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TURNER BROTHERS ASBESTOS COMPANY LTD.

From

ROCHDALE.

To

J. L. Collins, Esq.,
Turner & Newall Ltd.,
Manchester.

JW/BW
Ref. Copy to: NAM

Ref.

CONFIDENTIAL

5th March, 1952.

Dear Mr. Collins,

Asbestos Industry Regulations

Thank you for your letter of 3rd March, enclosing your letter of confirmation to Sir George Barnett that the appointment has been fixed for 3.00 p.m. on Monday, 17th March. Thank you also for the railway seat ticket enclosed.

I have been doing my best to compile statistical ammunition, but I have not been able to find anything very convincing. You suggested that the comparison with silicosis would be favourable to us, but the figures given below, which are taken from the Chief Inspector's annual reports, show that this is not the case :-

Deaths from Silicosis and Asbestosis contracted in
Factories (excluding Mines and Quarries.)

Extracted from Annual Report of H.M. Chief Inspector of
Factories, 1944.

	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948
Silicosis	192	224	169	138	149	125	140	153	139	156
Asbestosis	18	11	17	11	8	10	11	16	15	15

It will be seen that the cases of silicosis in factories number approximately ten times the asbestosis cases. I have no precise figures of the relative numbers

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of people employed, but the total number subject to risk of asbestosis can hardly exceed 3,000 persons, while the number liable to silicosis in potteries, steelworks, steel and iron foundries, tool and cutter grinding, and so on, must substantially exceed 30,000; the annual report for 1937 states that 12,770 factories were subject to various Regulations governing silicosis, whereas only 201 factories were subject to the Asbestos Regulations. (More up-to-date figures have not been published, but these are sufficiently indicative, although in both cases a large number of the factories will have been very small).

A comparison of the average ages at death and durations of employment is also not helpful, as the following table shows :-

Fatal cases of Silicosis and Asbestosis between 1929 & 1948

	No. of deaths	Average age at death	Duration of employment in years		
			Longest	Shortest	Average
Silicosis	1,093	58.3	62.0	1.5	34.2
Silicosis with Tuberculosis	1,090	53.7	67.0	0.7	31.2
Asbestosis	171	48.1	48.0	0.5	15.6
Asbestosis with Tuberculosis	76	39.0	29.0	0.8	10.3

It appears, therefore, that this line of enquiry gives us no help.

I have looked again at the draft memorandum which Mr. Morling forwarded to you on 6th December, and I have amended pages 3. and 4. and enclose herewith the revised version. I think that, as stated in paragraph 5. of this draft, our case rests on the three points that the Regulations as they now stand are -

- (a) impracticable,
- (b) unnecessary, and
- (c) inconsistent with similar Regulations.

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Points (a) and (c) are, I think, sufficiently established in this draft memorandum, but the chief difficulty is to establish point (b). The following figures may be helpful, but I am afraid they are not entirely convincing :-

Incidence of Asbestosis according to type of operation

	<u>Processes subject to Regulations 1, 2 and 5.</u>	<u>All other Processes giving rise to asbestos dust.</u>
Number of employees	513	919
Percentage of total employed	35.9%	64.1%
Number of cases of asbestosis leading to suspension from work	78	22
Percentage of total cases	78%	22%

It is clear that the incidence of asbestosis is very much less in the processes not governed by Regulations 1, 2 or 5, that is in processes such as flyer spinning, doubling or winding processes. In these processes no exhaust draught or damping is required, but dust is undoubtedly emitted, but in the last 25 years during which we have constantly employed between 500 and 900 people in these processes, there have only been 22 cases of asbestosis, and a number of these were complicated by tuberculosis or other factors. I am having these 22 cases further examined, to see if any more satisfactory argument can be built upon them; for example, if we could show that there have been no cases at all in certain processes where we know that a certain amount of dust is emitted, this could be used as an argument that there is a minimum level of dust concentration below which asbestosis does not occur. We need to be able to convince the

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Cont'n. 3. 5.3.52.

Chief Inspector that this minimum is higher than zero. It does not appear that our statistical evidence alone is likely to be convincing, and I am, therefore, turning up the medical references. Dr. Merewether will, of course, be aware of the medical facts, and it was fairly clear when he was here a few weeks ago that he accepts the fact that low concentrations of asbestos dust can be dealt with by the lungs without damage, particularly if the particle size is small.

Dr. Knox has recently made a survey by age of all employees in scheduled processes in this factory and has picked out all the cases which are showing even slight signs of fibrosis (none of these cases is severe enough to be responsible by the Pneumoconiosis Board, and many of them are very slight indeed), compared with the results of the similar survey made by Dr. Merewether in 1930.

Incidence of Fibrosis relative to length of employment.

Years Employed	Number Examined	Cases of Fibrosis		
		Number	Group Incidence percent	Average Age
Merewether { 0 - 4	89	0	-	-
and { 5 - 9	141	36	25.5	36.3
ice { 10 - 14	84	27	32.1	40.4
{ 15 - 19	28	15	53.6	43.3
(20 and over	21	17	80.9	52.7
Totals	363	95	26.2	41.4
Comparison { 0 - 9	566	0	-	-
with { 10 - 14	120	8	6.6	53.4
Rochdale { 15 - 19	89	3	3.47	42.3
{ 20 and over	85	18	21.1	46.6
Totals	860	29	3.4	47.2

These figures, which have been passed to Dr. Merewether, show that very substantial progress has been made at this factory in the elimination of asbestosis, but we can hardly claim that they prove that complete

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prevention of dust is not essential in order to eliminate the disease. I am having the 29 cases analysed by job, in the same way as the 22 suspended cases mentioned above, and possibly the results will show that some scheduled processes are not dangerous at all.

No doubt you will be speaking to me about the above and perhaps we can arrange to meet at some suitable time next week. I am pretty well tied up until Wednesday, with the Board meeting and visits of Board of Trade officials, but any time on Thursday would suit me - preferably the afternoon. Alternatively, Wednesday afternoon or Friday afternoon would do, but Friday is rather close to our visit to London.

Yours truly,

John Waddell

P.S. If you would care to come over a little
early for the dinner on Monday, perhaps
we could meet here at Felinge Corner?

JW