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Conference Re Asbestos & Cancer

to Lisa Corwin

Here are newly found
PP in Lanza talk
at 7th Saranac re
Asbestos and cancer.

Seen + fwd. to Jim + me.
by e-mail.

Barry

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Doctor Oppenheimer, has - who has done some experimental work with cellophane wrapped around hinges, which may be a pointer to this factor if it is material. Thank you.

BY DOCTOR RHODES:

Thank you, Doctor Merewether. Is there a comment about the Merewether discussion? (No response).

Doctor Lanza, I think you can make some comment on this.

BY DOCTOR LANZA:

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, before going into this brief statement of mine on chromates, I would like to make a few comments on Doctor Merewether's observations.

I was very much impressed with what Doctor Merewether said, and there is no question but what a very careful, painstaking job has been done in Great Britain on the subject of trying to determine what the hazard might be in the asbestos industry with respect to cancer.

There are just a couple of comments, I'm not saying one way or the other, that it may or may not influence the incidence of cancer. I would raise a couple of points which I think all of us might keep in mind, and which might possibly have some bearing on the situation in England.

Now, I have visited, somewhat extensively, I think, nearly all the asbestos plants of the United States, and the mines and the mills in Canada and have seen quite a lot of

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time there, and have spent a lot of time reviewing films, and not long ago, spent several days with Doctor Kenneth Smith on asbestos, reading his films.

I find it difficult to believe that our cancer incidence among asbestos workers could be anything like as large as it seems to be in England, because while I'm perfectly free to admit that we may have missed cancer cases which we should have not, on the other hand, I don't think we could have missed all of them if they had occurred, into the same extent that apparently they do in England.

Now, that is simply an observation of mine. Of course, it is true that as soon as the business of the harmful effects of asbestos once took hold in the American industry, they did start to clean up their plants and, while I wouldn't say that all the asbestos plants in the country were marvels of industrial hygiene perfection, nevertheless great strides have been made, and particularly, for instance, in the plant in Doctor Kenneth Lynch's town in Charlotte, South Carolina, where they have done a very beautiful job, so that with the small number of people in the industry, it's obvious that we are never going to have the clinical experience with asbestosis that we have, for instance, with silicosis, because there is not going to be the material to work on.

Now, back of that, there is still one more question.

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That is the nature of the asbestos itself. Now, when I first used to go to Canada, I used to hear frequently that, up there, that the Canadian asbestos was less damaging than the kind they used in England, I believe, and I have put that comment down to what we might call the national or local patriotism, you know, like the rivalry between towns, so that you so frequently see, but the fact remains the same, that in this country, we do use the asbestos, mostly the asbestos that we get from Canada, and I believe, from what I hear from our English friends, that a great deal, if not the major part of the asbestos used in England, is Rhodesian asbestos, which is quite dissimilar in its construction and in its formation, its physical characteristics, to the kind that comes from Thetford and from asbestos in Canada.

Now, that may have nothing to do with it, and up until two or three years ago, I dismissed that. I thought that was just puerile, but since we have in the last few years, learned that different types of silica, for instance, produce entirely distinct pathological effect, I am beginning to wonder if we have not failed to pay sufficient attention to the type of asbestos which varies even, as I am informed, there is a difference between the asbestos that is mined in the town of Asbestos and the kind that is mined not far away in Thetford, or yet both of these, in turn,

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are quite different from the asbestos that come from Rhodesia, and possibly from other parts of the world with which I'm not acquainted.

And, having in mind the lesson we've learned in the silica dust, I think that is something perhaps that we should pay more attention to. Now, I simply raise that point, because I think it may have a great deal more significance than we have been inclined to give it.

Now, I have summarized - I have summarized my remarks here very briefly, because the topic of chrome is going to be handled by Doctor Anna Bastjer, who has done the experimental work in chrome, and has a more intimate knowledge of it from that point of view than I do.

The available evidence is that chromate workers do have an incidence of cancer of the lungs in excess of what might be expected. Beyond this, we do not as yet know a great deal.

Interest in chrome as a possible carcinogenic agent, with particular respect to lung cancer, is comparatively recent. The officials of one of the largest chrome producing companies in this country supplied the impetus that started interest in this subject in the United States, their apprehensions to tangible form, in setting on foot the statistical survey conducted by Machle and Gregorius, and published in the Public Health Reports on August 27th, 1948.