

July 7, 1948

Dr. E. Davison,
The Associated Ethyl Company Limited,
Northwich Cheshire,
England.

Dear Davison:

Thanks very much for your letters of May 24 and June 2. At this point I am trying to clear up the matters on my desk, including my correspondence, before getting away on a two-weeks vacation. Accordingly I shall reply only to the specific questions raised in your last letter, and will leave further general matters until some later time.

The Sylphon Seal has been in use in the Du Pont plant for quite some time, and it is my opinion that they intend to equip every one of their stills with this device as rapidly as replacements are required. It has been difficult to obtain this equipment, and consequently only one or two of them are in use at Baton Rouge. The impression there is that they are very little better than a water cooled jacket, but they may be somewhat prejudiced. So far as I have been able to establish, the Sylphon Seal when carefully and appropriately put in place is a very satisfactory and very durable piece of equipment. I know of one that was in continuous use for eighteen months without giving rise to any trouble whatever. In any case, the Du Pont people are very greatly impressed and pleased by their performance.

Your question #2 cannot be answered at this moment in a satisfactory manner, since the people at Baton Rouge have been experimenting with this problem and have not come to a definite conclusion which they have expressed in performance. You will remember that there was no carbon filter on the intake side of the compressor when we visited Baton Rouge. The reason for this lay in the fact that the operating people fear that the accumulation of organic lead in such a filter might result in a fire. They chose, therefore, to use small filters situated in the line at the entrance to each building. They have not satisfied themselves as yet as to the best filter to be used. I shall obtain the best advice I can from them and pass it along to you. I can tell you that the development people see no reason for doubting that activated charcoal will be satisfactory for this purpose.

As to the still booths, I can only tell you my own opinions and experience. These booths have been removed completely at the Du Pont plant, and by the proper program of still maintenance they have avoided any difficulty incident to their removal. Following the still explosion at Baton Rouge the still enclosures were removed from D Building and they have not been restored. The conditions in this building have been equally as satisfactory as those in any other, and

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in my opinion the maintenance work has been done somewhat better and more promptly in this building than in the others. There is some tendency to rely upon these enclosures in lieu of proper and prompt maintenance. In addition there is some tendency to skimp the house-keeping because of the inconvenience imposed by the extra partitions. All in all I should say that if the maintenance in your plant cannot be brought up to a high level of excellence, the still booths should remain, and all men who enter them should be required to wear airline masks. If maintenance can be done properly, and if the conditions around the stills can be cared for adequately by properly tailored ventilation at the right points, then the enclosures can well be removed. I think your best judgment will have to be exercised on the basis of the actual conditions of the day's work rather than those which are ideal. I am convinced, so far as Baton Rouge is concerned, that we should remove the still enclosures. You will be interested in knowing that despite the tremendous pressure for production with the larger charge and a shorter cycle, we have been able to maintain conditions within the plants equivalent to those that existed at the time of your visit. Our mean urinary value for the workmen in the entire area is around .053 ± .002 mg. per liter.

I shall continue to be very much interested in what goes on and I am very grateful to you for writing so frequently and so fully.

With best regards,

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

RAK ef

Copy by Air Mail.
Original by Steamer.

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