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November 20, 1956

Mr. M. D. Burch, Director of Industrial Relations
Owens-Corning Fiberglas Corporation
National Bank Building
Toledo, Ohio

Dear Mr. Burch:

On November 15, I advised you by telephone of my visit to Washington, D. C. and my conference with the international officers of the Asbestos Workers Union. We talked of matters of general interest which led into a discussion of the health investigation being conducted by several of their locals in the New England area, and that led to a discussion of our problem in the South and their attitude in connection therewith.

While the international officers were personally friendly, as they always have been, I detected an element of animosity toward Owens-Corning Fiberglas as a company and specifically a feeling against glass. Normally, you would expect the International to conduct their own investigation with respect to health hazards for their various locals, if they believe such hazards exist. I personally don't believe that either Mr. Sickles or Mr. Hoff feel that their people have developed any lung condition resulting from the handling of Fiberglas. On the other hand, they showed no disposition to discourage the New England locals with regard to their promoting the examination of their membership. They did say, however, that they had on several occasions during the past deleted references to the subject from the minutes as published in the quarterly Asbestos Workers Journal. In the same connection they said that they could not keep the reference out of the last several issues. Mr. Sickles advised that the matter had been brought up at the last Executive Meeting held in Miami, Florida last spring and the Executive Board, as a whole, indicated that they had had no particular complaints from their membership. I cited to Mr. Sickles and Mr. Hoff the harm that could result from the publication of unsupported rumors and that such references appearing in the Journal might be contagious, and be picked up by other locals.

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While I received no proof, in conference with these gentlemen, that the revival of the health subject resulted from the situation we have permitted to exist in the South, they made it very clear that they didn't like our continued support of non-union applicators over a period of years particularly when those applicators favor the United Mine Workers. You will appreciate, I am sure, that I was in no position to ask favors of the executive officers. In their opinion I had dirty hands. Mr. Sickles made the statement, "In years gone by, we could always get something accomplished by calling you, but of late, we have not had your cooperation".

In the near future I plan to confer with Mr. Hugh Mulligan, the most powerful and influencial member of the Executive Board and the individual with whom I dealt ten years ago in having the premium that was placed against Fiberglas rescinded.

On the last two occasions that I visited Washington, Mr. Carl Sickles, the International President, made reference to complaints he had had from our competitors and their old friends about the monopoly Fiberglas seemed to have on the market. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that the revival of the health question has been encouraged by competition.

I have lived intimately with this situation for ten years and I feel very strongly that unless something is done, and done promptly, to better our position with the International, we may find them giving semi-silent approval to the activities of their locals with respect to the health problem. On the long haul, this condition could be costly to the Fiberglas industry. The volume of sales may preclude seeing these storm clouds accumulating.

I have suggested over the years that our first line of defense against the reopening and widespread revival of the health question lies with the various branch managers and their industrial salesmen. I personally believe that anything that is likely to impede the freeflow of the sale of Fiberglas, is a sales hazard. I also believe that if there was an intimate liaison between branch offices and their respective business agents, more of the complaints could be nipped in the bud.

Very truly yours,

Ira I. Brought

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