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J. E. Thomas - New York

J. L. Dorman, M.D. - Toledo

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M. Briley - Toledo
J. Tyvertsky - New York
W. Hibbard - Greenville

The Academy of Sciences Working Group
on Insulation Industrial Hygiene

A meeting was held on May 14, 1968, at the New York Academy of Sciences chaired by Dr. Irving Selikoff. The main portion of the meeting was devoted to a review of the current knowledge with regard to the health hazards of exposure and the environmental working conditions of insulation workers.

The only new information was that there is probably a threshold of atmospheric pollution from exposures below which neither asbestosis nor cancers occur. Dr. Selikoff's main theme was that the insulation workers required better environmental working conditions to abviate the health hazards of asbestos. He proposed an additions program of research to develop practical engineering methods to lower the atmospheric dust level on construction jobs with primary emphasis on the insulation workers. This research, which would have immediate application, would be carried out over a three year period by a team composed of a senior engineer, a junior engineer, a basic scientist, such as a mineralologist, a laboratory technician, a field technician and a secretary. The engineers would be drawn from industry but controlled from an academic institution yet to be named. The findings developed by this research group would be interpreted and appropriate recommendations made by an industry research council consisting of a scientist, a union member and two or three representatives of industry.

Dr. Selikoff proposed these men for the Insulation Industry Research Council:

Mr. J. M. Barnhardt
Mr. T. M. Brodie
Mr. Richard W. Deary
Mr. A. E. Hutchinson
Mr. J. B. Jobe
Mr. E. L. Levins
Dr. I. J. Selikoff

Although he did not say it, I feel strongly from the title he used on his May 17, 1968, information sheet (which is attached) that he will strongly favor Mount Sinai School of Medicine, City University of New York, as the academic institution, thereby permitting him a much greater degree of control than I believe he should have. The fibrous glass industry is only very peripherally represented on this proposed research council. I think it would be reasonable that our company be more directly represented.

In the information sheet dated May 17, 1968, I feel that Dr. Selikoff is attempting to over-step the stated purpose of this council, which is to develop practical engineering methods of controlling environmental hazards on work sites.

An industrial hygiene program then could be developed by various construction companies or groups of companies possibly in cooperation with unions in various parts of the country. I do not feel it would be wise to centralize an industrial hygiene program. The research itself would best be centralized.

Dr. Selikoff wished to add to this research program a periodic monitoring of the workers. I do not feel that this is a part of an engineering research program. We do need to monitor the health of insulation workers in a more efficient manner than has been previously carried out. I feel this might be best carried out on a regional basis through organizations such as the IDCAA (Insulation Distributors Contractors National Association), which could contract with knowledgeable occupational environmental physicians for the necessary periodic medical surveillance. A system might even be worked out whereby both the union and the association could contribute to the support of the medical surveillance, thus eliminating any question of bias.

J. L. Dobson, M.D.

JLD:jm

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