

MEMORANDUM

July 3, 1944

DR. ARMSTRONG:

The Actuarial Division has asked us to study the Johnson's Mine Company on which we have Group Life coverage, because in the last three years we have paid 28 claims of which 13 deaths were due to tuberculosis. The Group is increasing the premium on the company as of July 1, 1944.

Johnson's Mine Company quarries and manufactures asbestos and is located in Thetford Mines. Several industrial hygiene surveys have been made at Johnson's Mines in past years—the first was in June 1930 in connection with the study of an asbestos industry in Canada. Another study was made in March 1931. As you will probably recall the conclusion reached in the asbestos study was that asbestosis did not predispose to tuberculosis. Very high dust counts were found at Johnson's Mines with 99.25% of the particles of less than 10 microns. Workers were very careless about expectorating on the floors; drinking water was supplied in buckets and common drinking cups were in use. A number of recommendations were made to improve general operating conditions of this mine. No subsequent study has been made. I have suggested, inasmuch as Mr. Feknel is planning to visit Canada on other business, that he include Johnson's Mine in his trip with a view to a recheck survey of the Johnson's Company properties and a survey, if possible, of the living conditions of employees. If you think it feasible, I might be able to arrange to go along on this trip also. It seems to me regardless of whether asbestosis contributes to tuberculosis, there is a tuberculosis problem, not only in Johnson's Mines but in Thetford Mines. The latest mortality figures that I could secure show that Thetford Mines in 1941 had a tuberculosis mortality of 259 per 100,000; in Quebec 80 per 100,000; and in Canada 51 per 100,000. I have written to Dr. Gardner in Saranac to ask his advice about the present status of asbestosis in relation to tuberculosis and also for any suggestions as to the approach to this problem in Canada. I discussed the matter briefly with Dr. Burnette when he was last here and he suggested getting in touch with Dr. Turgeon, Director of the Division of Industrial Hygiene in Quebec City. I plan to write to Dr. Turgeon for more up-to-date figures on tuberculosis mortality and a breakdown by male age groups. If I went to Canada I could discuss the problem more freely than I could by mail. Before plunging into this, however, I should like to have your advice as to the proper lines of procedure so as to avoid crossing any administrative lines or stirring up trouble without leading to any constructive result. I might add that the Actuarial Division has asked Dr. McConnell about the health conditions in Johnson's Mine from time to time. Dr. McConnell's opinion was that the employees were French-Canadians and looked undernourished and that, in his opinion, the claim experience would not be very good. It has been for this reason that A&H has not been sold.

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