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1st November 1965

Mr. J.A.E. Clogg,

Asbestos and Health

Following the appearance of the two articles enclosed in the press and two short discussions this morning with Mr. Bateman, I have been thinking about possible action of a positive nature that could perhaps be taken to educate various sectors of opinion with regard to the true facts on asbestos and health.

1 Parliament

It would not be difficult to discover which back-bench M.P.'s on both sides of the House took a special interest in industrial health. Having established such a list and added to it Mrs. Joyce Butler, M.P. and the local M.P.'s for Rochdale, The High Peak and Bolton, The Asbestos Research Council could invite a party to visit Rochdale and Horwich during the next parliamentary recess. Mr. Waddell and Dr. Knox would be their hosts and could, over lunch, have a frank discussion with the M.P.'s on this important subject. It would be necessary to have available a document presenting the facts in a fair light for M.P.'s to take away with them.

In addition, I would like to suggest that our subsidiary companies invite the M.P.'s local to our asbestos goods factories to have a look round in order to see for themselves the careful attention that we give to this problem.

2 Press

If more newspapers seem to give prominence to the subject of asbestos and health, it would be worth considering whether the Asbestos Research Council should not invite the medical correspondents of newspapers to Rochdale and Horwich for the day for a similar frank discussion.

Cont/d

3 Customers

If this publicity continues it would be worthwhile considering whether our subsidiary companies should not write a letter to the customers who buy asbestos-based products from them, explaining that, when processed into manufactured products, asbestos is no hazard to health to those who handle it, but that care should be taken where these products are machined to ensure that proper dust extraction plant is employed in conjunction with those machines. J.W. Roberts is a special case which would have to be dealt with separately and in a different way.

It would be worthwhile considering whether a similar statement should appear in a box in all unit company catalogues about such asbestos-based products.

4 Staff

Would it be possible for Dr Knox to write an article on the subject of asbestos and health which could be printed and inserted in the wage packets of weekly-paid employees and distributed in the internal mail to monthly-paid employees with a covering note from the Chairman or Managing Director of each unit company's board? With T.B.A. and J.W. Roberts, this article could appear in "Firefly" if an issue was on the verge of production instead of being issued individually.

W.P. Howard

W. P. HOWARD

WPH/WKM
c: RMB

THE GUARDIAN Monday, 1st November 1965

Asbestos puts new health demand on the Government

BY OUR OWN REPORTER

Pressure on the Government to set up an occupational health service to complement the NHS is likely to grow as a result of the apparent link between asbestos and the increasing incident of fatal lung tumours.

The current issue of the "British Journal of Industrial Medicine" publishes a paper on an investigation into the hazard carried out by Dr Muriel Newhouse and Mrs Hilda Thompson, of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Their investigation of 76 patients at the London Hospital who died from the tumour mesothelioma demonstrated that 52.6 per cent of the cases had been in contact with asbestos through their work, or had lived in the same house as an asbestos worker. A total of 30.6 per cent had lived within half a mile of an asbestos factory.

Ministry inquiry

Yesterday a spokesman at the Ministry of Labour confirmed a report in the "Sunday Times" that the chief inspector of factories had set up a medical committee to investigate the risk of exposure to asbestos. The spokesman said that this committee came into being about six months ago—about a month after a similar body was set up to investigate the apparent link between bladder cancer and the rubber manufacturing industry.

The Minister of Labour, Mr Ray Gunter, was closely questioned in the Commons earlier this year after the disclosure that seven men had died of the disease. Mr Gunter said that efforts were being made to trace 500 men who had been fellow employees of those who were killed. Mrs Joyce Butler, Labour MP for Wood Green, has tabled a parliamentary question about the progress this committee is making.

The real need, in the view of the TUC, is for an occupational health service, particularly in view of the increasing use of chemicals in industry. As reported in the "Guardian" last week, the TUC is now so dissatisfied with the Government's progress that it is proposing to spend £150,000 itself to open an industrial diseases research centre, attached to an existing hospital, in time for the TUC centenary in 1968.