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Editorial: State lacks chips for job bargaining

APRIL 16, 2009

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Although it will be a year before production work at Thomas Products in Sheboygan ends, the loss of some 300 manufacturing jobs is no less devastating.

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Gardner Denver Inc., the parent company of Thomas, plans to consolidate production operations at its Monroe, La., operation.

Sheboygan was in the running with Monroe and both cities and both states made pitches to Gardner Denver with economic, tax and worker-training incentives offered.

The union representing Thomas workers here — Local 1060 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers — said it offered concessions to the company worth \$3 million over the next two years.

It appears to us that a major factor in the decision to move the jobs south was the state of Louisiana paying \$9 million of Gardner Denver's cost to move production equipment from Sheboygan to Louisiana. Gardner Denver also will get payroll and sales tax rebates from Louisiana and the city of Monroe is helping with the building of a new, 124,000 square-foot plant.

Leibham says Wisconsin's offer, which totaled about \$2.5 million, met what Gardner Denver was seeking to bring the 70 Monroe jobs here.

But company president Barry Pennypacker said the decision to move to Monroe was made to "ensure the long-term competitiveness of the business by continuing to drive cost and inefficiencies out of the operations."

So as Monroe and Louisiana celebrated on Monday, Sheboygan and Wisconsin were left to wonder: "Could we have done more?"

Sheboygan state Sen. Joe Leibham, who was instrumental in putting Wisconsin's incentive package together, thinks the failure to keep the jobs here lies with union, which he said showed "little interest in trying to honestly negotiate" some contract differences with the company.

He also criticized Gov. Jim Doyle and Democrats in the Legislature for pushing through \$1.2 billion in "new anti-job taxes" at the same time Sheboygan was trying to keep the Thomas Products jobs here. He also said Doyle should have been more personally involved in the talks with Gardner Denver, as was Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal.

We don't know any of the negotiation details with the union, but if it acted the way Leibham says it did, then the union leadership must live with the consequences.

We agree that Doyle should have become directly involved at the very beginning with Gardner Denver, and \$1.2 billion in new taxes does come at a bad time.

But the blame for Wisconsin's reputation as a high-tax state can't solely be laid at the feet of Doyle and Democrats.

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According to the nonpartisan Tax Foundation, Wisconsin in 2000 — the very end of Republican Gov. Tommy Thompson's 12 years in office — was second highest in the nation for per capita state and local tax burden; in 2008, the last year for which the foundation has data, Wisconsin ranked ninth.

Also in 2000, the Cato Institute, a public policy research foundation, named Thompson to its gubernatorial hall of shame as the third-worst governor in the country for his failure to restrain spending.

Wisconsin's messed up tax and spending practices have a much longer history than the current administration — and unless this gets changed soon, Wisconsin will still, have the short stack of chips in the high-stakes, poker-like game of attracting jobs.

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Jetter41 wrote:

"According to the nonpartisan Tax Foundation, Wisconsin in 2000 — the very end of Republican Gov. Tommy Thompson's 12 years in office — was second highest in the nation for per capita state and local tax burden; in 2008, the last year for which the foundation has data, Wisconsin ranked ninth."

Chip, that's what the editorial says, you took it clearly out of context.
4/19/2009 8:35:36 PM

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ChipThome wrote:

"According to the nonpartisan Tax Foundation, Wisconsin in 2000..."

Hello ??????

IT'S 2009 !!!!!!!!

We have had 7 LONG YEARS of LIAR JIM DOYLE'S GROSS MISMANAGEMENT of our state.

Listen to LIAR JIM DOYLE'S OWN WORDS ABOUT NEW TAXES:

<http://www.fightbackwisconsin.com/index.php?PageID=22>

The time has come to RECALL DOYLE NOW !!!!!

<http://www.recalldoyle.com/default.aspx>

4/19/2009 11:28:31 AM

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Jetter41 wrote:

Replying to bgddy0061:

Replying to amazedstill:

Forgot tride, it's spelled tried.

*Thanks for your "intelligent" comment bgddy.
(snarkiness intended)*

1 last the amazedstill You no darn well what a skint head is. If you are in you 30s or over.that was a slang term for a BALD HEAD. But again you knew this. Than you for showing how smart you really are not. Now be Like a vulture wanna be and spin this and the last post i wrote.

What is a "skint" head? I've heard bald headed people being called skin head. Skint is slang for money in England, is it not?

4/19/2009 10:09:09 AM

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bgddy0061 wrote:

Replying to amazedstill:

Forgot tride, it's spelled tried.

Thanks for your "intelligent" comment bgddy. (snarkiness intended)

1 last the amazedstill You no darn well what a skirt head is.If you are in you 30s or over.that was a slang term for a BALD HEAD.But again you knew this.Than you for showing how smart you really are not.Now be Like a vulture wanna be and spin this and the last post i wrote.

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