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## Breaking Bread in Long Island City

When big companies such as NBC and Morgan Stanley threaten to leave the city, politicians are quick to put together a package of tax abatements, low-cost loans and sales-tax exemptions to induce them to stay. But when a family-owned business with 400 employees - half of them minorities - wants help, no elected official will give them the time of day.

Fink Baking, still run by the same family that founded it in 1888, is one of the last major commercial bakeries left in this city. It supplies fresh bread and rolls to restaurants and delis throughout the region, while also serving hospitals, school cafeterias and hotels. If you have ever had a sandwich at Ellen's Coffee Cafe near Chambers Street, chances are you've tasted the bread made 365 days a year at the Fink plant in Long Island City.

Fink Baking isn't leaving the city; it's not even threatening to leave. Unlike Pechter Field, a competitor that may move from Brooklyn to New Jersey, the Fink family prefers to be in New York; it believes it can serve its customers better than out-of-state competitors. Whenever a hotel runs short of fresh bread, it calls Fink and, in less than an hour, an extra dozen loaves are delivered - by whatever means necessary.

But Fink reaps no rewards for its Fidelity. The bakery recently submitted a bid to continue supplying bread to the Health and Hospitals Corporation, but it was 6.5 percent higher than a New Jersey competitor's. That's understandable: Fink has higher gasoline, property and workman's compensation taxes, as well as higher labor costs. New York's procurement policies allow local companies a 5 percent price preference, and Fink is willing to lower its bid. If it loses the HHC contract - which is worth \$1.2 million over two years - about 15 workers would be laid off, payroll taxes will shrink and the city would probably face increased social welfare costs.

Rudy Washington, the Commissioner of Business Services, has informed Fink that "we will do all that we can to help you maintain your business operations," but that apparently does not include considering a new offer.

Lust week, the city adopted a budget based on the premise that tax cuts and a smaller municipal workforce are the best ways to create jobs. That may work for big banks and entertainment conglomerates, but not for a medium-sized company involved in an unglamorous business. One way to keep manufacturing jobs in New York is to use the city's enormous buying power strategically. If a firm is willing to pay higher local taxes and has a proven record of employing city residents, why shouldn't it get preference in competing for city business?

There is a new state law, Chapter 490 of the Laws of 1993, that allows local governments purchasing food to give preference to products grown or processed within the state. This statute, initially designed to help the agricultural sector, may turn out to be New York's best weapon in the fight for manufacturing jobs.

Why do we have a municipal death wish that puts the screws to companies like Fink Baking while we will do anything to please the Yankees, Boston Properties and ABC/Cap Cities?

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