

January 8, 1955

Mr. Manfred Bowditch
Director of Health and Safety
Lead Industries Association
420 Lexington Avenue
New York City 17

Dear Manfred:

Having returned to my desk only a few days ago, I am still digging out from under the accumulation of things to be done, and am far from having succeeded, but I rise to the prod in your letter of January 6 and reply to your much earlier communication (October 28).

First, let me say that the American Standard for labeling toys is good and should serve a highly useful purpose.

The "Food Standards Committee Report on Lead" issued by the British Ministry of Food is an interesting document. I don't know why it has not come to my attention sooner. If the statements and implications relating to sources and quantities of contamination of food and beverages with lead are correct, and I have no means of assuring myself that they are not, their's is an appalling situation in some respects. They are certainly in need of a thoroughgoing house-cleaning in their industries which are concerned with the food processing, packaging and distributing industries, as well as, perhaps, in their manufacture of household cooking equipment.

I have attempted, largely unsuccessfully, to catalyse some investigations there on the lead content of the food consumed regularly by representative groups of people in various walks of life. On my last trip in November and December, I laid the ground work for some observations of that type, and I have hope they will be initiated and eventually extended to yield some useful information. My primary concern arises out of the need for normal standards in industrial practice in an environment that is not necessarily equivalent to that of North America, but the data would apply usefully in the direction of the deliberations of this Committee.

The British, with their customary and, for the most part, admirable

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conservatism are not prepared to set standards that will upset commercial production and distribution without due warning and process, but some of those they have recommended at this time are indicative of the existence of conditions, especially those related to plumbism and piping and food containers, which, if known, would not be tolerated in this country for longer than is required to establish the facts (or perhaps to guess at them). Others are comparable to those in this country (tea, cocoa, certain beverages but not beer, and, I believe, food colorings). Certainly there is nothing radical about these provisions, and it would seem that they are long overdue in England.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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