

Hyde Park plant to be sold, closed

By Sarah Snyder
Globe Staff

A Hyde Park plant that has been used for manufacturing since the turn of the century will be sold in January, and 125 machinists laid off, in what one angry city official calls a good example of why Boston is losing blue-collar jobs.

The plant manufactures large fans for generating plants. It was bought last January by Scotland-based Howden Sirocco. The company said yesterday it is selling the plant in order to move all its North American manufacturing to Toronto.

Marilyn Swartz Lloyd, director of the city's Economic Development and Industrial Corporation, said the figures behind the plant closing show that lucrative Boston real estate prices are driving away blue-collar jobs.

Howden, she said, bought the Hyde Park plant and at least two other plants elsewhere for a total of \$16 million last January, and now has the Hyde Park plant up for sale for roughly \$20 million, based on its real estate value.

An officer of Howden Sirocco would not give any figures regarding sale of the plant.

Swartz Lloyd called the sale an example of a multinational company coming in to "buy Boston businesses for the real estate, while spitting out Boston workers in order to make a killing. That's what's going on here."

If the city had zoning for light manufacturing she said, businesses in those areas would be protected from such a sale. Under a light manufacturing zone now before the Boston Redevelopment Authority, any manufacturing business in the zone that was sold would have to continue to be used for manufacturing.

James Dixon, vice president of finance for Howden Sirocco, said the company wants to move its manufacturing to Toronto because, "We have two North American facilities, both very much underutilized, and the Toronto facility is much more capitalized than this facility. It will be much easier to move what we have here than the other way around, because of the equipment involved."

While manufacturing will be discontinued in Hyde Park, the company's engineering, marketing and administrative functions will be kept in Boston, Dixon said.

Dixon said the company will do everything possible to help the laid-off workers find other jobs. He said layoffs will begin next January and the plant will close by April.

Anthony Mastandrea, directing business representative for Machinists Union Local 1790, District 38, who represents the machinists at the plant, said, "I'm very upset and naturally I just feel we're losing more jobs in the state, and in this case, they're moving right out of the country." He said it is unlikely his members, who average about \$11 an hour at the plant, will be able to find comparable jobs.

"There is very little in manufacturing positions available. Burger King has a lot of jobs open," he said.

The plant, owned by Westinghouse for more than 20 years, was bought five years ago by American Davidson. Howden bought the plant in January when its parent company, The Howden Group, a Scotland-based industrial manufacturer, bought the Davidson Group, which included several manufacturing plants, one in Hyde Park and others abroad.

Hub official raps layoff plan

By PHIL PRIMACK

A CITY official said yesterday a Scotland-based corporation's plans to lay off 125 workers at a Hyde Park plant in order to sell the property "is a perfect example" of the need for the city to protect light manufacturing through tougher zoning.

"Allowing international moguls to buy Boston manufacturing plants and then turn around and make a real estate killing while throwing blue-collar workers out of their jobs is outrageous," said Marilyn Swartz Lloyd, director of Boston's Economic Development and Industrial Commission.

The Howden Group, which purchased the old Westinghouse plant in Hyde Park earlier this year, said yesterday that it will transfer its manufacturing operations from Hyde Park to another facility it owns in Toronto, Canada. Layoffs will begin in Boston in January and will be completed within two months, according to a company statement.

The manufacturing portion of the 23-acre Boston site, which produced large industrial fans used primarily by power companies, "is being put on the market," said the state-

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Marilyn Swartz Lloyd

According to Swartz, Howden paid American Standard \$16 million for the Hyde Park and at least two other facilities, but "now Howden is asking \$20 million just for Hyde Park. . . . For that price, it's not as if they'll be building affordable housing."

A city-proposed light manu-

facturing zoning ordinance scheduled for a hearing this month "would improve ability to create spaces for people to live and work," Swartz.

Although Howden said yesterday that "the engineering, marketing and administrative functions will be retained and expanded in Boston," Howden Vice President Jim Dixon said this would "probably not" result in any new jobs. He would not comment on the price or other details of Howden's proposed sale of its property here.

An official of the union representing plant workers said the company could have kept Hyde Park active.

"We just didn't see the effort from this company to keep this going as a manufacturing operation," said Tony Mastandrea, business agent for Machinists Union Local 1790. "I think they just bought the place planning to sell it as real estate."

Mastandrea, who began his career as a worker in the Westinghouse plant 41 years ago, said those being laid off "earn an average of about \$11 an hour. There may be new jobs for them out there, but not jobs that pay that much or use the skills these people have."