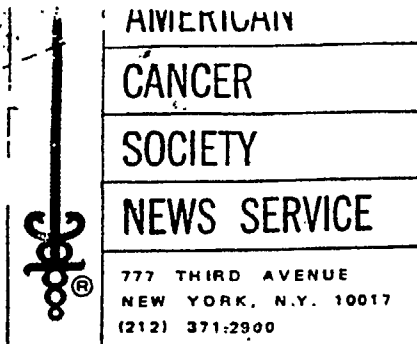




Mr. Dunkin
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American Cancer Society's
NINETEENTH SCIENCE WRITERS' SEMINAR
Sarasota Hyatt House
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(A.T. HAAS, Monday a.m.)

A LABOR UNION APPROACH TO OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE

ANDREW T. HAAS (53), General President, International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Asbestos Workers, Washington, DC. Mr. Haas joined the Union he now heads, in Philadelphia, in 1942. Following 2½ years of military service, and attending Iowa State Teachers College, he received his Mechanic's classification. In 1952, he was elected Secretary-Treasurer of Local #14. During his advancement through the Union ranks, Mr. Haas attended St. Joseph's College of Industrial Relations. In 1957 he was elected the Vice President of the International Union, and in 1964 was moved to the Washington office. He served as General Secretary-Treasurer, and was elected to fill the unexpired term of the General President following his death in 1972. Mr. Haas has served for a number of years on the Advisory Committee of Insulation Industry Hygiene Research Program at Mt. Sinai Medical Center. He has also served on the Advisory Committee on Asbestos Dusts of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration of the US Dept. of Labor.

A Labor Union Approach
To Occupational Disease

A Report By
Andrew T. Haas
General President
International Association of
Heat and Frost Insulators and Asbestos Workers

The alarming rate of occupational illness and death in this country is a tragic consequence of a society which for years was unaware of the long-term health hazards inherent in the widespread use of many conventional materials in our environment.

In terms of human pain and suffering, we are just now beginning to discover the hidden dangers of practices followed 20, 30, 40 or more years ago.

Recent discoveries in the medical and scientific field have led us to conclude that, while prolonged exposure to cancer causing materials may have been accidental due to ignorance, we cannot assume that the resulting pain, suffering, and death by environmental disease is unavoidable.

Moreover, if we are to correct the mistakes of the past, the solution lies not in a fragmented and half-hearted approach to the problem but in an all-out frontal attack, drawing from the talents and resources of a partnership between the medical and scientific communities, industry, and labor.

As president of a construction trades union, I am proud to report to you that already such a partnership has been formed. Moreover, this partnership has achieved significant results in the study of one form of environmental disease, its cause and prevention. And we have great hopes for important new findings in the area of treatment and cure.

On January 7 of this year, the Asbestos Workers Union, in partnership with the Johns-Manville Corporation and researchers at the Mt. Sinai Medical Center in New York, announced the formation of an environmental cancer research center.

This new center is an outgrowth of a partnership between the participants that goes back to 1968. Later in this report I will outline for you how the new center will function and what we hope to achieve through this combined effort.

First, however, I would like to review for you the events which led to the formation of the new center.

Certain conventional materials found in a natural state in our environment have been used for years in providing for the convenience, comfort, and safety of mankind. Asbestos is one such material. It has been used as an insulating and fireproofing material for many years.

Due to the nature of the material, the asbestos worker often has found himself in a dusty environment while working at his trade. In earlier days, our union members may have had a basic feeling that exposure to this dust was a nuisance and not good to breathe. However, they had no idea about just how dangerous prolonged exposure to asbestos could be.

These conditions prevailed until sometime after World War II, when questions were raised by some of our members and their families. They found themselves and their co-workers being afflicted with respiratory ailments at a rate higher

than that of the general population.

About 1959-1960, Dr. Irving Selikoff of the Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York became interested in the physical ailments that appeared to be affecting asbestos workers. As a result of this interest, a series of examinations and record-keeping was established by Dr. Selikoff with members of two of our larger local unions: Local No. 12, New York City, and Local No. 32, Newark, New Jersey.

As a result of these early examinations, the fears and suspicions that were responsible for the tests in the first place began to be substantiated.

At that point, so that a broader control base could be used, the International Union made available to Dr. Selikoff and his researchers the membership files of our International, including any and all information on deceased members.

At the same time that this research was going on, there were other research results being reported from different areas of the world supporting and reinforcing the fact that asbestos does, in fact, cause cancer.

Up to this point, all of the research conducted with our membership by Dr. Selikoff was financed by methods arranged by either Dr. Selikoff or Mt. Sinai through whatever means were available to them.

In 1968, however, the first joint effort of the Johns-Manville Corporation and the International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Asbestos Workers was undertaken.

This was in the form of a contribution of approximately \$200,000 in money or equivalent equipment from each of these two parties.

The \$200,000 contributed by the Asbestos Workers International was raised by assessing each of the approximately 18,000 members ten dollars. This contribution, plus additional grants by the International Union at a later time, helped to continue this research.

As the research started to assimilate facts and figures, the first indications in the early 1970's showed that of all our members' deaths, approximately 39 per cent were the result of asbestos-related diseases. The statistics at the end of 1975 showed this figure to be approximately 50 per cent.

Another alarming fact soon appeared from the research taking place all over the world, and this was the inordinate number of cases of mesothelioma, an asbestos-related cancer that so far has no cure. Approximately 85 per cent of all the recently uncovered cases of mesothelioma have proven to have been exposed to asbestos.

As research over the years uncovered the occupational hazard of exposure to asbestos, steps were taken by interested parties in the industry to eliminate asbestos exposure in the work place in order to erase the health hazard of inhalation or ingestion. However, it was evident that no appreciable amount of research was being undertaken to provide early detection, treatment, and, hopefully, a cure for mesothelioma.

The new center at Mt. Sinai is an effort to fill that gap in the attack against occupational disease. It represents a spirit of cooperation and determination on the part of labor and industry in the fight against job-related illnesses which threaten the health and well-being of all workers.

The center is being financed with a contribution of \$250,000 each from the Johns-Manville Corporation and our union. The money from the International Union will come from our Insulator's Health Hazard Fund through a contribution of one cent per member for each hour worked.

The overall thrust of the new program at Mt. Sinai will be, first, to determine who is likely to develop mesothelioma and why; second, to determine by what means prevention might be possible; and, finally, to develop effective treatment and a cure for this occupational disease.

But beyond the research into mesothelioma, the program will provide researchers with a rare opportunity to study other environmentally caused forms of cancer with the hope of significant findings.

It is my most sincere hope that other groups concerned with environmental health will follow the lead of our union and Johns-Manville and will join with us in these efforts.

Thank you.