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intra-company correspondence

to John Vyverberg - New York

from P. T. Saverstrom - New York

date April 22, 1969

cc: J. P. Kern - New York

subject HEALTH HAZARD COMMENTS
AT S.W.I.C.A. CONFERENCE
4/17/69 CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS

Dear John:

As you know there were two principal speakers at this meeting who spoke of air pollution with inorganic fibrous materials. The following is a recap of main points made by the speakers:

Mr. Hutchinson - President of The National Asbestos Workers Union

Mr. Hutchinson's speech covered primarily a plea by the Union for increased cooperation with employers. He spoke of good labor conditions being dependent on good financially strong contractors. Nationally, the Asbestos Worker's manpower has increased by 2000 workers in 18 months. He called for joint financing of apprenticeship training and Health Hazard programs. He also stated that until a Model Forms Agreement is accepted by employers, continual disagreements on jurisdiction will plague the industry, wasting a great deal of time and effort.

On health hazards, Mr. Hutchinson strongly denied accusations of dispute with the sheet metal workers regarding the use of insulation on the inside vs. outside of ducts. He maintains he is strictly interested in safety for the general public, particularly in schools and hospitals (It was obvious at this point that the Solikoff bandwagon had started). He argued that the proper U-factor could not be attained with insulation on the inside of ducts and that insulation manufacturers must start telling the truth. He hit hard on what he called "fiber fallout." This is a term Mr. Hutchinson used in his testimony at a Senate Sub-committee hearing. He graphically depicted to the committee members how the air they were breathing contained huge amounts of inorganic fibers: asbestos from the asbestos spray used to fireproof structural components, the fibers being introduced into the air stream in the return plenum of a typical HVAC system; and fiberglas, being blown throughout the room from the fiberglas ducts or lined ductwork.

In his words he made the Senators "stand up." He urged contractors to talk it up with engineers and architects to eliminate fiberglas ducts and lining, asking them to specify insulation on the outside of ducts, "where it belongs."

Dr. Solikoff - Mt. Sinai Hospital

Dr. Solikoff gave a very polished, effective and convincing presentation loaded with statistics and color slides. His general theme was anti-air pollution but only as it relates to the construction industry. He has definitely gone beyond asbestosis to attack all inorganic airborne fibers.

The lecture began with a historical review, supported with slides, of the development of asbestosis pointing up findings in South Africa, England and the U.S.A., particularly the Asbestos Worker's Union in New York City and Northern New Jersey (This paralleled the New Yorker article I forwarded you last fall).

After the historical review, Dr. Solikoff stated that the evidence now gathered is conclusive and made the following points:

1. Asbestos by itself is not that dangerous - the determining factor is exposure and dosage.

2. Asbestosis deaths can be sharply reduced by clearing up work areas and habits relative to creating dust.

3. It is likely that Asbestos does not work alone - it is not the whole cause, yet other factors have not been determined.

4. Asbestosis and other respiratory diseases in construction workers are more than tripled if those workers smoke.

He showed slides of ideas being worked on to eliminate construction dust. One showed a mask under development which would far surpass the U.S. Bureau of Mines standards. By the way, the standards are not related to fibrous materials. Another showed coating calcium silicate insulations to cut down on dust. (This struck me as a good idea--one which I will pursue with product development and manufacturing.) Another showed asbestos cement packaged in a poly bag into which water could be added. The resulting wet mixture would then be dumped into the trough for further mixing. He did make reference to fibrous glass materials by discussing the "Hogeman Factor." This is related to a new enzyme labeled "Kinan" which can be present in blood. Some tests have revealed this "Kinan" will cause blood to clot when it touches glass. According to Dr. Solikoff this may be the cause of other unknown diseases. He claims little authority on this but strongly argues that people should not be exposed to fibrous glass dust any more than they should be asbestos fibers.

511

He concluded on a note of confidence that respiratory diseases can be better controlled by action made possible by an aware industry.

At that point, a gentleman rose from the audience and requested to read a letter. He was granted permission and asked to introduce himself. He was a Dr. Grant, Medical Director of P.P.G. Industries. The letter was written by Howard Ayers, Director of the U.S. Public Health Service. It was pro fiber glass and in effect claimed that fibrous glass was not dangerous because the fiber diameters are too large to enter a person's system. Dr. Solikoff immediately countered that Ayers was not a physician and could not diagnose clinically. He also claimed Ayers information was based on dust counts, something Solikoff has no faith in.

Needless to say, we almost had a fight on the rostrum, but the chairman called a halt to it.

The sessions attended were most interesting and informative. I hope I've been able to convey some of the important ideas put forth by the speakers.

I will have an additional report on a presentation made Friday morning. This concerned environmental controls and probably covered some aspects of health hazards. Charlie Thornton planned to attend and take notes which he will forward to me.

Regards,

Per Saverstrom

PTS:ga