



L'INSTITUT DE L'AMIANTE
THE ASBESTOS INSTITUTE

COMMUNIQUE

**DR. GILSON SAYS THAT THE ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS POSED BY
ASBESTOS ARE SLIGHT -- IN FACT, NEGLIGIBLE.**

Dr. John G. Gilson is former
director of the Medical Re-
search Council in the Pneumoco-
niosis Unit at Penarth in Great
Britain.

Weakness of the Cost/Benefit Analysis

Dr. Gilson, former director of the Medical Research Council in the Pneumoconiosis Unit at Penarth in Great Britain, believes that the cost/benefit analysis on which the EPA bases its recommended ban on asbestos lays itself wide open to criticism. He particularly deplores the lack of a detailed breakdown of the \$2 billion figure cited by the Agency.

The British physician also notes that if substitutes prove less effective than asbestos, they may cause deaths whose cost has not been estimated by the American agency. He mentions three types of uses for which this calculation should have been made: fireproof construction materials, asbestos friction materials and asbestos clothing.

Uncertain Benefits

Dr. Gilson questions the logic of banning asbestos and asks whether a ban is the most effective and economical

means of reducing the number of cancer cases. On this point, he writes: "If the proposed ban on asbestos went into effect today, there would be no impact on the number of deaths caused by asbestos until the year 2000. And it is difficult to assess, for cancers occurring after the year 2000, what proportion can be linked to exposure prior to the ban."

He also believes that it is difficult to determine what proportion of cancers can be avoided in the workplace and environment by banning asbestos.

Methodological Flaws

In addition, the British researcher sees several methodological errors in the EPA's analysis. He notes first that the Agency makes no distinction between the various types of fibre, which runs counter to the most recent research on the harmful effects of asbestos.

Dr. Gilson also points out that trying to predict the number of possible cancers using the number of fibres inhaled per year as the sole criterion is a delicate matter. He points out that this would require combining several variables such as the dimensions of the fibres, their distribution in the air, their degree of aggregation, the type of fibres and maybe even the particular blend of different types of fibres.

Dr. Gilson concludes that the EPA has not assembled a convincing case for banning all forms of asbestos. The British physician rejects the EPA's thesis that recycling asbestos in urban areas would pose a significant threat to the public. He further says that most researchers share this point-of-view and have concluded that the environmental threats which asbestos poses are very slight -- in fact, negligible.