ASBESTOS FIBRE IMPORTERS COMMITTEE

NEWBY HOUSE · 309 CHASE ROAD · LONDON N.14 · TEL.: FOX LANE 1218

23 October, 1968

W.R. Janes Esq.,
Johns-Manville (Great Britain) Ltd
20 Albert Embankment
London, S.E.1.

Dear Mr Janes,

The Executive Committee of the Asbestos Fibre Importers Committee were extremely concerned to hear of the unilateral action being taken by your Principals - Canadian Johns-Manville - that every bag of asbestos fibre shipped by them would carry a dust warning reading:

CAUTION

This bag contains chrysotile asbestos fibre. Persons exposed to this material should use adequate protective devices as inhalation of this material over long periods may be harmful.

Although we subsequently have been advised that this warning notice will not be on the laminated bags used for the British market, it is likely that British dock labour will hear of it through the International Labour Organisations, or see in ships holds, marked bags for discharge at later ports, leading to a further series of problems in U.K. ports and factories.

As the Department of Employment and Productivity are finalising the new Docks Regulations for the U.K., such a notice could lead to further restrictions on the handling of Asbestos in the ports.

From the experience gained by the A.F.I.C., we feel sure that the introduction by Canadian Johns-Manville of such a caution notice would increase the U.K. problems. It could also create similar difficulties in other countries where labour might refuse to handle asbestos unless packed in an impervious bag and probably insist on metal containers or fibre board drums etc.

We feel that no company should take such an important and far reaching decision independendently because of the implications to all asbestos producers and manufacturers. We are therefore writing direct to the Quebec Asbestos Mining Association to ask them to take up this matter with all the Asbestos producers.

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The A.F.I.C. naturally are concerned over the possible hazards to health from asbestos but feel that as the caution notice on a bag, primarily is intended for factory personnel, it should not be visible to transport labour. Suitable leaflets with the caution notice and suggested protective measures could be forwarded for distribution only to the labour handling the asbestos in factories and warehouses.

We cannot reiterate too strongly the danger of Canadian Johns-Manville implementing this decision to mark the bags with a cautionary notice, not only from the difficulties which will re-occur in the U.K. but will also start in other countries and will affect the whole asbestos industry.

Yours sincerely,

M.J. Frazier

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