

Cross for
a new note

June 27, 1944

Mr. F. E. Wormser, Secretary
Lead Industries Association
420 Lexington Avenue
New York 17, New York

Dear Mr. Wormser:

Re: Lead Poisoning Publicity

I have noted with interest my copy of your circular letter of June 16 to the Board of Directors of the Lead Industries Association on the above subject, together with the enclosed letter of May 21 from Mr. P. E. Sprague, Vice President of the Glidden Company and a Director of Lead Industries Association.

I have taken the liberty of discussing this subject with two of my colleagues in the Ethyl Corporation, namely, Dr. R. A. Kehoe, Director of our Medical Department, and Mr. Ralph C. Champlin, Director of our Public Relations Department, who have had considerable experience in our Corporation's policies regarding the subject of publicity of our product, tetraethyl lead.

If it would be of any assistance to the Directors of the Association, in arriving at a policy for popular publicity on lead poisoning, both of these gentlemen are agreeable to accompanying me to the next meeting in which this matter will be discussed. I might add that we have had a fair amount of experience and have given considerable thought to this matter as it concerns Ethyl's public relations.

Meanwhile, it would seem to me, by and large, that the lead industry may have some room for improvement in getting its house in order with regard to industrial hazards and industrial hygiene before it takes the further step of education of the public to the hazards of lead. While I do not have too much specific information on this point, I am under the impression that there is much room for improvement in the field of industrial hygiene within our operations.

I feel that we are never in a sound position to take our story to the public until we have demonstrated our ability to handle our own affairs within our own industries.

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It also seems to me that the method which is used to bring this subject into the public mind must be carefully weighed. Education on the use of the products for each phase of the industry might be a preferable route. For example, in the handling of tetraethyl lead we first tried to do all we could in the field of industrial hygiene in our own plants. Then we extended this to the use of the material by the refiners, educating them thoroughly in the safe methods to be applied. The final step was to educate the public. All of this resulted from a build-up of many years of hard work. It seems to me that any program which might be undertaken to cover these three aspects of education in one step rather than three steps might lead into trouble.

Mr. Sprague mentions specifically the Michael O'Brien case. It is my belief that to publicize this case through the medium of trying to prove that lead was not the primary cause we would lay ourselves open to considerable controversy in the press, because certainly there are a sufficient number of legitimate cases of lead poisoning of children and it is hard to prove to the public what is truth and what is fiction. I for one am somewhat against this type of approach.

Time does not permit me to go into all the aspects of our thinking in this matter, but as I have stated in the foregoing, should you wish me to comment further at the proper time, say at the next Board meeting, or should you like me to bring some of my associates to the meeting who have had considerable experience in such matters, I should be glad to contribute as much as possible to the question.

Very truly yours,-

J. H. Schaefer
Vice President