FILE NAME: Asbestos Sacks and Bags (ASB)

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Meeting held at the MINISTRY OF LABOUR, 19 St James' Square, S.W.1. on Thursday, August 12th, 1965 at 3.30 p.m.

PRESENT:	Mr R.K. Christy, C.B.	- Chief Inspector of Factories
	Dr W.D. Buchanan	- Deputy Senior Medical Inspector
	Mr C. Mainwaring	- Deput Chief Inspector - Factories
	Miss L.A. Pittam	- Deputy Inspector - Factories
	Mr A.T. Hatfull - 384.	- Secretary of Safety Health and Welfare Division
	Mr M.A. Simons Whitehall 6200 — Ex 452.	- Principal - Safety Health and Welfare Division MoL Sipham. Sq.
	Mr H.C. Armstrong	- Commercial Councillor (Metals and Minerals) Office of the High Commission for Canada
	Mr M.J. Brazier	- A.A. Brazier & Co (Asbestos) Ltd. (representing Asbestos Producers and Merchants)

Asbestos and Asbestosis was a subject with which the Factory Inspectors are very much concerned at the present time. It was because of this that the meeting consisted of a number of interested parties, explained Mr Christy in opening the meeting.

Although the present situation at the Docks could not yet be classed as an industrial dispute, the reasons for the slow working were of considerable interest to the Factory Inspectors and the Ministry of Labour.

Mr Christy advised that Asbestos in factories was governed by the 1931 Code of Handling and Processing Asbestos in Factories. The 1934 Act regarding Dock Labour, although explaining various health provisions, did not mention Asbestos. Both these Acts were being revised and there was little doubt that eventually new regulations regarding Dockers working in dusty conditions would be incorporated, with a probable mention specifically of Asbestos and the types of packing that should be used.

Dr Buchanan mentioned that although there were no known cases of Asbestosis in Dockers, the Ministry of Labour had had no legal obligation to investigate and it could be that there were cases of which they had no knowledge.

It has recently been discovered that cancer of the plura (mesothelioma) could be caused by minimal exposure to Asbestos dust. This had been discussed at a Symposium held at the New York Acadamy of Science at the end of 1964. This discovery regarding minimal exposure as against the more classic causes of Asbestosis, is the chief reason for the increased activities of the Factory Inspector in this country at Asbestos manufacturers plants. They had found that one of the worst spots at the majority of plants was the warehouse. The Factory Inspectors were pressing for an impermeable bag.

Mr C.B. Selby Boothroyd of the Board of Trade, had written to the Ministry of Labour, stressing the gravity of the situation at the London Docks and the fears that if imports of Asbestos were banned, then such essential industries as the motor car and building trades, vital to the British economy, would stop working and many thousands of workers laid off; also vital export trade would be lost.

It now transpires that one branch of a Union at the London Docks took it on themselves to retain Dr Hunter in view of the dusty conditions on the "EMEZK" which was discharging Russian Asbestos. This Asbestos was packed "loose filled jute bags" and Dr Hunter's comments regarding the danger to health from Asbestos dust, and the handling of Asbestos cargos under certain conditions, were made on this visit alone. He had not seen the other types of packaging from other Asbestos Producers being unloaded at London Docks. Unfortunately the Unions sent the directive to their Members quoting"Asbestos in all types of packs" and this has resulted in the present "time work only" ruling. Under piecework, a gang could be expected to clear an average of 30 - 35 tons per hour. On a time work basis they are only working about 1 ton per hour instead of a more normal 8 - 10 tons per hour on time work.

Dr Hunter has left for a Lecture Tour of South America and will not be returning until the end of September. The Ministry of Labour are trying to contact one of his associates (Dr G. Kazantzies).

Dr Buchanan is going to arrange for tests to be taken at the Docks, of the dust content in the hold when unloading. They would also inspect the types of packaging. Their Report would state whether they consider Asbestos in types of impermeable packs, i.e. paper and jute laminated bags, reduced the dust danger level to what could be called a normal industrial risk.

Mr Christy advised that he was fully aware of the damage caused by the Dockers using hooks.

It was stressed that the Asbestos Producers had been working on the dust problem for a number of years, particularly on the question of bagging, and the Factory Inspectors themselves had been able to see the encouraging results at various Factories. The difficulty is to find a suitable bag which would withstand the multiple handlings in transit. Considerable progress had been made with shipments of Asbestos in paper bags, particularly for the shorter grades, becoming common. There is still the problem of the dust caused by a paper bag breaking and this occurred in most cases during unloading at the London Docks due to hooks or rough handling by the Dockers. The use of slings instead of nets and trays was another cause of bags breaking. It was felt that jute-paper laminated bags might be a satisfactory answer and they were pleased to learn that trial shipments were coming forward.

It was hoped that the whole problem would be solved before it became an industrial dispute and the Ministry of Labour was quite willing to arrange a meeting with the Dockers, Medical representatives, Shippers and ourselves if this would be of assistance when the reports are completed.