

FILE NAME: Eternit (ETER)

DATE: 1981 Mar 12

DOC#: ETER116

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Asbestos International Memo RE Company Statement
- Eternit is Setting the Record Straight

0000 0063 1337

ASBESTOS INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

(Limited by Guarantee)

68 GLOUCESTER PLACE, LONDON W1H 3HL

MEMORANDUM

13 MAR 1981

TO: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

12 March 1981

FROM: DIRECTOR GENERAL

AIA/1/4/9/POL

May we refer you to our memo dated 2 March 1981, concerning the recent press conference given by the German Minister of the Interior.

We are pleased to enclose a copy of the English translation of the pamphlet issued by Eternit (see item (c) on Annex 2) to counteract the misinformation given by the Minister.

for 
DIRECTOR GENERAL

Mr. [unclear] P. [unclear]
Mr. [unclear]
Mr. [unclear]
Mr. [unclear]

4 return please

HTX/H

13/3

0000 0063 1338

ETERNIT SETS THE RECORD STRAIGHT:

MINISTER MAKES BLANKET STATEMENT.

SOME MEDIA GIVE SENSATIONAL REPORTS.

ENVIRONMENTAL HYSTERIA FLOURISHES.

STIRRING UP THE FEAR OF CANCER AS A
TOOL FOR POLITICAL ENDS?

0000 0063 1339

ETERNIT IS SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT BECAUSE:

1. Medically approved research states: workers in the asbestos-cement industry have the same life expectancy as the normal population. These workers were employed in asbestos-cement production for many years. Concentrations of fine dust found today are 100 to 1000 times lower than at that time. And fibre concentrations in the environment are again 10,000 times lower.

It is highly unreasonable to draw conclusions from this about a threat to the public at large. Even the report by the Federal Environment Office states on this point that:

"The possible existence of an environmental risk with regard to this tumour may therefore be estimated, perhaps indirectly, from the results of research from the world at work, using a hypothetical dose-frequency ratio." (page 207).

2. The television showed workers who had been personally affected. They obviously came from the asbestos spray insulation industry, which is now prohibited in Germany. Eternit never had anything to do with the asbestos spray method, which has extremely high concentrations of fine dust, compared with the guidelines in the asbestos-cement industry. Although they were aware of these connections, the editors failed to make any distinction.

3. Even if asbestos fibres are removed from ^{Roofs} ~~rooves~~ by the effects of weather, there is no danger - in spite of what is claimed to the contrary.

The report by the Federal Environment Office has this to say:

"Since, however, average asbestos fibre concentrations at the measuring points with and without asbestos-cement roofing and in the open are below the detection limit (= 0.1 fibre/litre air), no quantitative proof can be given of environmental pollution" (page 145).

And this means: None of our tried-and-tested products present any danger to health.

RESULT

The demand by Federal Minister of the Interior Baum that asbestos should not be used - in particular asbestos-cement products - is unjustifiable and untenable.

Any action to stir up the fear of cancer as a tool for political ends is reprehensible. We are supported in this view by the reaction of large sections of the public.

SO EVEN IN THE FUTURE WE SHALL REMAIN YOUR TRUSTED PARTNER FOR ETERNIT PRODUCTS

0000 0063 1340

Cancer is a term that causes more anxiety than any other in our age. Since there is no universal cure, there is a widespread feeling of helplessness, sometimes to the point of hysteria. To over-hasty politicians this means: demand prohibitions!

Federal Minister of the Interior Baum, for example, at a press conference on 19.1.81: "Asbestos is a danger to the public at large!"

Inasmuch as he was referring to asbestos-cement, this is an unjustifiable and untenable claim. The Minister bases his statement on information from the WORLD AT WORK and from this draws incorrect conclusions for the ENVIRONMENT.