

# CHARLES A. CANNON

## A Mind for Business, A Heart for People

### Discussion Guide

(Note: The following questions are designed to generate discussion.)

1. What is your understanding of the term *paternalism* **apart** from the video? How is it the same or different from how the term is presented in the documentary? What are the pros and cons of true paternalism?
2. What was Mr. Cannon's policy on sexual harassment? How have views on sexual harassment evolved in this country?
3. Education, health care and religion were three focus areas for Mr. Cannon's life and profession.
  - a. Why did he believe so strongly in an "educated workforce"? Compare and contrast to today's education system.
  - b. How did he demonstrate the importance of health care? Discuss changes in medical care delivery over the years.
  - c. What were his contributions to foster a strong religious community? What do you see as the role of religious community today?
4. How was Kannapolis somewhat different from the stereotypical mill villages found in other regions of the state and the South as a whole? What made these distinctions possible?
5. What observations did First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt make when she visited the mill in Kannapolis? Why was she surprised?
6. What was the benefit of living in a mill house? How do you think such housing would be received in today's economy?
7. What opportunities for advancement were given to mill workers?
8. Discuss several of the unique challenges Mr. Cannon had to overcome to ensure the long-lasting success of the mill.
9. Discuss how African-American workers were treated in the mill. What types of jobs were they given initially? How did African-American women contribute to the early days of Kannapolis when they were unable to work in the mill themselves?
10. How did Cannon Mills support the transition of the integration of African-Americans into the workforce during the 1950s and 1960s? Why is this an important aspect of Mr. Cannon's history? How do you think we should address integration today?

11. Discuss why trade unions were not welcomed by employees of Cannon Mills. Discuss the role of unions in today's economy.
12. Discuss the term *philanthropy* and how it relates to Mr. Cannon. How was it a distinguishing characteristic of his life and his company? What role does philanthropy play in the community and state today?
13. Discuss how Mr. Cannon's personality contributed to his leadership and his success. Can this be emulated today? How? In what settings?
14. Discuss some of the innovations in advertising that Cannon Mills effectively utilized. Compare and contrast to today's advertising techniques.
15. Discuss the quote made by a former employee at the end of the documentary: "Absolute power in the wrong hands is dangerous. Absolute power in the hands of C.A. Cannon was a good thing." Do you agree? Disagree? Why? How does this relate to other corporations found in America today? How does it relate to government?
16. Charles Cannon gave a graduation speech in 1937. What did he offer those seniors? What does this say about his character? How do you think today's seniors would respond to his speech?
17. How did Charles Cannon treat returning WWII veterans? Compare and contrast to how we treat returning veterans today.
18. Mr. Cannon was surrounded by people that he trusted, and they trusted him. He wanted to understand other people's viewpoints and was able to accept criticism if it was justified. How do you think this character trait benefited Mr. Cannon and his business? Think of a time in your life when you listened to and accepted someone else's viewpoint that had a positive outcome. Be prepared to discuss.
19. In three words, describe Charles Cannon. Who else would you use those same words to describe?
20. After viewing, "Charles A. Cannon: A Mind for Business, A Heart for People," how would you best summarize the legacy of Charles Cannon?