

March 19, 1928

Mr. E. W. Webb,
Ethyl Gasoline Corp.,
25 Broadway,
New York City.

My dear Mr. Webb:

After my conversation with you over the telephone I feel that I have not been as frank with you as I might have been. On thinking over the matters which we discussed, it seems to me desirable to write and give you a frank expression of my point of view about the proper manner of handling the investigation which is to be carried on in England, as well as my feeling about a European trip for me in the near future.

First of all, I believe that the direction which events are taking in England is the very best possible one. I am led to believe from what I have heard that the personnel of the Committee to investigate the matter, is a reliable and trustworthy one. Considering the likelihood of their honesty, and considering also British conservatism, I do not think that the Ethyl Gasoline Corporation need fear the outcome of the investigation. There is some danger of being misunderstood if we make too vigorous an attempt to present our data to an investigating committee. This group of men will reserve the right to arrive at their own conclusions; they will resent any attempt to restrain them, or to determine for them the methods which they shall use. I am inclined to believe that the intervention of any and all persons in the employ of the Ethyl Gasoline Corporation will be regarded as an attempt to influence their minds, and I should be exceedingly careful that any person representing the Corporation keep entirely out of the thing until such time as assistance and information and co-operation are requested. Any show of anxiety will be interpreted as fear of the outcome, and I see no reason for having any fear as to the outcome of a just investigation. I believe that you, and all others of the Ethyl Gasoline Corporation group, representing a corporation that has investigated and feels sure of its ground, should stand upon your dignity in the matter and not be stampeded into doing anything which might be misinterpreted. Furthermore, I cannot but feel that my presence in England at the present moment, or even after my report is completed, will be entirely unnecessary and entirely without avail, except as the Committee may express a wish to consult with me over details of the manner of carrying out the investigation. If this Committee were to make a request that I see them I would hardly be in position to refuse gracefully, for they are entitled to any assistance which I can give them on a matter of this importance. However, I do not believe that it would be advisable for me to

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In fact, I do not feel that I can afford to break into my experimental program and abandon my University work during this present semester unless some such necessity as this arises. I may as well be brutally frank - I do not believe that the wish of the Ethyl Gasoline Corporation to be courteous to the Anglo-American Company, nor that the anxiety of the Anglo-American Company in this matter, is a sufficient justification for my dropping my work and getting myself into a very embarrassing situation in the University. My written report of our work will be able to speak for itself, and I think it will speak for itself better than I can speak for it. I have not been able to make any arrangement whereby I can get my work taken care of in my absence. I do not see how I can make such an arrangement. If I were to go, it would be only because my chief in the Department of Physiology waived the rights of the University in the matter in order to accommodate me personally. I do not see how I can ask him to do this, unless I am prepared to make some radical change in my relationship with the Department of Physiology. If I were in his place, I should regard such a situation as being almost the equivalent of a resignation.

I am sorry to have to put the matter into this blunt form, but I do not see any possibility of my continuing in my University work on my present basis if I am to face the necessity of going away for several months at a time during the school year. It becomes necessary for me to choose one way or the other. I think you will understand which way my choice will be made. On the other hand, if there is an expression from the Committee itself of a desire to see and consult with me, and if it is made sufficiently urgent as to the time, neither I nor the University would be in position to refuse, I believe. However, considering the length of time that Ethyl Gasoline has been used in the United States without bad results I do not see where there is anything sufficiently urgent in the British public health situation to necessitate my going over there immediately. It would seem to me that no decision is likely to be reached at once, and that a decision should and could be held in abeyance until such a time as all facts are in. I cannot but feel that any intelligent group of scientific men will regard the thing in this light.

I trust that this makes my position in the matter sufficiently plain, and that you will regard it as a proper position.

Very truly yours,

RAK:EJ

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