

November 30, 1950

Dr. Paul A. Neal, Chief,
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Bethesda 14, Maryland.

Dear Paul:

I write to you about two matters in which you can assist me, I think. I hope I am not imposing unduly upon your time.

First, in the matter of the investigation of a select committee of the House of Representatives to investigate the use of chemicals in food products, I am requested to appear on December 13. I shall be in Washington on the 12th in order to consult with various people, including the attorney who will be conducting the examination of witnesses at this hearing. Before testifying before this committee, I should like to know in a fairly definite way, something of the thinking of official people, with respect to the needs for legislation in this field, and something of their attitudes toward how these needs might be satisfied. I have my own opinions on the subject, but I do not want to throw any confusion into the situation, and therefore it would be very helpful to me if I were to have an opportunity to consider the ideas of other people, and the developments of recent months in this regard. It is my understanding that both you and Surgeon General Scheele have testified before this committee or will have done so before I do. I wonder if it would be possible to have a copy of your brief, if such is available, or otherwise to know the substance of your testimony as well as that of Surgeon General Scheele. If such material is available in any form at all, it would help me enormously to have it. If it is not, perhaps you would be willing to give me your ideas on this subject, at least briefly. Before I testify I expect to have an opportunity to talk with some of the people in the Food and Drug Administration and also some in the Department of Agriculture. Insofar as it is possible to do so, it is my feeling that those of us who have professional responsibilities in this matter should be in agreement.

There is another matter in which you might be of some help to me. At present we are looking for some funds to continue some work which has been begun and which should not be allowed to lapse. There are several items of such work, but the most important of these relates to certain carefully planned studies of the physiology of the skin. We have developed microchemical methods for the study of certain constituents of the sebaceous secretions, and we have hoped to study variations in these constituents under a variety of experimental conditions. For this purpose a rather costly room has been devised

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that would enable us to vary temperatures and humidities, and other facilities have been developed. The financial support for this work seems to be on the point of disintegrating through a combination of circumstances which are no one's fault. The work, on the other hand, should not be allowed to go to pot. Another aspect of this same program is the systematic study of the absorption of organic and inorganic materials through the intact skin and through skin damaged in various ways. We have also expected to follow some work on human subjects, under a variety of environmental conditions. The relationships of these to sweat glands and sweating, and to sebaceous glands and their secretions, are also to be attacked. In other words, to generalize, we have anticipated studying the skin as an organ of both secretion and excretion. The problem is a big one, and the information concerning it is badly needed. We have the organization and the equipment, in large part, to do this work. We need financial support. I think we shall be able to obtain it, but I am surveying the situation to establish what may be the best means. This is a general problem of physiology, and it could be put up to the Physiological Division of the Public Self-Service activities in respect to grants. Just what the possibilities are for a successful outcome of such applications at this rather crucial time is open to considerable question in my mind. Any information or advice which you could give me in this regard would be greatly appreciated. I fully realize that this is not quite in your province, but I feel certain that you will know present circumstance pretty well, and what I might do. If this is not the proper time to approach such broad scale grants, I shall turn to the other potential sources. As I have indicated, I think the funds can be obtained. My purpose is to try to set up the thing on such a long term basis as will enable us to obtain some really significant information. You will recognize that this cannot be done within a period of one or two years. Definite progress could be made, but in this sadly neglected field, we shall have to work almost from the ground up. I should greatly appreciate any advise you can give me.

With kindest personal regards,

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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