

*Prof. Bennett Williford
for you in formation
BJ*

HAMMERMILL PAPER COMPANY

AREA CODE 814 / GL 6-8811

ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA 16512

JOHN H. DEVITT
PRESIDENT

March 29, 1965

Mr. John F. Zeller, Vice President
Business and Finance
Bucknell University
Lewisburg, Pennsylvania 17837

Dear Mr. Zeller:

I am deeply grateful to you for your perceptive and helpful letter of March 26 and particularly for your response to your student group. It has come to our attention that a national civil rights organization, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee based at Atlanta, Georgia, has initiated charges against us and has attempted to initiate an economic boycott in various colleges and universities across the country. The charges that have been made against us are unjust and unfair. The press reports which presumably formed the basis for the charges were fragmentary and completely out of context. Therefore, they gave a totally erroneous picture of Hammermill's actions, motives and policies.

We have informed SNCC of our basic position but up to this time have had no response from them.

I believe that it is important that you and all other sincere people who have been exposed to this matter be informed of the facts and we appreciate the opportunity you have given us to do this.

Hammermill has for several years been deeply concerned with the problem of securing a southern based pulp mill to assure itself of a continuing supply of its essential raw material - pulp. Practically every major pulp and paper manufacturer in this country either has a southern pulp mill or is planning one. Hammermill is presently non-competitive with these major companies in the area of pulp supply and this situation will worsen with time unless corrected. Therefore, our responsibility to our stockholders and employees leaves us no other choice than to construct new pulp facilities in the South.

Ample wood supply now and for the future, abundant water and adequate transportation are essentials to the economics of a

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plant site. The huge growth of the paper industry in the South in recent years, particularly in Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas has reduced the number of attractive sites to a relatively low level. Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama now represent the best remaining available locations.

We first made public announcement of our consideration for the plant site in May of 1964. During that year this project was of the highest priority to us. All of the facts bearing on the decision were not available until early January 1965. By this time it was imperative to make a decision on the site. The facts demonstrated conclusively that the Alabama site, which is ten miles from Selma - not in Selma - met the required economic criteria. Accordingly, our affirmative decision was announced at the earliest possible moment so that programming could be initiated.

Construction at the site will not begin for at least four to five months as considerable engineering work still has to be done. Operations are presently scheduled to start up in 1967, nearly two years from now. In effect, Hammermill will not be present in Alabama until 1967 as operators and employers.

The foregoing provides briefly the background of the project and how it came into being. I hope you will share our conviction that our responsibility to our stockholders necessitated the project.

We share the public concern that the basic rights of Negroes in Alabama have been denied and even more particularly in the Selma area. Particularly, we deplore the violence which has permeated the area. We have publicly stated to Governor Wallace and his staff and to a large group of citizens of the Selma area that Hammermill's traditional policies are built on the principles of respect for the rights of others and the maintenance of law and order. We have stated in a public release and a private wire to Roy Wilkins of NAACP and to James Farmer of CORE that "Hammermill's policy is and always has been to make no distinction among employees or job applicants other than on the basis of ability and specifically to make no distinction on account of not only race but also no distinction on account of color, creed, national origin or any other matters not relevant to ability". We are clearly on the public record as to our policies and intentions.

The mill which is now being designed will not have separate facilities for white and colored employees. We are now engaged in designing training programs which will be available for both white and colored employees. When we become an employer in Alabama we will be an equal opportunity employer within the spirit as well as the letter of the law. I might add that long before civil rights legislation was enacted, Hammermill made no distinction between employees as to race, color or creed or national origin. Negroes have been employed at Hammermill in Erie for over thirty years. There are many on our list of retired employees.

Mr. John F. Zeller

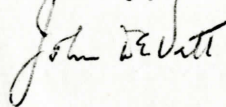
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We do not support or condone the injustices which have occurred in Selma. However, a refusal by Hammermill to locate near Selma would not remove the problems which exist not only in Alabama but generally throughout the South. Nor would our absence from Alabama advance civil liberties or help to solve the problems. In contrast, it is our considered conviction that when Hammermill becomes an employer in Alabama that we will make a major and beneficial contribution towards improving the economic and civic health of the communities in which our activities are located and provide new and important opportunities to all citizens of these areas. We are convinced, as are many other responsible leaders in the civil liberties movement, that our presence in Alabama will provide leadership and constructive action for helpful solutions to the problems of race relations in the South and indeed perhaps to other parts of our nation.

Further to the subject, I am enclosing a copy of a statement to the national press released by us on March 16 which may have escaped your attention. I trust that this letter and the enclosed press release provide an insight into Hammermill's motives, problems, intentions and position. Particularly, I hope that our response will be helpful to you in dealing with the students who have brought this subject to your attention and convince them that the campaign against Hammermill is unjustified. I appreciate that correspondence is at times an inadequate vehicle for communication and so if you have any further questions or need clarification in any areas I would like to hear further from you. It is genuinely important to us to have the good will and sympathetic understanding of all individuals who, like we, are deeply concerned with the problem.

Sincerely,

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Enclosure