

Remarks of M. Monroe Kimbrel upon the occasion of the opening of the new Thomson Company plant at Martinez, Georgia Thursday evening, November 12, 1964, Augusta Town House, Augusta, Georgia.

The conductor of the symphony orchestra walks to the center stage, mounts the podium, turns his back to the audience, lifts his baton and pauses briefly before the first strains of the beautiful music. Unbelievable planning, investment, musical scores, rehearsal, promotion, and blending of prima donna musical personalities -- all were essential before the first note of the sweet music so many patrons came to enjoy.

This event is not unlike a discriminating customer entering The Emporium in San Francisco and asking for "Mr. Leggs" -- the quality men's slacks. Or, a lady entering the now famous Goldwater's store in Phoenix or Scottsdale, Arizona and suggesting she wants the latest in ladies slacks -- the "Mr. Thomson ... Please!"

Somewhere across the country twenty customers make that request every minute, eight hours a day, five days a week, fifty weeks a year. This has to be true because that is just how many pairs of slacks now produced by Thomson Company.

Not unlike the symphony orchestra, too, is the fact that before the very first pair of slacks reaches a customer for his personal enjoyment there are unbelievable hours of planning, market testing, huge investments in plant and machinery, in addition to building an organization of people with ability and vision. Also required is a management willing to take the risk and accept the challenges of the future. These qualities the Thomson Company has in abundance and these have contributed significantly to their success -- a success

we salute tonight in the opening of the new plant at Martinez.

Few periods in the history of the United States have been so filled with economic and technological changes as the period since 1936 -- a period coinciding with the life of the Thomson Company. The shift from a depression to an economy geared to full scale production for war and then to one producing for peace.

This economy had to share the burden and the emotions of defending a part of the free world from aggression. Our nation found itself burdened with the responsibility of producing not only for our own freedom but that of a large part of the rest of the world.

With such strains placed on our economy, manufacturers wrestled almost constantly with inflationary problems and to anticipate one crisis in international affairs after another. In addition, the garment industry had to adjust to new scientific and technological developments that have been occurring with bewildering rapidity. Competition within and without the country has tested the genius of management and machine.

The Thomson Company has always responded when the strains were heaviest. On May 26, 1945 the coveted Army-Navy E Award was presented for their highest standard of excellence for the production of Army and Navy pants and shirts. As significant as these achievements have been, their contribution to the economy of our region-is by no means the only benefit from their production.

A special technical report prepared by the Georgia Institute of Technology suggested that the Central Savannah River Area provided several advantages for the location of plants for the manufacture of man-made fibers and textiles. Among the attractions listed were:

1. proximity to the eastern concentration of fiber plants;
2. a combination of land, water, and air transportation facilities;
3. abundant water supplies and waste disposal facilities;
4. low natural gas rates; and
5. a growing chemical complex.

The most interesting conclusion of the report, though, was "Among the CSRA's greatest assets are the availability and excellent work attitudes of the area's labor force. In addition, wage rates compare favorably with those in other sections of the country."

No finer evidence could be found to verify that conclusion than the enviable achievements of the Thomson Company. The excellent record of this company is not an isolated one. Others in this area have been similarly successful. They have appreciated the cordial reception they have received from the various communities and have responded in kind. They have provided employment to an ever increasing number of good workers. They have at the same time been especially concerned with the desirable growth and progress of these communities.

Indeed, I am sure the Thomson Company story could be told over and over. It just so happens I am more familiar with it. I own no stock in the Thomson Company, I wish I did. We have been privileged to serve their local banking needs and that has been a very pleasant association. Completely aside from this, though, I ~~probably~~ have been privileged to enjoy a fond personal relationship with most of the Thomson Company men -- ^{probably} a closer relationship with the management and the Thomson employees of the company than any other outside individual. It has given me an opportunity to observe at first hand the philosophy of the management and the spirit of the employees. I can tell you in all sincerity ^{these} ~~it~~ could not be finer.

The communities of Thomson, Millen and Harlem and their surrounding trade territories already attest the tributes to a fine organization. Martinez and Columbia County, Augusta and Richmond County are fortunate this new plant is joining the family.

The Central Savannah River Area is attracting an ever increasing number and variety of industrial plants. All of us are aware of the impact this has had and is having on the economy of the region. It requires small imagination to appreciate what any employer of eleven hundred people means. This is abundantly true when such an employer is the Thomson Company.

While we are proud of the Thomson Company and its achievements, I can think of no tribute higher than the Thomson Company is paying the Central Savannah River Area. With three plants already here to establish the fourth in our region is a sincere compliment -- a tribute of the highest order that the management of the Thomson Company has chosen to concentrate all of their manufacturing operations in our area. It is a tribute to the labor, to the utilities, to the government, to the schools, to the recreational facilities, and to the religious atmosphere.

If I were charged with the responsibility of searching for new industry for the CSRA -- textiles, pulp, electronics, chemical or whatever you suggest -- I cannot imagine a finer sales pitch than to tell the Thomson Company story from 1936 up until tonight. My friends, we can take a big bow for the compliment paid us by the Thomson Company in choosing Martinez for its fourth plant.

Nearly nine years ago on Wednesday evening, January 18, 1956, the Thomson Company celebrated its Twentieth Anniversary. About twelve hundred people representing employees and friends gathered at Bell Auditorium here in Augusta. On that occasion it was my pleasure to bring greetings. Mr. Harry

Johnson was present as were Mr. Archie Clark and L. D. Berry. To the group assembled I said:

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

"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.

"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." *END QUOTE*

At that time I thought the remarks quite appropriate. The succeeding years have served only to mellow and to amplify that feeling. Joe Lipshie, Ned Johnson, Ham Berry and Bill Bryant continue to provide the finest in leadership. A whole long list of others do an equally outstanding job.

The Thomson Company has not been a mechanical device stoked with dollars at one end and pouring forth slacks at the other but an organization of men and women. Human reactions have always been considered.

Believing that the future welfare depends upon the actions and choices of mankind, the Thomson Company has lived over and over the thesis that the choice of the road to be followed lies with men and not with blind fate. The wisdom of that policy is confirmed by so many employees who have remained with the company so long.

I am more convinced than ever tonight that this fine organization will continue its enviable record of progress -- building a strong Thomson Company

family, maintaining its place of leadership in the Central Savannah River Area, and accepting new challenges with vision and determination; determined, like the conductor of the symphony orchestra pleasing an eager audience, that the Thomson Company will always provide the finest for discriminating buyers of men's and ladies' slacks.

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