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MOCKERY OF "COMPENSATION" FOR ASBESTOS WORKER

DEAR COMRADE,—About 18 months ago alarming news came to the ears of Turner and Newall's operatives about the asbestos industry.

The Home Office had made an extensive inquiry into the trade and had found it injurious to health, in fact dangerous to such a degree that in some instances it poisoned the lungs, causing that deadly scourge, tuberculosis.

(iis was the scheme of the Home Office. Anybody employed in the affected areas of the said mill must be examined by lung experts, and if found suffering must at once be compelled the leave the firm.

Compensation under the Workmen's Compensation Act would be granted, the maximum sum being 30s. per week. This compensation to be based on 12 months' previous service.

Now Turner and Newalls have been for a considerable period on short-time, so that the workers who were unfortunately classed as unfit, but were still to be employed in the industry, were treated in a very unfair manner. Some of them had only been working three days a fortnight, others three days a week.

Here are facts of the compensation scheme paid to old workers:—

One man with 26 years' service got 15s. a week, 16 years 18s. a week, 15 years 22s. a week and 16 years 10s. a week.

One woman who had worked for 36 years was classed as fit only for light duties.

She was found work in another department, but her wage was dropped by 9s. per week.

If a worker loses a limb he gets compensation, but if he gets asbestos on the lungs he is penalised.

This woman with 36 years' service is at the moment ill in bed with neurasthenia, brought about by worry and thinking she has done another worker out of a job.

Women have also been compelled to leave the firm; one receives 10s. a week. They are not allowed to receive National Health or draw from the Labour Exchange; one worker has been compelled to go to the P.A.C. for relief.

Not long ago one of the principal owners of Turner's asbestos died and left £40,000 to form a nucleus of a pension fund. Now, when the directors were asked about this money, they say that it cannot be used for compensation. — Yours fraternally, "A SUFFERER," Rochdale.

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