FILE NAME: Asbestos Sacks and Bags (ASB)

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THE OCEAN SHIPOWNERS' GROUP JOINT COMMITTEE

Telegrams—"TRAFFIC PHONE LONDON"
Telephone—ROYal 8131

Shipping Federation House,
146-150 Minories,
LONDON, E.C.3.



The Secretary,
Turner & Newall, Ltd.,
Asbestos House,
Fountain Street,
Manchester, 2.

29th July, 1965.

Dear Sir,

ASBESTOS IN BAGS

I should first explain that the Ocean Shipowners Group Joint Committee is the joint industrial body responsible for working conditions within the Ocean Trades of the Port of London.

At the present time, both sides are concerned over the possible risk of men sustaining Asbestosis. Whilst for some years this fear has existed, it has been brought to a head in the Port of London recently, following gangs employed on a particular vessel obtaining a medical opinion for themselves from Dr. Donald Hunter of the Middlesex Hospital Medical School, and a copy of the letter written by the latter is enclosed.

Since the gangs concerned obtained this advice, the discharge of Asbestos on the vessel has been restricted to approximately one ton per hour, the men being supplied with Siebe Gorman Masks Mk.4.

As when the discharge of the bags of Asbestos is completed, a certain amount of dust will remain, it is understood Dr. Hunter has advised the men to continue wearing the masks and continue the discharge of the other commodities at a reduced output.

You will appreciate that this will have a grave affect on the importing of Asbestos through the Port of London.

Following a decision of the Joint Committee, a Consultant Bio-Chemist is at the present time examining the dust count in the atmosphere of ships' holds during the

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course of discharge of the various types of bags which are imported. It is, of course, reasonable to expect that one of the features of his Report will be concerned with a recommendation as to the best type of bag to be used. The question still remains, however, as to whether - whatever is contained in the Report - the men will accept the conclusions reached, in face of the opinion held by Dr. Hunter. Indeed, it may be necessary to submit our Bio-Chemists Report to a Doctor for further comment, and it would assist me greatly if you could advise me of an eminent Doctor, who might, even in the fact of Dr. Hunter's views, give an opinion.

Insofar as the Docks are concerned, it is felt by some Members of my Committee that the risk of Asbestosis is far greater in the processing industry than to dockers, who are only in contact with this commodity in small quantities for short durations at infrequent intervals. It has therefore occurred to me that as processors of Asbestos Fibre you will have available to you considerable medical information on the risks of Asbestosis, but this may, of course, be limited to the circumstances under which your men are employed.

At the same time, it is felt that you might be able to provide me with some useful information on your experience and possibly comment on the risks dockers might run, together with any other useful information which you think may be of assistance to me. It might even be useful to know to what extent your employees have suffered with Asbestosis, if such information can be made available.

Whilst the issue at present is restricted to the handling of the raw Asbestos, it has been indicated by one Trade Union that an approved mask should be worn even when handling the manufactured product, such as sheets, pipes, etc. Whilst I personally feel that this view has been taken in the present climate of grave fear over the raw material and thus may not become a problem, it will be useful if you could also comment on this aspect.

Yours faithfully,

(D. L. Bennett)
Secretary