

Joel Leonard Chairman of the United States National Defence Manufacturing Workforce Committee Challenged New Zealand MP

Addressing the New Zealand Maintenance Engineers Conference Joel Leonard passionately showcased the turn around in North Carolina's manufacturing sector

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND, November 21, 2013 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Opposition MP David Parker was challenged on the Opposition party's mantra to increase the minimum wage by the visiting Chairman of the United States National Defence Manufacturing Workforce Committee.

Speaking after Mr. Parkers opening speech on the multi-party inquiry into future of NZ

manufacturing at last week's National Maintenance Engineering Conference, North Carolina's Joel Leonard responded to Mr. Parkers call to lift the minimum wage by declaring that the minimum wage is an entry wage. Drawing an analogy with apprentice pay schemes, Leonard stated, "The minimum wage should be viewed as the first step in a workers desire to secure employment and progressing by endeavour. Lifting the minimum wage simply prevents those people from ever getting on to the start line."

Invited to New Zealand by the [Maintenance Engineering Society](#) to showcase the resurgent turn around in the North Carolina manufacturing sector, Leonard pointed to the experience of the United States as a guiding light for New Zealand's manufacturing future. He asked "Why not a stronger Manufacturing and Maintenance Future?" During his passionate keynote address Joel Leonard challenged attendees to promote maintenance and manufacturing in New Zealand. He said "What you glorify is what you get"

He added, "It is no longer why boost manufacturing? It is why not? It is not longer why use 3D printing, it is why not? With mineral commodity rates dropping, with global economic uncertainty and anxiety climbing, an investment in skilled technicians will generate stronger results.

Tourism and service industry may help support New Zealand economy but cannot help it thrive.



Joel Leonard

The multiplier effect is just not there and that was a hard lesson that the US recently learned. That is why the US is in the process of manufacturing renewal and STEM education revolution. Under the premise what you glorify is what you get, science festivals are being organised; new sports where technical skills, like welding, machinists, and others compete are emerging across the US. Special fast track classes are being created to create the necessary skill sets to fill the skill gaps in manufacturing.

3D Printers are being adopted by newly formed community workshops where people can design new projects, use tools and equipment with help from supporters. These workshops are being set up all over the world and helping deepen the talent pools.”. “Is New Zealand setting these up?” he asked.

Leonard later provoked the audience to get into the classrooms and become technical evangelists so that more of New Zealand youth pursue education and develop the necessary skills to help replace the exiting baby boomers before they depart the workforce. Leonard stated that the biggest fix to address the skills gap is to calibrate the aspirations of our youth to current and future needs of employers.

With his encouragement, the Maintenance Engineering Society endorsed the creation of a Youth Development Committee and nominated the 2013 [MESNZ](#) scholarship winner, Taranaki’s Connor Hobbs as the inaugural chairman. Leonard finished his session by imploring the audience to help FIX IT FORWARD for a better tomorrow for New Zealand.

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