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TRIP TO MONTREAL, ASBESTOS, THETFORD MINES, QUEBEC

October 16-October 21, 1944

PURPOSE

To explore the reasons for the high tuberculosis mortality rate in Thetford Mines;

To confer with the operators of the asbestos mines in Thetford concerning the establishment of an industrial health clinic in Thetford Mines;

To visit Group policyholders in Montreal with Mr. Perry and Mr. Fehnel. Mr. Fehnel to make industrial hygiene survey of Asbestos mills in Asbestos and Thetford.

SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

A. tuberculosis and asbestosis

1. Provincial Health Department to provide us with age-specific mortality rates for tuberculosis by sex for past eight years in Thetford, Asbestos and six comparable communities in addition to Dominion and Provincial rates.

2. Dr. Burnette to secure data for us on health services, character of population and living conditions in the communities for which mortality data is being secured.

3. Local physicians and nuns at Thetford Mines hospital believe asbestos dust contributes to tuberculosis.

4. Thetford hospital, built in 1930, has 150 beds—75 devoted to tuberculosis. Excellent, modern surgical equipment and basal metabolism apparatus. X-ray machine 100 milliamperes and 20 years old. No EKG. About 50 tuberculosis patients in the hospital, about 50 percent male.

5. Thetford has $15,000 health budget. County pays 10 percent, Provincial government pays the rest. One full-time health officer, Dr. Blais, and five part-time nurses are employed. Follow-up on tuberculosis is poor. The nurses lack adequate training. Dr. Foley, the Provincial Epidemiologist, thinks there are 10 unknown cases for every known open case (he insists that the unknowns are not open cases).

6. Dr. Sirou, the physician in charge of the Thetford Mines hospital tuberculosis service, believes asbestosis causes tuberculosis although, according to Mr. Faburin, he has written and publicly stated the contrary.

7. Living conditions in Thetford have improved in recent years. Mr. Fehnel, who visited Thetford in 1930 and 1935, observed the improvement. Miss Chess, the Metropolitan Nurse, finds homes in Thetford better than homes in parts of Quebec City.

8. Asbestos companies in Thetford have no health information on their workmen. Only data may be on A&H claim forms.

9. In Johnson's Company's new mill a common tin drinking cup is still used. This was observed and reported by Mr. Fehnel in 1935.

10. In Johns-Manville plant health service has been maintained for years with Dr. Stevenson in charge. Dr. Smith has just been employed to assist him. Dr. Smith was with the Aluminum Company of Canada on foreign service. There is a small but fairly well-equipped hospital and health records on employees extending over a period of years. It is hoped to enlarge the hospital facilities soon and install newer x-ray equipment. It was recommended that a new machine be at least 300 milliamperes and preferably 500 in order to secure adequate chest films for asbestosis.

11. In Asbestos, Dr. Smith said the incidence of tuberculosis appeared to be in the young women employed in the weaving and spinning mill. Operations are very dusty. Personal hygiene, living habits, and nutrition of these girls in his opinion, were poor. Plans are under way to have a nutritionist demonstrate proper lunches and the preparation of other meals. Mr. McCaw was interested in securing all the health education materials of the Metropolitan which might help in this industrial situation. New ventilating equipment is being installed in the spinning and weaving section. The electrostatic precipitator which collects the dust from the various operations is working about 75 percent efficiently, mainly because the increased tempo of operations is overloading it.

12. At our suggestion, the three managers of asbestos mines in Thetford agreed to invite the laboratory man from Dr. Tourangeau's industrial hygiene department in the Provincial Health Department to visit Thetford and work alongside Mr. Fehnel in making dust collections. This invitation was extended by Mr. Sabourin, legal representative of the Asbestos Producers Association, to Dr. Tourangeau when we called on the latter in Quebec.

13. We suggested that the effort be made to have the Compensation Commission insist that x-rays, taken to demonstrate asbestosis, be made by a standard technique and that, if possible, diagnostic criteria be established. Mr. Sabourin thought it would be possible to have a committee on asbestosis made up of Canadian and American medical authorities meetiin Montreal and formulate such standards. He also believed a clinical symposium on asbestosis could be arranged, to which practicing physicians in communities near the asbestos industry would be encouraged to attend by paying one-half of their expenses. Dr. Gardner and Dr. Lanza were authorities mentioned to speak at this symposium and for membership on the Committee on Asbestosis.

Re Industrial Health Clinic in Thetford

1. The establishment of a clinic is a legal requirement in the asbestos industry. The government has recently ruled to allow the industry to establish its own health service.

2. Three companies have agreed to spend about $60,000 to establish the clinic.

3. The position of full-time industrial physician will be offered to Dr. Paul Cartier whom I met and interviewed in Montreal. If he accepts he will start at once to plan his program and secure equipment.

4. Clinic will be operated by a committee composed of the three managers. I suggested that the physician be a member of this committee.

5. Dr. Cartier, or whoever is appointed to the position, will have freedom and $1000 yearly for professional study and travel.

B. Visits in Montreal

1. Radio Corporation of Canada

a. Dr. Kaufman critical of M.L.I. Medical Examiners on A&H follow-up. This criticism has been passed on to Dr. Burnette (see Exhibit A).
b. Abnormally high claim rate in radio-assembly section where there are 90 percent females. Causes—neurasthenia, weakness, fatigue, anemia.
c. At Mr. Fehnel's recommendation, ventilating hoods have been provided on operations involving soldering. He will make recheck survey.

2. Charles E. Frosst and Co.

a. Planning health service for employees. Sent Dr. Lozinsky, Director of Research and in charge of developing service, description of service for small plant (Exhibit B).
b. Observed several working locations where dust and drug concentration in atmosphere might be hazard. (Mr. Fehnel arranged to visit and make survey.)

3. Congress of Industrial Physicians

This is a group of about 25 physicians employed in industry around Montreal. Dr. Graham Ross, of National Breweries, is president. Mr. Fehnel and I spoke to this group on the work of the Industrial Hygiene Bureau and some postwar problems in industrial medicine. Dr. Ross would like Metropolitan industrial hygiene literature which would be appropriate for these physicians. (Dr. Burnette has been informed.)

INDIVIDUALS MET DURING TRIP

Radio Corporation of Canada
Mr. Leacock, the new President
Mr. McCallum, Personnel Director
Dr. Kaufman, Medical Director
Mr. Rousseau, Safety Director

Charles E. Frosst and Company
Eliot S. Frosst, President
Mr. Sheen, Plant Manager
Dr. Losinsky, Director of Research

Asbestos Corporation
Mr. Robert Steele, President, Montreal
Mr. Alfred Penhale, Manager, Thetford

Montreal Anti-Tuberculosis League
Dr. Paul Cartier

National Breweries
Dr. Graham Ross, Medical Director

Aluminum Company of Canada
Dr. Fildfell, Medical Director

Asbestos Producers Association of Quebec
Mr. Ivan Sabourin

Mr. Sabourin made arrangements with the three operators in Thetford Mines and with the Johns-Manville Plant in Asbestos for us to inspect and make dust surveys. He also took us in his car on the trip from Montreal to Asbestos to Thetford to Quebec, and back to Montreal, and assisted us in meeting officials in the Provincial Health Department in Quebec City.

Johns-Manville
Mr. H. K. Sherry, Manager
Mr. McCaw, Director of Industrial Relations
Dr. Stevenson, Medical Director
Dr. Smith, Assistant to Dr. Stevenson

Johnson's Company
Mr. Andrew Johnson, President

Bell Mines
Mr. O. C. Smith, President

Dr. Sirou, practicing physician in Thetford Mines

Miss Chess, Metropolitan Nurse, and in addition the

Sisters in charge of the hospital in Thetford and a number of the

Plant Superintendents and Engineers in the four mines which were inspected.

Quebec Health Department

Dr. Paul Perrot, Statistician
Dr. A. P. Foley, Provincial Epidemiologist
Dr. Jean Gregoire, Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare
Dr. Jules Gilbert, Director of Health Education
Dr. F. J. Tourangeau, Director of Industrial Hygiene

Communities for Which Information on Tuberculosis Mortality and Health Conditions Is Being Obtained

Chicoutimi
Cap de Madeleine
St. Jean
St. Hyacinthe
Rimouski
Valleyfield
Asbestos
Thetford

EXHIBIT A

October 25, 1944

Dr. Norman L. Burnette
Assistant Secretary
Canadian Head Office

Dear Norman:

Your questionnaire regarding community health services and living conditions, which you planned to send to the Nurses in communities in which we are making the tuberculosis mortality study, reached me today. I think it covers everything we talked about Saturday and should give us the necessary information. If it seems necessary and we are in doubt about conditions it may be possible for me to make an inspection visit later on. I assume from your letter that you can secure the information from a trusted source known to you in Rimouski. If you are in doubt about a source in Asbestos, I believe I can secure this information through Dr. Smith, the assistant to Dr. Stevenson at Canadian Johns-Manville in Asbestos.

I have several questions which I did not take up with you on Saturday which relate to my visit. (1) Dr. Graham Ross, Medical Director of National Breweries, Montreal, was interested in our industrial health material. He has about 25 physicians in his professional organization which he and Dr. Fildfell, Medical Director of Aluminum Company of Canada, are organizing. He could use 25 copies of appropriate literature for these men. Do you have supplies of our Industrial Health Series and do you wish to supply Dr. Ross with them? (2) Mr. C. M. McCaw, in charge of Industrial Relations of Canadian Johns-Manville, Asbestos, Que., is interested in having health education material for educational work with their employees in Asbestos. They have become quite active in safety education and now want to turn to health education. He wanted to be supplied with the health education material which we have available. Do you have literature you can send him? If not, what do you wish done? I might also mention that Mr. McCaw raised the question about nursing service. He said that the impression had been given them that they would have nursing service when the insurance was purchased. I explained that we provide nursing service where it is available and that would not necessarily follow the contract. You perhaps know the background of this and you may wish to say something to him.

In connection with the nursing service, I gave Miss Chess the names of the managers of the two mines we insure in Thetford, Mr. O. C. Smith of the Bell Mines, and Mr. Andrew Johnson, of Johnson's Mine. She is planning to call on them this week.

(3) Mr. Ivan Sabourin is also interested in Metropolitan health literature. I shall arrange to put him on the Statistical Bulletin mailing list, but am in doubt as to what you prefer to do about other health literature. Would

you prefer to send him material in which you think he would be interested through the Head Office or would you wish us to do so?

While I was at RCA in Canada I met Dr. Kaufman, Mr. McCallum, and Mr. Rousseau; Medical Director, Personnel Director, and Safety Director respectively. Their claim rate, as you know, is running currently around 40 per 1,000, according to data which they have at hand. Peak was reached during August, which was more than twice this rate, I believe. Dr. Kaufman does not believe that these claims are all for legitimate illness. He is particularly critical of the part played by the Company Medical Examiners in claim administration. He said they were poorly trained for their work and their follow-up visits did not aid in the control of malingering. He stated that the Company should employ laboratory diagnostic tests such as blood examination, x-rays, etc., to check up on vague diagnoses submitted by attending physicians. The predominant diagnoses are neurasthenia, weakness, anemia, etc., and occur among the female employees, particularly in the radio assembly department, which has about 90 percent females.

In Asbestos Dr. Stevenson, who is the Johns-Manville physician, is also Medical Examiner for the Company. He mentioned that employees were abusing their A&H insurance. He has talked with local physicians about their signing of certificates and their excuse is that they are accommodating the patients. One of the attending physicians suggested that the Company print in bold letters on the form, which is given to the attending physician to fill out, that the insurance is not intended to cover vacations, rest periods, etc.

I did not know whether this comes within your province, but I thought that I would pass it on to you to do whatever you see fit.

Sincerely yours,

George M. Wheatley, M.D.
Assistant Medical Director