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UNION CARBIDE

INTERNAL CORRESPONDENCE

Asbestos Slum ★ D

file

MINING AND METALS DIVISION • P. O. BOX 579, NIAGARA FALLS, NEW YORK 14302

To (Name)	Mr. W. C. Thurber	*Date*	June 13, 1974
Division	Mining and Metals Division		
Location	38th Floor - 270 Park Avenue New York, N. Y. 10017	*Originating Dept.*	Technology Department
		Answering letter date	
Copy to	Mr. W. J. Kovack Mr. J. W. Rawlings Mr. A. H. Soeder	*Subject*	Asbestos Pilot Plant

The Niagara Gazette strikes again. A recent series on nuclear reactor dangers prompted open hearings which just about stopped all work at Somerset, N.Y. A series two weeks ago on East Falls Street and minority oppression, everyone from the mayor down agrees, caused racial flareups at Niagara Falls High School, shut down of the school and arson in the junior high.

Now this editorial, attached, which the bargaining unit is brandishing, has caused me grief. They are threatening an OSHA request of inspection. I can't afford this, not especially because of asbestos, but because once one of those characters is inside the gate he is obligated to look at everything, and we still have electrical and equipment guard violations that are scheduled but still not fixed.

So I have shut down the asbestos pilot plant temporarily until I can monitor (all our equipment is in King City this week), probably next week. Also, (see editorial) we are probably going to have to look into the protective clothing situation and health inspections and record keeping. We should have done this anyway, and already have a health setup for the laboratory technicians.

As far as I can see this is just one of a series of nit-picking grievances, rather than a real fear, which continue to accumulate because we are working the bargaining unit harder than usual, especially in the asbestos pilot plant. Nevertheless I can't take any chances on OSHA, and Arnold has achieved understanding with the union steward that no action will occur if the monitoring and health protection plan is adequate. The pilot plant has been shut down for some time and hasn't been monitored in years - if ever.

R J Klotzbach

RJK:MM
Attach.

R. J. Klotzbach

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W. C. Thurber
from R. J. Klotzbach

Niagara Gazette - Sun., June 9, 1974

Fragile system

"The ecologists like to talk about the fragility of the ecosystem. But it is probably nowhere near so fragile as the industrial system man has reared up to sustain his life here on earth." — Forbes Magazine.

Industrial 'germs'

Vinyl chloride, it now appears, may be a good deal more than an industrial hazard. It may be the "germ" of an epidemic.

At first, it seemed to threaten only people who worked in factories where it was used in the production process. But the recent death (reported the other day in the Gazette) of a woman who had lived near the Niagara Falls Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. plant suggests that the menace may be more widespread than that. The woman died of the same rare liver cancer (angiosarcoma) which medical researchers believe may be caused by vinyl chloride gases and particles.

Nobody is quite sure about it, but it begins to look as though even the diffuse concentrations of vinyl chloride gas that may be expelled from factory ventilation systems could be lethal.

THIS IS NOT the first time so-called industrial hazards have posed dangers to the population at large.

It now seems proven beyond reasonable doubt that abestos is the cause of many deaths among people who have only the most casual contact with it. In England, for example, members of the families of men who work with asbestos have died of another extremely rare cancer, mesothelioma, which occurs mainly among abestos workers. The theory is that their illnesses resulted from handling the men's clothes, which apparently contained some asbestos dust.

Researchers believe that the widespread use of asbestos — in insulation, in roofing, in various home and industrial products — is thus a threat not only to those who work directly with it but also to to the population at large.

Now mercury is under similar suspicion. The National Institute of Health has commissioned a $237,000 study at the University of Rochester to learn how mercury that is emitted into the environment in industrial processes may affect the metabolism, neurological systems, and reproductive systems not only of workers but of people who live near mercury-emitting industries. Three or four years ago, people worried mainly about mercury getting into human food — particularly fish — and poisoning fish eaters in this indirect way. Now it seems mercury poisoning may be more directly caused.

THESE ARE FRIGHTENING developments. We have always known about the visible dangers of industrial society — the wheels that crush, the fires that burn, the smoke that suffocates. But because they were visible, these hazards were to some extent avoidable.

Now we learn of invisible hazards — and one can be sure that vinyl chloride, asbestos, and mercury aren't the only ones. These hazards can threaten all of us. When you walk past a construction site you may inhale a particle of the asbestos insulation that is being sprayed on structural steel, and 20 years later you may die of an agonizing cancer caused by that particle.

We have all but wiped out tuberculosis, smallpox, and other killers, only to replace them with more insidious killers of our own making. Now we must apply ourselves to the task of wiping out these new killers. It will be arduous and expensive. It may even require the elimination of some industrial processes and products. But it must be done, for surely it is no bargain to be rid of tuberculosis only to expose ourselves to new epidemics of cancer and neurological disease.

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