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1900 Extn. 368

DEM/EMC

7th January, 1963

Mr. D. E. Martin, B.Sc.,
Managing Director,
Vacuum Industrial Applications Ltd.,
Netherton Road,
Wishaw,
Scotland.

Dear Sir,

CON/NIRNS/2C/104318

I can now reply to your letter of 19th December, 1962.

We requested tenders on a functional specification for 4 or 8 high vacuum units, of 1400 litres/second minimum baffled speed. Presumably the design effort to which you refer was concerned with the preparation of your tender, and not with work involved in our consideration of that tender.

We received several tenders from British firms and three from foreign firms. During our study of these tenders we received a visit, without appointment, from one of your representatives Mr. Arnott. We did not wish, and it would not have been proper, to discuss prices with Mr. Arnott at this stage, and we had to confine the discussion to technical matters. There was some discussion of pumping speeds, because your figures were higher than those of other manufacturers for a given pump diameter and because speed was a prime factor in the specification. Mr. Hadden was invited by Mr. Arnott to witness a test.

The test confirmed the stated speed, but there were no means of absolute gauge calibration and Mr. Hadden offered to check the gauge. The disputed results which he obtained were communicated only to yourselves and the people directly concerned in this Laboratory, and you need have no fear of adverse publicity. Mr. Arnott has visited us since then, and we have tried to help by offering to conduct further tests here, including comparative tests between one of your pumps and one of another make. It seems to me that we have behaved co-operatively and discreetly.

There remains the important matter of our final rejection of your tender. If the sole criterion for this had been the pumping speed, then certainly you could rightly have criticised us for deciding the issue before the calibration dispute had been resolved. However, this is not the case. The final evaluation of the tenders showed that yours was the only offer from a British firm which could claim to meet the specification in all respects, but that a foreign firm could meet the specification at a substantially lower price. We therefore gave the order to the foreign firm, and in accordance with normal practice told you of our rejection of your tender immediately. We were not at all influenced by the unresolved arguments about the gauge calibration. We are still willing to collaborate with you on speed tests, and we shall be in the market for more pumps in the future.

I must ask that Mr. Arnott should come by appointment only in future. Perhaps it would have been better if my colleagues had refused to see him without appointment during their consideration of tenders, but naturally they did not wish to be discourteous.

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Mr. D. E. Martin, B.Sc.

I hope that you will agree that there is no need for our friendly relations to suffer, at any rate in the present case. I cannot yet comment on your past experience with the U.K.A.E.A. and ourselves, but we have asked the Contracts Branch to look into this and I shall let you know the outcome.

Yours faithfully,

T. G. Pickavance