

KFL

113/1660

Mr. W. M. Ellison

JAN 31

February 4, 1942.

The Workers' Committee.Asbestosis

It is felt by the Board that you will be interested in certain facts relating to this industrial trouble, particularly as the extent of the danger is very often exaggerated and amongst our own people at any rate the truth should be known.

For a period prior to 1931 the Government were making investigations into the effect of asbestos dust upon those working in the industry and after the scientists had discovered that long exposure to asbestos dust was harmful the Government introduced, in 1931, what are known as the Asbestos Industry (Asbestosis Scheme) Regulations. Prior to this no-one knew it was harmful. From that moment the management have done and are doing everything possible to remove the risk, and have already spent thousands of pounds in this connection. They are now engaged in putting the finishing touches to the prevention and dust removal apparatus in this factory, and when this is done the work carried on here will, in our opinion, be free from risk to health.

During the last 20 years there has been an average of 1,250 people employed here, of whom about 600 have been employed in the scheduled areas. It will be seen that the percentage affected is very small, and it is clear that the majority of the cases must have been caused before it was known that the dust was harmful and proper precautions taken. The average period of work of the cases affected so far is 20 years. Altogether there have been 53 medical suspensions, made up as follows:

- 18 Totally Disabled.
- 17 Fit for moderately heavy work.
- 18 Fit for light work.

Out of these 53 cases there have been 24 deaths up to the end of 1941, but in only 6 cases out of these 24 has the verdict been that asbestosis was the primary cause. In the other cases there have been all sorts of complications, consequently it might or might not be correct to say that asbestosis was a contributory cause. Some of the bases were heart disease, cancer, and the usual other diseases which occur whatever the occupation or sphere of life may be, and which risks everyone has to face. We do not doubt the bona fides of the opinions expressed by doctors after a post mortem, but when a man has cancer, or heart disease, and his lungs are also affected in greater or lesser degree by asbestosis, it is an almost impossible scientific task for anyone to say exactly what has been the actual cause of death.

These figures, although such a small percentage of the

total employed, are not viewed lightly by the management, who feel the greatest sympathy for the workers suspended; compensation payments made by the Company have not been limited to the amounts stipulated by the Home Office - where circumstances have indicated that further sums were necessary to enable the individual to live in comfort, the payments have been increased in the degree necessary to meet the needs of the case. Out of the suspensions noted, alternative employment has been found in the factory for about 21 employees. The remainder are either retired under the asbestosis scheme or have followed some other occupation.

The directors are convinced that the working conditions and health record of the factory are as good, or better, than can be found in most industries and we would welcome at any time an investigation to prove this. A comparison of our health record with that of an average cotton spinning mill would indeed be welcome. The temperature and dust prevailing in the latter mills have led to a large number of workers being incapacitated by bronchitis and other chest conditions, whereas atmospheric conditions in this factory created by the supply of large volumes of fresh air at moderate temperatures are exceptionally good; the whole air content in the principal work rooms is changed every few minutes.

With the desire to obtain all possible information on this disease, and for guidance in preventive action, the directors decided early in 1941 to institute a research conducted by the works doctor and our own scientific staff in conjunction with the British Postgraduate Medical School, London, and it is hoped that helpful information will be the outcome.

On behalf of the Board,

J. H. Russell

PLANTIFFS
EXHIBIT
IN 1695