

MEMORANDUM

July 26, 1944

Dr. N. L. Burnette
Assistant Secretary
Canadian Head Office

You will recall on your last visit I discussed with you the problem of tuberculosis in Thetford. Since that time I have made further investigation of the problem and it would seem to be worth while for me to visit Thetford with a view to first-hand observation of the situation there. Several industrial hygiene surveys have been made at Johnson's Mine in past years. The first was in June 1930 when Dr. Lanza was studying the asbestos industry. Another study was made in March 1931. At that time very high dust counts were found in Johnson's Mine. Workers were very careless about expectorating on the floors; drinking water was supplied in buckets; common drinking cups were used. A number of recommendations were made to improve general working conditions of this mine. No subsequent study has been made. Adjacent to Johnson's Mine is Bell Mines, also a Group policyholder. We have made a comparison of their mortality rates over the last four years, and the following table shows the difference in mortality. This may not be statistically significant but would seem to warrant further investigation, both of Bell and Johnson's Mines.

Although Dr. Lanza had concluded from his asbestos study that tuberculosis was not an expected complication from this disease, in view of this experience in Johnson's Mines I felt warranted in writing to Dr. Gardner in Montreal to find out what his present opinion is. He has made some recent studies, both in Quebec and in North Carolina of this possible relationship and the postmortem evidence indicates, in his opinion, that asbestosis does not predispose—like silicosis—to tuberculosis. However, he thought that comparative mortality and morbidity studies of tuberculosis and asbestosis in Thetford and other communities in Quebec and other provinces would be very worth while. Following a trip to Quebec last week, he has just written me that, in his opinion, the outstanding feature in Thetford is not asbestosis but tuberculosis.

Since Bill Fehnel is planning a trip to Canada also, I thought I would plan to go at the same time. This we expect will be the week of September 11th. Bill Barrett is arranging, through Mr. Perry, to get invitations for us to visit Johnson's and Bell Mines. There are some other industrial health contacts that Mr. Perry seems to think it would be desirable for us to make also.

Since this problem in Thetford appears to be largely one of tuberculosis, it would seem to be a fertile field for the Canadian Tuberculosis Association and public health agencies in Canada. I would be interested in meeting the people that you think would have an interest in this problem, both in the Province and in the Dominion. If they are interested in making an attack on the problem, we might be in a position to give them some technical and statistical help and perhaps promote the interest of management in this disease.

In view of this pending trip, other activities or points of

(over)

Interest in relation to our Welfare work may occur to you as pertinent
for us to look at together.

George K. Wheatley, M.D.
Assistant Medical Director
