

Community-Based Adjustment to Textile Plant Closure and Downsizing

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

8-9 April 2004

Session 4

Presentation: “Anticipating and Engaging the Need for Change: A Summary of Efforts”, Andrew Dobelstein

Discussants: Jim Clinton, Executive Director of Southern Growth Policies Board
Valeria Lee, Executive Director of the Golden Leaf Foundation

Jim Clinton took exception to the notion that we need a step after Rapid Response. His view: we need a step before Rapid Response. Communities should be ready for plant closings through planning and preparation. This requires leadership at the local level. He cited the work of SGPB in its annual reports in preparing communities to manage transition on an ongoing basis.

He also suggested that discussions of community transition based on outside advice are ill-conceived. His advice to communities: get all the advice you want, but then you decide your future.

Valeria Lee applauded the focus of the conference on the well-being of workers. In contrast to the Triangle-Triad crescent, she said she came from a different place – a place of ongoing poverty and slow transition. Her foundation is devoted to supporting communities and their opportunities for improvement.

She agrees that solutions to the problems of poverty are not easy to find. She suggests, as well, that the education system should not be chosen simplistically as the source of the solution. She worries that it was the original source of the problem.

She cautioned the participants to remember the plight of farmers in this discussion of transitioning. While manufacturing is the subject of the day, the agricultural sector faces a similar transition.