

Tompkins/Cortland Labor Coalition

representing over 7,000 workers

United Autoworkers #2300 • International Association of Machinists #1607 • Ithaca Teachers Association
Service Employees #200 • Ironworkers #60 • United University Professions • Bricklayers and Masons #17
Civil Service Employees Association #855 • Cornell University Security Employees Union • Laborers #589
Ithaca Police Benevolent Association • Carpenters #603 • Plumbers and Pipefitters #109 • Painters #178
International Typographers Union • Electricians #961 • Ithaca City School District Employees • Teamsters #65
Electricians #241 • Trumansburg Teachers Association • United Autoworkers #1326 • TC3 Faculty Association
Civil Service Employees Association #605 • Musicians #132 • Civil Service Employees Association #812

March 13, 1989

Dear _____

Since 1985 the Tompkins/Cortland Labor Coalition has made public its distress over the plant closings and large workforce reductions which have plagued this country and this region. Locally, this trend appears to have abated and in some small fashion reversed itself. Some new manufacturing jobs have opened up and for that we are all quite happy. Still, concern exists in our community over the potential of further loss of good paying jobs and the need for advance notification of major fluctuations in employment.

We are pleased to enclose a copy of the new federal Plant Closing Law, called the "Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act." Also enclosed you will find a brief sheet highlighting the law, entitled "Highlights of the 1988 Plant Closing Law."

While the federal law is a beginning, we do not feel that it fully addresses the significant impact plant closings have on individuals and communities. And while we know that there is not unanimity of thought on this topic we would like to continue the discussion of this most important issue. Likewise, the City of Ithaca is concerned about job loss and has provided funds to the Labor Coalition to do research into varying aspects of job loss and plant closings.

Last year, the Ithaca Common Council affirmed its support of advance notification by voting to include in its lease agreements, with businesses moving into the city industrial parks, a statement asking for 90 days advance notice of intended closings or large layoffs. Also, last year the Governor signed the New York State Compact with business and labor encouraging advance notification of intended closings or large layoffs. At all levels of government the importance of advance notice has been recognized and addressed.

In a recent survey of former Ithaca Gun employees, the vast majority of whom were skilled machinists with over 12 years seniority, the amount of notice given of the plant closing was less than 24 hours. Most of these workers still have not recovered from the economic and social havoc that closing created in their lives. After 2½ years most have still not begun to earn the wages they were making when they were laid off, many have no health insurance and most have had to severely cut back on personal expenditures. The cost to the state and local taxpayers has been significant as well. The average length of unemployment was about 8 months with most people using all of their 26 weeks unemployment benefits. Many



had to seek additional social services such as food stamps, medicaid and welfare.

It is clear that our local experience mirrors the national picture. The results of our Ithaca Gun survey give us a clear idea of the social cost of plant closings and large layoffs in our area. Even six months notice would not be sufficient time to completely address the multitude of problems associated with a shutdown. The bottom line is that as much time as possible is needed to retrain workers, help them find new employment, and deal with the economic impacts on our community. Therefore, we would like to encourage local businesses to fully understand the current federal law and make a further commitment to at least 90 days advance notification of a closing or large layoff.

Further, we would like to take this opportunity to meet with you and discuss the law. We would be interested in your thoughts on prospective employment needs and related issues. Someone from our office will be contacting you in the very near future.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters.

Sincerely,

Coert Bonthius, Staffperson
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