

FILE NAME: General Motors (GM)

DATE: 1996 Feb 6

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DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Letter to Dr. Merle E. Gibson from Barry Castleman



Barry Castleman, Sc.D. environmental consultant

February 6, 1996

Dr. Mearl E. Gibson

Dear Dr. Gibson,

The following double-spaced text I would like to put in the 4th edition of my book, Asbestos: Medical and Legal Aspects. The second paragraph is based mainly on memos of interactions with you and others at GM/Inland, written by Ed Fenner (who later died from mesothelioma) and Sidney Speill of J-M. I would like to additionally reference my discussion with you as a comprehensive reference for the truth of the whole paragraph.

As the deadline for sending this off for publication is very near, I would appreciate word from your office confirming the accuracy of the matters described. Can you please try to do that today?

It was a pleasure speaking with you today and learning of your efforts to investigate and prevent asbestos disease.

Sincerely,

02/06/96 14:23 FAX 1 410 482 1039

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A number of asbestos mining and manufacturing companies knew that Dr. Selikoff held the view that cancer from asbestos could be initiated by a single fiber. This was at variance with industry contentions that exposures not demonstrated by epidemiological studies to be hazardous were safe. Asbestos industry doctors and industrial hygienists came to serve increasingly as salesmen for the industry as it came under fire, trying to persuade customers that the scientific evidence wasn't so frightening.

One such meeting was held in 1969 with officials of General Motors' Inland Manufacturing Division. Dr. George Wright (Johns-Manville and National Gypsum medical consultant) and Dr. Paul Cartier, along with representatives of Johns-Manville, Asbestos Corporation, and Lake Asbestos, were unpersuasive at a stormy meeting with the Inland Medical Director, Dr. Merle E. Gibson, who was inclined to accept "the Dr. Selikoff 'one fiber' theory." J-M's Director of Environmental Control, Ed Fenner, noted, "Dr. Gibson left an unfavorable impression with some of us because of his attitude." Dr. Gibson, who had persuaded General Motors management to install extensive dust controls at its brake products plant and warn G.M. dealers against blowing out brakes with compressed air hoses in the early 1960s, remained opposed to even the slightest asbestos contamination of the atmosphere, as from brake lining wear.

Amended
11/18/94
5/16/94