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Raf

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Asbestos Minerals in Cosmetic Talc

I had the opportunity to visit with Professor Selikoff, in New York on Friday, March 21st, 1975. During this time, part of the discussion dealt with the identification of asbestos minerals in talc. The minerals of concern were: chrysotile, tremolite and anthophyllite. It was my understanding that by talc was meant cosmetic talc only, the samples being obtained over the counter at the retail level. It also was my understanding that while most of the samples were from the United States, there were several from Great Britain.

Their laboratory is using step-scanning electron microscopy for quantification. They are now, with this technique, well below 1% sensitivity for chrysotile and tremolite, and at about 1% for anthophyllite.

Several British samples showed asbestos, more than reported by Fred Pooley at his seminar here. It should be noted that Pooley's samples were taken at the import source, not at the retail level. In addition, the sensitivity of method in Professor Selikoff's survey was greater than in the study done by Dr. Pooley a few years ago. The two data bases, therefore, are not incompatible.

According to Professor Selikoff, some of the American samples also contained asbestos. We did not go into details as this is an ongoing survey.

Professor Selikoff did note that chrysotile, with their analytical techniques, has been found in some cosmetic talcs. He stated that they are there because the chrysotile was in the rock beds from which the talc was obtained.

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