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January 28, 1970

Professor Irving J. Selikoff, M. D.
Mount Sinai School of Medicine of the City University of New York
5th Avenue and 100 Street
New York, New York 10029

Dear Professor Selikoff:

I have been asked to assess the importance of brake lining material as an air pollutant. Most of the concern has to do with the asbestos which comprises something like one-half of the lining material. I am aware of the paper by Jeremiah R. Lynch, J. Air Poll. Control Assoc. 18, 824 (1968) which purports to show that the asbestos undergoes a metamorphosis to a mineral of different structure, but I understand that you have misgivings about the assumption that all asbestos fibers are large enough to be seen at the magnification used in Lynch's paper. Another point, it seems to me, is whether the metamorphosis renders the material less malignant as far as physiological action is concerned, but as far as I know there is no information about this.

What do you think about this situation? Do you know of any evidence that the material abraded from brakes is any different in its effect on the lungs than the material stirred up in the building trades? Maybe we should consider running some experiments to determine sizes of asbestos fibers as found in the undamaged lining material, or perhaps repeat Lynch's work with the far higher magnification available to us.

I missed your talk here. As you probably know, it made quite an impact on those who were present. The following day when I returned to the lab, everybody was telling me about the talk so I suppose I could say that I did hear it transcribed. One of the points I understand to have been made (I think I had heard it first from Dr. Weinstock when he came back from a Gordon Conference last year)

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is that the gross amount of asbestos used in brake lining is much smaller than the amount that is wasted in the building trades. I would like to know more about this, that is, how this conclusion was reached (what the numbers were and where they came from, and so forth).

Anything you can do that would help me form an informed opinion on the subject of brakes would be much appreciated.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

William R. Pierson
Chemistry Department
Scientific Research Staff

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