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TURNER BROTHERS ASBESTOS COMPANY LTD.

of Origin	To
45/2120-3 London	Dr. S. Holmes Health Physics Dept. Rochdale

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Your Ref:- [illegible] 1970

8th October 1970

Asbestos and Health: Shell

We had a word on the telephone following receipt of your letter of 25th September and as a result I made an appointment to see Mr. Hawkins and indeed met him yesterday. Mr. Hawkins is the Secretary of the Shell International Safety Committee which, amongst other things, would be responsible for recommendations to the various Shell companies including Shell Tanker and the refineries regarding asbestos and possible substitutes.

Mr. Hawkins was at some pains to explain to me that the Committee only made recommendations and would not instruct anybody to take a course of action, but he agreed that as the technical people in The Hague would have agreed the recommendations, most units would accept them.

The impetus for the alterations to the Shell MESC document came from the Medical Section of Shell in London and at first was rejected by the technical people at The Hague. However, about this time there was some adverse publicity in the Dutch press on the subject of asbestos and health, and one of the medical people at The Hague supported the London recommendation, with the result that alternatives were sought. The procedure is that the alternatives have to have the approval of the technical people in The Hague and I gather that most of the front running in finding alternatives was in point-of-fact again done by the medical people.

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I explained to Mr. Hawkins our concern that an international company such as Shell in effect issued a document suggesting that asbestos cloth, for example, created a health hazard, and I told him how this could quite unfairly complicate situations for us, not only in home markets but in overseas markets as well. He gave me a most understanding and sympathetic hearing, particularly when I described to him the virtues of dust-suppression and of "Fortex" products, although I was anxious at this stage to make the object of the visit one of principle rather than one of selling our products.

As a result of this talk Mr. Hawkins will have discussions with a Dr. Leamon and a Dr. Blackmore in London (they were not available yesterday) and will then suggest a further meeting when we will be given the opportunity to explain yet again our situation. Mr. Hawkins is also going to The Hague next week and may possibly mention the subject there, but he expects the procedure to be:

i) that we should meet the medical people in London, and if that is reasonably successful,

ii) we should visit the technical people at The Hague.

I might say at this stage I have not offered any defence in favour of rope lagging and millboard, but have rather directed my discussions towards cloth which I think in all markets could be the major problem.

In so far as the comment about further replacement materials is concerned, Mr. Hawkins gave me an assurance that they have nothing in mind concerning compressed asbestos fibre jointing or indeed greased and graphited packings ~~jointings~~. To the best of his recollection, against these items the Safety Committee listed the comment, "These products carry only minimal risk". Whilst even this is not as definite as we would like, in Mr. Hawkins'

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mind it in equivalent to saying "don't worry, you can use these products without difficulty".

The next step is for me to await a telephone call from either Mr. Hawkins or Dr. Leamon.

E. A. Edmonds