

March 8, 1952

AIR MAIL

Mr. T. R. A. Bevan
The Associated Ethyl Company Ltd.
Artillery House, Artillery Row
London S. W. 1, England

Dear Ray:

Doctor Boyd is now on his way home, and it is time for me to report to you on him and his sojourn with us, and to comment on a few matters which he brought to my attention as well as one or two which seem to me to be of some consequence.

First let me say that he is an extremely able man and that you are fortunate in having found him. Not only is he able but he also has charm, sensitivity, integrity and industry. Therefore, if he decides to make a career of his work for Associated Ethyl, we (you and your responsible associates, as well as I) have gone a long way toward solving the long term problem of medical service for your company and its customers.

He has had a good experience in coming here. In my considered opinion it has been good for him and has opened his eyes to many things. I firmly believe that this has also been a good investment on the part of Associated Ethyl, although that is a thing which only time will demonstrate. Much depends on whether or not he finds real satisfaction in his work. There is a problem in that respect which will have to be faced, and I felt it advisable to touch upon it even though it involved some risk. The medical work at a manufacturing plant may pall on one, as does "routine" medical work in any industrial set-up. It takes experience, background and imagination to find satisfaction in the day's work, and an additional requirement is that of sound working relationships with the people among whom one's work is carried out. The latter is not always possible and rarely is it easy, but I think Boyd will achieve this. Another requirement for a really good man is that of keeping alive an interest in, and a familiarity with, the general field of medicine. Here it might be possible for Doctor Boyd and Barry to find a considerable satisfaction in acquiring and maintaining some professional and academic association at Liverpool or Manchester, in connection with their work at the new plant. I don't know what is best for them to do. I know Dr. Lane at Manchester, and I'm sure they might find a means of fitting in there on some feasible basis. I don't know about Liverpool. But they should be able to find their way about without undue difficulty, and it would be a great source of satisfaction to them to carry on some work of this type.

I pictured to Boyd a situation in which he and a man of generally equivalent competence, - and I hope that Doctor Barry is of this

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calibre - would share their main responsibilities, so that in time either would be in position to give good advice in all medical matters. Both should be fully familiar with the plant work, the general problems of the industry over the whole of its operating area, and the medical men who act as consultants. Some considerable effort will be required to achieve complete familiarity with your medical problems and representatives and to get your household in good order in these matters. The prospect, therefore, is for some considerable amount of travel, for some appreciable amount of responsibility and prestige in the field of industrial medicine and public health, as these relate to the general situation of Associated Ethyl at home and abroad, and for such association with professional people in this field of practice, research and teaching as should keep their interest at an high pitch.

With specific reference to the hazards of the manufacture, distribution and use of tetraethyl lead, I believe that Doctor Boyd has had a satisfactory tutelage. He will learn more as time goes on, for he knows the principles. Specific facts will loom more important under the influence of his experience. I have no question in my mind on these points. I have gone over many things with him and have been impressed by his good judgment. He can continue to consult me about anything on which he desires my help, and I have encouraged him to do so. He realizes from seeing me at work that he will not always get a prompt answer to his questions and letters, but he also knows that I will take pleasure in doing all I can do to help him and Associated Ethyl.

He and I have discussed the matters which he brought along (and received by mail later) for my examination. Of one of these I wish to express my own viewpoint in some detail, since in my opinion, it is a matter of considerable importance. It relates to the reports (Boyd's and the modifications suggested by yourself and others) on the cases of poisoning arising out of the cleaning of gasoline storage tanks at Poole early in 1951. This was and is a troublesome matter for several reasons which I shall not give in detail, but one of them lies in the fact that the matter was not handled properly in the first place, and that is always embarrassing to all concerned. It is unlikely to work out in such a manner under Boyd's regime, since for all of his inexperience at that time, if he had been in on it earlier, I really believe that it would have been handled properly. What I say, therefore, is not intended as a criticism of you, since I'm sure that there would have been no difficulty or difference in point of view between us. Rather it is a matter of what is wise and necessary to do after the fact in such an awkward situation. I cannot take the position that I know just what would be expected of the medical man in Boyd's position in your country, for I do not know all of the nuances of the professional proprieties vis a vis the medico-legal situation. What I am prepared to say, however, is that Boyd was justified in the opinion he arrived at, concerning the case of the man who died under circumstances regarded by the coroner as death from meningitis. In my opinion, there is

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little doubt that this man died of tetraethyl lead poisoning. It is not necessary to have incontrovertible evidence to this effect in order to arrive at the best diagnosis.

Under the circumstances that now exist in this matter, and because of the general awkwardness of this situation long after the fact, Boyd believes that the matters should be dropped, and with that conclusion I agree. However, I do not think that I would have dropped it at the time if I had come into it under the circumstances that brought him into it. On the contrary, I followed up a similar case in Florida and consented to let it ride without exhumation of the body and the acquisition of proof, if the responsible people would take the necessary steps to compensate the wife of the poor negro who died under circumstances generally similar to those referred to in this case. He believes, and I agree, that the policy of following up on such cases and establishing the facts, regardless of where the blame may fall, should be followed hereafter. It is on this precise principle of performance that we have built our position of primary regard for the public interest and for the verities of the position of tetraethyl lead in the economy and commerce of the country, and I may say, of the world. I am trusted in this field, I believe, because I have never protected anyone from the consequences of his mistakes when someone was injured in the process. I believe, as I know you do, that we shall be able to maintain this industry only on such hygienic principles. My point is that Doctor Boyd, without any urging or coaching, feels strongly on this point as a matter of professional integrity. To have found a man with that kind of intense honesty and moral sensitivity is a piece of good fortune, which I am sure you will recognize. I do not think his attitude was one of naivete or of impractical idealism or of being a stickler for form and minute correctness, but rather a profound unwillingness to be a party, even after the fact, to an act of carelessness that cost a man his life.

You will gather from all of this that I like Boyd very much and approve of him and trust him. He doesn't know everything, and he does not think he does. He knows enough to do a good job and he is made of the kind of stuff that it takes to do our job. I sincerely hope that we can keep him happy, not by any kind of pampering but by giving him work to do that is worthy of his mettle. I have seldom found a man for whom, on so short an acquaintance, and with so little actual testing, I have developed so much personal regard and trust. One of my friends and associates in Boston remarked to me in a note "He has given me a new faith in Britain." Within it is not a "new" faith, as you know, but a strengthening of an abiding confidence.

With all kindest regards and best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

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Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.