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UAW AND BENDIX CORPORATION

Bendix Automotive of Canada Ltd. employs 650 workers in the manufacture and assembly of brakes in Windsor, Ontario. The operation includes the drilling, refitting and fitting of asbestos brake linings.

According to UAW Local 195, Health and Safety Committee, exposure to unsafe working conditions has resulted in 13 cases of cancer of the larynx, stomach and lungs.

The Health and Safety Committee began to investigate the situation when the deaths of three workers apparently from cancer of the larynx were reported withing a five year period.

According to Dr. John Marshall, medical consultant of the OFL, cancer of the larynx might normally occur *"Once in 3,000 to 5,000 people"*. Dr. Selikoff, commenting on the situation at Bendix, added ominously that *"if there are three people with cancer of the larynx, there must be at least 30 or even 100 who have died of cancer of the lung."* Since beginning the investigation, the Health and Safety Committee has uncovered 10 more cases of cancer, including lung cancer.

The Health and Safety Committee has submitted a documented brief to the Workmen's Compensation Board. The company has consistently refused to cooperated with the union, claiming that any medical data and statistics are "confidential", and that there is *"no evidence that exposure to asbestos caused cancer in any of our employees."*

The UAW brief documents a long history of unsafe conditions. For instance, *"In 1940 the ventilation in the plant was inadequate – most hand grinders did not have local exhaust systems. Employees attempted to combat the dust by wrapping a handkerchief around their faces."*

Between 1974-77, an asbestos dust collector bag system was used, with the clogged bags simply being shaken inside the plant. Until 1977, drysweeping of asbestos dust, a procedure widely recognized as extremely dangerous, was also common.

According to Tom Shafer, president and general manager of Bendix Windsor, operations are now "well within established limits". Dr. John Marshall has stated that the Ontario standard was designed to combat "asbestosis", but is not low enough to protect workers from cancer.

And like most occupational hazards, the risks are not restricted to the workplace.

Jack McCann, UAW Health and Safety representative, has stated that the *"company used to dump open boxes of asbestos dust in outdoor bins"*, which released fibers in the air, *"sending clouds of dust into the neighborhood."*

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