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Roundhouses

COPY

Chicago, November 16, 1937

Mr. H. B. Voorhees:

Last week Mr. C. L. Brockett of the Rock Island called me and said that the Rock Island had received a request from Dr. M. H. Kronenberg of the Illinois Department of Health for permission for his representative to go through the roundhouses and shops of the Rock Island to make an inspection relating to health conditions. He wanted to know if I, as chairman of the railroads committee handling matters relating to the proposed Occupational Diseases Act, knew anything about Dr. Kronenberg and what he proposed to do with the information he was seeking. At the time I was unable to give him any information as I thought all matters relating to sanitation and health were being handled by the Division of Factory Inspection.

Yesterday I met with the employers' Group of the advisory committee to the Illinois Industrial Commission, of which Mr. O. E. Mount of the American Steel Foundries is chairman. Mr. Mount advised me that Dr. Kronenberg is head of a unit of the Illinois Department of Health that is working at the University of Illinois in conjunction with the Department of Labor, and is endeavoring to develop information relating to health conditions in manufacturing and other plants in Illinois. He stated that the Illinois Manufacturers Assn. had been approached by Dr. Kronenberg for permission for he and his representatives to inspect all factories and other plants in Illinois. Mr. Mount stated that the manufacturers would be agreeable to granting this permission provided Dr. Kronenberg would agree that all information he assembled would be held strictly confidential so that it could not be used against any employer in the event an employee brought suit, claiming loss of health or disability resulting from an occupational disease contracted in the employer's plant. Dr. Kronenberg, so far, has not given that assurance and Mr. Mount is of the opinion that the information that will be collected will be assembled in pamphlet or other form and distributed so that it would be available to any lawyer who might handle a suit for an employee. For that reason he feels that it would be inadvisable to allow Dr. Kronenberg or his representatives to make the inspections they wish to. However, because of their connection with the Illinois Department of Health, and relation with the Department of Labor, he did not think it would be advisable to give them a definite refusal. If the request should be made, we should ask Dr. Kronenberg who he represents, what authority he has and what he proposes to do with the information he intends to collect, and when and if that information is furnished we should then say we will take the matter up and see what can be done. In other words, Mr. Mount thinks we should not tell Dr. Kronenberg no, neither should we tell him yes, but carry him along until his interest becomes centered elsewhere.

This information is given you so that you will know how the Employers' Group feels about Dr. Kronenberg's proposed inspection of manufacturing and other plants.

(Signed) Armstrong Chinn
Chief Engineer

AC/JW

Chicago, Nov. 18th, 1937
File 6-1514
1-832

Mr. C. M. House:

Please note attached from Mr. Chinn relative to a Dr. M. H. Kronenberg, who is connected with the Illinois Department of Health, requesting permission for his representatives to make inspection of shops and roundhouses with respect to health conditions existing on such premises.

Until more is known about the purpose of such inspection, we do not wish to grant free access to such representatives to freely inspect our premises, and I suggest that you advise our local officers and general foremen, stating it may be possible that representatives of the Illinois Department of Health may approach them for permission to inspect our shops and roundhouses, and that if such request is made, to inform the representative to handle the matter with you to secure authority before inspection can be permitted. If any such requests are made, please advise me and await decision before authorizing the inspection.

Please return Mr. Chinn's letter after the matter has been handled.

H. B. VOORHEES.

(B)

cc-Messrs.

A. Chinn
C. W. Bearden
J. J. Butler
F. S. DeVany