

Room E17-113

Tel. 617/253-6401

February 27, 1979

To the Editor
The New York Times
229 West 43rd Street
New York, New York 10036

Dear Sir:

According to an AP report, Mr. William Blakey, Deputy Assistant Secretary of HEW, has stated to a Congressional subcommittee that "removing potential hazardous asbestos from... schools should be the responsibility of state and local governments" and that "federal money would not be available for the task."

This astonishing attitude is presumably shared by Mr. Blakey's superiors, including Secretary Califano and, ultimately, President Jimmy Carter.

Asbestos is one of the best understood and most dangerous environmental carcinogens. It causes primarily cancers in the lung, but also in other organs. And it is a carcinogen that we have the power to eliminate.

The American people through their Congress spend a billion dollars a year for research on cancer. But the Administration uses a technicality to deny a few million dollars to protect our school children from a well established hazard. This is the same Administration that actually wants to increase by several billions (well beyond the cost of living raise) the appropriations for defense.

One sometimes wonders whether the struggle against cancer is worth pursuing in the face of the callous inversion of priorities shown by those who run our Government.

Sincerely yours,

sel/na

S. E. Luria, M.D.
Director
Institute Professor