

31, Queens Road,
MELBOURNE.

30 April 1955.

The Directors,
Wilding & Porter Pty. Ltd.
10-12 Victoria Street,
WEST BRUNSWICK.

Dear Sirs,

This correspondence is in confirmation of and relative to a discussion on the afternoon of Friday, 29th April 1955, between a co-director and myself.

The matter under discussion was the slow development and production of the Ami-Musicola Juke Box and hinged upon my statement that a production model - a model requiring very little or no fore-seeable future modifications - would not be produced, under the present staff position, for approx. and at the latest, 3 months; i.e. 3rd or 4th week of July 1955.

Several reasons were forwarded for this developmental and production lag:-

Production staff.

Five men, of the Fitter & Turner category, are employed in the manufacture of the present 'C' Type Musicola - these five men, working 40 hours per week each plus 8 hours overtime each per week, can produce a maximum of six Musicolas per month.

Only one of these men - Rowe, a Milling machinist - has, at times, any time available for the production of parts for the new project; it is pointed out that this man is only a Milling machinist and, as such, cannot be efficiently be used on other machines or upon benchwork.

It would be impossible to remove one other man from the 'C' Type production and employ him on the Ami - the 'C' Type production would suffer, to the extent of, at least, two machines per month, under these circumstances.

Four machines per month would not meet the present fluctuating demand per month and, I believe, would not find sufficient finance to aid the running of the business, particularly, as our stock position, at the moment, is very high and likely to increase as the Ami project nears the production stage.

Development.

This stage of production is held by one man only - Richards - working under my direct control.

It entails the draughting of drawings of every item in the Ami mechanism, credit unit, cabinet, coin chute, etc. - some parts require only one drawing, some two, three and even four drawings, depending upon the manufacturing processes involved.

It is not a matter, in some cases, of copying a part - even though a part is copied completely, all tolerances, material types and production methods have to be worked out at the same time; some items, even the simplest, requiring only one drawing, may keep the draughtsman employed from 2-3 hours; some other items, i.e. the Transfe Housing or the Base Plate, may take 4-6 days each - reference may have to be made to 20 or 30 drawings before dimensions can be verified and finalized.

I have not worked out the number of drawings required for the mechanism and credit unit alone, but it would be in the region of 200 or more.

Since the original Australian made Ami was purchased - richards has completed the following:-

Approx. 100 drawings.

Cleaned up, checked and modified a dozen or more patterns.

Manufactured several dies and jigs.

Assisted and advised in the manufacture of dozens of internally made items.

Assembled one mechanism to approx. the 80% stage - sufficient for proving of data.

Aided in the manufacture, in the early stages, of the 'C' Type Musicola.

The time devoted to the Ami is approx. 22 weeks which, I do feel, is comparable to the amount achieved - he has shewn a willingness and keenness for work and original design - much more than several months ago.

His general attitude has improved and he is shewing a good understanding of our confined production methods which is only a result of experience in this establishment - however, he, as well as others, need supervision.

During that period of 22 weeks, I have devoted approx. 3 hours per day to the developement of this project; the developement and manufacture of this unit is and has been very much more difficult than our present model - it requires much inquiry and searching for suitable, equivalent or alternative items or materials, i. motors, turntables, microswitches, relays, transformers, rectifiers, switches, etc.

Other than the above electronic equipment, steels of odd sizes and even odder supply and demand have had to be located and alternative methods of manufacture worked out; at this stage, the entire mechanism and credit unit has been covered reasonably satisfactorily although more time is required to brush-up certain items and to complete drawings.

All this data, which has been collected, has been passed to Richards and used to the fullest extent - within the next few days, it is my intention to commence upon the design of a suitable cabinet and its fittings; it is pointed out that this work must be carried out at home to obtain peace and quiet.

General.

Although I have previously expressed my general dissatisfaction as to the progress of the Ami - I, nevertheless, feel that no more could have been achieved in the time and with the present staff available.

The general financial and stock position does not surprise me to any great extent and it must be mentioned here, that the stock position will, of necessity increase in the near future - I am referring here to manufactured parts and stocks of materials and other items of equipment (not plant) which it has been necessary to purchase at an early date due to their market shortage or their unavailability, excepting from disposals stores.

As mentioned previously, about 100 drawings have been blueprinted and are available for the manufacture of parts - there is no delay as far as the development is concerned - the cabinet, although it presents certain difficulties, should be much easier to develop than its varied contents.

With the addition of 2 more Fitters of suitable type, the production of the first machine could be made in approx. 4 weeks less time.

As is known, a roster has been worked out to permit the necessary 2 nights per week overtime for the Fitters on the 'C' Type but only allows 16 hours per week to be spent on the Capstan Lathe, using Birch - this is too much for him but does not give us enough hours on this machine to , really, get anywhere, in any reasonable period of time.

My suggestion, even though our shop is full to capacity at the moment, is to employ 2 more men - I cannot see any other alternative.

I have stated on several occasions that our financial and staff resources are not nearly sufficient for such a developmental programme as the Ami - whether my statement has been believed does not concern me greatly, but it is an opinion which has been gained from a fairly comprehensive knowledge of the workings of our business - both, technical and financial.

In the past, and at the present, too much has been required of my services, although I do not stand alone on that score, but from now on , I shall attempt to confine my duties to the essential needs only - production and development - office administration, in all its forms, will have to revert to others and I shall not hold myself responsible for these tasks.

I, also, suggest that discussions concerning staff, finance, plant, etc. be held in the presence of all directors and an attempt must be made to reach some finality on these discussions.

Since the before-mentioned part of this letter was composed, several events have occurred which I here bring to your notice and must be discussed at the earliest opportunity as they are of extreme importance and effect the backbone of our business, namely:-

Backman.

This man - our Foreman - who is a necessity in our business now and in the future, has repeatedly stated that he wishes to give notice - the latest time, yesterday; his reasons are interesting, to say the least:-

a. Wages. Not sufficiently high enough and below the figure as paid outside for such a person and under such circumstances.

b. Working conditions. I did not ask him, at the time, to explain fully these items as I prefer that he stated his complaints at a meeting of all directors, but from past experience, I should hazard these guesses:-

1. Cramped & unsuitable working conditions in all sections of the establishment.
2. Lack of suitable locker space.
3. Lack of meal eating space and lack of suitable relevant equipment.
4. Unsatisfactory washing facilities. and lavatory conveniences.
5. Possibly, the necessity for overtime, in order to earn sufficient.?

Falconer.

This man is Backman's right-hand man and our left-hand man - it is known that he would appreciate and benefit from a change in his type of work - generally, he would probably concur with Backman's complaints; in fact, probably, everyone employed here feels the same way re. conditions.

Birch.

He has given notice, w.e.f. Thursday 19th May - the reason, at the moment of writing, being rather obscure.

Glaum.

He will be entering the Army for Training sometime in August.

It will be seen from the above that something rather drastic will have to be carried out in the very near future to satisfy these men - especially, Backman and Falconer, to say the least, as they alone, other than myself, hold the key to the assembly of the 'C' Type and its predecessors.

We have not a suitable man, at the moment, who must be of a special type, to train on the assembly of this present mechanism or any new model, and even though, such a person did exist in this factory, six months would elapse before this trainee might be suitable to stand upon his own two feet on this work.

It is, now, of no use making promises to these men - they, apparently, want action and it is in our own interests to see that they are 'looked after', within sane bounds.

My suggestions are, as follows:-

Wages. To interview, at least, Backman and to review the situation bearing, in mind, their capacity and their necessity here now, and in the near future.

Conditions. I suggest that we interview, at least, Backman, Falconer and Jetson working, eating, washing and other conditions and attempt to satisfy their needs - we all know that they are working under very bad conditions with, in some cases, bad plant, comparatively, and I feel that they are entirely justified to complain.

Staff. Large display advertisements have been displayed in the main city papers and six local papers without any applicants.

Staff must be obtained and we must endeavour to find the reason for no interest being shown - does it mean, wages?

It is suggested that a man be found to replace, either Backman or Falconer, if needs be, one day - this man will not be easy to find even though the wages be right.

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I also wish to add that, as apparently, my word or capabilities, have been doubted, that I am ready, at this stage, to stand down to another technical member if it be so desired - if I am considered as satisfactory, I wish to ask you, my co-directors, permission, in the future, to bring into the discussion, a member of this staff to give some weight to my suggestions - under the circumstances, I feel that it is necessary to have someone to back up or 'knock back' my suggestions and needs.

To supervise the present production model is a fairly good days work but to add to that, the developement and production of a machine, such as the Ami type with its multitude of finely manufactured parts and its electronic equipment of peculiar nature, is almost more than one man can achieve in a short time, even under normal conditions.

There is one thing which I had omitted to mention earlier - dozens of hours have to be spent on the manufacture of drilling, boring and milling jigs, electronic testing equipment and sub-assembly processes - these, will unfortunately, have to be completed weeks after the production of the first five mechanisms and cabinets, etc.

It is felt that it is imperative that we, this day, thrash out completely and to the very best of our ability all the points as mentioned above and reach some finality, in each case.

This report has taken considerable time and thought and is my sincere interpretation of the situation and conditiond, as I see them and I therefore, hope that it is given due consideration.

Yours sincerely,

John S. Porter.