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INDUSTRIAL INSULATOR

April - May, 1968

Vol. XIII, No. 3

SELIKOFF TESTIFIES BEFORE CONGRESS

Dr. Irving J. Selikoff, consultant for the International Union of Asbestos Workers and professor of community medicine at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, City of New York, testified before the House Select Subcommittee on Labor regarding the problem of asbestosis and how the Administration's Safety Bill (H.R. 14816) would assist to protect workers. A portion of his testimony follows:

"It is an unhappy reflection on all of us -- government, public health authorities, the medical profession -- that at this time in the United States in the 1960's, seven per cent of all deaths among insulation workers are due to a completely preventable cause, pulmonary asbestosis."

Dr. Selikoff said that in the course of his research he has studied the health experience since 1942 of 632 members of Asbestos Workers Locals 12 and 32 in the New York - New Jersey metropolitan area. Since 1942, he said, 27 of the original 632 workers have died of asbestosis, out of a total of 367 deaths.

Dr. Selikoff said the men were studied over a period of many years because those who work with asbestos "do not get asbestosis in five, ten or 15 years after starting work -- asbestosis will become significant and death may follow 25, 30 or more years following the start of their first job. A similar period of clinical latency is true of asbestos cancer, as well."

Had the health experience of the 632 men been the same as for the general population, he said, 203 deaths could have been expected over the interval of 20 years or longer. "Instead, 255 men died. As we look for the reason for the extra 50 deaths, it becomes evident that cancers of several types are responsible for the excess deaths. Thus, while we might have expected six or seven deaths due to lung cancer among these men, there were 45. While we would have expected nine or ten cancers of the stomach or colon, there were 29."

The medical witness commented that the federal standards bill "will go a long way in improving the unfortunate conditions that now exist... The asbestos industry in general and the insulation industry in particular are much too important and much too valuable to be limited or injured by default. Appropriate safety measures are thus in the interests of both the industry and its employees."

Dr. Selikoff continued:

"Workmen in the trade expect and await the measures necessary to eliminate or diminish the hazards to which they are exposed.

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I recently inquired of them what problems they had noted in their practical experience. Over 13,000 took the trouble to write me with suggestions about cleaning up their trade, ranging from the availability of improved masks through less dusty materials, improved working practices, appropriate exhausts, appropriate health examinations and the vacuuming of clothes before going home.

"It is idle and largely inaccurate to 'blame the industry' for the present situation. It is sometimes not appreciated that 'industry' is not an all-powerful monolithic single entity -- certainly it is not in the insulation trade. In this trade, most employers are small business men, with limited resources, employing few men. When I looked into this matter at the end of 1965, there were over 900 employers in the industry, employing an average of 17.6 men per shop.

"Such employers have neither the expertise, nor funds, nor knowledge to have detected these health hazards. They are just as much upset by them as are their men. Nor can they mount the necessary engineering and industrial hygiene programs to develop adequate safeguards to remove these hazards. They will be anxious, I am sure, to undertake appropriate occupational health and industrial hygiene programs once these are suggested to them. This, I assume, is in line with the purposes of the bill.

"In the insulation trade, it is my impression that, while all would welcome the necessary measures, unless the public health authorities and those responsible for the occupational health measures take action, nothing will be done. In large part, this is because no one knows where the responsibility actually lies. Does it belong with the materials manufacturers? The individual employer? The regional employers' associations? The national employers' association? The national materials manufacturers' association? The local unions? The international union?

"...I would suggest that it is very much in the interest of industry in general, and the insulation industry in particular, to have, as the proposed bill suggests, adequate authority given to the Department of Labor to set these standards necessary to reduce or eliminate occupational health hazards. I do not refer to these callous statistics which indicate that it is cheaper in the long run to have adequate safety and health precautions than to pay workmen's compensation costs. While this may be true, there is a much more important aspect to the question.

"In many instances, where there is intra-industry and inter-industry competition, it is often the most conscientious employer who is at a competitive disadvantage. This is certainly true in those industries in which there is a risk of pneumoconioses or dust diseases of the lungs, as silicosis, coal workers' pneumoconiosis, talcosis and asbestosis. Since there is, as we have seen, a long latent period -- usually over 20 years -- between dust exposure and diseases resulting from such exposure, precautions taken today will bear fruit, in the form of the employees' good health, two decades or more hence. But at that time, it is highly likely that the employee will be working elsewhere. The employer is investing in current occupational health precautions, sees no immediate benefit, not even in reduction of workmen's compensation costs. If he must pay the latter to current employees who are ill, he is paying for the neglect of another employer twenty or thirty years before.

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"This analysis is relevant to the insulation trade today. I have spoken to many insulation contractors. They have been very concerned with the difficulties that have become evident and earnestly wish to remedy matters. Yet they have told me that if substantial investments or significant changes in working practices and conditions were required as part of the program to make this trade safe for the men working in it, such investments should be industry-wide and should not penalize those who undertake them in favor of those who do not.

"Standards based upon information collected and evaluated by experts in the Public Health Service, set on practical and realistic levels by the Secretary of Labor with adequate enforcement powers, and required by all employers in the industry seem essential to correct the serious situation I have outlined. The industry itself has neither the academic and scientific nor the administrative resources to prepare the appropriate corrective program and, the economic facts of life are such as to mitigate against the broad application of such a program by voluntary persuasion alone.

"Moreover, these influences are even more relevant when considering the social and community responsibilities which may exist. If the use of asbestos insulation materials should be shown to include some health hazard to other construction workmen as the result of concomitant indirect occupational exposure, we would need some mechanism as that outlined in this Bill to insure appropriate corrective measures, since many employers might hesitate to undertake expensive precautionary measures to prevent uncertain disease that might occur many years later among men they did not know, did not employ and for whom they had no responsibility -- especially if in making such an investment they assumed an intolerable competitive disadvantage."

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HAPPENINGS!! AND NEWS OF THE INDUSTRY

Ralph Sartori is recovering satisfactorily from a heart attack late in April. He expects to be back on the job before too long. ------- Bob Harris at Anchorage is now President of the Alaska Chapter of AIC, having replaced Hazel Brown in this year's election. ------- AIC's Board of Directors will meet on June 14 at Lake Tahoe. Final plans for the Annual Meeting at the same location in late October will be completed, along with other business. ------- The Asbestos Workers have requested another increase in the pension contributions rate. You may already have been called by the President of your local chapter. In case you have not, let him know how you feel on the pension plan. A meeting is expected with the Union Representatives in San Francisco on June 27. ------- Your attention is directed to a speech which was made by Mr. William Cour, Chairman of the National Joint Board for the Settlement of Jurisdictional Disputes, to the Building and Construction Trades Department in Florida last November

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and reproduced in the February issue of the Asbestos Worker. Mr. Cour's comments are most appropriate and do duscuss the operations of the National Joint Board. Mr. Hutchingson comments, as General President of the Union, on Mr. Cour's statement, as follows: "It will be our aim to adhere strictly to the rules of the National Joint Board and we hope that in this way we will do our part in alleviating the many problems that Mr. Cour refers to." ------- Frank Calegory and Ken McCaffree met with Drs. Tabershaw and Cooper at the University of California to discuss a consultant agreement with them on the occupational health program. A full report and agreement will be presented to the Occupational Health Plan Trustees on June 27. -------- No report yet on the Vancouver contractors. The group met twice this month to consider formal affiliation with AIC. The prospects, according to Herb Scollan of J. K. Campbell, Ltd., look good. ---------- An individual firm member of IDCNA pays $250 annual dues. The AIC firm pays only into the regional treasury, and the average amount is less than $50 per firm for national association membership. Some say that IDCNA membership doesn't cost, it pays!!

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LABOR ISSUES

Union Wage Demands Upset Cabinet Committee: Concerned over escalating cost, the President's Cabinet Committee on Price Stability, formed in January, expressed alarm over current contract demands of building trades and warned that outsized settlements prior to peak building season "could imperil efforts to regain price stability." Noting that annual wage-fringe gains in contracts negotiated last year averaged a sizable 7 per cent plus, one-third above all-industry figure, the Committee said sharp wage and price boosts in key construction industry "spread inflation throughout the economy by raising costs elsewhere and by intensifying wage demands in other industries."

Prefab Report Foresees No Revolution: Report on prospective advances and impact of prefabrication in construction industry, prepared by Battelle Memorial Institute at the request of the AFL-CIO Building Trades Department, says applied changes in technology between now and 1975 will be slow and evolutionary, not revolutionary. Most formidable constraints are listed as being buying public's resistance to innovation and fragmented structure of industry, with unions, building codes, architects, capital, and transportation being lesser inhibiting factors. Based on 11-month study, report concludes that anticipated inroads of prefabrication will assist growth of about half of building trades unions -- particularly Operating Engineers and IBEW -- and deter expansion of rest. Majority of unions, it adds, will experience shifts of their membership from on-site to factory locations.

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Union-Label Proviso Struck Down By NLRB:
Disagreeing with trial examiner, NLRB finds that Sheet Metal Workers in Seattle and Tacoma unlawfully entered into "hot cargo" agreements with employers requiring them to install only materials bearing union label. Board rejects view of examiner that union's conduct was aimed at enforcing lawful contract clause prohibiting handling of prefabricated products manufactured at less than construction wage rates.

Nevada Court Holds Fringe Contributions "Wages":
Nevada Supreme Court, with one member dissenting, affirms trial court judgment that sums owed to Carpenter welfare and pension funds are entitled to priority over claims of other creditors in default proceeding. State statute requiring contractors to post bonds reads, "A claim of any employee of the contractor for labor shall be preferred claim against such bond or cash deposit." Court says, "Simply because some of the workman's pay goes into a fund for his sickness and old-age security instead of in a paycheck does not alter the fact that the fringe benefits are a result of his own efforts the same as the money he puts in his pocket."

Average Hourly Wage Hits $4.90 In First Quarter:
Wage increases in first three months of this year lifted average hourly scale of union building tradesmen to $4.90 as of April 1, Bureau of Labor Statistics reports. Addition of hourly fringe costs boosts figure to $5.37 — 6.2 per cent, or 31.2 cents, higher than year ago. Average base rates range from $3.79 for Laborers to $5.39 for Bricklayers.

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