

June 24, 1955

Mr. Manfred Bowditch
Lead Industries Association
420 Lexington Avenue
New York City 17

Dear Manfred:

I have not ignored your letters and enclosures on the situation in Australia, but I've been too preoccupied otherwise to participate in the correspondence.

The action taken by the Australian Federation of Organizations of the Blind is, I think, quite unrealistic, for a number of reasons. The position with respect to paints is well known to yourself and has been well expressed in the second paragraph of Leonard Greenburg's letter. The other issues, and especially the etiologic and clinical aspects of optic neuritis have been discussed satisfactorily, from my viewpoint, by your other correspondents.

On the other hand, one has to look at this matter on the peculiar background of Australian (specifically Queensland) experience. In view of the publications of Gibson, and the controversy over the relationship between lead poisoning and chronic nephritis which has produced a monograph (Chronic Nephritis and Lead Poisoning, by L. J. Jarvis Nye) and a controversy which has been reviewed repeatedly and given rise to at least two elaborate reports in the Australian Medical Journal, it is not surprising that this country and many of its people are highly sensitized to the hazards of lead absorption. I have been in touch with a number of their medical people, including Nye, for a good many years, and on the background of the legislation promulgated in Queensland, this proposal does not strike me as surprising at all. What does surprise me is that Mr. Taylor is not aware of the background which has made this a not altogether unexpected development.

I may say that it is quite unlikely, at least in my thinking, that this proposal of the Organization will be acted upon favorably by the Australian Government. The Medical Association, I should think, would be consulted for its reaction, and it would be most surprising to me if some of the well informed and sensible people in Australian medical circles were not to point out the same things that have been said in your correspondence. This proposal, it would seem, stems from a lay group, impressed by certain things in the past history of the area (which they have misinterpreted) and motivated by a sincere but misdirected sympathy for those afflicted with this dreadful handicap.

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I shall be interested in what may come of this, and if it should be indicated by any information which you receive, I might take a hand in it through correspondence with some of the people who might, if necessary, do something about it. I have had some continuing association with several fairly influential medical men in Australia, through which I could obtain information and raise certain questions of fact and opinion. This may not be necessary, and if it is not, it is better left to the Australians.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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