

October 28, 1936

Dr. H. E. A. Boldero
68 Wimpole Street
London, W. 1
England

Dear Dr. Boldero:

I am writing to you at this time to acquaint you with the fact that we have had several rather unfortunate incidents in connection with the cleaning of tanks used for mixing and storing leaded gasoline, these incidents having recently culminated in three fatal poisonings among a group of seven workmen who cleaned a storage tank (which had also been used for mixing) without any precautionary measures. The circumstances connected with this situation justify a very thorough-going investigation of this problem and we are undertaking such an investigation which will probably take several months to complete. In the meantime I am not in position to make recommendations which go beyond those which we have already made with relation to this procedure. It is quite apparent that the methods we have used in this country to put our precautionary measures into effect have been inadequate. I have a distinct feeling that there may be inadequacies also outside of this country, and it gives me some anxiety to think that incidents of this sort may occur in connection with the cleaning of storage tanks in any part of the world. It seems quite certain that we shall have to set up some mechanism for taking this activity under our own supervision. We are in the process of setting up a mechanism for this purpose in this country. At present I do not consider it advisable to try to extend such a mechanism beyond our own province and I shall not make any recommendations on the subject until we have complete information as to the character and magnitude of the whole problem. As an illustration of what I mean, let me point out that all the cases of poisoning in this field have occurred in connection with tanks which have been used for mixing and which may, therefore, have contained concentrated fluid in the sludge at the bottom of the tank, as well as crystalline decomposition products of tetraethyl lead. On the basis of the occurrence of cases we might assume that the danger is confined to tanks that have been used for mixing as distinguished from tanks that have been used solely for the storage of finished leaded gasoline. I am by no means certain that this conclusion

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is justified and until I am certain, I shall not wish to make any recommendations of widespread application. On the other hand I consider it advisable, and I have so recommended to Bevan, that we take such steps as are feasible to remind the distributors of leaded gasoline abroad of the necessity of taking at least those precautions which have previously been recommended by us. I think you will see at once that this whole problem may be a very serious one, and I should appreciate it very much, therefore, if you would discuss the matter with Bevan and that you come to an agreement as to the immediate steps which may be required in reminding the distributors of leaded gasoline of the dangers which may be present in this activity.

From time to time I shall keep you informed on the progress of our observations on this subject here, and when I am in position to do so, I shall make general recommendations as to what may be done to more adequately eliminate this hazard.

Machle has brought back news from you but it has been some time since we have had an opportunity to talk about various questions which have arisen. I should be very grateful to you if you would drop me a line from time to time, letting me know of anything of importance which may come to your attention.

With kindest personal regards,

Very truly yours,

RAK:is

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

cc Mr. Lewis

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