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for file: Asbestos Textile Institute

PLAINTIFF'S EXHIBIT ATI 50

October 26, 1964

Dr. Irving J. Selikoff
750 Broadway
Paterson, New Jersey

Dear Doctor Selikoff:

Our client, the Asbestos Textile Institute, has requested us to communicate to you the grave concern which all member companies share over the possibly misleading implications of recent articles carried in many local and national newspapers on your report and news conference concerning mesothelioma.

The linking together of asbestos and mesothelioma in a cause and effect relationship is clearly made in the article which appeared in The New York Times of October 7, 1964. But in addition to describing your comments on possible occupational hazards, that article also ascribes to you and to Dr. Hammond statements and inferences that go beyond the confines of the studies which you actually conducted:

> "The worrisome feature, Dr. Hammond and Dr. Selikoff said, is the evidence that asbestos, once taken into the body, stays there. Thus even a single heavy exposure could conceivably produce a cancer after a latent period of 20 years or more, they said.

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> "This idea, for which they said there is some experimental as well as epidemiological evidence could expand the risk from simply those occupationally exposed to virtually anyone who might only occasionally encounter asbestos dust."

Again, that article stated:

> "The specialists who gave the report expressed worry that the danger might not be entirely restricted to a limited occupation group, but that it might be more general and possibly of considerable importance. There is no direct evidence to substantiate this, they said, but some of the available findings hint that this may be the case."

It is common knowledge that developments in the field of cancer and possible causative factors or possible preventative and curative measures are subjects of very great and vital public concern. It must be recognized, however, that only the most careful and dispassionate efforts in presenting the results of limited research in this field to the public can avoid misinterpretation, oversimplification, and exaggeration. This is particularly true in discussing with members of the press such limited and tentative conclusions as those suggested by your studies.

Unfounded inferences and hints of danger, though sure of receiving wide distribution, contribute nothing to public understanding. Nor do they aid intelligent action by anyone, whether at the individual or group level or in private or public agencies. The health and welfare of workers in the asbestos and related industries, no less than the general public, in part of course rests upon wise, careful, and practical utilization of scientific knowledge. Innocent but unwise treatment of research data in public discussions or leaving it to laymen to appreciate the carefully phrased limitations and qualifications, can cause reactions that are not justified by the state of scientific knowledge.

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The efforts by members of this association in their own scientific work and medical programs and in cooperation with studies by such groups as the Public Health Service amply demonstrate the willingness of this part of the asbestos industry to act responsibly and intelligently in matters involving the health and safety of its employees and the general public as well. These companies welcome all responsible efforts along these lines.

The Asbestos Textile Institute urges no restraint upon independent medical inquiry or research - indeed it earnestly desires expansion of existing knowledge in this field. Nor does this association seek in any way to discourage the right to discuss the results of such efforts. But it does urge caution in the discussion of these activities to avoid providing the basis for possibly damaging and misleading news stories. The right to study and to discuss these subjects is clear, of course. But the gravity of the subject matter and the consequences implicitedly involved impose upon any who exercise those rights a very high degree of responsibility for their actions.

Sincerely,

CADWALADER, WICKERSHAM & TAFT

GDR/mrc

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