

Remarks of M. Monroe Kimbrel on the occasion of celebration of 20th Anniversary Thomson Company, Wednesday evening, January 18, 1956, Bell Auditorium, Augusta, Georgia

Many of you are likely familiar with the early history of the starting of the Thomson Company. For some of the information, though, I spent a little time looking over the items in the local newspaper late in 1935 and early in 1936. You may be interested in some of the things I read.

During November 1935 there appeared in the legal ads of the McDuffie Progress notice by Colonel J. Glenn Stovall as receiver of the sale of the Mary Delia Manufacturing Company on Monday, November 25, 1935. This was to include 54 1/2 acres of land on which were located approximately 40 tenant houses and the main mill building of approximately 265 feet by 117 feet, the building being equipped for approximately 9000 spindles.

On Thursday, November 28, three days after the sale, the McDuffie Progress also carried a front page story revealing that Thomson businessmen had become the owner of the Mary Delia Manufacturing Company property. More important was the fact that they had been active prior to the sale and been successful in locating someone to operate a pants manufacturing plant. The new firm proposed to overhaul the plant, install new machinery, and begin operation very soon.

Local people would continue to control the dwellings near the mill property and the new company would be given five years free rental if certain stipulated payrolls were made during that period.

A later article reported that ten days after signing the contract, a full carload of machinery was received. This was

only the initial shipment and, I have since been advised, should really have never stopped in Thomson but more properly delivered directly to the Savannah River and dumped.

On December 12 the legal ads carried an application of A. E. Clarke of New Jersey to incorporate as the Thomson Company for 20 years to manufacture, sell, and deal in clothing and wearing apparel and goods, wares, and merchandise of all kinds.

Then on January 16, 1936, the McDuffie Progress carried the big news. The actual operation of the Thomson Company had started on Friday, January 10, 1936, with an initial force of 15. The number of employees was to be increased about 10 a week or as fast as they could be trained.

Training apparently progressed faster than they had anticipated for on April 1, 1936, another story appeared listing the total number of employees as approximately 200. This is only typical of the growth of the Thomson Company which has continued over the entire 20 years and which we confidently predict under its present incomparable management will continue.

Another evidence of the rapid growth of the company was shown by the change in the capital structure. As the time of incorporation, the capitalization was listed as 250 shares of preferred stock at \$100 a share and 5000 shares of common stock at \$1 a share.

On June 4, 1936, the company petitioned for authority to increase the capital to 500 shares of preferred stock at \$100 a share and 25,000 shares of common stock at \$1 a share - an increase in the capital structure of about five times.

Now that the Thomson Company was under way, just who were the employees? Practically no outside people were brought in. We

find they are our neighbors and friends - people we have known all our lives. This has continued to be true in all the 20 years. The Thomson Company is just a big family of our local people.

During 1955 the payroll of the Thomson Company amounted to approximately 1 3/4 million dollars. Over the last 20 years, payrolls have amounted to nearly 18 million dollars with 12 1/2 million dollars in Thomson, a little over 5 million in Millen during the 15 years there, and about 150 thousand at Harlem last year.

In addition to these cash payments there have been substantial payments for fringe benefits, vacations, sick leave, rest periods, unemployment, and social security tax payments, hospitalization, and other insurance benefits. At all three plants during 1955 this amounted to approximately a quarter of a million dollars.

It has always been the policy of the Thomson Company to provide the very finest standard of working conditions available in the industry. Keeping pace with this standard, considerable outlays of capital were made in 1955 for completely air-conditioning each of the three plants. For machinery and outside labor alone, this cost approximately \$110,000 in Thomson, \$38,000 for Millen, and \$15,000 for Harlem, and when considering their own labor and equipment furnished, this amounted to a total investment of approximately \$200,000 for this one improvement alone.

One of the most welcome innovations was the installation of the public address system in 1945. Appropriate music - popular, jazz, and sacred - is piped throughout the building at intervals during working hours. This provides a pleasant atmosphere and a

welcome relaxation.

The splendid vacation plan provides one week paid vacation for employees having 6 months to 5 years service, 2 weeks vacation for those having 5 to 15 years, and 3 weeks for those having 15 years and longer.

It is an established and basic policy with the company to provide 50 weeks of work each year. The other 2 weeks are for vacation. This policy has been broken only 3 times in the 20 years. Each of these occasions was due to unusual shifts and adjustments in business conditions over which the company had no control and were scattered to have the least effect on personnel.

In such a seasonal industry with absolutely unpredictable demands and changes in the trade, this is a record almost unbelievable. There are few others in the industry who can approach this record. It is an outstanding tribute to your company that you have been able to maintain such stable operation.

You have always responded magnificently when the strains were heaviest. During World War II most of you bought bonds regularly to finance the war. You also dedicated yourselves to doing the very best job you could. This resulted in your winning on May 26, 1945, the coveted Army-Navy E award. This was the highest standard of excellence and was awarded for your production of army and navy pants and army shirts.

As important and as tremendous as that has been, your contribution to the economy of our region is by no means the only benefit the Thomson Company has brought.

The Thomson Company has been a very vital part of each community. You have participated in every worthwhile undertaking. You have been particularly interested in the educational,

cultural, civic, business, and religious development. You have responded to every call. You have been active in every phase of the community life. The company has contributed generously of its funds and its influence. As one instance alone, a 15-minute program has been sponsored continuously since the beginning of the radio station in Thomson dedicated entirely to public service. The time has been available for any worthwhile civic or community endeavor.

With a balance sheet now reflecting new working capital of approximately 2 1/2 million dollars, it is easy to see the growth of your company continued. It has been the policy of your company to reinvest earnings either for improvement of existing facilities or in broadening benefits to its family of employees or for an expansion to meet the ever growing demand for your quality product.

Something of the production - about 20 pairs of quality trousers come off the production lines every minute. It is estimated there are about 1200 people here tonight. So a little rapid arithmetic means every working hour the Thomson Company will produce one pair of trousers for each person present here tonight. Approximately 35 1/2 million pairs of trousers have been produced since the company started.

During 1955 employment was furnished for approximately 900 people. The Thomson plant had an average daily employment of 567 people.

A compliment to the splendid organization is the number of people who have remained with your company so long. It is your

policy of awarding gold watches to those employees who have 10 years service with the company. Other awards are made at the end of 20 years, which I understand you are to witness shortly. At the end of 1955, a total of 173 gold watches had been awarded to ladies and 45 gold watches to men.

The millions of dollars from this payroll have provided a real stimulus to business in the area. These dollars have found their way into practically every cash register in the community. In addition to the butcher, the baker, and the candle-stick maker, huge amounts have also gone to the railroad for transportation, to the trucking industry for transportation, for electricity and natural gas as fuel and power and substantial amounts to the post office. The Thomson Company and all the fine people in the Thomson Company family mean a tremendous amount to every business, profession and service organization in the area.

One item to illustrate this point. The total resources of the two banks in Thomson at the end of 1935 totaled approximately one million dollars. At the end of 1955 total resources of the two banks totaled more than 5 1/2 million dollars. Certainly not all of this growth is due to the Thomson Company alone. None of us would for one minute, though, deny the Thomson Company has been the largest single factor in that growth. Other businesses have shown similar growth as a result of your fine company accomplishments.

I would not be fair to you or to myself if I did not take this occasion to pay special tribute to one or two of your people. There are more than 800 fine people in your family but I just happen to have been able to observe these especially.

Through his long experience and dedication to his job, Mr. L. D. Berry is widely regarded as one of the most capable men in the industry. He is constantly striving to keep the Thomson Company out in front.

Through the 20 years of your company, Mr. Harry Johnson has been one of the vital cogs in your success. He has been responsible in a large way for your company maintaining such a phenomenal record of continuous employment.

There is no finer Christian gentleman anywhere than Mr. Archie E. Clarke. His keen business judgement, his warmth of spirit and his boundless energy make him almost the measure of your company. Mr. Clarke continues to amaze me with his intent personal interest in the welfare of each member of the Thomson Company family.

As long as men of their caliber provide leadership for your company, I am confident the Thomson Company will carve an even more enivable record.

One of the big assets of the Thomson Company is the fact you people have worked together as a family. You have always been familiar with the problems of the company and there has been a mutual confidence. This has contributed in a large measure to the success, for without this trust you would never have been able to progress in the manner you have.

The business people and citizens generally of Thomson, of Millen, and of Harlem are proud of you. We are proud of your accomplishments. We are proud of the spirit existing in your organization. You have recognized as a basic requirement for success mutual respect. That you have in abundance.

You have pride - and justly so - in your job. You remind me of the story of a new building. An outsider had wandered up and asked one of the workmen what he was doing. He replied that he was carrying brick up to the men at the top. A second, when asked what he was doing, said he was mixing mortar for the bricklayers. A third old man who was merely picking up trash around the building was asked what he was doing. With a gleam in his eye and pride in his job, he proudly exclaimed that he was building a beautiful new temple. This old gentleman had something of the vision you people demonstrate.

Your company is not so many people, machines, and so much cloth. You have a purpose. You are producing the finest quality trousers available on the American market today.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is my story. It is my delight to participate in the celebration of your 20th anniversary.

I congratulate you on your outstanding achievement. I am confident, as a closely knit family, you will continue to meet the challenges of the future. You will welcome the expanding horizons and new business opportunities of tomorrow.