

W.W.F. Shepherd

AIR MAIL

J. W. ROBERTS LTD., ARMLEY, LEEDS 12, ENG.

MLD/VL

10th August, 1949

H.A. Williamson Esq.,
The Atlas Asbestos Co., Ltd.,
110, McGill Street,
MONTREAL,
CANADA.

Dear Mr. Williamson,

Asbestosis

I now have yours of the 4th instant with further reference to the case of alleged asbestosis developed by a spray operator employed by Messrs. Fleck Brothers, Vancouver. Whilst there appears to be no need for any further direct action with the Department of Industrial Hygiene, I hope that the following comments will be of help in investigating the matter further from a more or less practical angle, because unless we do pay attention to these things they are apt to develop into serious snags.

As we at these Works have been in touch with asbestosis since it was first put forward as an industrial risk - so that we have not only had longer experience, but more time in which to find similar cases - I find it difficult to grasp why the first case amongst spray operators should have been reported from so far away as Vancouver, more particularly in the case of a man who did not do any spraying but merely filled the machine during work on board ship where, because of the difficulty of handling the old heavy machines, these are normally kept on the exposed deck, quite away from the man who is doing the spraying below; if the lid of the machine is kept closed the amount of dust is absolutely negligible; so that he could not possibly accumulate sufficient to give rise to fibrosis of the lung in so short a time. The fact that it has occurred so soon after the dates you give suggests to me that there may be some previous history involved, and it might be worth determining whether the man has previously been engaged in some other dusty occupation, such as mining, flour milling, or loading grain in ships.

The figure of 93 Dollars per month suggests total incapacity, and in passing I wonder whether this is paid by you or by your Government; from the interest they are taking it would seem that the latter is the case.

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As regards dust counts, these are apt to be misleading, especially as there is seemingly no standardised method in operation, but even so I cannot quite follow what the set of figures quoted is intended to indicate. Some counts which were done by us quite recently, however, show that the reduction in dust resulting from the use of our two new spraying methods are in the order of 14/15ths for the pre-damping method, and 9/10ths when using the continuous damping process in the new machine, as compared with the old method, so that this would bring your own people's figures well below the 300 per c.c. suggested by them as a safe working quantity.

It should be noted here that the maximum allowance of dust, laid down shortly before the War by the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists, was 5 million particles per cubic foot in the case of asbestos, and 50 million for Portland Cement. (A cubic foot = 28,315 c.c.).

I shall be leaving here at the end of the month, and be away for about four months in South America, so will you please keep in touch with Mr. G.A. Wilson in respect of the supply of new spraying equipment, and should anything fresh arise perhaps we could arrange to deal with it together on my return, especially if I am able to call and see you next year.

The Department of Industrial Hygiene have acknowledged our letter of the 19th July, and you might care to have a copy, which I attach.

Yours sincerely,

Encl:

PLAINTIFF'S
EXHIBIT

IN 2071