CONFERENCE NEWS

DAY 1

Strategies put Boilermakers, contractors, owners on path to more work

The 35th MOST National Tripartite Alliance conference opened with a focus on new initiatives and strategies to boost work opportunities. Strategies within the M.O.R.E. Work Investment Fund are setting the foundation for Boilermakers, contractors and owners to take advantage of new work projected to come online as a result of the Inflation Reduction Act, transitioning energy landscape and other factors.

"We have to keep our shoulder to the wheel with the M.O.R.E. Work Investment Fund, and we have to evolve to keep our craft alive and be ready for what's coming," said Conference Chairman and Boilermakers International President Newton B. Jones.

IP Jones noted that less than $1 million was initially invested in a California state legislation (SB 54) campaign in the first iteration of the M.O.R.E. Work program. That successful Western States campaign resulted in about 3 million additional man-hours for Boilermakers with millions more for other crafts.

"That was an over 1,000% return on investment in its first year," he said. "And we signed on 31 new contractors and brought in at least 1,800 new members in two locals."

Now fully running since 2019, the M.O.R.E. Work program has expanded. In addition to the four core focus areas (marketing, organizing, recruitment and employment), work recovery and job targeting initiatives are investing in tactics to reclaim lost work, gain work in new industries and allow contractors to generate more competitive bids.

Boilermakers International President Newton B. Jones discusses M.O.R.E. Work Investment Fund strategies.

"All of these strategies are tools for surviving this unprecedented transformation. It's going to be ongoing and a long process," he said.

Developments in recruiting strategies include the launch of a new, centralized online application system and boot camp style training.

"We can't do everything through the apprenticeship program," said IP Jones. "The boot camps are working really well."

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He called attention to a new boot camp training program being built out at the U.S. Army's Fort Benning, Georgia, base. The army is providing a building for the Boilermakers' training, which will be aimed at soldiers who are preparing to leave the service.

Also in the arena of recruiting, President Jones remarked on the Boilermaker Women at Work program, which focuses on recruiting and retaining female members, as well as fostering leadership development paths for female Boilermakers.

"The Women at Work initiative is a very important strategy, because there are a lot of women who want to go to work and can do this work," he said. "And who do you think built the Liberty ships during World War II?"

Another initiative within the M.O.R.E. Work Investment Fund, Climate Change Solution Initiatives, is also critical to a healthy future for Boilermakers, contractors and owners, he said.

He stressed the importance of Boilermakers' having a voice in the debate about climate change solutions and pointed out the advocacy work International Director of Climate Change Policy Solutions Cory Channon has been doing to educate and raise awareness about carbon capture technology, hydrogen and other developing solutions.

Boilermakers' began advocating for carbon capture, use and storage in 2008. The message about a common sense "all of the above" energy and solutions approach and CCUS as a vital solution is finally cutting through the rhetoric, propaganda and misinformation that long has dominated the narrative, pushed by extreme "environmentalists" who call for only so-called "green" initiatives, such as solar, wind and batteries.

"Recently, the Biden administration put together the Infrastructure Act and the Inflation Reduction Act with incentives that will bring us—all of us—a whole lot of work," President Jones said. "We're seeing the focus shift to CCUS, hydrogen and nuclear, and manpower for new projects is going to be an issue for all crafts. We have to work to recruit and train people."

To that end, IP Jones announced that discussions had begun with the Ironworkers union to create a strategic alliance that would coordinate job opportunities where appropriate and share manpower among the two unions to ensure jobs could be properly staffed. He said alliance discussions were still in their infancy.

"There's going to be a whole lot of work coming to our crafts all at once, and we've got to be ready," he said.

President Jones pointed out that while the conference was the 35th National Tripartite Alliance conference, it was actually celebrating its 37th anniversary, due to the pandemic hiatus.

"This has been an enduring meeting that has brought us together to find solutions to problems we face every day on jobsites, to understand the needs of our employers and contractors and come to solutions that make sense."

Boilermakers, Ironworkers begin strategic alliance discussions

Ironworkers General President, Eric Dean, acknowledges that his union copied the Boilermakers' tripartite model of bringing the union together with contractors and owners to discuss and solve problems.

"They say imitation is the finest form of flattery," Dean said. "You guys have been meeting with your owners and contractors a lot longer than the Ironworkers have, but somewhere along the line, we got it and we copied off of you."

Now, with a glut of work opportunities appearing on the horizon due to the recently signed Infrastructure Act and Inflation Reduction Act, the Boilermakers and Ironworkers unions have begun early discussions about forming a strategic alliance that would coordinate job opportunities and share manpower among the two unions.

Dean pointed out the many similarities in the unions' structures and goals, and he gave an overview of upcoming Ironworker projects in need of massive skilled, trained manpower. A strategic alliance could potentially put Boilermakers to work to fill the gaps and maintain a union workforce.

"We want to get to a solution and put Ironworkers and Boilermakers to work and make sure the contractors and owners have the skilled workforce they need," he said.

Both Dean and Boilermakers International President Newton B. Jones emphasized that discussions about the strategic alliance are still in early stages.

"We might fight sometimes, but like brothers, when we put our backs together everyone else stands a losing chance of being in the same fight if we're both aligned together," said Dean. "When we have each other's back, we're unstoppable."

Hydrogen hubs would bring thousands of jobs

Visionary and entrepreneur Ian MacGregor, founder of Hydrogen Naturally, Inc., laid out plans for his next project: producing what he describes as "bright green hydrogen" at hydrogen "hubs" in Canada and the United States.

MacGregor plans to finance, build and operate hydrogen hubs that will use scrap wood fiber as feedstock. The hubs' Natural Air Capture facility will make and sequester CO_2 and will manufacture renewable fuels. The goal is to remove one gigaton of CO_2 from the atmosphere and make large quantities of clean hydrogen and ammonia.

"What we're focusing on is the full carbon cycle, and we will be carbon negative in the hydrogen we make," he said. "We're not zero, we're less than zero, because the tree took the carbon out of the air."

This is not MacGregor's first time focusing on hydrogen. A previous project Sturgeon Refinery (which became part of North West Refining) in Alberta was the first greenfield refinery to be built in Canada since 1984 and is the world's first refinery designed to capture CO_2 emissions from the outset. It's believed to be the largest blue hydrogen plant in the world.

He plans to build four hubs in central locations starting in Alberta. Hubs on the East Coast, West Coast and Gulf Coast are also in his plans. The hubs will be built in identical train processes akin to an assembly line process so they can be continuously built, and he estimates it will take about five to 10 years to build all four.

"Each hub will have about 25,000-50,000 person years of manufacturing and installation labor," said MacGregor, noting that each would also require about 5,000-10,000 forestry workers to supply the fiber.

"And who's going to build them?" MacGregor asked. "Boilermakers."

GCCSI outlines new trends in carbon capture

Carbon capture is gaining traction worldwide as a necessary solution to mitigating climate change, leading to government funding and incentives projected to spur an increase in carbon capture projects.

According to Spencer Schecht, Senior Client Engagement Lead for the Global CCS Institute, several points in the Infrastructure Act and Inflation Reduction Act will have a direct impact on accelerating carbon capture deployment in the United States. In addition to $12 billion being earmarked for carbon capture, use and storage, enhancements to the 45Q tax credit make CCUS more attractive. Enhancements include:

- Multiyear extension on construction to 2033
- Direct pay for the first five years after the carbon capture equipment is placed into service
- The 45Q credit value has increased to $85 per ton for sequestered CO2, and for utilization or enhanced oil recovery the credit has increased to $60 per ton

"This creates a market with economic certainty," Schecht said. "What all this means is that CCS is going to be a big part of climate conversations going forward."

He reported that in the United States, Houston and the Gulf Coast, the Northern Plains, Midwest, Appalachia and California are CCUS hotspots. In Canada, Alberta and Saskatchewan are leaders in CCUS. In all of North America (U.S. and Canada), there are currently 18 commercial projects operating or in construction and 74-plus commercial projects in development.

CCUS network "hub and cluster models" are growing in popularity for their economies of scale for compression and transportation, shared risk, efficient use of resources for storage and an overall reduced deployment timeline.

Schecht noted that in order to further enable carbon capture deployment, there needs to be incentivization that happens through government, significant capital through investment and a policy framework put in place that gives investors confidence in the business case for a positive return on investment.

"CCS is a tricky nut to crack in that we need to be incentivized to use our carbon or put it elsewhere," Schecht said. "It's not necessarily a product or a service, however it is in the service of maintaining a habitable climate."

Dr. Evan Blumer, Consul Energy

'Power plant of the future' to burn coal waste, help manage forests

Coal waste may seem like an unlikely fuel for a power plant that is designed to be carbon negative, but it's exactly the right feedstock for Consul Energy's new project.

"We're going to build a power plant that's going to clean up carbon and take power plants carbon negative," said Dr. Evan Blumer. Blumer's concept, which uses a unique combustion system, pressurized, fluidized beds, is a finalist in the U.S. Department of Energy's 21st Century Power plant program, a multi-phase program that will lead to the development of the "power plant of the future"—one that provides power-grid reliability and resilience with near-zero emissions and includes carbon capture technology.

Consul Energy's plant, which will be built in Pennsylvania, has advanced through the first two phases of the DOE's competitive process and is one of three projects selected for the final stage: design, development and funding.

A pressurized, fluidized bed allows for fuel flexibility, combustion efficiency and low emissions—which means it can burn just about anything for fuel.

"It's the first coal-based, carbon negative power plant that will take more CO2 out of the atmosphere than it produces," Blumer said. "The most valuable thing this plant will do is not producing energy but capturing CO2."

Blumer explained that in addition to burning coal waste and eliminating the need for coal waste storage, the plant will co-fire with biomass. After exploring several biomass options and logistics for transporting and storage, Consul Energy landed on wood—specifically wood from Pennsylvania forests.

As a long-time environmentalist, Blumer understands the problem of unmanaged forests, which have become more prevalent due to the decrease in demand for forest products. He saw the win-win opportunity to work with Pennsylvania forestry.

"I spent all my life focused on the environment, and I don't care about clean or green or renewables, because it doesn't mean anything. I care about one thing, and that's carbon," he said. "They have a problem, and we have a need. Our need becomes a solution to their problem. We can help them improve the forests' health and wildlife habitat."

Blumer noted that he's often asked why, after spending 30 years working to save endangered species, he's involved with a project like this.

"If we can have this kind of impact (through developing a carbon-negative energy system), this one project will mean more to the world than anything I could have done focusing on endangered species."

Boilermakers on track advocating for CCUS, hydrogen

Boilermakers International Director of Climate Change Policy Solutions, Cory Channon, rounded out a day of discussions about carbon capture technology, hydrogen and other energy production climate change solutions. Channon stressed the importance of collaboration, advocating for an "all of the above" strategy and combating misinformation about so-called "green" solutions.

"The world is in our hands now, and we have to have these adult conversations now," he said. "The villain is CO_2."

The Boilermakers' message is beginning to take root. Channon noted that now is the time to ramp up education and awareness of CCUS and other developing technologies to gain government funding and policy support.

"We need to shift the mind of the people to shift the government," he said.

Watch this video about the Boilermakers and new hydrogen opportunities at
vimeo.com/728909190

Safety and staffing at center of caucus concerns

Boilermakers, contractors and owners met independent of one another to discuss topics to bring to the table for discussion. Safety and staffing were the two chief concerns arising from all three caucuses.

With increased job opportunities on the horizon, all agreed that providing Boilermaker manpower was a priority. All agreed that recruiting, retaining and training were critical to meeting the projected needs.

"Staffing continues to be a challenge," said Owner Caucus Representative, Steve Giffen of PBF. "We need to continue through regional and local tripartite opportunities to provide information on what projects are coming up, numbers and specific skills needed."

"We must all work together as never before," emphasized Tim Simmons, Labor Caucus Representative and Boilermakers ED-CSO.

Mike Bray, Contractors Caucus Representative and Senior Executive Consultant for Riggs Distler & Co., Inc. remarked on the positive nature of the caucuses.

"When you sit in a room with contractors and they don't have a lot of complaints, we're doing something right," he said. "We're collaborating."

Steve Giffen
Owner Caucus
Representative
from PBF Energy

Tim Simmons
Labor Caucus
Representative and
Boilermakers ED-CSO

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