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SUBJECT: Talc/Asbestos
OSHA-NBS Activities
File No. 0503.01

CONFIDENTIAL

TO: Mr. G. Lee

This brings us up to date on the status of the assaying of 88 talcs for asbestos content underway by the NBS (Nat'l Bureau of Standards) as recently commissioned by OSHA.

Situation at OSHA

I arranged clearance through Deputy Secretary (of Labor) Concklin's office for permission to review technical aspects of the OSHA program at NBS and was turned over to the OSHA officer responsible for that work, a Dr. Byung Kwon. I had found it necessary to go through the top of that organization having previously learned that NBS did not have the identity of the talcs they are analyzing, but that OSHA did.

Kwon has the breakdown code of the identity of the talcs but says he purposely obtained them sealed up from NIOSH and will not open the code until NBS has completed the work and has placed their written report in his hands. Kwon promised to telephone me with the information I requested from him, on the day that he receives the NBS findings, namely: (1) whether or not any of our talcs or talc products are in the study, (2) whether or not OSHA has complete identity of our talcs, if in the set, and (3) the NBS results on whether or not any federal fibers (by OSHA or NIOSH definitions) were found in any of our talcs or talc products. I left it at that for the present visit and was well satisfied with that promise from Kwon.

OSHA and Kwon specifically are under considerable talc/asbestos pressure right now. This arises from four sources. (1) As soon as President Carter announced the appointment of his Secretary of Labor, Marshall, Vanderbilt Co. delivered a blast to Marshall implying the incompetence of OSHA staff and the inadequacy of the NIOSH methodology on asbestos determination in talc. Apparently, to Vanderbilt's surprise

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the blast came down to Kwon, who got in touch with NIOSH to learn of recent unfavorable findings on x-ray pathology of Vanderbilt talc workers. Kwon recommended withdrawal of previous field memorandums which had given Vanderbilt some latitude. Kwon's recommendation was immediately carried out and puts Vanderbilt talc matters in a worse state than ever heretofore. (2) Pfizer also sent a dispatch direct to Secy. Marshall possibly along similar lines. That was delivered by messenger to Kwon while I was sitting there talking to him this past Thursday afternoon. (3) Dr. Corn had submitted a lengthy report of his accomplishments and future needs for OSHA when he resigned as top man a couple weeks ago. One of the points Corn made clear was that OSHA lacks technical expertise in the Washington headquarters and Kwon seems to have taken that personally. (4) President Carter visited Labor last Wednesday and the OSHA contingent came away feeling that they will be reorganized but expect to be able to add about 150 new technical people to their Washington staff. Kwon was a little shook at that and explained to me that he (Kwon) had cited Carter's peanut operations for dust violations a few months ago.

Situation at National Bureau of Standards

I visited Dr. Heinrich last Wednesday and delivered a copy of the current Mt. Sinai article on Talcum Powders, together with a copy of the critique of the article as submitted to me on a personal basis from Dr. Krause of the Colorado School of Mines. Heinrich had not yet visited Dr. Langer but intends to do so within a few days. It was very timely to have him know of the technical critique from Colorado and he is unusually appreciative of that information.

Although we were the first industrial scientist to present Dr. Heinrich with a reliable set of asbestos minerals and a cross section of usable references, we are no longer alone. Pfizer's Norwood and Stanley have offered him their help to use their methodology and Vanderbilt has been in constant touch with Heinrich's bosses during the recent episode arising out of the recent Health Research Group accusations.

I feel good about the attitude of NBS because they now fully realize the intricate technical web in their talc/asbestos work. They are as equally concerned that some of their

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g findings on the talc assays will be taken out of context and Heinrich is going to try to qualify his findings and the method limitations in his report to OSHA.

For the longer range it is important to have learned that OSHA has funded \$250,000 and assigned NBS the task of resolving differences of opinion on asbestos and defining what asbestos is and what it is not. The estimate is that the work will take 1-2 years to resolve.

The above longer range undertaking by NBS will of necessity have to involve agreement with other agency science people. Naturally the mineral specialists in the Bureau of Mines, the Geological Survey, etc., are not happy with NBS getting the assignment to define a mineral class.

As for right now, the most important thing for us to do is to keep on top of the NBS study scheduled to be completed about March 1st, and released shortly thereafter.

/by

W. H. Ashton

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