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Mr. M. Harris,
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21st March, 1977

Dear Mike,

I have to acknowledge your cable concerning Dr. Kotin and your letter of 2nd March.

I do agree that it is of primary importance to bring all your forces to bear in countering the effect of the NIOSH submission and I am indeed grateful for your offer to make George Wright and Dr. Peinar's information available.

I am also appreciative of your suggestion that we should get Walter Smither to Head the Medical Committee of the International Asbestos Information Conference but I am somewhat reluctant to do this since both Alex Cross and I are already taking prominent parts in the organisation and one more Cape man would I think, be a bit too much! I am therefore proposing that we ask Dr. Robert Murray to lead this team and to set it up in the first place with the specific task of collecting information on asbestos-related disease from all countries throughout the world. If this works well, we would consider a more formal appointment of a medical advisory committee headed by Dr. Murray.

I am not sure whether you know Dr. Murray. He was with the International Labour Organisation and subsequently was Medical Advisor for the Trades Union Congress in this country, from which he retired in 1975. Although of course, he is not connected with the industry, he is, I believe, an entirely suitable person for this task and I am putting the suggestion to the Executive Committee members.

Our main concern here recently has been with the recommendation of the sub-committee of the British Occupational Hygiene Society which has been reviewing the fibre standard. You will remember that it was their original recommendation that resulted in the British 2-fibre standard, the evidence being based on the health record of a number of employees at Turner's textile factory in Rochdale whose record could be set against known dust levels.



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This committee has produced a draft report with a recommendation for 0.9-fibre standard. The Industry based members of the committee however, refused to accept this conclusion and so the committee has fallen apart without agreeing on a recommendation.

The reason for this disagreement is that the 0.9 figure hinges upon the incidence of crepitations in some eighty of the men who were exposed and this is to some degree supported by parallel data involving X-ray changes and what is described as "suspect" asbestosis. It is the crepitation data however which is the most important and which is hotly contested by Turner's who point out that there is not sufficient agreement on the numbers in which crepitations have been diagnosed and that re-examination indicates that many of these people are now free from crepitations. Some members of the committee argue that crepitations come and go whereas Walter Smither argues that such crepitations associated with asbestosis are quite distinctive and that they are permanent. A good deal depends upon how this disagreement is resolved.

It had been my intention to send you a confidential copy of the draft report with this letter since I would have much valued your comments, George Wright's, and Paul Kotin's, on the document. I had a letter from George this morning however, and he tells me that he will be in the UK next week and so I propose to hand it to him personally.

The facts (as distinct from the recommendation) are to be written up and then sent as evidence to the Advisory Committee on Asbestos that has been set up by the Government and it will be this committee's task to advise a new standard. The Industry is therefore very concerned to make a further submission to the Advisory Committee setting out its criticism of the statistical interpretation and possibly putting in a recalculation.

Aside from this, we are much pre-occupied with the European Economic Community who are taking an increasing interest, producing regulations and guide lines involving asbestos, and also with international trade union organisations.

In view of all these uncertainties, I do understand that you would not be in a position to think about any collaboration in South Africa. It would be nice to think that the situation may reach a point within the next twelve months when you might view things differently - but in any event, my invitation to you to visit our mining operations still stands.

Aside from all these problems, I do hope that all is well with you and yours!

Yours ever,

R. Gaze
Dr. R. Gaze

RG/WFG