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May 11, 1934

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Gerard Swope, President
General Electric Company
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Swope:

You will perhaps remember that I wrote you last winter suggesting that an inquiry be made into the use of asbestos in General Electric plants because of serious trouble which has arisen recently in other plants using this material. You then instructed me to look into the matter and report to you later.

At the outset I assumed that the problem could be attacked in the same way as is the problem of silicon dust, namely, by an examination of the dust content of the air. But a consultation with Dr. L. U. Gardner, of Saranac, disclosed the fact that there are no data as yet with regard to the dangerous quantity of asbestos dust, and the only practical way of determining whether the amount in the air of any given factory is enough to be harmful is to examine men who have been exposed, especially at first by means of X-ray pictures of the lungs. I would have no objection to going to York and finding a fairly serious condition as regards asbestos dust in the Insulating Department, where "asbestos moving in lag form" is done and where some 24 men work during the four shifts. There is an exhaust over part of each belt machine, but these are far from adequate and it may be that only a completely enclosed apparatus which would prevent dust from escaping, would be adequate, for the fibres are light and fluffy and not easily stored in by an exhaust. The draughts from the moving belts blow them about and they accumulate on surfaces higher than the men's heads. It is beyond doubt that the men breathe in some of this asbestos dust.

We discussed the question of taking X-rays of some of the older employees, I was reluctant to advise such a procedure if it would mean alarming the men and starting rumors of danger, but Mr. Obermeier was quite sure it would not. He offered to explain to the four men who have worked longest in that department (from 18 to 25 years) that the Company wanted to be sure the dust was not harmful and so wished to have the oldest employees examined. He said they were reasonable men and their relation to the Company was such that they would respond with entire confidence.

In Bridgeport I found a quite different situation,

Over

**GENERAL ELECTRIC
COMPANY**

GENERAL ELECTRIC BUILDING
570 LEXINGTON AVE. AT 51ST ST., NEW YORK

GERARD SWOPE
PRESIDENT

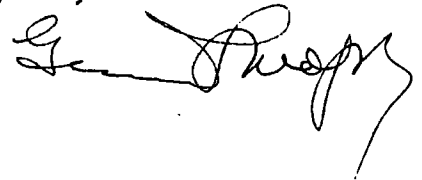
May 15, 1934

Dr. Alice Hamilton
School of Public Health
Harvard University
55 Shattuck Street
Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Dr. Hamilton:

I have read with interest your letter of
May 11th, regarding your investigation of the method of
handling asbestos at our York, Bridgeport and Schenectady
plants, and have forwarded it to Mr. Burrows, Vice-President
in charge of manufacturing, for his consideration.

Very truly yours,



GS:H