



Johns-Manville

Internal Correspondence

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Subject: ASBESTOS ACTIVITY IN THE U.K.

I met with Mr. H. D. S. Hardie of Turner & Newell on Friday, September 2, 1977, in London. He elaborated on his comments suggesting that it was not a good time to meet with some on the British researchers.

As we already knew, the "standard setting" and "compliance" responsibilities in the U.K. now belong to the Health and Safety Executive. Mr. Bill Simpson (a former trades union man) is chairman of the Health and Safety Executive and is also chairman of the appointed Health and Safety Commission. The commission is a policy setting board for the H&S Executive and it is my understanding that the commission is the formal vehicle for reports to the Minister. Thus, the commission is much more than advisory.

The commission appointed an ad hoc advisory committee on asbestos in May, 1976. The advisory committee will probably disband by mid-1978. At that point, the asbestos activities will be handled by permanent branches of the H&S Executive.

Several subcommittees are now preparing reports for the advisory committee. A medical advisory subcommittee is chaired by Dr. Ken Duncan, the Chief Medical Officer for the Medical Advisory Service (which is also a part of the H&S Executive). Mr. Hardie indicated that Dr. Duncan is or will be on record that, without qualification, data are totally inadequate and they will be 3-4 years in coming. The medical subcommittee which is to report to the main advisory committee in November, is likely to report that there can be no medical answer to the hygiene standard within 4-5 years (in the context that at this time there are inadequate data to support or reject a 2f/cc. standard).

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Professor Donald Atcheson (epidemiology - S. Hampton University), a member of the medical subcommittee, has undertaken a literature review during a four month sabbatical in Canada. He will be reporting to the medical subcommittee between now and November.

Two new studies, under the direction of Peter Elmes, have been formulated.

Molly Newhouse, working as a consultant, has begun (July, 1977) work on a T&N friction materials Ferrodo plant. Individual exposure estimates will be made - they may try to simulate 1950 conditions. The cohort will be made up of the post 1949 workforce (1500 in 1950, 2000 today). Ferrodo management has made the following statements: "no asbestos related disease after curring"; "dust levels prior to 1962 were probably of the order of 15 f/cc. in dusty areas and only during the last 8 years have they been working down to 2 f/cc."; "all meso. (about 5) cases have work histories from one department - RR brake blocks, which used blue".

A second T&N plant, at Tanworth, has a pure chrysotile exposure history (A/C building materials). The employment records are reasonable back to 1950. A research team has not yet been selected for the study.

Dr. Duncan also wants to launch a study on a cohort of compressed asbestos fiber jointings and gaskets workers who have apparently had long and low exposure.

The BOHS subcommittee which was chaired by Dr. Gilson disbanded when Dr. Gilson resigned. Berry and Peto apparently had some very lively disagreements prior to that time. Peto is not a member of the new BOHS subcommittee chaired by Dr. Roach. Both BOHS subcommittees have continued to look at morbidity (i.e. crepitations or certified asbestosis cases). Berry's analysis of the updated and enlarged "knox-cohort" precipitated a meeting attended by T&N and TBA medical personnel and Elmes and Berry. Present plans call for two papers to be published together: 1) Berry's paper and 2) a "dust levels" paper by TBA (they should be completed by the end of 1977).

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I also spent several hours with Julian Peto. He is: the lead author on the most recent Doll mortality study of TBA cohorts; a member of the disbanded BOHS subcommittee (and probably one of the main reasons it disbanded); the author of the paper that hit the London Times and the New Scientist; and the one who testified to the advisory committee on asbestos in July, 1977. Everything of Peto's that I have read has been above criticism from an analytical point of view. He seems to be a rigorous, competent investigator. There have been times when he has probably not considered his audience properly, or has been naive about the potential impact of his work, but even then his qualifications of his conclusions have been adequate, but ignored by others.

With the possible exception of taking smoking patterns into account, the main problem in Peto's work is the exposure estimation. In particular, area vs. personal monitoring and historical conversion and characterization. Also, the more basic problem of the precision and variability of the monitoring process itself must be considered. (e.g. the factory inspectorate is consistently counting in the range of 1/2 the industry exposure estimates right now).

Peto plans to continue investigation⁴ the TBA workers (he has the names and lengths of employment for all past and present workers).

We should closely follow the renewed British research activity.

GRC/plf