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Visit to Denmark to discuss asbestos January

1966 - 1968 January, 1968.

During this visit, I talked to the following people :-

Mr. <u>Wilhelm Johnsen</u>	- Dansk Eternit-Fabrik A/S.
Mr. O. Homann Pedersen	- Elsinore Shipyard.
Dr. A. Ederwein	- World Health Organisation.
Dr. A. Grot	- Government Department of Occupational Health.
Mr. M. Pers	- Persolit A/S.

The arrangements for the visit were made by Mr. Algreen Petersen of Binar Juul & Co. A/S, who accompanied me throughout. I am most grateful to him for his co-operation.

Mr. Johnsen

Mr. Johnsen, a director of Dansk Eternit, described a meeting which had taken place in December, 1964, between officials of his company and Mr. Homann Pedersen of Elsinore Shipyard. I believe the meeting was partly concerned with commercial matters, but Mr. Homann Pedersen had also raised the question of asbestos and health, using the information given to him by Dr. Karvonen of the World Health Organisation. Dansk Eternit had attempted to counter some of the Karvonen statements by pointing out that in many years of handling asbestos, no health problems had arisen in and around their factory. This statement they had confirmed in writing.

I left with Mr. Johnsen copies of the A.R.C. Codes of Practice.

Mr. Homann Pedersen

Mr. Homann Pedersen is a Senior Engineer at Elsinore Shipyard and is the Danish representative on I.M.C.O.

He was fully aware of the purpose of my visit, i.e. to discuss the statements made in his recent report (7th November, 1967), which I told him I had seen. He said that the report was a confidential document and he had been upset to find that it had "leaked". He said that of his insulation force of twenty men, six were already affected in health to some degree. Although the situation had so far been accepted, he was afraid of trouble with the Union concerned, and was therefore determined to find substitutes for asbestos wherever possible. He seemed very set on this point, coming back to it many times during our meeting.

Thanks to Dr. Karvonen, Mr. Homann Pedersen got out the small printed notes of the relationship between asbestos exposure and cancer. I was able to explain the situation concerning asbestos and associated lung cancer, pointing out that this was known and accepted by the industry. I described the difference between talc and the incidence of mesothelioma, quoting the relevant paragraphs of the Report of the Senior Medical Inspectors' Panel. I drew attention to Dr. Karvonen's statements regarding the significance of pleural plaques in persons working in or living near the Finnish apophyllite mines, pointing out that the published papers of Haukio and Neurman did not contain any evidence of such plaques leading to malignancy. These papers were published in 1966 and Mr. Homann Pedersen said that Dr. Karvonen's information was more recent. Nevertheless, he admitted that he now had doubts on the subject and had an idea that Dr. Karvonen had not given him the true facts.

Mr. Homann Pedersen kept referring to a "700 page report" which was about to be published in U.S.A. on the subject of asbestos and health. He first said that he had lost the reference to it, then on pressure later in the meeting found it - it turned out to be the Proceedings of the 1964 New York Conference published two years ago. I was able to present him with copies of three of the papers - those by Dr. Knox, Mr. Hills and myself. He had heard of the reports by Prof. Thomson etc. on the finding of "asbestos" bodies in the lungs of the general public. I told him about the work on "ferruginous bodies" and said that a lot of statements made in New York in 1964 would be modified at the Dresden Conference in April. I also dispelled the idea that amounts of asbestos large enough to initiate disease were present in the general atmosphere.

I tried to put into the right context the comments in his report concerning the Draft New Regulations. I referred to the suggestions which had been put forward by the A.R.C. and other interested bodies, designed to get away from the unrealistic "no dust" concept. I said that there might well be a Maximum Allowable Concentration for asbestos dust incorporated somewhere in the legislation and spoke of the forthcoming B.O.H.S. report.

Mr. Homann Pedersen referred to his work with I.M.C.O., who insist on non-combustible materials for passenger accommodation. This, he says, is due to U.S. domination, which he bitterly resents. He claims that Danish ships are completely safe by virtue of their sprinkler systems. While he admits that this is forcing him back to asbestos panels, he is trying his best to find substitutes. He is in touch with the Danish mineral wool insulation industry, who say they can give him what he needs. He seems to have no fears regarding the deterioration of such materials in service. On the same subject he revealed that B.S.A. Crews have offered both glass cloth and glass rope lagging.

- 7 -

He is steadily trying to find the best methods of handling asbestos materials. He has visited Italy and France and has seen a method of firing asbestos panels without drilling. This involves clamping the panels between steel flanges and uses the further advantage that close size tolerances are not essential. He says that the liner "France" has been panelled in this way. There is actually nothing novel about the method - it is illustrated in both the T.A.C. and Marinite catalogues. He is at present engaged in making a demonstration rig to train his staff.

He seems to be very much against personal protection when handling asbestos, maintaining that "a material that needs such protection is dangerous". He says that men cannot be compelled to wear respirators, which he maintains are not proof against fine asbestos dust anyway. I explained the function of a respirator in reducing a hazardous concentration to a safe level, but he was difficult to convince. Nevertheless, he was interested in the A.R.C. Codes of Practice and asked for twelve further copies of each. He also knows of the work of the A.I.C. through Central Asbestos and would like twelve copies of the general publication on Asbestos and Health when it is published.

Dr. A. Eberwein

Dr. Eberwein is Head of the Health Promotion Group at the European Headquarters of W.H.O. He explained that Dr. Karvonen had left W.H.O. at the end of December to take up a post as Professor of Physiology in the Veterinary School in Helsinki, under Professor Leo Noro. He had not yet been replaced and as an interim measure Professor Sven Forsman of Stockholm was acting as part-time adviser on occupational health. Dr. Eberwein was unable to comment in detail on what Dr. Karvonen had said about asbestos health hazards, but confirmed that he must be assumed to have been speaking as a private individual, and the views expressed were not those of W.H.O. He explained that official statements from W.H.O. could only be given at the request of the governments of Member Nations. He said that the Head of the Social and Occupational Health Section in W.H.O. at Geneva is a Dr. Bell (Australian) and he would be the man to contact,

Dr. A. Grub

This was a very worthwhile interview. Dr. Grub's position is similar to that of our Senior Medical Inspector. He was well aware of the present situation in the U.K. regarding the Draft New Asbestos Regulations and was familiar with the Medical Panel Report. He also knew of the B.O.H.E. proposed standards for chrysotile. (He is a member of B.O.H.E.). To meet the situation in Denmark, he would very much like to draft

/s/ Dr. A. Grub