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with Report on the International Congresses on Diseases of the Chest

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INSTITUTE OF OCCUPATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
MONTREAL, CANADA

Newsletter No. 1 of the Scientific Committee, October 1966

Dear Members of the Scientific Committee:

Enclosed are the minutes of the first meeting
of the Scientific Committee in Montreal, July 25 - 26, 1966.

There were important news since then:

The former name "Asbestos Health Research Council" was changed to "Institute of Occupational and Environmental Health" and application was placed for its establishment as a legal entity, which is expected soon to be approved by the authorities. Our Scientific Committee is a part now of the Institute of Occupational and Environmental Health, the other parts being the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors, and probably, a Board of Governors. The proposed activities of the Institute will be the same as those previously planned for the Asbestos Health Research Council.

The Executive Committee of the Institute of Occupational and Environmental Health was appointed recently and is composed as follows:

Karl V. Lindell, Chairman
(Chairman of the Board,
Canadian Johns-Manville Co., Limited)

Michael J. Messel, Member
(President,
Lake Asbestos of Quebec, Limited)

W.W. Oughtred, Member
(Executive Vice-President,
Asbestos Corporation Limited)

Parker Smith, Member
(Vice-President,
Bell Asbestos Mines Limited)

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follows:

The Board of Directors is composed as

Michael J. Messel, President

J.O. Eby, Vice-President

R.S. Coleman, Director

Karl V. Lindell, Director

J.A. Main, Director

Dr. R.J. Merrill, Director

Philip A. Meyer, Director

W.W. Oughtred, Director

Parker Smith, Director

Our Institute of Occupational and Environmental Health, upon application of the CIRA, became Associate Member of the Asbestosis Research Council of England.

The Institute of Occupational and Environmental Health has moved into its new premises in Montreal. The address is as follows:

Institute of Occupational and Environmental Health,
Suite 1210 - IBM Building,
5 Place Ville Marie,
Montreal 2, Canada.

Telephone: Area Code 514 No. 878-3538

The Scientific Secretary, Dr. P. Pelnar, is now in Montreal working full-time for the Scientific Committee. He is establishing his headquarters and archives at the above address of the Institute in Montreal.

Enclosed is the report on the international congresses, on Diseases of the Chest in Copenhagen and Occupational Health in Vienna, held on August and September 1966. Report was written by Dr. Paul Cartier of Thetford Mines who attended both congresses. You will notice that no mesothelioma was observed in patients with pleural plaques in Finland.

Results of both congresses and also of the congresses in Tokyo will be discussed thoroughly during the next meeting of the Scientific Committee.

Sincerely yours,

George W. Wright, M.D.
Chairman

Presyol T. Palnar, M.
Secretary

encl.

Dr. Paul Cartier,
Thetford Mines, Que., Canada

**REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESSES
ON DISEASES OF THE CHEST IN COPENHAGEN
AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH IN VIENNA.
AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 1966.**

More than 3,000 physicians from all over the world were registered at each of these meetings and among the hundred of papers presented, 14 were on Asbestosis in Copenhagen and 14 in Vienna.

In Copenhagen most of the 9 papers were rather pessimistic, many speakers repeating the statements made at the New York Symposium. It was said that any exposure, even one which lasts a few days was sufficient to be considered as a possible causal factor of any varieties of cancer, pulmonary, pleural, peritoneal, gastro-intestinal and genito-urinary. The case of the lady who washed her husband's trousers and who developed pleural mesothelioma was presented as a demonstration of this theory.

Statistics were presented showing in some hospitals that 40 to 80% of the cases with cancer of any organs were considered related to the asbestos factor either because they were found to have some asbestos, asbestos bodies or fibers. On this general principle, if it is true that 40 to 50% of the general population of the cities have some asbestos bodies in their lungs, then 40 to 50% of most cases of cancer would be related to the asbestos factor and the recognized factors such as tobacco or the other factors of genetic or viral nature would become less important and less significative than the asbestos factor.

Dr. Neuman of Finland presented a large series of pleural plaques which apparently seems related to the number of asbestos bodies present and to a very light and even questionable asbestos exposure. On the other hand, no cases of pleural mesothelioma have been detected among the asbestos workers or among the numerous cases of pleural plaques in Finland.

Dr. Irving J. Selikoff who was the Chairman and responsible for the programme of the Copenhagen Symposium has repeated many of the statements made at the last New York Symposium, although in the appreciation of many he has been less categoric and interested to discuss the various problems. Dr. Selikoff in his remarks has given some credit to Q.A.M.A. for the interest shown for the study of the problems pertaining to the asbestos industry. It might be of some paramedical or practical interest

to mention that as a Member of the International Committee on Occupational Diseases of the American College of Chest Physicians, I have learned that Dr. W.G. Hannon, the regular appointed Chairman of this International Committee, has been asked 3 months before the meeting to give up the Chairmanship and the planning of this Copenhagen Symposium to Dr. Selikoff.

This rather strange decision could explain why the general atmosphere of the Copenhagen Symposium was somewhat similar to the one in New York although much more friendly.

In Vienna, Drs. Noro, Vigliani and Vorwald were the chairmen of the 3 scientific sessions on Asbestosis with the result that a more profitable and liberal discussion took place. Dr. Vigliani and Dr. Vorwald have made the direct statement that the mere fact that a cancer is detected in an asbestos worker cannot be interpreted as a proof of a causal relationship between those two factors.

To Dr. Bohlig from Germany who expressed the opinion that the cases of pleural plaques can be considered as candidates to the future development of pleural mesothelioma, it was said that this hypothesis appears to be questionable because in France, Finland, Italy, Austria, Bulgaria and Belgium none of the cases of pleural plaques have so far progressed to the stage of pleural mesothelioma. The same observation prevails for the cases of pleural plaques identified in Quebec.

Dr. Lavenne, Professor at Louvain University and Physiologist at Hasselt Institute has made the remark that unfortunately there is the possibility that an unjustified hysteria similar to the one which has existed some 10 to 15 years ago concerning berylliosis and byssinosis and which has disappeared, may also exist now in the case of asbestosis and that a more complete scientific study may permit to obtain different conclusions, different from those publicized so largely in the recent medical literature.

The question of identification and of the meaning of the asbestos bodies and of asbestos fibers in the lungs has been discussed at great length. Some participants were of the opinion that the mere detection of asbestos bodies and of fibers in the lungs means asbestosis or a pathological hazard capable to become a causal factor of cancer, while a large number of others refuse to accept this viewpoint. Drs. Vigliani and Vorwald have taken a large part in this discussion mentioning that a scientific approach to the investigation of those problems is needed and that a certain prudence in the conclusions drawn should prevail.

It remains regrettable that the selection of the Chairman and of the speakers of a meeting can contribute to give such different pictures

of the same disease. It is for a consideration of that kind that during the meeting in Vienna, it was said that it would be a mistake that the International Union against Cancer (Meeting in Tokyo October 1966) take a too exclusive control of the study of the problems related to asbestos and give at the same time a too great emphasis to the single aspect of cancer to neglect all the other aspects. For that consideration it was suggested that other qualified organizations such as the International Association on Occupational Health should also be invited to participate to this difficult task of research.