
ANOTHER VOICE

Act before more jobs are lost

It's happened again.

Another business is closing in Niagara County.

Allvac in Lockport has announced that it's "temporarily" closing its doors on Sept. 13. The reason — the price of electricity provided to the plant by NYSEG is too high.



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Tom Nicholas, union president of United Steelworkers of America 2857, says the real reason behind the move is the company can buy cheaper electric power in North Carolina. In fact, the price per kilowatt is reportedly half of what the business pays in New York.

While the closing will idle about 40 to 50 workers in Lockport, old-timers will remember that — in its heyday — the company, which started as Simonds Saw & Steel in the early 1900s and has been successively named Guterl Specialty Steel and Allegheny Ludlum, was the city's second-largest employer.

The years and the American steel industry's decline have all taken their toll on the business, but losing 40 to 50 good-paying jobs is still a big blow to Lockport, and to the county.

You only have to read the newspapers to see that companies are closing in this county at an alarming rate. In the past couple of years, it seems that good-paying jobs have been disappearing almost weekly.

Corsons, Oldham Saw, Nabisco, DuPont, Occidental, SLG Carbon. The list goes on and on.

And where do many of these good-paying jobs go? Right down south, often to North Carolina, where the business climate is obviously a lot more friendly than it is here.

Whether it's taxes, the cost of electricity or

something else, businesses just can't seem to survive here.

And what do our local politicians do? Well, right now, at the county level, their best idea seems to be deciding whether to initiate an 8 percent sales tax or pass another double-digit tax increase. Just maybe we'll get both. That should do a lot for business.

As for Allvac officials, they're not saying much either, except that negotiations with NYSEG are continuing.

And NYSEG spokesman Dave Greenfield apparently isn't speaking.

Interestingly enough, John Simon, head of the county's Industrial Development Agency, said that discussions with Allvac have been ongoing for about five years, but he hasn't had any contact with the company in the past five or six months.

Obviously, not a good time to drop the ball.

I hope that the lack of information does indeed mean that negotiations are taking place.

It's ironic that a company would move from Niagara County because of high power costs. Don't we have a huge power plant a few miles away?

It's time our city, county and state politicians take a stand, stop blaming everything on state and federal mandates and figure out a way to stop the hemorrhaging of jobs from our area.

Call them and ask them what they're doing to keep jobs in Niagara County. Tell them you don't want to leave your friends and family and move somewhere else to find work. Tell them you don't want to watch your children and grandchildren move out of state in search of good jobs.

Do it today — the next plant is probably getting ready to close.

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