

GROWING COMPANY HOLDS JOB FAIR

By Gerry Cherry
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The search for qualified machinists to help their booming business expand finally led Pro-Fab, Inc. of Oklahoma City to set up a Job Fair. Hoping to fill 50 new positions to add to the work force of 100, Pro-Fab will introduce prospective employees to their facility Saturday. If the job fair is successful, other growing businesses in Oklahoma might adopt the strategy.

Coordinator Mickey Quoetone said a nationwide shortage of skilled machinists has left the firm shorthanded at a time when growth is only waiting for enough people to do the jobs. "We have enough work for 24-hours-a-day," she said, "but only enough people for one and one-half shifts."

After trying all the traditional ways to attract experienced workers—newspaper advertising, radio spots, and use of employment services in Oklahoma and other states—Quoetone said the Oklahoma Department

of Commerce helped Pro-Fab come up with the idea of attracting potential employees with a job fair. "We hope to show experienced machinists our company can offer more than any other," Quoetone said.

The job fair, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the plant at 910 N. Morgan Road, will feature a tour of the facility and information about the company and its history. Interested visitors can fill out an application and interviews for qualified individuals will be arranged. Pro-Fab is looking for electrical and mechanical maintenance personnel, as well as skilled machinists.

"We know it's not feasible to get that many skilled machinists," Quoetone said, "but we will train workers with core skills, such as blueprint reading, and we are even looking at talented people with mechanical ability. There's an opportunity to move into engineering just by starting in the field," she said.

Jim Rice, founder of the company, started the business in his garage, with one machine, in 1987. Before beginning the venture he worked for Kawasaki as a mechanic, then moved into the construction industry, becoming head of his own firm. When the bottom dropped out of Oklahoma's economy, Quoetone said, Rice turned to other skills. Beginning with one machine, Rice built the company to its current status as a major supplier of parts for the GV jet, manufactured by Gulfstream Aerospace Technologies. Pro-Fab also has contracts with Rockwell International, Boeing, Cessna, Raytheon, British Aerospace and the U.S. Government.

Rice's first contracts were for machine gun parts. Today, one of Pro-Fab's defense contracts is the manufacture of the breechlock on the M-2 machine gun and the bipod on the M-60 machine gun. They also manufacture the refueling boom for the KC-135 aerial tanker for the U.S. Air Force. The company has expanded eight times since it's founding, and sales are projected at \$10 million.

According to Rice, it is Pro-Fab's technical expertise as well as precision, simultaneous, five-axis machining centers, and CAD/CAM equipment, that sets the company apart. Right now, more technical expertise is what they need.

"People are our most valuable resource," Rice said. "We stay on the leading edge of technology and it's imperative to have skilled workers handling our operations. Technol-

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STATE CHAMBER TO RELEASE GOVERNMENT REPORT

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Oklahoma 2000, Inc., the research affiliate of The State Chamber, will release the results of its two-year study of the implications a citizen-imposed limit on tax increases on state government on Monday.

Entitled "In Search of Smaller Government: The Case of State Finance in Oklahoma," the study focuses on the impact of State Question 640, which was approved by voters in 1982 and is considered one of the most strict measures so far in placing limitations on the legislature to raise revenues.

The study also examines governmental responses to the limitation imposed by the constitutional amendment, which indicates that officials have adapted to the amendment by identifying alternative methods of increasing funding without invoking the amendment's requirements, and a survey of voter opinions indicates a conservative orientation of the public toward government and further limitations of the program reduction prospects and revenue raising alternatives available to state government officials. Additionally, the study examines the conflicting pressures between state residents' desire for services and their emphasis on lower taxes. Evidence compiled by the researchers also indicates that the state is turning to "off budget enterprises" to perform governmental functions.

An important question raised by the study, according to the chamber, is whether the amendment has created the condition for a structural or long term deficit and whether this is insufficient to maintain the existing level of services. Although revenues will grow with economic expansion, the study concluded, the rigidity of the present tax structure is a further limiting factor. From a review of the tax structure and the changing program emphasis in Oklahoma, the study finds that it is most likely that revenue will grow less rapidly than both the overall economy and expenditure needs.

The study concludes, "Oklahoma's search for limited government may be over. As the state moves toward the 21st century, the quest will be to identify the most rational and creative pattern of response to the new budget realities."

The study will be released during The State Chamber's annual meeting and during an afternoon press conference at the State Capitol.

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have voted although they were not registered. The 11 voters were not enough to surmount the difference between the two men, and Morgan was declared the unofficial winner, pending action from the election board on Monday.

Either of the losing candidates, Ward noted, have one avenue remaining: An appeal to the Oklahoma Supreme Court, where they could seek a stay of the election board's action pending arguments concerning their cases.

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