

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
Office of the Assistant Secretary  
Washington

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My dear Mr. Crasert:

Receipt is acknowledged of your letter of 25 May 1942, regarding negro training and employment at the U. S. Naval Ordnance Plant, Macon, Georgia. Your letter with its enclosures has been the subject of careful consideration, and in addition, Commander A. B. McCrary, the Inspector of Ordnance-in-Charge, came to Washington and conferred at length with representatives of the Bureau of Ordnance, of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy and of the Shore Establishments Division of the Navy Department.

Following the conference, on 1 May 1942, at the Macon Plant, (operated by the Reynolds Corporation under contract with the Bureau of Ordnance of the Navy Department), between your representatives, a company official, the Vocational Training Director of Bibb County, Georgia, and Commander McCrary, the latter on 5 May 1942 issued instructions to the Reynolds Corporation. (Copy enclosed marked "A"). These instructions are properly classified as "restricted". These instructions in essence require the Reynolds Corporation to comply with Executive Order 8802, and were issued prior to the date of your letter to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

You are familiar with the instructions the Navy Department has issued to its Bureaus and field offices directing compliance with Fair Employment Practices covered in Executive Order 8802, and with the clauses regarding same that are included in Naval contracts.

In the case of ordinary contractors, whose plants are privately owned, the Navy does not have supervision of their personnel policies even though those companies are working on Naval contracts. Your Committee has recognized this obvious fact by itself issuing "cease and desist" orders to certain firms in New York and New Jersey, as reported recently in the public press. The case of the Naval Ordnance Plant, Macon, Georgia, is slightly different. This plant is wholly owned by the Government and its total output is for the Government. Hence the Navy Department has a vital interest in all matters relating thereto, and recognizes a corresponding but limited responsibility in the conduct of its affairs. I say limited because the contractor-operator, the Reynolds Corporation, should not be relieved of its contractual obligations as to satisfactory operation of the plant.

The Reynolds Corporation was employed as contractor-operator of this plant because in the opinion of the contracting Bureau after consideration of all facts of the management problem it was deemed to be best fitted for the

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undertaking. Inherent in Reynolds' contractual responsibility is the employment of all personnel and the maintenance of a satisfactory management-labor relationship. Both the War and Navy Departments are of the opinion that their concern with labor relations practices in plants in this category should be limited to insuring that the policy followed shall be consistent with the maintenance of maximum production, the safety and security of such plants, and fair employment practices. With respect to the last, our contract with the Reynolds Corporation was amended on February 14th of this year and at that time incorporated our usual clause in accordance with Executive Order #8802.

I have taken the trouble thus to analyze the situation at some length in order that the Navy's position in this matter may be made perfectly clear and accepted by all parties at interest.

In the instant case of the Naval Ordnance Plant, Macon Georgia, the Inspector of Ordnance-in-Charge will be directed to instruct the contractor-operator, the Reynolds Corporation,

- (a) That Executive Order #8802 must be complied with;
- (b) That recruitment, in-plant training and upgrading of employees must conform thereto;
- (c) That any references to race or religion be deleted from any employment forms, if such exist;
- (d) That recruitment may not be confined to any source that results in discrimination because of race, creed, color or national origin, provided of course that the National Labor Relations Act and the laws regarding aliens must be complied with; and
- (e) That it must not in any other way discriminate against loyal qualified applicants or employees because of race, creed, color or national origin.

As to labor unions, outside employment agencies, and especially State or other vocational training schools, these are matters not within the jurisdiction or control of the Navy Department or the contractor, neither of which have the authority to demand changes in their practices relating to racial or other types of discrimination. In this case it would appear that the principal difficulty is that the vocational schools do not train negroes for the kind of mechanical work available in the Macon plant. If your Committee, or some other government agency is in a position to change such practices, there would appear to be no valid reason why the contractor-operator should not make provisions for the employment of negroes in a section of his plant providing, of course, that they are otherwise properly qualified.

Summarizing, steps will be taken to insure that in employment procedure and within the plant, no discrimination will be permitted. Your Committee is of course aware of old traditions and intense public feeling in regard to these matters in certain sections of the country. Any radical changes in prevailing

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customs should be made with the greatest tact and discretion if really serious trouble is to be avoided. Any such changes, especially those outside of the plant, should be most carefully considered by fully qualified sociologists or other competent persons before any drastic action is ordered, or the consequences may be disastrous with an enormous burden of responsibility. The preliminary molding of public opinion in the vicinity I consider to be of great importance.

Realizing the importance and difficulty of the problem, the Navy Department reiterates its desire to comply not only with the word but with the spirit of the President's Executive Order, and its intention to cooperate in all practicable ways with your Committee and others in reaching a satisfactory solution.

Yours very sincerely,

Ralph A. Bard

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