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M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Mr. Dunlap, Assistant Attorney.

FROM: Dr. Lanza

DATE: March 9, 1926

SUBJECT: Picher Clinic, Picher, Oklahoma.

The Picher Clinic is carried on as a cooperative enterprise between the Metropolitan, the United States Bureau of Mines, and the mining companies in the district. The Metropolitan contributes $8,000 a year, the U.S.Bureau of Mines $8,000 a year, and the mine operators $15,000 a year. Formal contracts have been entered into as between the Metropolitan and the Government and each individual mining company and the Government. The original plan was to have it continue for three years from February 1926.

The staff of the clinic consists of Dr. Meriwether, Surgeon-in-Charge, 2 assistant physicians, a medical officer in charge of the laboratory, an X-ray technician, and 6 clerks. Every mining company in the district contributes to the clinic upon a per capita payroll basis. Up to the present time only two small mines have refused to come in, one employing 40 men and another employing 80 men, but one of these has signified its intention of joining. Not all of these participating mines are Group policyholders, but all the big companies in the field are covered by the Metropolitan with the exception of the Eagle Picher Lead Company.

We have just completed the complete physical examination including an X-ray of every man working in the district, which includes Ottawa County, Oklahoma; Cherokee County, Kansas; Jasper County, Missouri and a few outlying villages; upwards of 10,000 men have been examined. Every man then he is examined is given a card on which is his photograph, his signature, his summary of his physical condition, the card being stamped with the United States Government seal. The card is then placed in a little leather folder.

As you know, there has been some investigative work done in the Joplin-Picher district off and on for a number of years, but no attempt has been made to deal with the condition. Previous investigations have merely been for the purpose of establishing the facts. To adequately deal with this situation two forms of endeavor are necessary; that is, mining conditions underground must be improved and every effort made to control the dust hazard, and second, the physical condition of the men must be constantly supervised so that those whose lungs have become dust damaged may be removed from the industry before they become hopelessly ill. As you know, these miners with dust damaged lungs (silicosis) contract and die of tuberculosis.

Mr. Dunlap Fisher Clinic March 9, 1926

The mining companies in recent years have been gradually improving underground conditions and these mines are less dusty than they were. I do not believe that the present conditions represent the maximum possible results in the way of dust control, but at least there is a forward movement.

Our purpose in making physical examinations of miners was first of all to detect all men working underground who had tuberculosis and remove them from the industry, and secondly to guarantee that no new men could be hired for underground work whose lungs were not normal. If we can get tuberculous men out of the ground and keep men with tuberculosis from being hired and if we can maintain an annual physical check-up, I do not see but what we must eventually diminish the amount of tuberculosis and the total permanent disability waste. The first effect of these examinations among group policyholders is probably to cause an increase in the total permanent disabilities, but that should be followed by an improvement in the number of these cases.

Whether we can get to the point where we can or wish to exclude men with silicosis from underground work I do not know; time alone can tell. It is our plan at the end of three or possibly four or five years to turn over the whole enterprise to the mining companies and let them run it.

Of course aside from its local features the physical examination and re-examination of so many thousands of men are going to give us a lot of valuable information both in regard to silicosis and other lung conditions which will be of general use to us. It must not be forgotten, too, that no group insurance in other places where the silicosis hazard is a very serious one, notably Barre, Vermont.

The most remarkable thing about this clinic has been the entire absence of objections or serious complaints from the men. I should not have believed it possible that such a scheme as this could have been put over without some serious objections. Of course the moral force of the Government and the Metropolitan is the deciding factor. It should be remembered that all the men working in this district are Americans, there being no foreigners and no negroes in that part of the country. So we are dealing with a homogeneous population which is another factor which I believe will facilitate the securing of some worth while statistics that might have a bearing on the general questions of health insurance.

Mr. Dunlap Fisher Clinic March 8, 1928

The attached leaflet is handed to the miner at the same time that he gets his card from the clinic. I have in my files Dr. Meriwether's report for the year 1927. It is rather long, but it is very interesting and comprehensive and, if you would care to read it, let me know and I shall send it up to you. Also if there are any points that are not clear or about which you would like to have further information, let me know.

[redacted], Medical Director.

April 19, 1928. WFY:HCP

Dr. Wade Wright, Medical Director,
Metropolitan Life Insurance Company,
1 Madison Avenue,
New York City, N. Y.

Dear Dr. Wright:

Yesterday I received a letter from Dr. Lanza in which he made inquiry as to whether or not I would be interested in joining your staff. Since Dr. Lanza stated that due to his leaving for an extended trip to the West Coast I should reply directly to you, I presume you are entirely familiar with the situation and further reference will be unnecessary.

To be entirely frank in my reply, I do not know whether I am interested in joining your staff or not - not because I do not hold your institution in esteem but because I have neither had occasion to be dissatisfied with the Bureau of Mines nor time to think a great deal about leaving. In the past I have received rather attractive offers from industrial concerns, but none of them appealed very strongly, due mainly to the highly commercialized atmosphere or to the apparent lack of opportunity, and I gave them but little consideration.

I am, however, pleased to tell you that a position of the type which Dr. Lanza briefly outlined in his letter interests me. My interest is no doubt stimulated in this particular instance by a general knowledge of your organization and by frequent complimentary remarks which Dr. Sayers has made when either he or I have made reference to your staff, laboratories, or work in the field of industrial hygiene. In view of this I would be very glad to have the opportunity of discussing with you the possibility of joining your staff. I feel quite sure I am at liberty to do so, as Dr. Sayers and I have a very close understanding as to the opportunities and limitations in the Bureau of Mines. The working conditions and personal relations are excellent, but as you know, the financial advancement is limited, although I have fared very well.

HCP

Dr Sayers

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If it is convenient to you, I would like to have the meeting referred to sometime early next week, preferably Monday, April 23, as I may have occasion to go on to Washington Tuesday, April 24. Also, it happens that at this particular time I am confronted with the opportunity of going with the Mine Safety Appliances Company of Pittsburgh with the promise of considerable more remuneration than I receive from the Bureau of Mines. In confidence I may tell you that with that company I would be filling a newly-created position (as I understand) for guiding research on new appliances, giving technical advice and service, and making contacts. The duties appear rather interesting but not as much so as my present work or, I may add, the work which I understand is being conducted by your staff.

I do not know whether or not you are entirely familiar with the type of work I have been connected with at the Bureau of Mines. To give you some idea, I am enclosing a list of a number of the publications and reports of investigations (some of which are confidential) with which I have been directly connected during the past 6 or 8 years.

Again thanking you and Dr. Lanza for your consideration, I am

Very truly yours,

W. P. Yant,
Supervising Chemist,
Health Laboratory Section.

Encl.

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Wright

FROM: Dr. Lanza

DATE: July 2, 1928.

SUBJECT: Visit to Picher Clinic in regard to making plans for the next year's work of the Clinic.

I was in Picher on June 17 to the 22nd, this being the end of the fiscal year and it was necessary to attend to the matter of renewing contracts and preparing the budget for the ensuing year.

The mining industry in the Picher district is running on a basis of about one half of last year and it is estimated that it will continue on that basis for the next year. It is estimated that there are 4,000 men working underground in the immediate Picher district and about 5,500 in the whole field.

The Clinic has just concluded a very successful year. Over 11,000 have been examined and the records are in the process of compilation. There has been an entire absence of friction or trouble of any kind, and on the other hand, I have heard nothing but the most enthusiastic comment on the work of the Clinic from the officials of all our Groups down there. I feel that Dr. Harisuther and his staff are deserving of the utmost credit for the manner in which they have so far conducted a difficult job calling for the utmost tact and discretion at all times. The Clinic is very popular throughout the district not only with the mine operators but with the miners, the doctors and the community in general, and people come within a radius of 200 miles for diagnosis. The work of the Clinic is beginning to attract the favorable attention of the entire mining profession in this country and it is impossible to foretell at the present time how far-reaching an effect for good it may have.

Dr. Harisuther and I prepared a budget based on a participation of the mining companies to the extent of a minimum of 4,000 men employed underground. The total budget is $26,000 of which the Metropolitan is contributing $8,000, the Bureau of Mines $6,000, and the mine operators $12,000. On June 20 we submitted this budget to the advisory committee of the Clinic which is composed of representatives of the five big companies, all of whom, with the exception of the Eagle Picher, are Group policyholders, and the budget received their endorsement. On Friday, the 22nd, together with the advisory committee, we presented this budget to a meeting of all the mine operators. It was accepted with enthusiasm and a number of the mine operators present took the occasion to testify not only to their appreciation of the good work of the Clinic in improving the health and well-being of the miners, but also to the

fact that they felt that the work of the Clinic conferred a definite economic advantage to the district. The auditor of the Eagle Picher Lead Company addressed the meeting and testified that owing to the improved physical condition of his underground force, as a result of the work of the Clinic, accidents were less frequent and less severe in their effects. The secretary and treasurer of the Federal Mining and Smelting Company gave testimony to the same effect and throughout the meeting not one single adverse note was sounded. Those who were present at the meeting and who had sufficient authority immediately signed their contracts for participating in the Clinic's work for the next year, while the others promised that they would have their contracts signed within the next few days.

The present status of the Clinic work is this. As a result of the physical examinations of men employed there are no men with tuberculosis now working underground in Picher, nor is it possible for men whose lungs are not in good shape to secure underground work. The whole health level of the mining force is constantly being raised and the yearly re-examinations keep the men informed as to their condition and make it possible for them to leave underground work as soon as any evidence of lung damage indicates that this is desirable.

Again I should like to call attention that this is the most far-reaching demonstration of its kind that has ever been tried in this country or probably in any other country, with the possible exception of the South African gold mining field. Not only has the work been carried on in a very thorough manner but it has been done in a democratic way and the mining population is educated to understand what we are trying to do, and because they appreciate this they have given their full cooperation. It is estimated that there will be not less than 7,000 examinations made this year which represents, as far as we can tell, about the normal work of the Clinic in future years.

The present staff of the Clinic consists of Dr. Merivether, Surgeon in Charge, two physicians, an X-ray technician, a laboratory technician, a principal clerk, a chief clerk, and three clerical assistants.

C. H. Lavinder
Assistant Medical Director.