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ing system in the fertile Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. This could lead to FMC's purveying a complete seed-to-canned-tomato operation. International Harvester Co., of Chicago, has supplied the Russians with a test cotton harvester, and competitor Deere & Co. of Moline, Ill., is organizing an exhibit and seminar in Moscow.

Russian tests. The Soviets have bought pesticides and herbicides from such American companies as Stauffer Chemical Co. of Westport, Conn., and Rohm & Haas Co. of Philadelphia. FMC's pesticide Furadan is undergoing Russian testing, with a view to possible sales.

The Ford Administration wants to sell the Russians at least 8-million tons of grain a year over five years. But it attaches an important condition: early warning of additional purchases to prevent disrupting markets at home. The U.S. would also insist that its own grain needs, and those of such established customers as Japan, be covered. Officials say they are still talking about obtaining Soviet oil, but a wheat-for-oil barter deal is not foreseen. More likely, the U.S. would capitalize on the Russians' need for grain as a bargaining tool to get oil in return sometime in the future. ■

SAFETY & HEALTH

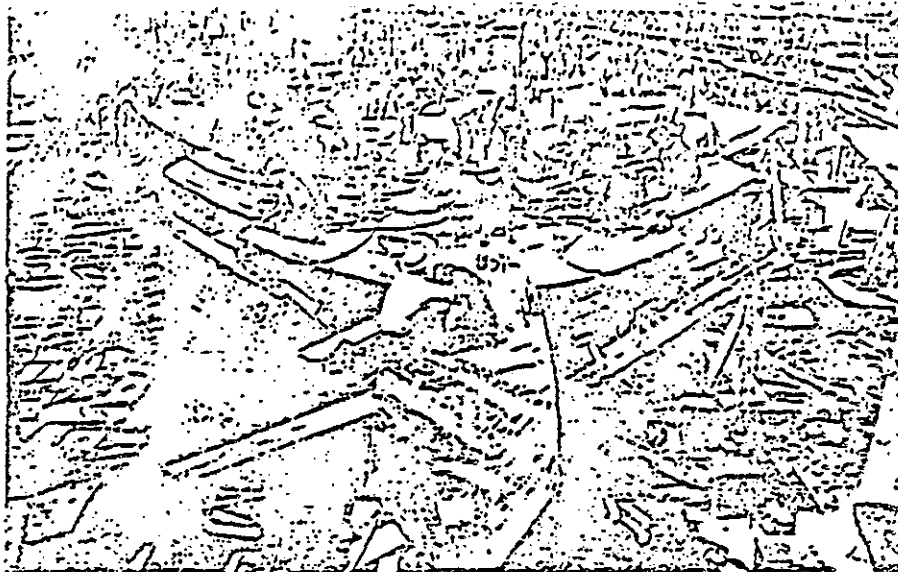
A grim cancer legacy from World War II

Some of World War II's 3-million shipyard workers may have a fatal, asbestos-caused cancer, and some angry cancer experts charge that the Navy has sat on this knowledge for nearly five years.

The Navy has already made a few cash settlements to former workers who contracted job-related cancer. But no effort has been made to track down affected workers, and the huge liability that might result could also affect private companies.

The American Cancer Society and Irving J. Selikoff, an environmental health scientist at Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, want the Navy to track down former shipyard workers and warn them of their possible plight. The Navy is "sitting on a time bomb," says Selikoff, one of the nation's top asbestosis experts. "They are keeping this as long as possible, and I can't say that I blame them."

Asbestos has long been recognized as the cause of asbestosis, a lung ailment, and outbreaks of this disease among construction workers and those in the



The asbestos used in World War II ships may now spur a major hunt for cancer victims.

asbestos processing industries resulted in exposure and emission limits. But millions of pounds of asbestos were used to insulate pipes and valves in ships built during World War II with techniques since abandoned, and as long as five years ago reports started coming from Britain about a growing incidence among former shipyard workers of a fatal asbestos-caused cancer called mesothelioma, which strikes the stomach lining and chest cavity.

'Next month.' For several years, Selikoff and the American Cancer Society have been negotiating a study with the Navy to outline the extent of the problem. But according to E. Cuyler Hammond, an ACS director, "They kept saying they would begin next month but nothing would happen."

But if current theories prove true, this may be one of the most serious outbreaks of industrial cancer ever, and fear of widespread publicity seems to be forcing the Navy's hand. Captain George M. Lawton, director of the Navy's Occupational Environmental Health Div., told BUSINESS WEEK that he does not yet know the magnitude of the problem, but the Navy will study it.

According to Lawton, the Navy has already agreed to award workmen's compensation to former workers who contracted lung cancer or mesothelioma, but only a handful of awards have been made. Increased publicity could lead to a flood of claims.

Unwanted spotlight. The issue remains a Navy problem for the time being, but it may well hit the Maritime Administration, which funds construction of merchant ships, and private shipbuilding companies as well. "I'm not aware that this issue has been discussed in the context of the Navy situation," says Edwin M. Hood, president of the Shipbuilders Council of America. And a spokesman for the Maritime Ad-

ministration says his agency would probably not be liable for compensation claims since it neither owned the shipyards nor the ships built with its funds. Still, the entire shipbuilding industry may find itself in the spotlight as word of the mesothelioma and lung cancer hazard spreads.

It is unlikely that today's dockyard workers are contracting mesothelioma, since shipbuilding practices have changed over the last few years. Selikoff refuses to announce results of medical examinations on current workers, but he says the Navy has substantially cleaned up the environment for workers exposed to toxic substances.

Selikoff says there are sound medical reasons for trying to locate the World War II workers. Even though mesothelioma is incurable, other asbestos-caused cancers are not. "If you know who is at risk from asbestosis, you can cure many of the lung cancers, and even cancers of the colon," he says. ■

EXECUTIVE SUITE

Why irate women are calling Avon

Earnings may be on the rebound this year at Avon Products, Inc., the world's largest cosmetics company, but scores of female and minority employees are concerned that they are not sharing the wealth. Specifically, they feel that they have been denied the same promotions and pay raises offered to Avon's white, male employees.

For the first time, however, they are doing something about it. Many women have quit, while others have or-