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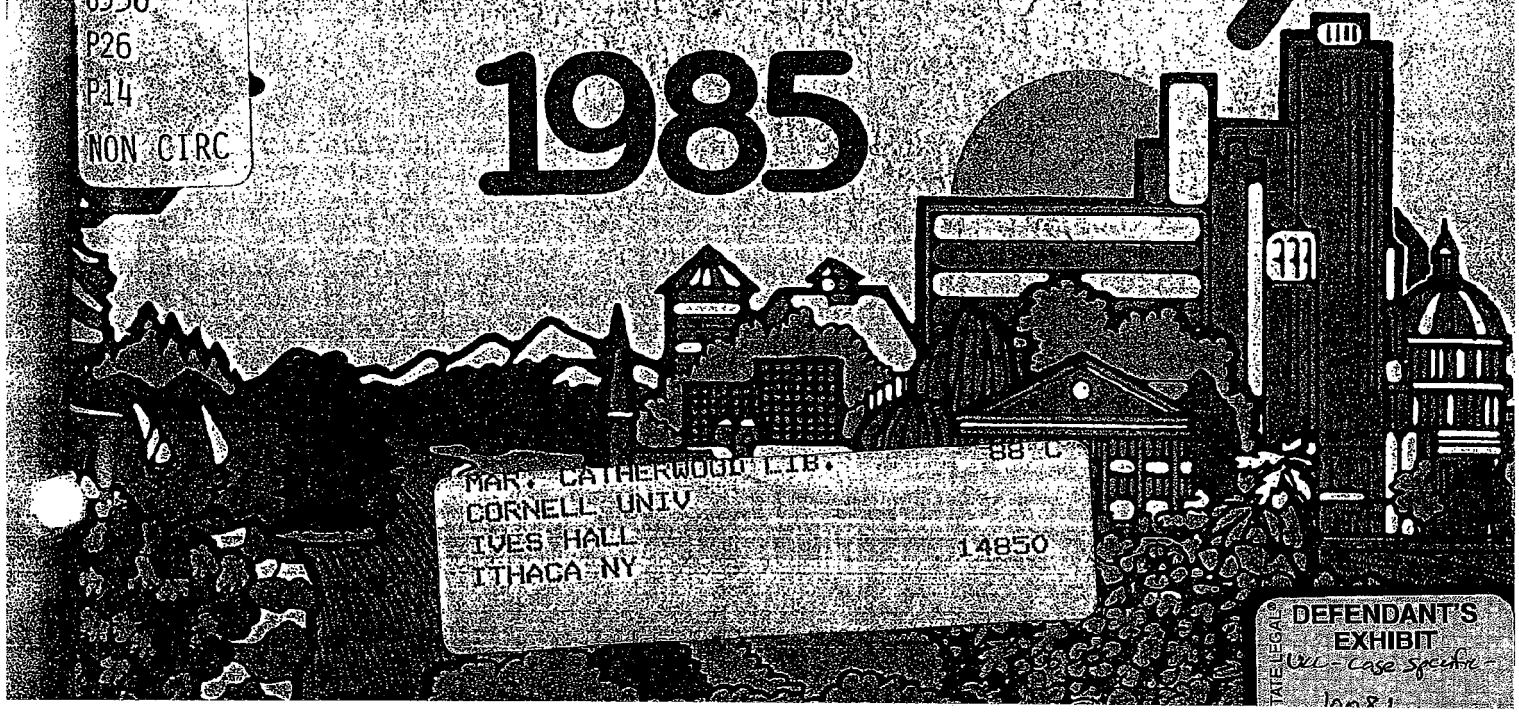
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WILLIAM A. DUVAL
General President
1750 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

A. L. MONROE
General Secretary-Treasurer
1750 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

General Vice Presidents

BERNARD SNIEGOWSKI
1st District
1443 Westchester Boulevard
Westchester, Ill. 60153

MICHAEL E. MONROE, 2nd District
1750 New York Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

JAMES WOLFORD, 3rd District
100 Devon Lane
Williamsville, N.Y. 14221

PATRICK LANE, 4th District
17846 Jayhawk Dr.
Penn Valley, Calif. 95946

GUY LEBER, 5th District
1930 Bishop Lane
Louisville, Ky. 40218

WALTER RAFTERY, 6th District
Box 112
Lake Sherwood, Mo. 63357

RICHARD J. ZACK, 7th District
1750 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

DAVID CAIRNS, 8th District
9 Aspen Ave.
Toronto, Ontario M4B 2Z1

Labor Seeks Job Hazard Notification

A long-time adviser to IBPAT's health and safety program and a host of union officials have called on Congress to adopt a strong federal law to provide workers with the right to know if they are at risk of contracting job-related diseases.

Dr. Irving Selikoff, professor of Medicine at the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in New York and a supporter of the Brotherhood's safety efforts, was among the witnesses who urged speedy passage of the High Risk Occupational Disease Notification and Prevention Act. The measure would require the government to tell workers when they have been identified as being at high risk of getting an occupational disease.

At present, workers identified in scientific studies such as those undertaken by Dr. Selikoff in cooperation with IBPAT as potential victims of job-related diseases are not informed, and therefore, are unlikely to take preventive measures to possibly save their lives.

Dr. Selikoff, an expert on occupational illnesses, urged passage of the notification legislation. He stressed to the subcommittees that it has only been in this century that medical professionals have been able to concentrate on the prevention of disease.

He praised the bill for being "intensely practical" because it "asks us to try to prevent disease for those at greatest risk."

In pointing up the ethical questions surrounding the withholding of notification from potential occupational disease victims, Selikoff stressed that "whether we inform people of risks can ultimately be thought of as a decision that will determine, in many cases, whether people will live or die."

Considered the nation's top authority on asbestos-related diseases, Selikoff pointed out that 9,000 deaths annually are anticipated from this exposure.

He predicted 15 to 20 percent of these deaths could be prevented "if we were to apply what is currently known in properly conducted medical surveillance programs."

Selikoff added that a side benefit of surveillance of high risk groups would be the advantage of "forcing" advances in medical management and treatment.

Thousands of Brotherhood members remember Dr. Selikoff as the physician who examined delegates to the 23d Convention in 1974, and who has made valuable contributions to IBPAT's safety and health program since them. Dr. Selikoff was an honored guest at last year's 25th General Convention. He has been widely credited with bridging the gap between medicine and occupational hazards, and for this work was presented with the AFL-CIO's Murray-Green Award, labor's highest, in 1979.

Dr. Selikoff was joined by Rubber Workers President Milan Stone in testimony before the House panel and by Howard D. Samuel, president of the AFL-CIO Industrial Union Dept.; Joseph M. Misbrener, president of the Oil, Chemical & Atomic Workers; and Michael McCloskey, chairman of the Sierra Club.

Witnesses told the subcommittees that passage of the high risk notification bill is "a long overdue commitment to simple fairness and justice."

The House bill would require the Secretary of Health & Human Services to establish certified occupational and environmental health centers to provide medical monitoring examinations and related services to workers who are notified that they may be at high or increased risk of a job-related disease.

Trades Win Safety Net Ruling

The AFL-CIO Building & Construction Trades Department scored a victory for workers in the steel erection industry when a federal appeals court in Boston ruled on the use of safety nets.

The 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a citation by the Occupational Safety & Health Administration against the Daniel Marr & Son Co. for failing to protect its employees who work as "connectors" fastening together the steel beams during the erection of a building.

The BCTD and the Ironworkers had intervened in the case in support of OSHA, which had inspected the erection of the steel frame of a turbine generator building at the Seabrook, N.H., nuclear power plant at the request of Ironworkers Local 474.

The OSHA inspector in May 1982 observed four connectors working without nets 115 feet above the ground and 40 feet above the nearest inside floor.

He cited the company for not having safety nets inside and outside the structure. Marr Co. contested both citations, which were later upheld by an administrative law judge. The firm appealed the exterior net citation to the Occupational Safety & Health Review Commission which overturned the law judge's ruling by a 2 to 1 vote.

In reversing the OSHRC decision, the three-judge appellate court panel said the Labor Secretary's interpretation of the department's safety regulations should be given deference if it is logical and reasonable.

Soon after, an appeals court in Philadelphia, also overturned an OSHRC requirement that workers actually be exposed to the danger of a head injury before an employer can be held to have violated the requirements for hard hats. The court held "proof of access" by a worker to a zone of danger is sufficient for OSHA to act.