

November 24, 1937

Mr. John V. O'Reilly
2900 Louisiana Avenue
St. Louis, Missouri

Dear Mr. O'Reilly:-

A short time ago our librarian heard some reference over the radio to your hobby of collecting soil from foreign countries. She was immediately interested in as much as we have been making a systematic study of the lead content of vegetation and other food material in this country and in various other countries. Some portion of this lead which is regularly found in vegetation is derived from the soil. Therefore we have become very much interested in the lead content of soils from different parts of the earth. Hearing of your collection of soils, Miss Conway was immediately impressed with this opportunity for our collection of a number of soil samples for analytical purposes.

Obviously I do not want to be a source of nuisance and trouble to you, but I wonder if it would be possible for us to obtain a small quantity, perhaps 100 grams, of soil from a number of countries. For our purposes the more recently these soils have been obtained, the more useful they would be. This is particularly true if the soils have been kept in such a way as to permit them to become more or less contaminated by atmospheric dusts. Such dusts contain small quantities of lead and might appreciably influence the lead content of any samples which we might obtain.

If it is possible for us to obtain such samples, I should be very glad to send you a number of small containers (whatever number you might be willing to make use of) for the purpose. Moreover I should be very glad to supply you with the results of our analyses if they should be of any interest to you.

In any case allow me to thank you in advance for your courtesy in replying to

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Miss Conway and in giving me this opportunity to write you further.

Sincerely yours,

RAK:is

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

P.S. Miss Conway has called my attention to the fact that some reference was made to the fact that this soil had been disinfected before being sent to you. If this is the case, it would, of course, be necessary for me to know something of the manner of the disinfection. If the soils were merely heated so as to kill plant or animal life, it would not influence our results. If they were treated with some chemical disinfectant, that procedure might, of course, make the samples useless for our purposes. RAK.

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