FILE NAME: Shell (SHEL)

DATE: 1970 Oct 20

DOC#: SHEL016

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Confidential Memo from K.B. Gates RE Asbestos & Health - Shell

0002 1111

Confidential Mr. R. A. Wells. PA 10

Copy also to Mr. D. W. H

EBC/LC
To:- RHP(3)

CONFIDENTIAL 20th October, 1971.

Asbestos & Health : Shell

You will recall that Mr. Edmonds and Dr. Holmes were to meet Dr. Broughton and Dr. Lemon this week to try and exploit the low dust-counts recorded, by an independent authority, at the application and removal of FORTEX cloth from a simulated lagging operation. Shortly, I understand that the discussion was not successful, Dr. Broughton evidently taking the view that discontinuing the use of asbestos has not posed problems of any significance in relation to the cancer-risk which he believes exists (while evidently recognising and accepting that asbestosis is only a minor problem). His attitude is that if no risk attends the use of FORTEX materials, then it is our responsibility to secure some dispensation to that effect from the Factory Inspectorate.

Though we had feared we might achieve no more than this at this stage, the outcome is nevertheless very disappointing. I cannot fault the logic of Dr. Broughton's attitude, observing that it is substantially the same as that of a B.P. company authority recently approached by Mr. Edmonds in the same context; indeed, it would not greatly surprise me if there had been discussion between the senior medical officers of the major oil companies and the determination of this as a common attitude. However difficult the task, I think we must accordingly attempt to wring dispensation of some kind from the Factory Inspectorate, and Dr. Holmes has this under urgent consideration.

Our interest in Shell's attitude has been much less, you will recall, for the sake of our turnover with Shell than with the influence which their specifications exert upon other areas of our trade, and we have felt it in some sense unfair that Shell's stipulations about their own quite modest requirements should have such a profound effect upon our industry. I gather Dr. Broughton fully recognises this but believes it does not relieve him of his responsibility towards Shell employees in all

parts of the world, some of them perhaps barely literate and not to be relied upon for even ordinary commonsense in their housekeeping. This does not seem to me readily contestable, and I am forced reluctantly to the conclusion that no good could be expected from an approach to some higher authority in Shell: such higher authority would, in my view, be extremely unlikely to override the firm recommendations of the professional advisers, especially where the logic of the advice is apparent even to laymen; further, such an approach might well block what contact we have with Dr. Broughton and that contact is likely to be critically important if we are able to secure anything of value from the Factory Inspectorate. (It is a very considerable operation to effect and promulgate changes in Shell's M.E.S.C. documents, and we might well find ourselves blocked by its bureaucracy unless we had the support and active goodwill of Dr. Broughton and his medical associates).

E. B. Gates

0021 1111

CONFIDENTIAL

PA 1D

Mr. RAWELLS.

Copy also to Mr. DWH

EBG/LC
To:- RHP(3)

CONFIDENTIAL 20th October, 1971.

Asbestos & Health : Shell

You will recall that Mr. Edmonds and Dr. Holmes were to meet Dr. Broughton and Dr. Lemon this week to try and exploit the low dust-counts recorded, by an independent authority, at the application and removal of FORTEX cloth from a simulated lagging operation. Shortly, I understand that the discussion was not successful, Dr. Broughton evidently taking the view that discontinuing the use of asbestos has not posed problems of any significance in relation to the cancer-risk which he believes exists (while evidently recognising and accepting that asbestosis is only a minor problem). His attitude is that if no risk attends the use of FORTEX materials, then it is our responsibility to secure some dispensation to that effect from the Factory Inspectorate.

Though we had feared we might achieve no more than this at this stage, the outcome is nevertheless very disappointing. I cannot fault the logic of Dr. Broughton's attitude, observing that it is substantially the same as that of a B.P. company authority recently approached by Mr. Edmonds in the same context; indeed, it would not greatly surprise me if there had been discussion between the senior medical officers of the major oil companies and the determination of this as a common attitude. However difficult the task, I think we must accordingly attempt to wring dispensation of some kind from the Factory Inspectorate, and Dr. Holmes has this under urgent consideration.

Our interest in Shell's attitude has been much less, you will recall, for the sake of our turnover with Shell than with the influence which their specifications exert upon other areas of our trade, and we have felt it in some sense unfair that Shell's stipulations about their own quite modest requirements should have such a profound effect upon our industry. I gather Dr. Broughton fully recognises this but believes it does not relieve him of his responsibility towards Shell employees in all

cont'd ....

0000 0021 1112

parts of the world, some of them perhaps barely literate and not to be relied upon for even ordinary commonsense in their housekeeping. This does not seem to me readily contestable, and I am forced reluctantly to the conclusion that no good could be expected from an approach to some higher authority in Shell: such higher authority would, in my view, be extremely unlikely to override the firm recommendations of the professional advisers, especially where the logic of the advice is apparent even to laymen; further, such an approach might well block what contact we have with Dr. Broughton and that contact is likely to be critically important if we are able to secure anything of value from the Factory Inspectorate. (It is a very considerable operation to effect and promulgate changes in Shell's M.E.S.C. documents, and we might well find ourselves blocked by its bureaucracy unless we had the support and active goodwill of Dr. Broughton and his medical associates).

E. B. Gates