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OWENS-CORNING FIBERGLAS CORPORATION (11)

INTRA-COMPANY CORRESPONDENCE

General Offices - Toledo, Ohio
January 7, 1942

Attention of Mr. E. J. Marshall

cc: Mr. Harold Boeschenstein
Mr. W. P. Zimmerman

Subject ASBESTOS WORKERS UNION

Review of 1941

1. The issue was joined.
2. Our health story was drawn together.
3. Our strategy has been to attack each situation locally.

Immediate Developments Ahead for 1942

1. Siebert article to appear in January issue of INDUSTRIAL MEDICINE.
2. Gardner article in preparation for JOURNAL OF INDUSTRIAL HYGIENE.
3. Sulzberger program under way.

Strategy for 1942

Should it not be to take the offensive?

The following plan is suggested:

1. Gather as a weapon-in-reserve an impressive file of photostats of medical literature on asbestosis. Available are two bibliographies covering medical literature to 1938, citing references to scores of publications in which the lung and skin hazards of asbestos are discussed. This file would cover five or six hundred pages, which can be microphotographed in the library of the Surgeon General in Washington or in some other medical library.

2. (a) Explore through Aetna the feasibility of working out a plan whereby our products liability coverage could be extended to all members of the Asbestos Workers Union wherever and whenever they are handling Fiberglas products. This would involve some 2,000 workers all of whom would have to be X-rayed (X-rays to be interpreted at Trudeau by Dr. Sampson), and in all probability given a physical examination before group coverage became effective on a set date.

   (b) If feasible, approach Union leaders with offer presenting plan as follows:

      (1) A demonstration of Owens-Corning's willingness to work

with A.F. of L. Union Labor.

(2) A means of extending to Union members on construction jobs the same kind of insurance protection and industrial hygiene precautions now available to workers in private industry.

(3) An irrefutable demonstration of the willingness of a reputable commercial insurance company to underwrite such a risk and of the manufacturer to carry the premium cost.

(c) If reaction is favorable, arrange for Aetna representatives to present plan at Union district conferences and/or meetings of locals or at general convention of Union in fall of 1942. Presentation to be accompanied by distribution of Aetna leaflets explaining the insurance and telling the Fiberglas health story.

(d) If reaction is unfavorable, use the asbestosis weapon-in-reserve to let them stew. We may be sure that word of the proposal will reach competition and may give us a lever with which to go direct to the locals under the union's professed law of local autonomy. This procedure may provide an opportunity to promote dissension in the ranks that conceivably could bring about over-throw of the present Union leadership.

(e) The proposal can be exploited publicity-wise to our advantage either way.

If the reaction is favorable, it is a step unprecedented in the industry, taken by a manufacturer so confident of the absence of unusual hazard in his materials that he has joined forces with Aetna - at a rate more favorable than could be granted to any competitive manufacturer - to protect and reassure labor and assume liability attaching to any occupational hazard attributable to his materials.

If the reaction is unfavorable, the way is opened to spread word among the locals about the refusal of the Union officals to make this protection available to the members and to play all the stops on asbestosis. Implied is the threat to distribute to all members of the Union copies of the U.S. Public Health Bulletin #241 on Asbestosis.

Principal advantages of the whole plan are that it would take out of the realm of rumor and gossip all the stories of injuries that are floating around, would enable us to document such stories, and would enable us to take the offensive in telling the health story of Fiberglas where it would do the most good.