Hospital Equipment and Accident Prevention at Asbestos, Que. Take Hazards Out of Industry

Asbestos, Que., September – A pit worker, stripped to the waist, [illegible] facing the [illegible] plate of the X-ray [illegible] in the Canadian [illegible] hospital, [illegible], Swiss expert diagnostician:

"Prenez une longue respiration.....Laissez-le .....
Prenez une autre.....Tenez-la..... Ne bougez pas."

Then he presses the button – "Click! .....Click! ..... Click!" – and the X-ray has taken not one picture, but two. Between the second and third "click" the camera has moved by a short distance, the plate-changer has reversed position, and a second exposure was made. The two resulting plates, viewed together, give a stereoscopic view of the patient's chest.

Thus the finest X-ray equipment in the world, recently installed in the Company's modernized hospital, is putting the mining town of Asbestos in the public health spotlight. The new equipment is at the service not only of employees of Johns-Manville mine, mill, and factory, but also residents of the surrounding community. It is a protection against hazard of accident or illness not surpassed elsewhere on the continent.

Government authorities have expressed interest in the discovery that workers here show remarkable freedom from dust diseases, the record being much better in this respect than it is in other countries. In asbestos quarrying and milling a certain amount of dust is unavoidable, but it does not seem to

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Johns-Manville has spent large sums and employed [illegible] to be very harmful. The hospital occasionally uncovers a case of acute tuberculosis, but the incidence of this disease among workmen is less than [illegible] the general population. Dust is, therefore, not a serious hazard to health. Chief value of the X-ray apparatus is in discovering cases, of whatever cause, before they could be discovered clinically.

[illegible] "course of prec[illegible]tion", however, every one of the 1400 Johns-Manville employees is required to undergo an X-ray examination at least once a year. The apparatus is busy every day.

First started nineteen years ago for traumatic surgery (accident cases), the Company hospital is now devoted to general work for the surrounding district, and there is a small percentage of highway accident cases. More than 90% of all accident cases and surgery are handled here for the community.

Injuries are neither as numerous nor as serious as they used to be in asbestos operations, and the local asbestos industry, though it represents a major part of the volume of the whole Canadian industry, is responsible for a much smaller percentage of accidents. Dr. R.H. Stevenson, veteran surgeon in charge of the hospital here, gives the credit for this to the Company's adoption of systematic accident education and prevention work.

"There used to be in the old days, he says, [illegible] accident ratio of 67% in a year. Now it is about 20%, and this, of course, includes the slightest burn or injury throughout the year. Sudden deaths appear to be almost a thing of the past."

The Company's safety program is a model for any mining operation.

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There is a committee of employees for safety work in each major department of pit, mill, and factory. These hold monthly meetings, which are attended also by department heads and additional representative workers. These committees spend one day a month inspecting methods and equipment. Each accident is investigated, and an investigation committee, headed by C.M. McCaw, meets monthly.

Safety equipment in every department is kept up to the most modern standard.

As an incentive to safety consciousness, merit buttons for employees who complete five or ten years without an accident are being planned.

The net result is plain to be seen in the remarkable improvement in accident ratio figures.

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