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DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Letter to Phillip Drinker from Dr. Lanza RE Avoiding Possible Suits or Choosing Settlement for Workers with Silicosis

March 10, 1933

Mr. Philip Drinker
53 Van Dyke Street
Boston, Mass.

Dear Phil:

I have your letter of March 9. Mr. Davis came to see me, accompanied by Mr. Winans, Personnel Manager of the Union Carbon and Carbide Company. Mr. Davis is the head of the department dealing with power development for this Company and struck me as being a very decent citizen and seemed to be quite well informed on the whole subject of silicosis.

I have heard from a number of sources about the high mortality that has been attendant upon the construction of this tunnel. The suits are being brought against the contractor and the insurance company and Union Carbon and Carbide is apparently not liable. However, they have decided to look into the matter thoroughly and be of such assistance as circumstances may warrant to the contractor in defending these suits.

I pointed out to Mr. Davis, and as far as I could make out, he got the same advice from Sayres, that the thing to do was to establish first of all whether these sick men had silicosis and for that purpose, I suggested that he consult Dr. Peacock. My own opinion is that if these men were found to have silicosis and they had worked under conditions exposing them to silicosis, the suits had better be settled. Of course, there is a strong probability that many of these men were old hard-rock workers who may have had silicosis when they went to work for the contractor. Mr. Davis was anxious to establish the status of respirators and I advised him to get in touch with you, both as to type and as to the time when various types appeared on the market.

I imagine that there are probably some genuine cases of silicosis mixed up with a number of more or less fraudulent suits. The majority of these people bringing suits are negroes and naturally the whole think has been engineered by some clever lawyer. I do not know who the contractor is but I expect they have got him across a barrel. A number of suits have been filed on behalf of persons now dead and I believe their lungs have been secured. I advised Mr. Davis to consult Dr. Gardner for this phase of the job. I shall be glad to give you any further dope if I have any.

Sincerely yours,

A. J. Lanza, M.D.
Assistant Medical Director

Dr. Philip Drinker
53 Van Dyke Street
Boston, Mass.

Dear Phil:

I have your letter of March 9. Mr. Davis came to see me, accompanied by Mr. Timms, Personnel Manager of the Union Carbon and Carbide Company. Mr. Davis is the head of the department dealing with power development for this Company and struck me as being a very decent citizen and seemed to be quite well informed on the whole subject of silicosis.

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