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Asbestos and Québec's economic development

In its study of the Québec asbestos industry commissioned in 1973 by the Department of Natural Resources and presented in report form in 1975, the Department's division of Mineral Economy and Development made special mention of the fact that *"commercialization of Québec asbestos (by the companies) is presently being conducted with great efficiency"*.

The report also warns the Government against the danger of disrupting *"integration with the world economy, which is a characteristic of the Québec industry, and on which it depends for stability and growth"*, which, according to the author, *"could lead, in addition, to the elimination, to all intents and purposes, of private capital inflow in the future expansion of the industry in Québec."*

The provisional balance sheet for production and sales of mining companies in 1976 shows to what extent asbestos commercialization is carried out with great efficiency, and the investment programs in which the industry is presently engaged, at a cost of tens of millions of dollars, attest to the importance of the inflow of private capital.

Contributions to the State

But neither the report, nor most documents, studies and press articles published since then, mention the economic benefits accruing in Québec as a result of these performances with respect to commercialization and capital inflow.

Thus, it is too often ignored that the asbestos mining industry, by virtue of its efficiency and stable prices, markets and their maturity, contributes more to the Québec Treasury than all the other mining sectors.

In fact, Québec income from asbestos mines alone represents 60% of all income derived from the entire Québec mining industry.

In 1976, asbestos companies will have paid the State, in mining rights, company income taxes and other provincial taxes, over \$40 million.

Salaries

However, this is only one aspect of the industry's contribution to the Québec economy.

Thanks to full employment policy, it provides work to more than 6,500 persons, who are also tax-payers, who share salaries totalling over \$100 million.

Company disbursements for the various social benefit programs, — retirement and pension plans, workmen's Compensation Board, unemployment insurance, etc. — amount to close to \$20 million, to which should be added substantial sums which the industry devotes to scientific and medical research for the development of health conditions at work.

On the other hand, the performance of these mining activities, concentrated in five Eastern Township localities, directly benefits 55 000 inhabitants of this Québec region which, essentially, depends on the asbestos industry.

Purchasing policy

Furthermore, the asbestos industry, in doing business with some 290 Québec suppliers spread among the mining communities, the adjoining cities and the major centres like Québec and Montréal, purchases nearly \$85 million worth of goods and services annually in Québec.

In this way, in total, the asbestos companies whose 1976 sales are about \$340 million, injected some \$300 million into the national economy.

McGill and Industrial Health

The Occupational Health and Safety Unit of Montréal's McGill University is currently conducting important research studies dealing particularly with dust elimination, identification of dangers associated with the use of chemical products and the health of workers in the asbestos industry.

The second will be conducted in cooperation with the Institute of Occupational Medicine of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine of the University of London. It will deal mainly with incidences of death and radiological changes among employees working in the asbestos mining industry.

A multidisciplinary team

McGill University's Occupational Health and Safety Unit is headed by Dr. Graham Gibbs, Industrial Hygienist, and groups together doctors, engineers and experts in other various fields, such as microbiology and geology. The unit is geared to study all aspects of the industrial environment susceptible to affect the health and safety of workers.

The Department's principal laboratory facilities are located at Mont St. Hilaire, near Montreal, and include two experimental units to study exposure to dust, and highly-perfected equipment to check the efficiency of respirators. Experts study the effects produced by various levels of illumination, the performance of ventilation systems and dust and noise measuring and control devices.

In addition to formulating and making recommendations relative to industrial health, the McGill department cooperates with industry regarding implementation and development of equipment needed to improve hygienic and health working conditions.

the asbestos industry (Beaudry Report), Dr. Lesage feels, however, that it would be a great mistake to entrust medical problems only to Community Health Centers.

Consultants

According to the Association's medical director, these units are, above all, administrative control and supervisory bodies. "The largest share of achievements in occupational medicine in Québec", he stated, "were carried out by company doctors who are truly consultants in their fields of endeavour and primarily dedicated to the health of the workers."

In Dr. Lesage's opinion, industrial medicine specialists should be involved in the planning and study of any Bill aimed at Occupational Medicine in Québec. "The company doctor is an occupational doctor who, better than anyone, is aware of workers' problems and of their milieu as he is directly in contact with them all the time."

Dr. Lesage also stressed that effective occupational medicine should not only prevent health problems, but also promote and maintain the highest degree of physical, mental and social welfare of workers.

"Industrial doctors practice occupational medicine"

— Dr. Lesage

Invited as the Guest of Honour at the closing dinner of the Annual General Meeting of the Association of Doctors of Industrial Medicine, Dr. Michel Lesage, Medical Director of the Québec Asbestos Mining Association, stated that the setting-up of an occupational medicine system would be of little value without the active participation of company doctors.

Agreeing with the idea of creating an Occupational Health Board, as recommended in the report of the Committee for the study of the Health Conditions in

The Johns-Manville five-year plan

The decision taken by the Johns-Manville Company to pursue its investment program, amounting to \$77 million, is part of a five-year plan to develop the Company's facilities at Asbestos.

Essentially, the program's objective is to ensure, over the next quarter century, optimal annual production at the Jeffrey Mine (700 000 short tons).

Relocalisation activities also affect a residential sector of some 250 dwellings.

The Johns-Manville five-year plan is part of an expanded construction and renovation program completed in 1974 and involving investments totalling \$74 million, aimed at maintaining production capacity and improving health conditions very considerably.

Optimum efficiency

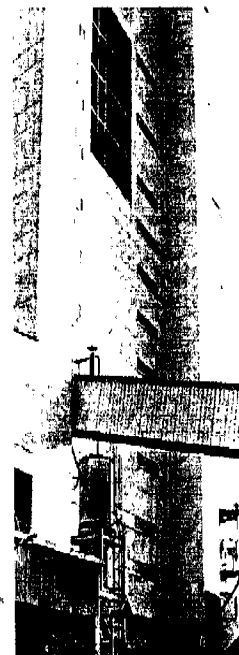
The five-year plan, with its three stages, was announced at the beginning of April 1976. Since then, a new complex has been built for construction and maintenance purposes, bringing together under one roof several different shops in order to maximize service efficiency.

It is expected that work on expansion of the mine, whose deposits have been mined for over 100 years, will be completed between now and 1980.

Mine expansion with a view to guarantee continuous supply of fibre at its present rate, calls for implementation of a major refitting and relocalisation program.

New facilities

Thus we are proceeding with construction of new administrative offices and relocalisation of main storage areas, the mechanical shop and the shovel shop. This also applies to the effluent purification plant.



Research at the Association

Promotion of technical research and of technological development are two of the major objectives of the Québec Asbestos Mining Association.

Within the framework of its activities in this area, the Association has recently retained the services of an expert in noise control and industrial dust filtration techniques, Geoffrey Knight.

Before joining the Association, Mr. Knight was employed by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources of Canada where he was involved with research on dust and the environment. While at the Department he developed a sampling system of respirable dust and an analysis system with quartz (SiO_2) assessment by X-ray diffraction.

In his new assignment, Mr. Knight will act as an advisor to the asbestos industry in dust measuring and control matters. He will be stationed at Thetford Mines and his office will be located in the industrial clinic.

Exchange programs

Mr. Knight's appointment was preceded by the hiring of Marc Trudeau, Geological Engineer and specialist in analysis instrumentation, as Research Advisor for the Association. He has been holding the position for the last few months. Mr. Trudeau is mainly responsible for establishing a continuing exchange program with scientists and researchers studying properties of asbestos fibres.

Mr. Trudeau was among the experts called upon by the Investigation Committee on Hygiene in the Asbestos Industry to assist in the preparation of its report.

Health, hygiene and environment

Bell Asbestos' modernization program is well underway

Phase II of Bell Asbestos' renovation, modernization and building program which it has been involved in since 1973 should be completed this summer. The entire program representing investments of around \$9 million, is essentially aimed at optimum elimination of dust sources in the process plant and in the Company's other facilities at Thetford Mines.

According to the Company's President, Marcel Dorais, Bell Asbestos tackled the hygiene problem in its entirety, and worked towards solutions which meet the objectives set by public authorities for hygiene and health at work.

A new building

A six-story building was added to the existing mill and will contain the most modern equipment and tools currently available. Installation of the equipment is underway, and this part of the project, which also includes relocation of existing equipment to the crushing section, is now 85% completed.

Phase III, which is also presently underway, includes relocation and modernization of machinery in the first mill. As far as engineering work related to the project is concerned, most work is being carried out by company employees. At the

beginning of 1977, completed work required expenditures of \$5 700 000.

Uninterrupted production

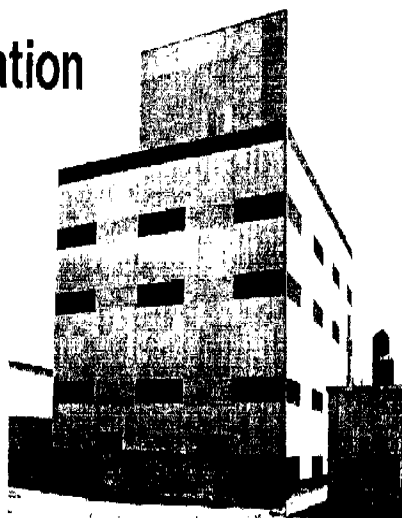
In addition to construction of a new building, all other renovation and modernization work will ensure, in the original facilities, effective environmental control, and performance calibre similar to that which will be obtained in the new building. All work has been conducted without any interruptions to production operations.

All conveyors and sifters are gradually being covered to eliminate dust emission. Push-pulls (air-cushioned separators) providing perfect airtightness are also being added in the new mill.

Projects already completed, which have notably included installation of a dust filtration system in the dryer and implementation of three dust filtration systems in no. 3 shaft, have resulted in a 50% decrease in the dust level.

Automation

New projects being currently studied deal with improvement of hygienic conditions in the ore warehouses where a new air purification technique will be introduced during 1977. Finally, waste transportation methods at loading and dumping points have been automated at a cost of \$1 500 000.



Bell Asbestos' new building, the main air system filters and push pulls.

Considerable progress at Carey-Canadian

Carey-Canadian, of East Broughton, is currently conducting an air purification program started in 1976. Over \$3 million are being allocated for this project alone, and already considerable progress has been made in open pit operations, as well as in the mill and related facilities.

Thus, since June, 1976, a new central air eduction system is providing effective and adequate ventilation throughout the entire mill. By the end of the current year all sifters will be recovered and the covering of the conveyors will be completed by the beginning of 1978.

New equipment

Last February, the Quebec Government's Environmental Protection Department authorized the Company to instal six dust filtration units. The new equipment which filters a total of over 500 000 cubic feet of air per minute, will be located in the mill, the drying and packing sections, the pilot plant, the laboratory and the dust filtering cabins for employees.

In order for dust accumulation to be eliminated more effectively, all floors have been insulated, and electric cables will be entirely covered.

The current program will also provide a link up of all existing equipment in the mill to the central eduction system, as in the case now for most vibrating sifters and conveyors.

An environment committee

For the last year, the Company has set

up a special team to detect dust sources and to ensure smooth operation of the purification devices. An environment committee, composed of management and union representatives was formed to ensure environmental quality and to recommend the most effective ways of improving hygienic conditions.

Major work is currently being carried out in the analysis laboratory to eventually double its surface area. Once the work is completed, by September 1977, the lab will be equipped with a complete filtration, heating and air conditioning system.

On the other hand, the Company recently purchased, at a cost of \$300 000 a new drill, equipped with a dust filtration system, which will replace existing drills.

War against noise

Finally, in order to eliminate noise pollution as much as possible, a sound-proof room was built in the garage shop and silencers have been installed on several parts of equipment used by employees.

Carey-Canadian's President Mr. Prus, feels that parties concerned should be reasonably happy with progress made since the start of the renovation and modernization program, all the while noting that the job is not over. "We'll manage," said Mr. Prus, and with the continuing cooperation of all our personnel, Carey-Canadian will succeed in considerably improving hygienic conditions and meet the objectives set out in the Beaudry report."

Health, hygiene and environment

Project at the National Division of Lake Asbestos

In 1976, the Lake Asbestos Company began an additional modernization and air purification program at its National Division in Robertson-

ville which will have required investments totalling around \$3 million by 1980.

Installation of ten air filtration systems at the mill and dryer was completed at the beginning of the year and the equipment is now in full operation. A compressor with a capacity of 2 190 cu. ft/min has been installed to ensure the equipment operates smoothly.

The plant's hygiene will be considerably improved due to the

three new central suction systems to be put into operation at the mill, dryer and crusher.

Magnetic concentration

A new magnetic concentration system is already being used at the dryer and process plant for the ore gang waste before milling. This procedure ensures, in conjunction with four additional vertical mills, a higher production rate.

Ten push-pulls (air-cushioned separators) will soon be placed into service in the plant for the first asbestos separation phase. Two pressure packers have also been added to the equipment.

Lake Asbestos purchased *National* in 1973. The mill and mine, which employ more than 250 people, produce 90 000 tons of fibre annually. Up to now, work performed at Robertsonville has required investments of over \$1 million.

At Black Lake

On the other hand, the Company has finished installing at its Black Lake mill, which was built in 1958, three central suction units at the process plant, dryer and crusher to ensure cleanliness in the plant. About \$250 000 were allocated for this work.

The use of continually modernized technical equipment is of prime importance in dust control and hygiene in the asbestos industry. Following annual examinations conducted by the Thetford Mines Industrial Clinic and verification by the Pneumology Committee of the Workmen's Compensation Board, not a single incidence of pulmonary disease was discovered among the 359 employees working for Lake Asbestos at Black Lake.



Tourism and recreation in the Thetford Mines region

Mining is not incompatible with a pleasant life-style, witness the pictures from a new tourism leaflet on Thetford Mines and region.

This leaflet, produced by the City of Thetford Mines, is meant to promote the area's main points of interest and will be widely circulated throughout Canada and the United States with the assistance of the Quebec Ministry of Tourism, Fish and Game and the Canadian Tourist Bureau.

According to Guy Beaudoin, Economic Development Manager for Thetford and one of the main forces behind regional promotion, "Thetford Mines owes its existence to asbestos and we are proud of it. But we too often forget that the region offers the tourist several scenic sights and occasions to practice outdoor sports such as swimming, hunting, fishing, camping, etc."

Within a ten-mile radius of Thetford are to be found no less than 12 lakes.

Asbestos on French TV network

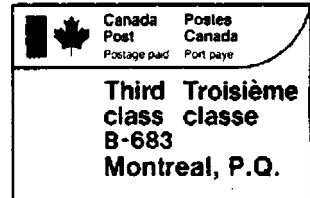
As part of a documentary on industrial health, the Lake Asbestos Company will be the subject of a television feature to be broadcast April 3rd, over the French CBC network's, *Les Beaux Dimanches*. Radio-Canada crews visited the Company's Black Lake site where they filmed each phase of mining operations from the open-pit mining stages (see our

photo) to the processing plant and pressure packing. For this report, which was filmed in February, Lionel Pluze, Vice-president of the Company, and Benoit Poulin, Interim President of the Union, were interviewed.

Lake Asbestos (annual production 160 000 short tons) has been in operation since 1957.



Is regrouping of mines desirable?



Recently, the Eastern Townships Regional Development Council's Mining Committee submitted a report entitled "A Québec Asbestos Policy" to the Ministry of Natural Resources.

The Eastern Townships RDC has accomplished some very interesting work and it is fitting to recognize the commendable efforts made by its members in preparing the report.

The RDC report formulates two main proposals: to regroup five mines located in the Thetford-Black Lake region to be used to supply a central treatment plant and to create a marketing board.

Regrouping

Theoretically, the RDC proposal is not without a certain logic. A logic which, if pursued further, could be applied to a great number of industrial sectors in Québec.

However, all those connected with the industry, who have a considerable experience in the mining operations of asbestos, are unanimous in affirming that, in this particular field, such regrouping would not improve production in any way. Quite the contrary.

In addition, the enormous investments that such a project would necessitate are totally out of proportion with respect to the anticipated results.

Besides the fact that the RDC proposal would lead to the closing of four plants, of which three were built not so long ago, a regrouping of this

magnitude would signify, as a direct consequence of the concentration of activities, a massive lay-off of asbestos workers.

Marketing Board

Following an exhaustive study of the asbestos industry situation, the Ministry of Natural Resources' Division of Mineral Economy and Development submitted a report in 1975 in which it concludes that such a Board "would disrupt integration of the Québec mining sector into the world economy and would risk destroying this sector's main expensive force in Québec".

The report further states: "Under present economic conditions, where Québec primary sector can expand considerably, this would not seem desirable. The creation of such a board would also disrupt the rapport between producers and buyers and would necessarily lead to marketing difficulties because of its lack of know-how, at least in the beginnings. It offers no real gains since Québec asbestos marketing is presently conducted with great efficiency."

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