



June 30, 1978

Mr. S. S. Conway, Jr.
Troy Office

RE: Asbestos Information Association

The quarterly meeting of the Board of Directors of AIA was called for June 28, 1978, in New York City. The meeting was scheduled to coincide with the "International Conference on Health Hazards of Asbestos Exposure", being held at the same place and time.

The purpose of this memo is simply to inform you of the rather disastrous outcome of the conference and the implications and conclusions of the various presentations.

Although I did not personally attend the conference, it was summarized during AIA's Board meeting. Apparently, the first two days of the conference were the only days when any scientific information was aired and exchanged. The third and final day was apparently a carefully orchestrated performance by Drs. Bingham and Selikoff, and others, for a very self-serving purpose. The world-wide scientific community in attendance at this meeting held the final result in a very low esteem, and since I had an opportunity to discuss the results with various physicians from Australia, U.K., and South America I know that most of the foreign physicians felt that they had been used for a domestic, political purpose and some of them described the meeting as a typical North American Science Conference where politics and science is mixed at will and without sufficient attention to the facts.

The conclusions of the meeting were as follows:

Positive:

It was proven that mesothelioma can be caused by other substances than asbestos, such as in the well-known Turkish mesothelioma case where the disease apparently is caused by Zedlite.

File: AIA

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For the first time at a conference of this nature, no one raised any argument as to cigarette smoking and its direct contribution to pulmonary fibrosis.

Negative:

No radically new developments and findings were revealed during this meeting.

Before the end of the year 1978, the exposure limit in the U.K. is anticipated to be reduced to one (1) fiber per cubic centimeter.

Based on information presented during this conference, it is anticipated that most doctors will refuse to discard asbestos exposure as a possible cause of various diseases, regardless of the length and degree of exposure!

On July 14, 1978, ABC Television will be broadcasting a documentary on asbestos, and starting on July 17, the Government will broadcast radio and television ads explaining the dangers of asbestos exposure. These ads will be directed specifically towards the shipping, construction and automotive industries. Newspaper ads will also be taken out in strategically located cities such as Newport News and Detroit. The potential impact of this campaign is difficult to predict, but it is entirely conceivable that some kind of asbestos hysteria could break out.

Although no new and tougher exposure limits are anticipated as a result of this conference, the volume of law suits are expected to increase drastically. I had the opportunity to listen to one of the ads, which simply requests that anyone ever exposed to asbestos visit his physician. Since, however, there is no known cure for some of the ailments, it is quite possible that some will go straight to their lawyers instead.

The asbestos industry has lost two recent law suits. One was a mesothelioma case allegedly resulting from exposure in a Virginia shipyard. The exposure took place only two years prior to filing the law suit. This in spite of the fact that the latency period for mesothelioma is around 30 years and that mesothelioma can be caused by other materials as well. The plaintiff was awarded \$750,000 in this suit. The other suit involved a \$150,000 award in Illinois.

Mr. S. S. Conway, Jr.

Page 3

1207

The real danger of this conference and the upcoming radio, television, and newspaper ads is a significant increase in law suits. It was furthermore stated that a large number of the visitors to this conference consisted of legal counsel to plaintiffs.

B. Iwarsson

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