FILE NAME: US Steel (USS)

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DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Newspaper Article - US Steel hold interests in asbestos dumps

BC Notes: Sept. 1, 1984 story in Rand Daily Mail (South Africa) -- "US Steel holds interests in asbestos dumps." The asbestos dumps endangered thousands of people.

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US Steel holds interests in asbestos dumps

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BDM

By PHILLIP VAN NIEKERK

UNITED States Steel — one of the wealthiest and most powerful corporations in the world — holds investment interests in abandoned asbestos dumps which are polluting large areas of the North Eastern Transvaal and creating a health hazard to thousands of people, a Rand Daily Mail investigation has disclosed.

Also holding extensive land and mineral rights in the area is the British asbestos multinational, Turner and Newall.

The Mail has established that several farms in the area littered with asbestos dumps have been sold to the South African Development Trust in the past 18 months for incorporation into Lebowa.

At present sparsely populated, these contaminated farms are soon to be the scene of large-scale settlement by blacks.

The sales could be in contravention of a provision of the Atmospheric Pollution Prevention Act that a mine-owner cannot dispose of any asset of that mine unless he has taken the necessary steps to prevent dust pollution.

The Mail was the first to report the existence of numerous uncovered dumps in the area four weeks ago. Since then researchers have estimated that at least 200 000 people living there could be exposed to the pollution.

Only one tailing dump in the entire asbestos area running along the Strydberg mountains, which includes densely-populated sections of Lebowa, shows signs of attempts to cover it and prevent environmental contimanation.

The main companies still owning land and mineral rights in the area are Associated Asbestos, Lagerdraai Asbestos, Dublin Consolidated Mines and Egnep, alongside numerous other small owners.

Dublin Consolidated is owned by Turner and Newall, while Egnep is owned by the Griqualand Exploration and Finance Company (Gefco), which is controlled by the mining giant Gencor.

Associated Asbestos and Lagerdraai Asbestos are wholly owned subsidiaries of Associated Ore and Steel which is controlled by Oresteel Investments in which U S Steel has a 49 % share and is the largest single shareholder.

An Italian company Italiani Prodotti Minerali, also holds a substantial interest in Associated Ore.

Mr Robert E'sperance, a director of Oresteel based at U S Steel's headquarters in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, told the Mail yesterday that he was "totally unaware" of the situation.

"We are minority shareholders," he said, adding: "I can't comment on the environmental situation, though U S Steel is very, very concerned about environment all over."

Three farms contaminated by asbestos dumps and in which U S Steel, through Associated Ore, holds a major shareholding have been sold in the past 18 months to the S A Development Trust.

They are Piezangsdraai, Lagerdraai and Beesthoek. On Lagerdraai there is an old mill and a tailing dump with a family living right on top of it.

Mr Guido Sacco, the chairman of Associated Ore and Steel, admitted that they had taken no steps to cover the dumps on their properties.

"We stopped mining asbestos a long time ago, about 15 years," he said. "We were a very, very small producer. At the time we did not know asbestos was injurious to the health."

According to company reports, there were mining operations on both Lagerdraai and Piezangdraai as recently as the early seventies.

The Turner and Newall-owned Dublin Consolidated — which has maintained substantial base mineral rights in the area — has been gradually selling off its farms with old mine dumps on them.

All the farms have been sold in the past five years, and the dumps show no signs of having been covered up.

At Bewaarkloof — which Egnep sold to the SA Development Trust in May for almost quarter of a million rand — vegetation has been planted on the dump but fibres have continued to spill into the road despite a wall being built around it.

Mr C Good, the group finance executive for Turner and Newall Holdings, said that as far as he knew the mines on Dublin property had been worked by tributors

"To the best of my knowledge — and I must concede its scanty — the Government Mining Engineer's approval was granted for the sale of the properties."

However, according to an old newspaper report Dublin Consolidated employed 15 000 workers in 1968 working mines in the Bewaarkloof valley alone.

5-9-84

Dear Barry,

Here is the touchstone for our USA campaign!

Thanks for the info, if you lay your hands on any updates please send.

Campaign becoming quite high profile here, even radio + TV taking some interest but we can't really control them.

Best regards,

Jean

P.S. Please give me a telex no. for urgent messages, and if any new standard declared on the States let us have documentation soonest. Thanks.