

The decision makers may have to decide willy-nilly. I personally believe that a close examination of the issue of the relative danger of blue asbestos shows that the benefit of the doubt has not always been given to human health.

Let me explain.

There are two groupings of opposed opinion relative to this matter.

There is one grouping holding that all types of asbestos are equally dangerous.

Among the partners in this grouping, in the USA there are the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, sectors of the asbestos industry, several labour unions, major sectors of the scientific community, and other groups whom I would style the progressive environmentalists.

There exists another grouping which insists that all forms of asbestos are not equally dangerous, that blue is the worst of the bunch by virtue of mesothelioma. That grouping includes nations such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and Holland. In addition, in several other countries such as Germany and Norway, some authoritative opinion falls in with this point of view.

Gerry Clarke's survey of the utilization of asbestos¹ shows the pattern in the USA in the recent past: no selective banning of any particular asbestos type, but a shift away from asbestos generally.

- I ask why blue asbestos should have continued to be used in North America generally for at least a decade after its use had been banned, in effect, from some parts of Europe. Is this not an example where blue asbestos, not human health, has been given the benefit of the doubt?

I can see three possible reasons why there should have been no selective banning of blue asbestos in North America and certain other places:

¹Gerry Clarke Asbestos - A Versatile Mineral Under Seige, Industrial Minerals, March 1982 p 19-37.