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Questioning the Validity of the Sandblasting Study

September 26, 1932

Mr. G. T. Hellmuth,
Chicago, North Shore and Milwaukee Railroad Company,
72 West Adams St., Chicago, Ill.

My dear Mr. Hellmuth:

Dr. Greenburg has shown me your letter of September 21 and I want to take the responsibility of answering for him and for myself and setting forth our attitude with regard to the whole problem of the sandblasting study.

First of all I think it vitally important to distinguish between three questions. (1) Is the report a scientifically valid one? (2) Is it expedient for the Safety Council to publish it? (3) If the Safety Council does not publish it what rights has the U.S. Public Health Service in regard to the document?

From the standpoint of scientific validity I do not think there is anything in Mr. Hoyt's memorandum that raises any new question of significance. It is not true as stated that two well qualified workers will obtain widely different results with the same method; but it is true that different methods of dust determination give variable results and therefore require different standards in their interpretation. This was fully allowed for by the Committee. The Committee also considered carefully the question of silicosis and decided at the outset that the evidence was overwhelming and that there was no need to go into that matter again. The committee had also brought before it very fully the question of the representative character of the sampling and decided that the procedure followed was sound. The committee went into all of these matters in great detail and adjourned sine die. I can see no

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Justification for calling the committee together again and feel pretty sure that its scientific members would not be willing to devote the time to the rehashing of these questions.

The problem of the expediency of publishing the report is an entirely different one. I think Mr. Hoyt is right in saying that much of the good we hoped for will undoubtedly be accomplished by such publicity as has been obtained. Furthermore the basic material, as you may perhaps be aware, has already appeared in a foreign publication in a paper which I sent to Germany early last March at a time when we all had reason to assume the report of the committee would be published in May before the appearance of the German journal. I enclose a copy of this pamphlet for your information. I can say very frankly that in view of the opposition that has been aroused I can see there are strong arguments of political expediency against the publication of the report by the Council. This, however, is a practical question which rests with the executive Committee and has nothing to do with the technical committee.

If the Council decides not to publish the report, the question as to the policy to be pursued by the Public Health Service will have to be taken^{up} directly with them.

Yours very sincerely,

Enc.