FILE NAME: Asbestos Sacks and Bags (ASB)

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Asbestos at the docks

Sir,—I refer to the article by Dr Alfred Byrne, "Dockers Fear Health Peril from Asbestos." In the present state of scientific medical knowledge, mesothelioma should not, surely, be allowed to cause panic reactions until the fullest details regarding its distribution and causes are fully understood.

The work of our dockers, unlike that of men in asbestos production industries, is non-continuous and limited as to time and exposure to injurious substances. Dr Byrne's earlier article, to which he refers, implies quite terrifying risks even to persons handling preparations of asbestos commonly used in their own household chores. From what he has said it could appear that the danger of mesothelioma might be present on any building site or in the homes of the public where preparations such as asbestos wool-lagging are commonly used.

Although asbestos has not been regarded as having likely association with the development of mesothelioma among the dockers one is unable to say that scientific investigations still going on concerning a variety known as crocidolite might not one day show it as a noxious substance of more severe significance.

The Port of London Authority during the summer of 1965 were active in co-operating with the Ministry of Labour and others to pursue investigations and formulate measures by which any sort of risk from asbestos cargoes generally would best be tackled. On the findings and recommendations of these inquiries representations were made to the shippers to ensure new and better methods of packaging crude cargoes of asbestos coming into the country. The report produced to the parties concerned does not apparently diverge to any great extent from what was subsequently circulated by my department to Port of London Authority staff; it was concluded that such risk as there might be in this country would not amount to more for dock labourers than for other workers.

Dr Byrne's articles are of interest as containing expressions of broad scientific conjecture published where they will attract attention from many who have no access to informed and impartial opinion.

In his concluding paragraphs one is happier when noting an admission that questions of packaging and loading are in fact exercising the "ingenuity of doctors, scientists and industrialists throughout the world." Dr Byrne, however, does not give credit to the Port of London Authority for the part which they have played and are playing in this connection. Whenever questions are raised about objectionable cargoes the Authority is invariably interested to seek for and press measures by which these can be mitigated and controlled.

The Authority's health policy is directed to prevention rather than passive acceptance of unknown risks. Accident Prevention Committees, on which sit representatives of the staff, meet regularly at the docks and their questions and observations on subjects of physical accidents and possible injuries to health are regularly passed to the Authority's head office, where they are considered and advised on by members of management and of the medical department.

In conclusion, it can be said that since December, 1946, when comprehensive returns of health of all Port of London Authority staff were initiated, there is no instance of any case of asbestosis, or malignant growth of the lung attributable to asbestos, or of mesothelioma, being reported in the service.

A M Lawrence-Smith,
Medical Officer, Port of London Authority
London E C 3

Dr Alfred Byrne writes: Dr Lawrence-Smith has failed to deal with the several points in his circular to the dockers, where, I suggested, he was factually wrong. His letter is equally inaccurate if it is claiming that the P L A has removed the risk of asbestos from the docks. Moreover, I find no comfort in his assertion that no cases of mesothelioma have arisen since 1946, seeing that it takes an average of 40 years for the tumour to appear.

Fixing the rate

Sir,—We were intrigued to learn from last Sunday's article ("Dockers fear health peril from asbestos") that payment of 2s. per hour has some beneficial or preventive effect on pleural cancers from inhaled asbestos, and would appreciate information on the research which led to the fixing of a particular sum to combat the occurrence of mesothelioma.

This principle of prevention by payment could perhaps be extended to other forms of disease. Just to make sure in the case of the dockers, we would suggest that 2s. 4d. or 2s. 9½d. per hour may be even more beneficial.

J L J de Bary, M R C S, L R C P, D I H
A. Ward Gardner, M D, D I H
D C Murphy, B Sc, F R I C, F Inst Pet.
Fawley, Hants

Sunday Times 6.11.66

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Hazards of asbestos dust

Leader, Saskatoon, Sask. Nov. 12th 1966

Asbestos dust may be more incidiously lethal than many authorities believe. The current issue of the medical journal "The Lancet" reports the death of a man of 48 from the coincident development of asbestosis and an associated form of cancer. His only exposure to asbestos dust had occurred thirty years ago when he worked for six months as a grinder in an asbestos factory. The case raises several issues, all of social importance.

First, under the existing structure of the Prescribed Diseases Regulations, no claim for disability can be made for the malignancy associated with asbestosis or the asbestosis itself unless exposure to asbestos can be established as having occurred after July 4, 1948, which is a purely administrative date relating to the introduction of the regulations. It is quite clear that the Ministry of Social Security should review these regulations in their application to all diseases which have a long induction period, such as bone necrosis following work in compressed air, and various forms of tumour whose association with working environments is only now becoming clear.

Second, attention should be given to those points in the carriage of bulk asbestos which fall outside the 1931 Asbestos Industry Regulations. These regulations are at present being amended because it is now realised that they are inadequate in the light of present knowledge, yet they are still taken as providing safe exposure limits in such places as docks and transient storage warehouses. Fears expressed by dockers handling asbestos have been allayed by an assurance that malignancy cannot result unless exposure has been heavy enough to cause asbestosis. This is a dangerous assumption, no longer supported by informed medical opinion.

It is all too obvious that the uncontrolled tipping of asbestos waste, like that which took place in Buxworth, in Derbyshire, presents a serious hazard which needs to be suppressed by all possible means including proper legislation. There is no longer any question of "safe" exposure to asbestos, but there is an urgent need of new rigorously controlled methods of handling and packaging. Further, there are experiments under way which propose asphalt-asbestos mixtures for road surfaces. If these prove successful many thousands of tons of asbestos might be used on the roads each year. With wear, would such a surface produce dust, and would asbestos particles begin to reach the atmosphere along all the roads where it was used? Unless these questions can be answered with a stringently proven negative, any authority which uses such surfaces experimentally might be guilty of an action which both morally, and in its results, is as serious as the indiscriminate exposure of a population to high levels of ionising radiation.

Challenge to Gunter on dust peril

A WOMAN MP WITH A CONSTITUENCY OUTSIDE OF DOCKLAND HAS CHALLENGED THE MINISTER OF LABOUR, MR. RAY GUNTER, OVER THE CANCER DANGER TO DOCKERS WHO HANDLE CARGOES OF ASBESTOS.

Mrs. Joyce Butler, Labour MP for Wood Green says she is not satisfied with the reply the Minister gave to her question in Parliament on this issue.

Mr Gunter said:

(Asbestosis is a lung disease which is contracted through working daily over a period of months or years in fairly heavy concentrations of asbestos dust.

I am informed that there is no recorded case of a docker contracting asbestosis from his work, and dockers are therefore no more likely to get lung cancer than anybody else.

VERY RARE

It appears that asbestos is also associated with another kind of cancer called mesothelioma. This affects the covering rather than the substance of the lung.

It may also affect the lining of the abdominal cavity. It is a very rare disease.

Even now, with all the publicity that has been given to the subject in the medical and national press, reports of new cases are still only coming in at the rate of less than 50 a year.

Of the new cases being reported each year, a substantial majority are thought to have had some occupational exposure to asbestos.

Three main kinds of asbestos are imported into this country. About three-quarters of it is chrysotile or white asbestos: about one-fifth is amosite or brown asbestos, and about one-twentieth is crocidolite or blue asbestos.

Current evidence points to blue asbestos as being the variety most commonly associated with mesotheliomas.

It is impossible to be certain that the others are harmless, but the risks are certainly much less than with blue asbestos.

The chance that any individual docker will get mesotheliomas is remote.

This is true even with the precautions that have been taken in the past. My Department is revising the Docks Regulations to require additional precautions.

In the meantime we have recommended to the producers, importers and users that asbestos of any kind should only be imported into and transported within this country if it is in dust and fibre-proof containers.

Unlined hessian sacks allow too much dust to escape. Multi-wall sacks may split under load.

We must assume that blue asbestos cannot be handled safely even in bags which are normally reasonably dust-proof.

Satisfactory conditions can however be obtained if the blue asbestos is packed in dust-proof containers which are then stacked on pallets which can be handled mechanically.

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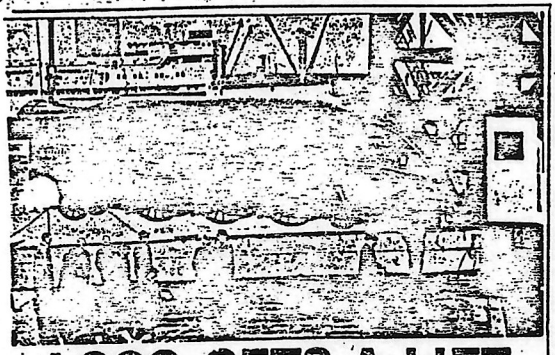
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LOCO GETS A LIFT

BEING loaded on board the MV. BEAVEROAK at the Royal Victoria Dock is the British Rail Pacific Locomotive DOMINION OF CANADA which is being presented to the Canadian Railroad Historical Association for display in their Montreal museum.

The locomotive had been withdrawn from service and was due to be scrapped, but, after being approached by Mr. J. O. Lyle, chairman of Tate and Lyle Ltd., British Rail agreed to make a gift of it to the Association.

While in the workshops, out of running order and short of some parts, the question of restoring and repainting the engine arose.

Tate and Lyle—who have a substantial investment in the Canadian and Dominion Sugar Company—undertook to assist with the cost of the work, which was carried out at a cost of £1,600.

Globe-trotting chiefs will meet in Tokyo

ROUND - the - world trips for two top PLA men will mean a rendezvous in Tokyo, after each has crossed half the globe from a different direction.

TRAVELLER NUMBER ONE is Director-General Mr. Dudley Perkins, whose itinerary takes him via Frankfurt, Rome, Karachi and Bangkok, where he is to stay for a day; through to Hong Kong, where he is to hold a luncheon and a reception and on to Tokyo for the International Association of Ports and Harbours Conference. There he will meet . . .

TRAVELLER NUMBER TWO. Lord Simon, PLA's chairman, who will have arrived via Montreal, where he is scheduled to stay for several days and meet Canadian shippers, at whose Council luncheon he is guest of honour; and Honolulu, after stops at Vancouver, Toronto and Winnipeg.

The two men will attend the six-day conference in Tokyo, go on a post-conference tour of Japan with other delegates, and then the Director-General will continue his way via Honolulu, Vancouver, by train across Canada to Calgary and from Montreal back to London, a month after leaving London.

Lord Simon will return from Tokyo via Anchorage, Alaska and Hamburg before finishing his shorter trip after three weeks away from home.

The trips are designed as PLA-selling tours and during their gruelling, business-packed travels, both men will make valuable business associates and learn more about foreign handling and container techniques.

IN LOVE WITH THE RIVER

This trim craft is a familiar sight down by the River. She's ex-Bluebell girl Sandra Fehr, who lives in sight of the Thames, in Tite Street, Chelsea. She's a keen water skier and an inspector—"But eager to learn" — small boat sailor.

"The River fascinates me. I could spend hours watching the traffic on it," says Sandra.



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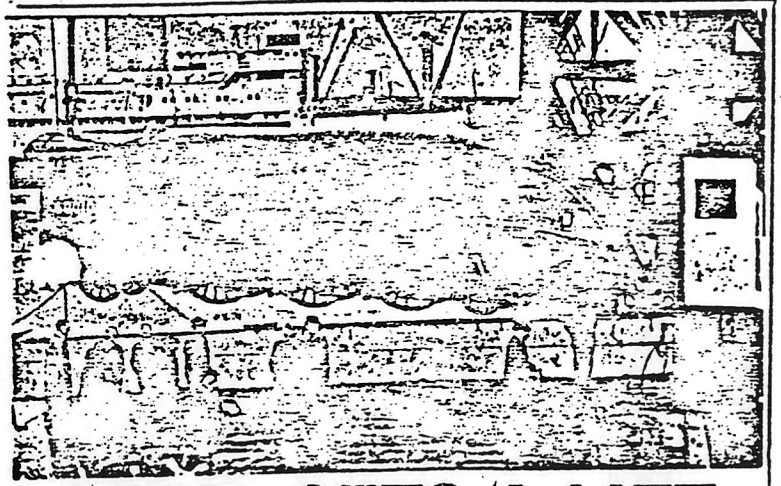
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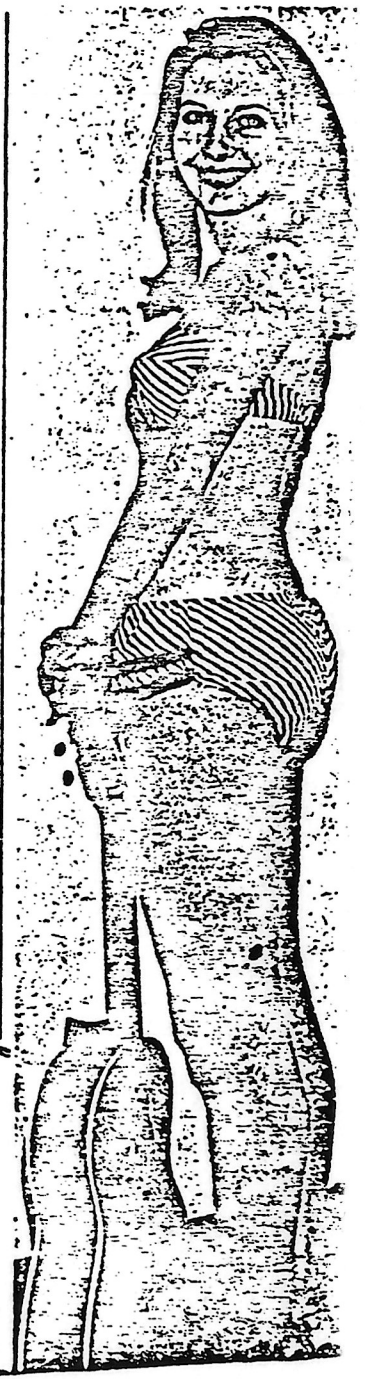
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THE PORT
May 12, 1967

A PORT INQUIRY

'I refuse to work with it'

—says George Cooper

who wrote to us following the report of Mr. Gunter's statement in our last issue.

DEAR SIR, — If the Minister of Labour has been led to believe that asbestosis can only be contracted through extensive work in a heavy concentration of asbestos, he should have read our local paper, the "Stratford Express" which recently reported the following deaths:

The wife

(a) A 68-year-old woman who worked in an asbestos factory — 53 years ago!

(b) A middle-aged wife, whose only contact with asbestos was by washing her docker husband's overalls.

(c) An elderly clerk who once worked in the OFFICE of an asbestos firm.

(d) A man of 53 (my age) who became a "shadow of his old self, and who had to be helped to do everything, whose last three months was sheer agony, despite pain killing drugs that he aged prematurely!

Knowing such things is it any wonder that I have written to the paper stating that until asbestos, whether white, brown or blue is carried in containers, I shall refuse to work this dangerous commodity?

The risk

It is one thing to risk one's own health, it is another to take this risk home to one's wife, children and as in my own case, one's grandchildren.

Although it is a couple of years since I last handled asbestos, I have since taken every opportunity of visiting local mobile X-ray units.

special masks to wear it is another to expect men to work comfortably, efficiently and at piece-work stroke.

The dust

I have seen how the contents of a bag follows one down to the bottom of the lower hold, when a bag bursts, and how the dust settles on the men's clothes, and on other commodities such as cartons of foodstuffs and fruit, cases of tea, bags of beans, etc. (etc.).

I have also noticed that these bags made ideal nesting places for ship's rats and mice.

Not only is it not very nice to turn a bag over to have these jump out, and to find their young inside, but these vermin carry disease themselves.

I have seen that the PLA have also stated that the danger to dockers of asbestosis is not as bad as we think, but I have also seen in an article ("The Sunday Times," October 30, 1966) that these pronouncements are not in accord with the facts.

Misleading

Indeed, Dr. Robert Murray, the TUC's medical adviser, has said that the PLA's document on the subject is misleading, and that even short exposure can cause mesothelioma.

As prevention is better than cure, I agree with the quote of Dr. Robert Murray. "If preventable, why not prevent!"

And I personally re-iterate my statement that I shall not work asbestos until it is completely safe.

GEORGE Wm. COOPER
Sector 4, Form. NASD
90 Queens Road West,
Plaistow, E13.

THE I



Mr. GEORGE COOPER pictured at the docks.

Asbestos load is rejected

ONLY last week the BALTIC MERCHANT returned to Leningrad from the Surrey Commercial Docks with a consignment of asbestos that it had brought from Russia a week earlier, still intact in its hold.

Stevedores had unloaded the remainder of the ship's cargo, but when they came to the asbestos they claimed that it was not properly packed. The main fault with it was bad stitching at the neck of the sacks.

The stevedores — members of the National Stevedores and Dockers Union — contacted their area officer. He inspected the asbestos and confirmed their view.

He then informed the head office of the union and Mr. Leslie Newman, the acting Stevedores secretary took over.

Efforts were made to get the men to change their minds, but without success.

Eventually a meeting was arranged on the spot between the ship's representatives, medical men and union officials.

Mr. Newman said: "I inspected the asbestos bags together with the others and I had no hesitation in confirming my members' action. When the bag was moved asbestos dust escaped."

Further efforts were still made to get the union to change their decision—again without success.

The BALTIC MERCHANT was loaded with 914 tons of general cargo and sailed from Quebec Dock bound for Leningrad with the asbestos still intact in its hold.

WHAT THE FIGURES SHOW

THE FACTS ABOUT

A NEW STATEMENT SIGNED BY ALL SIDES:

'No unacceptable risk exists'

A STATEMENT has been released this week that should ease considerably the worries of dockers over the handling of cargoes of asbestos.

The statement—which has been prepared after a long inquiry into all aspects of the problem—is signed by Dr. A. M. Lawrence-Smith, Medical Officer of the PLA; Dr. Robert Murray, Medical Adviser to the Trades Union Congress; and Dr. Kenneth Perry, Consultant Physician to the London Hospital.

Dr. Lawrence-Smith said this week: "Because of the alarm that had been caused by publicity about asbestosis, I pressed for a three-man inquiry, which would be representative of all sides, to inquire into this.

"The result is that we have produced a statement which relates very definitely to the Port industry."

Dr. Perry is an expert on toxic diseases especially the effects of toxic dust on the lungs.

The statement reads:

"We have met and discussed the implications of the above commodity as a source of injury to health. We have taken due count of published medical opinion and of official statements by H.M. Chief Inspector of Factories as well as reports by the Pneumoconiosis Panel and all other relevant information available to us.

Our inquiries have found no cases of injury to the health of a dock worker in the Port of London that could have resulted from employment there with asbestos cargoes; and we have no knowledge of any cases of asbestosis occurring otherwise in the docks industry in this country as a result of dock work.

We have examined the methods of packaging used by the shippers, and have visited and inspected the methods of stowage in ships, as well as the procedures followed in the Port of London Authority for handling asbestos packaged cargoes, and we are satisfied that with asbestos packaged according to the requirements explained to us, namely in impervious lined bags, the future risk should be negligible and no special protective measures should be needed in the docks.

In the event of sub-standard packaging being met with among cargoes received, we would recommend that the rate of discharge should be controlled by local agreements more particularly if bursting of bags occurs. Respiratory protection would then be advisable during clearing up operations, using approved respirators.

We are fully satisfied, so far as the docks industry is concerned, that no unacceptable risk at present exists and that provided the currently approved requirements and methods of work are followed, dockers may proceed with confidence in the handling of asbestos cargoes.

We are at the same time of the opinion that there is a need for continuing vigilance by the Port authorities to ensure the exclusion of developing hazards and for this purpose we recommend the regular inspection of cargoes of asbestos together with proper supervision of the health of docks staff."

Special remarks and observations by Dr. Murray:

I consider that under Paragraph 5, the continuing vigilance of the Port Authorities should include regular environmental monitoring of the unloading operation and appropriate medical examination of dockers with long service including exposure to asbestos cargoes.

Dr. Murray asked for the sider to be added because he believes regular tests should be made of the atmosphere when asbestos is being unloaded to ensure that then concentration does not reach too high a level. If it does, he feels the ship should be sent back.



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Dr. ROBERT MURRAY

MEDICAL OFFICERS GIVE THEIR VIEWS

THREE eminent medical officers this week gave their views on asbestosis.

"The docker may work a cargo for a few hours and then not touch it again for weeks or even months.

"We are, however, going to tighten up the docks regulations to make certain that asbestos is carried in containers or properly sealed bags. Then they won't be exposed at all to it."

He went on: "Because asbestos is dangerous and because asbestos importers want to import it, they must see that no people are exposed to this dust.

"He believed that with whites and bags bursting then I think it is

employees to take risks it was his duty to take every conceivable measure to see that the employees were protected.



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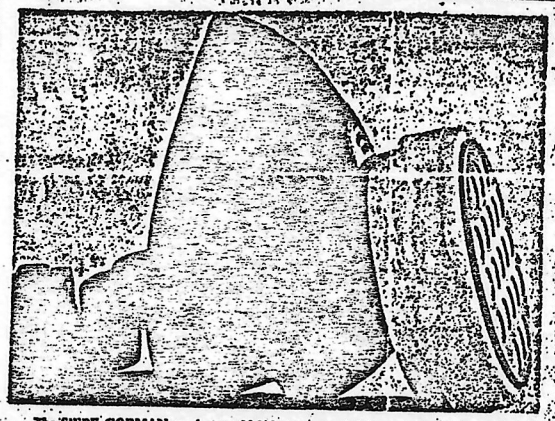


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The SIEBE GORMAN respirator which is recommended for use when asbestos is being handled in the Docks. In the joint statement — alongside here — the three doctors insist that respirators must be used particularly if bursting of bags occurs.

How it all began...

IT ALL BEGAN with what seemed to be a harmless paragraph in a paper published in the British Journal of Industrial Medicine in October 1956.

The title was "MESOTHELIOMA OF PLEURA AND PERITONEUM FOLLOWING EXPOSURE TO ASBESTOS IN THE LONDON AREA."

It was presented by Muriel L. Newhouse and Hilda Thompson of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

The paragraph that has become so widely quoted since then illustrated how the dependents of people in contact with asbestos could just as easily contract asbestosis.

A wife of a docker, it said, had died of the disease after she had brushed down her husband every night for three or four years when he came home "with his dungarees covered in asbestos dust."

A medical correspondent for a national newspaper followed it up, other newspapers quickly did the same and before long asbestosis had become a major issue in Dockland.

Medical experts have since queried the authenticity of the case.

They say: How many cases occur of a docker handling so much asbestos EVERY DAY for a period of three or four years that EVERY NIGHT his clothes are "covered in asbestos dust"?

They point out that (a) There is not a cargo of asbestos to be unloaded every day; and (b) even if there was, it would be done by different gangs.

● **What is the position then today? First the medical facts and history.**

ASBESTOSIS is the damaging of the lung by inhaling

Later that year there was a published account of two cases of squamous cancer of the lung occurring with asbestosis.

One was a young woman aged 35 exposed, as a spinner, to asbestos for eight years; the other, also a woman, aged 71, had, in all, two years exposure in the mattress and opening department of an asbestos factory, but some 15 years before.

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The Ministry of Labour in their Chief Medical Inspector's report for 1966 conceded: "The latest data suggest that there is a considerable risk of men and women with asbestosis ultimately dying from a lung cancer."

On mesothelioma — the other disease believed to be caused by inhaling asbestos dust — the Ministry's report said: "In contrast to lung cancer, mesothelioma has been rarely diagnosed until recent years. No doubt earlier cases were diagnosed as

limited that there is hardly any danger at all to his health.

BUT they cannot guarantee there is NO danger, and the dockers argue back that while there is any danger at all — never mind how small — they are justified in pressing for every possible precaution to be taken.

That is why the Ministry of Labour is now working on a new set of docks regulations for the packaging of asbestos.

The draft of these should be available later this year, and these, it is hoped, will solve the problem once and for all.

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But it was made clear that although Mr. Lowe was a docker at the time of his death, it was 15 years since he had last worked with asbestos with a firm of boiler rover makers.

This bears out the medical opinions that any time up to 40 years can elapse between exposure to asbestos and the disease becoming fatal.

In November last year an inquest was held on a 48-year-old docks tally clerk who had died of mesothelioma. It was stated that he had worked in the docks for more than 20 years — although only for about eight years as a tally clerk.

The East Ham inquest was told that doctors at East Ham Memorial Hospital had inquired into the man's contact with asbestos and it was found that he had worked for about six months on a grinding machine at an asbestos company when he was 16.

The pathologist pointed out that asbestos mesothelioma was known to have a long incubation period and that six months was probably about the minimum exposure period necessary to produce that effect.

● Precautions are taken in the docks with the unloading of asbestos — as they are where all dangerous materials are involved.

● Protective clothing and respirators are issued.

● Dockers are paid an extra two shillings an hour while they are unloading asbestos.

But they say they would prefer the proper packing precautions to be taken rather than have the extra money.

The first union action over the handling of asbestos followed very quickly after the [illegible] of the docker's wife.

Members of the National Stevedores and Dockers Union refused to unload asbestos from a Russian ship in the Surrey Commercial Docks because in the words of a union official: "The dust was flying all over the place."

The union called in a doctor. He inspected the cargo and confirmed that as it was packed, it was a health danger. The ship sailed back to Russia with the asbestos still in its hold.

Since then members of NASDU and the Transport and General Workers Union have refused to handle asbestos when they consider it is not packed properly.

Ships have been frequently sent back with their asbestos cargoes still intact and the two unions now have agreed a general policy on the handling of the material.

But Britain badly needs asbestos. Ironically it is responsible for preserving far more lives than it takes and is alleged to threaten.

● Mr. Jim Read, acting dockers' secretary of NASDU, said: "We have no objection to our members handling asbestos provided it

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recently reported the following deaths:

The wife

(a) A 58-year-old woman who worked in an asbestos factory — 53 years ago!

(b) A middle-aged wife, whose only contact with asbestos was by washing her docker husband's overalls.

(c) An elderly clerk who once worked in the OFFICE of an asbestos firm.

(d) A man of 53 (my age) who became a "shadow of his old self, and who had to be helped to do everything, whose last three months was much agony, despite pain killing drugs that he aged prematurely!

Knowing such things is it any wonder that I have written to the paper stating that until asbestos, whether white, brown or blue is carried in containers, I shall refuse to work this dangerous commodity?

The risk

It is one thing to risk one's own health, it is another to take this risk home to one's wife, children and as in my own case, one's grandchildren.

Although it is a couple of years since I last handled asbestos, I have since taken every opportunity of visiting local mobile X-ray units.

It is one thing to supply

and fruit, cases of tea, bags of beans, etc.

I have also noticed that these bags made ideal nesting places for ship's rats and mice.

Not only is it not very nice to turn a bag over to have these jump out, and to find their young inside, but these vermin carry disease themselves.

I have been told the PLA have also stated that the danger to dockers of asbestosis is not as bad as we think, but I have also seen in an article ("The Sunday Times," October 30, 1966) that these pronouncements are not in accord with the facts.

Misleading

Indeed, Dr. Robert Murray, the TUC's medical adviser, has said that the PLA's document on the subject is misleading, and that even short exposure can cause mesothelioma.

As prevention is better than cure, I agree with the quote of Dr. Robert Murray, "If preventable, why not prevent?"

And I personally re-iterate my statement that I shall not work asbestos until it is consigned to the furnace.

GEORGE Wm. COOPER
Sector 4, Ferm. NASD
90 Queens Road West,
Ilaiton, E13.

Asbestos load is rejected

ONLY last week the BALTIC MERCHANT returned to Leningrad from the Surrey Commercial Docks with a consignment of asbestos that it had brought from Russia a week earlier, still intact in its hold.

Stevedores had unloaded the remainder of the ship's cargo, but when they came to the asbestos they claimed that it was not properly packed. The main fault with it was bad stitching at the neck of the sacks.

The stevedores — members of the National Stevedores and Dockers Union — contacted their area officer. He inspected the asbestos and confirmed their view.

HE then informed the head office of the union and Mr. Leslie Newman, the acting Stevedores secretary took over.

Efforts were made to get the men to change their minds, but without success.

Eventually a meeting was arranged on the spot between the ship's representatives, medical men and union officials.

Mr. Newman said: "I inspected the asbestos bags together with the others and I had no hesitation in confirming my members' action. When the bag was moved asbestos dust escaped."

Further efforts were still made to get the union to change their decision—again without success.

The BALTIC MERCHANT was loaded with 914 tons of general cargo and sailed from Quebec Dock bound for Leningrad with the asbestos still intact in its hold.

WHAT THE FIGURES SHOW

These are the last official figures of deaths from asbestosis to be published by the Ministry of Labour.

They show that with male deaths 32.9 per cent of the cases of asbestosis developed into cancer of the lung, and with females the percentage dropped to 14.

Only 13 cases of mesothelioma are included in these figures.

Period	Males			Females		
	Asbestosis—all deaths	Asbestosis with cancer of lung	Percentage with cancer of lung	Asbestosis—all deaths	Asbestosis with cancer of lung	Percentage with cancer of lung
1924—1930	33	—	Nil	7	—	Nil
1931—1940	66	13(1)	19·7	82	5	6·1
1941—1950	92	21(2)	22·8	45	5(1)	11·1
1951—1960	144	45	31·3	40	11	27·5
1961—1964	413	62(3)	54·7	26	7(4)	26·9
1924—1964	428	141	32·9	200	28	14·0

(1) Includes one case recorded as "cancer of pleura."
(2) Includes one case recorded as "sarcoma of pleura."
(3) Includes eleven cases recorded as "mesothelioma of pleura".
(4) Includes two cases recorded as "mesothelioma of pleura".

We have met and discussed the implications of the commodity as a source of injury to health. We taken due count of published medical opinion and of o statements by H.M. Chief Inspector of Factories as w reports by the Pneumoconiosis Panel and all other rel information available to us.

Our inquiries have found no cases of injury to health of a dock worker in the Port of London that c have resulted from employment there with asbestos car and we have no knowledge of any cases of asbestosis oc ing otherwise in the docks industry in this country as sult of dock work.

We have examined the methods of packaging usec the shippers, and have visited and inspected the methoc



Dr. ROBERT MURRAY

MEDICAL GIVE TH

THREE eminent medical officers this week gave their views on asbestosis.

Dr. William Buchanan, deputy Senior Medical Inspector of Factories for the Ministry, said he felt that asbestosis now had a tremendous emotional factor built into it, very similar to the attitude of people at the time of the testing of atomic weapons when there had been publicity about the danger of getting leukaemia by being exposed to radiation.

Dr. Buchanan pointed out that it was important not to make too much of the situation. As many people died of lung cancer in 12 hours, he said, as from mesothelioma in a whole year.

He went on: "We don't think dockers are heavily exposed to asbestos — certainly not so much as workers in industries who are working continuously with the material.

"The docker may work cargo for a few hours and th not touch it again for weeks even months.

"We are, however, goin tighten up the docks regu tions to make certain a asbestos is carried in conta ers or properly sealed by Then they won't be expo at all to it."

He added that pressure fr the dockers had undoubte contributed to the improvem which had already taken pl

Dr. Robert Murray, Med Adviser to the Trades Us Congress said he would not entirely happy until there w total ban on the importing Crocidolite — blue asbesto

"My own belief," he says, that blue asbestos is so dan ous it should be put into same category as the chemi that cause cancer of the blad That would mean banning from this country.

"Nobody has yet convin me that this is an essential c modity and must be impo in the country's interest. I prepared to be proved wr but that is my present view."

Dr. Murray said he beli that if an employer asked

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asbestos together with proper supervision of the health of docks staff.

Special remarks and observations by Dr. Murray:

I consider that under Paragraph 5, the continuing vigilance of the Port Authorities should include regular environmental monitoring of the unloading operation and appropriate medical examination of dockers with long service including exposure to asbestos cargoes.

Dr. Murray asked for the rider to be added because he believes regular tests should be made of the atmosphere when asbestos is being unloaded to ensure that then concentration does not reach too high a level. If it does, he feels the ship should be sent back.

CAL OFFICERS THEIR VIEWS



Dr. LAWRENCE-SMITH

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employees to take risks it was his duty to take every conceivable measure to see that the employees were protected.

He went on: "Because asbestos is dangerous and because asbestos importers want to import it, they must see that no people are exposed to this dust."

He believed that with white and brown asbestos, precautions could be taken that would make it safe for dockworkers to handle them.

"But no blue asbestos. He felt it was so dangerous that it would be wrong to stand the chance of the slightest amount of dust getting into the atmosphere.

"The proper precautions for handling the other two types of asbestos, he said, had eventually to include containerisation.

"Then," he added, "no docker will be worried about inhaling this dangerous material. I don't think the situation will be under control until this happns.

"The use of palletised paper sacks or bags with ptythene linings are a number of improved methods of packing asbestos.

"Provided these are used and provided, dockers are provided with respirators in cases of bags bursting then I think it is legitimate for dockers to handle them with safety. But I think eventually we must go over to complete containerisation."

Dr. A. M. Lawrence-Smith, Medical Officer of the PLA, described the risks to dockers as "slight to negligible."

"Because there is this element," he said, "we have to take precautions and keep our eye on the matter." Our observation will continue, the docker can be certain."

Dr. Lawrence-Smith said he was of the opinion that a person had to be exposed to asbestos for something in the nature of three months, and under production factory conditions with defective ventilation control before there was a chance of him getting asbestosis.

iel L. Newhouse and Hilda Thompson of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

The paragraph that has become so widely quoted since then illustrated how the dependents of people in contact with asbestos could just as easily contract asbestosis.

A wife of a docker, it said, had died of the disease after she had brushed down her husband every night for three or four years when he came home "with his dungarees covered in asbestos dust."

A medical correspondent for a national newspaper followed it up, other newspapers quickly did the same and before long asbestosis had become a major issue in Dockland.

Medical experts have since queried the authenticity of the case.

They say: How many cases occur of a docker handling so much asbestos EVERY DAY for a period of three or four years that EVERY NIGHT his clothes are "covered in asbestos dust"?

They point out that (a) There is not a cargo of asbestos to be unloaded every day; and (b) even if there was, it would be done by different gangs.

What is the position then today? First the medical facts and history.

ASBESTOSIS is the damaging of the lung by inhaling asbestos dust. The early symptoms are a cough and shortness of breath. It can be diagnosed in its early stages and stopped from advancing further.

There is increasing evidence that a person with asbestosis can get lung cancer — and this is what is causing most concern.

Up to 1930 — according to a paper presented by Dr. William Buchanan, deputy Chief Medical Inspector for Factories to the Ministry of Labour at a symposium in New York in 1964 — there appeared nothing to suggest this.

The first published suggestion of such an association came in 1935 and described the case of an asbestos weaver at whose death from asbestosis at the age of 57 a lung cancer was also found.

began...

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"Such a possibility is indicated by the 1964 deaths which, in isolation, show that in that year alone there were 9 deaths from mesothelioma associated with asbestosis."

The report also pointed out that evidence had been advanced which suggested that the incidence of mesothelioma was also higher in non-occupationally exposed population living in the vicinity of asbestos factories, and also pointed to Crocidolite—blue asbestos — as the particular variety of asbestos responsible.

THESE ARE THE MEDICAL FACTS. WHAT IS THE DANGER TO THE DOCKER?

Doctors argue that the time a docker is exposed to and handles asbestos is so limited that there is hardly any danger at all to his health.

BUT they cannot guarantee there is NO danger, and the dockers argue back that while there is any danger at all — never mind how small — they are justified in pressing for every possible precaution to be taken.

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Dust could escape easily, and often the bags were badly stitched.

The alternatives to the old style of packing is containerisation or specially lined bags. The problem with containerised cargoes is that ships carrying asbestos would be limited in the number of ports they could use.

When the asbestos dust escapes, dock workers complain that on a windy day it can be blown for a considerable distance and probably settle on the clothing of people not concerned with the unloading or on foodstuffs.

SO FAR THERE HAS NOT BEEN A CASE OF A DOCKER DYING AS A RESULT OF HIS CONTACT WITH ASBESTOS IN THE DOCKS.

Two months ago the coroner for St. Pancras, Mr. Ian Milne, recorded a verdict of death from an industrial disease, asbestosis, on 48-year-old docker Mr. Robert Lowe, of North Street, Barking.