

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

INDUSTRIAL TOXICOLOGY

55 VAN DYKE STREET
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Feb. 12th 1925

Surgeon General Cumming
United States Public Health Service
Washington, D.C.

Dear Dr. Cumming:

For the last fortnight I have been receiving letters from a health organization connected, I understand, with a newly formed union of garage workers, on the subject of tetra-ethyl lead, and I am unable to give them any satisfactory answer. At present the situation seems to be as follows:

The States of New York and New Jersey forbade the sale of tetra-ethyl lead, until, recently, the appearance of the report of the Bureau of Mines led the former State to sanction the sale of concentrated tetra-ethyl lead to distributors. The decision was based on advice given by the Public Health Council of New York State, of which Dr. Simon Flexner is Chairman.

The report in question, issued by the Bureau of Mines, seems to my correspondents unsatisfactory and the criticisms made by an industrial toxicologist to whom they submitted it, Dr. Paul Feznikoff formerly engaged in lead research work here, strike me as well taken. Dr. Hsall and Dr. Cecil Drinker have also attacked the methods and conclusions of the Bureau in an article which will come out in the February number of the "Journal of Industrial Hygiene".

The suggestion made by the garage workers' union is that an impartial investigation of this public health hazard be made

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by the United States Public Health Service. They point out the fact, which does seem to me open to criticism, that the study of the Bureau of Mines has been financed by the General Motors Company and the work which is still going on is also financed by it. This will, in the eyes of Labor, always serve to cast doubt on any negative results obtained by the investigators, and I am sure you will agree with me that that is good psychology, especially as they are aware of the damaging fact that the General Motors did not wait for the results of the inquiry before putting tetra-ethyl lead on the market.

I have undertaken to write to you in their behalf because I find myself in entire agreement with them both as to the importance to garage workers and perhaps to motor car users, of this new and little understood poison, and as to the desirability of having an investigation made by a public body which will be beyond suspicion and whose findings will be accepted as impartial and trustworthy.

Very sincerely yours

Alicia Hamilton