

Our Opinion: More jobs, good pay

Sunday, December 18, 2016

THE WORST EMPLOYER IN ALL OF THE
ENTIRE HISTORY OF LITERATURE,
Ebenezer Scrooge,
BARELY PAID ENOUGH TO KEEP
HIS EMPLOYEE and DEPENDENTS
HOUSED, CLOTHED AND FED...



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MUCH BETTER
THAN TODAY



Two decades after losing much of its manufacturing muscle, Greensboro finds itself in great position to rebuild.

A survey by The Boyd Co., a national site selection consulting firm, ranks Greensboro as the nation's low-cost leader for companies looking to open advanced manufacturing operations.

And the timing couldn't be much better. Manufacturing jobs are coming back to the U.S. as labor costs rise around the world. In 2015, about 60,000 manufacturing jobs left the country, but about 67,000 jobs returned to the U.S., according to Southern Business & Development.

Add to that the oft-repeated vows by President-elect Donald Trump to return manufacturing jobs to the U.S. and the promises by Gov.-elect Roy Cooper to try to do away with the controversial HB 2 that has caused some businesses to cross North Carolina off their lists.

Top it off with the 1,500-acre megasite in neighboring Randolph County that is ready to go online, and you can see why John Boyd, the principal of the Boyd Company, says Greensboro is “at the top of the list at one of the more exciting times in 30 years.”

With such great opportunity comes a need to be prudent.

Yes, this area needs more manufacturing jobs. But it’s just as important to make sure they are the right kind of jobs.

We’re at the top of the Boyd survey in part because of the availability of cheap labor and energy in a market with a recent history of producing skilled manufacturing workers at places such as HondaJet, Bright Plastics and Purolator.

State officials announced this month that a Taiwan-based maker of high-end sports apparel will build a manufacturing plant in Rutherford County. That project will bring about 600 jobs to the rural county, which is suffering with a 6.1 percent unemployment rate compared to Greensboro’s 4.9 percent.

Jobs at the projected Forest City plant will pay an average of nearly \$26,000, lower than the Rutherford County average of almost \$32,000. That means the new jobs will pay about \$12.50 per hour on average.

The average hourly rate in Greensboro is closer to \$20. That’s a wage more in line with advanced manufacturing, where workers have skills that are needed in 21st century factories. Thanks to programs at Guilford Technical Community College, Forsyth Tech and others, this region can provide workers with those skills.

Those are the types of manufacturing jobs that this area needs to thrive. To settle for less will mean we have people working barely above the poverty line who are not adding much to the tax rolls while potentially stressing state and county services.

If the state gives incentives for a company to relocate here — Everett Textile will get \$3 million in tax incentives in return for its \$18.5 million investment in Rutherford County — we should make sure we’re as focused on wage growth as we are on job growth.

Greensboro has a great opportunity — let’s make the most of it.