

Lead Industries Association

420 LEXINGTON AVENUE
NEW YORK/N.Y.

CLINTON H. CRANE, PRESIDENT
F. M. BROWNELL, VICE PRESIDENT
F. W. ROCKWELL, VICE PRESIDENT
FELIX EDGAR WORMSER, SECRETARY AND
TREASURER

November 27, 1945

Dr. Robert A. Kehoe
University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, Ohio

Dear Bob:

I have received further word from Australia which indicates that the current lead hysteria, if I may term it that, promises to spread to prohibition of the use of a great many lead products, including, strangely enough, cable sheathing, and that the agitation centers around Dr. Nye. I presume he is the Dr. Nye who is the author of "Chronic Nephritis and Lead Poisoning" published in 1933.

After leaving you in Pittsburgh I made it a point to review the file of literature I had in this office on the subject. Much of it I find I received from you, particularly reprints of some of the earlier work on the subject. On rereading Nye's report and also the Government publication, "Plumbism and Chronic Nephritis in Young People in Queensland" I am becoming increasingly convinced that no case at all has been made for tying in chronic nephritis with lead poisoning in children. I was also happy to note that your own Committee on Lead Poisoning of the American Public Health Association apparently recognized the invalidity of Nye's conclusions, by making the statement:

".....even in the case of children the production of chronic nephritis, perhaps better described as diffusely scarred kidneys, cannot certainly be attributed to the effects of an episode or multiple episodes of lead poisoning. The facts in these matters must await further careful clinical investigation."

My criticism of Nye's work and the Government's work is that they do not prove lead poisoning in the children in the first place. They do not prove exposure and they do not prove the presence of lead poisoning through the alleged exposure. At least, I can not



November 27, 1945

find any evidence in Nye's book, or the subsequent Government work, that accounted for the great number of cases described in Queensland. To be sure, some of the cases undoubtedly were authentic lead poisoning, as indicated in later and more thorough Government work, but Nye depended almost entirely, it seems to me, on mere professional pronouncements that the chronic nephritis subjects apparently had lead poisoning years before they were seen by Nye. No proof of lead poisoning is given in infancy. What sort of scientific work is that?

Apparently the Dr. Fairley you mentioned to me in Pittsburgh examined some of the work of Nye and others and reported on it in the Medical Journal of Australia of May 5, 1934. In fact, I have Dr. Fairley's report, because of your kindness in letting me have the original reference. Frankly speaking, I think that Dr. Fairley's study has the same defect as that of its predecessors.

Rather than to go into a detailed discussion of my criticisms I merely wish at this time to suggest that if you do have any means of procuring further information from Australia I hope you will try to do so as I gather the situation is serious in Australia and if carried to its conclusion is bound to have unfortunate repercussions in the United States.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely yours,

John W.
Secretary.