

STATEMENT DELIVERED BY HERBERT L. LEVINE IN BEHALF OF THE SPRAYED MINERAL FIBER MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION, P.O. Box 427, WESTFIELD, N.J. 07090, BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK, JANUARY 27TH, 1971.

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THE MEMBERS OF THE SPRAYED MINERAL FIBER MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION, WHO MAKE ASBESTOS CONTAINING MATERIALS USED TO FIREPROOF LARGE BUILDINGS, APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE HERE TODAY. WE HOPE THAT THE COMMENTS WHICH YOU HAVE BEEN HEARING ABOUT ASBESTOS WILL NOT PREJUDICE YOUR OPINION AGAINST ASBESTOS. I SAY THIS, BECAUSE IT HAS ALREADY BEEN ANNOUNCED FREQUENTLY AND FORCEFULLY THAT NEW YORK CITY IS GOING TO BAN THE SPRAYING OF ALL MATERIALS CONTAINING ASBESTOS. WE HOPE THAT ASBESTOS WILL NOT BE CONVICTED WITHOUT AN APPROPRIATE HEARING, AND WITHOUT ADEQUATE CONVINCING SCIENTIFIC PROOF THAT IT IS HARMFUL TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

WE FIND NO SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT A BAN ON SPRAYED ASBESTOS. SUPPOSITION OR SPECULATION IS INSUFFICIENT REASON TO LEGISLATE A PROVEN PRODUCT OFF THE MARKET.

OF COURSE, THE HEALTH OF THE PUBLIC IS, AND RIGHTFULLY SO, THE PRIME CONSIDERATION. WE APPRECIATE THE RESPONSIBILITY THAT THE CITY COUNCIL AND CITY OFFICIALS HAVE, BUT WE URGE YOU NOT TO BE RUSHED INTO A POSITION THAT HAS NO SCIENTIFIC SUPPORT, AND WHICH MIGHT BE A DISSERVICE TO THE PUBLIC.

THE SITUATION INVOLVING SPRAYED ASBESTOS HAS BECOME DISTORTED AND EMOTIONAL. AS A RESULT, MEMBERS OF OUR ASSOCIATION ARE FACED WITH THE THREAT OF LOSING THEIR RIGHT TO MAKE AND SELL A LEGAL PRODUCT WHOSE VALUE FOR SOCIETY HAS BEEN PROVEN BEYOND QUESTION THROUGH THE CENTURIES.

NEW YORK CITY RECENTLY INSTITUTED REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE SPRAYING OF ASBESTOS CONTAINING MATERIALS. THESE REGULATIONS ARE BEING FOLLOWED FULLY AND CAREFULLY, AND THEY ARE ACCOMPLISHING THEIR PURPOSE OF KEEPING ASBESTOS DUST FROM ENTERING THE AIR AT CONSTRUCTION SITES. TO PROPERLY PROVE THIS, FIELD STUDIES HAVE BEEN MADE IN OUR BEHALF BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES LABORATORY AT MOUNT SINAI HOSPITAL, WHICH IS HEADED BY DR. IRVING J. SELIKOFF, ONE OF THE MOST RENOWNED AUTHORITIES IN THE WORLD ON ASBESTOS AND HEALTH. THIS LABORATORY, STUDYING ASBESTOS AIR LEVELS IN THE VICINITY OF SPRAYING OPERATIONS WHERE THE NEW YORK CITY REGULATIONS WERE BEING CAREFULLY FOLLOWED, WAS UNABLE TO DETECT ANY INCREASE IN ASBESTOS AIR LEVELS IN SURROUNDING AMBIENT AIR. IN OTHER WORDS, DR. SELIKOFF STATES, ADEQUATE PRECAUTIONS CAN PROVIDE EFFECTIVE CONTROL.

OUR ASSOCIATION RECENTLY ISSUED A CODE OF PRACTICES FOR SPRAYING. THIS CODE CONTAINS PROVISIONS MORE STRINGENT THAN THE CITY'S REGULATIONS. WE HAVE DISTRIBUTED COPIES OF THE CODE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND ARE URGING MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS EVERYWHERE TO ENACT ITS PROVISIONS INTO LAW.

WE HAVE GONE FURTHER IN OUR DESIRE TO HELP MAINTAIN IN NEW YORK THE CLEANEST AIR POSSIBLE. WE HAVE SUGGESTED TO THE NEW YORK CITY BUILDING COMMISSIONER THAT A SPECIAL INSPECTOR BE EMPLOYED TO CHECK DAILY ON SPRAY FIREPROOFING WORK GOING ON IN THE CITY. THE INSPECTOR WOULD ACTUALLY BE HIRED BY THE BUILDING'S OWNER OR AGENT, BUT WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE ONLY TO THE BUILDING COMMISSIONER. THE INSPECTOR SHOULD BE A QUALIFIED PERSON WORKING FOR AN INDEPENDENT, CERTIFIED TESTING & INSPECTION AGENCY APPROVED BY THE CITY BUILDING DEPARTMENT. WE ALSO HAVE RECOMMENDED THAT SPECIAL INSPECTION PROCEDURES BE INCLUDED IN THE CITY'S BUILDING CODE.

THE MAIN QUESTION IS WHETHER AIRBORNE ASBESTOS IS A HEALTH RISK TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC. MANY SCIENTISTS HAVE BEEN STUDYING THIS AND HAVE REPORTED FINDINGS INDICATING THAT NO SUCH HAZARD EXISTS.

DR. SELIKOFF RECENTLY WROTE: "WHILE THERE IS AT PRESENT NO EVIDENCE OF COMMUNITY RISK FROM ASBESTOS FIBRES IN THE AMBIENT AIR, IT IS ONLY PRUDENT, ESPECIALLY WITH OUR CONCERN FOR REDUCING GENERAL AIR POLLUTION, THAT JOB-GENERATED DUSTS AND FIBRES BE PREVENTED FROM DRIFTING INTO THE COMMUNITY AIR."

HE HAS FURTHER COMMENTED: "ADHERENCE TO NEW YORK CITY'S REGULATIONS FOR THE APPLICATION OF INSULATING MATERIALS THAT CONTAIN ASBESTOS WILL PREVENT ASBESTOS DUST FROM ENTERING THE AMBIENT AIR. THESE REGULATIONS WILL ALSO KEEP ALL OTHER INSULATING DUSTS FROM CONTAMINATING THE CITY'S AIR AND WILL ALLOW THE INSULATING AND FIREPROOFING OF BUILDINGS TO PROCEED IN SAFETY."

DR. GEORGE W. WRIGHT OF CLEVELAND, ANOTHER NOTED AUTHORITY WHO HAS BEEN STUDYING ASBESTOS AND HEALTH SINCE 1948, HAS WRITTEN: "THE RISK TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC POSED BY THE MOSTLY INTERMITTENT EXPOSURE TO THE LOW CONCENTRATIONS OF ASBESTOS LIKELY TO BE PRESENT IN THE AMBIENT AIR HAS BEEN EXAGGERATED BEYOND THE LIMITS IMPOSED BY THE KNOWN FACTS."

DR. THEODORE VAN DELLEN, AUTHOR OF A NATIONALLY SYNDICATED MEDICAL COLUMN, HAS JUST WRITTEN ONE ON ASBESTOS DUST. HE SAID ONLY MINUTE AMOUNTS OF ASBESTOS DUST ARE INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY AIR POLLUTION AND INDICATED THERE IS NO HEALTH HAZARD TO THE PUBLIC. THOUGH PEOPLE MAY INHALE ASBESTOS FIBRES, HE SAID, "TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, THESE BODIES DO NO HARM."

IN ADDITION TO SPONSORING STUDIES DURING SPRAYING OPERATIONS, OUR ASSOCIATION ALSO HAS HAD RESEARCH DONE INSIDE A BUILDING WHERE THE PLENUM AREA BETWEEN THE SUSPENDED CEILING AND THE FIREPROOFING MATERIAL WAS USED FOR CIRCULATION OF RETURN AIR. THESE PLENUMS, THEREFORE, ARE LINED WITH ASBESTOS CONTAINING MATERIAL. THIS WORK, DONE BY A LEADING TESTING ORGANIZATION, PRODUCED SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS. THE CONCENTRATIONS OF ASBESTOS FIBRES AND TOTAL PARTICULATE MATTER RANGED FROM 1.2 TO 2.7 FIBRES PER LITER. CONTRAST THESE FIGURES WITH THE THRESHOLD LIMIT VALUE OF 5,000 -- I REPEAT, 5,000 -- FIBRES PER LITER SET BY THE AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF GOVERNMENTAL INDUSTRIAL HYGIENISTS, THIS LATTER LIMIT BEING FOR OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURE.

ALSO, OTHER RESEARCH SPONSORED BY THE ASSOCIATION FAILED TO DETECT ANY ASBESTOS FIBRES OF RESPIRABLE SIZE IN THE WORK ENVIRONMENT OF THE NEW FEDERAL BUILDING IN NEWARK, N.J. OR IN THE MAIN ROTUNDA OF THE TRANS WORLD AIRLINES TERMINAL AT J.F. KENNEDY AIRPORT, NEW YORK, AND BOTH OF WHICH WERE TREATED WITH ASBESTOS CONTAINING MATERIALS.

THERE IS A GREAT AMOUNT OF SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE AVAILABLE ON ASBESTOS. WE HAVE SUMMARIZED SOME OF IT AND HOPE YOU WILL TAKE TIME TO READ IT. IT IS IMPORTANT AND PERTINENT. WE WOULD BE HAPPY TO PROVIDE YOU WITH FULL COPIES OF THE REPORTS AND OTHER MATERIAL FROM WHICH THIS SUMMARY WAS DERIVED.

SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS SHOW THAT AIRBORNE ASBESTOS IS NOT A HAZARD TO THE PUBLIC. WE HOPE THIS COMMITTEE WILL CONSIDER THESE FINDINGS, AND THE TESTIMONY AT THIS HEARING, AND CONCLUDE THAT BANNING SPRAYED ASBESTOS IS UNNECESSARY AND WOULD NOT SERVE ANY USEFUL PURPOSE WHATSOEVER. WE URGE YOU TO CONSIDER THAT THE CITY'S REGULATIONS ARE BEING FOLLOWED AND THAT OUR INDUSTRY IS HELPING MAINTAIN A CLEAN AIR ENVIRONMENT REGARDING ITS PRODUCT.