

November 16, 1946

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

Dear Ray:

Thanks for your two letter of October 29 and November 1, respectively. I am very glad to have the further information on the lead in the scale of tank cars, and I shall look forward to the receipt of additional information from Smith via your office.

I am delighted to know that you are coming back to the United States early in the year. I am looking forward to seeing you for more reasons than one. There are a number of matters which should come to a head by that time that will be of mutual interest. Then again it is always a great pleasure to me to sit down and talk with you about many things.

I am also glad to know that Davison is turning out well.

With reference to his inquiry about the information in "Noxious Gases" by Henderson and Haggard, I regret to say that, while this is a very good book in many respects, it is practically worthless in any matter that has to do with clinical medicine. Neither Henderson or Haggard were doctors, and neither of them had the slightest idea of anything related to medical practice. Both are to be commended as physiologists, and Henderson, who is now dead, was a very able and imaginative man. However, he was not altogether to be trusted in matters involving critical judgment, and perhaps you will remember in relation to the problem of tetraethyl lead, that he was a bitter-ender in opposition to the use of the product considering that the entire public was certain to be poisoned, and that this was all to be done more or less deliberately by designing business organizations who were willing to make their fortunes by any means. Haggard, despite a number of excellent intellectual qualities, is a somewhat unreliable fellow, who certainly lacks critical judgment.

All of the above discussion is unnecessary in relation to the paragraph referred to, but is rather the explanation of why it is that either or both of these men was quite capable of writing more or less dogmatically about things of which he knew nothing. As a matter of fact the only firsthand clinical descriptions of tetraethyl lead poisoning that appeared in medical literature prior to a few years ago were those of myself and Machle. In my first article I made some reference to the fact that exposure to minute dosages of tetraethyl lead might well produce a condition

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which resembles ordinary lead poisoning. I have had repeated occasion to regret this, for actually what I saw that led me to this conclusion was a combination of exposure to very small amounts of tetraethyl lead plus more significant amounts of decomposition products of tetraethyl lead that had reached the inorganic stage. I was not aware of the chemical aspects of this problem at that time, and therefore should not be held too much to account for what was said. On the other hand, I did point out that tetraethyl lead poisoning, as seen up to that time was a totally different syndrome than that of ordinary lead poisoning. Actually I knew very much less about both of these conditions than I do now.

At the present time, it can be said categorically that chronic poisoning from exposure to tetraethyl lead has never been seen. When poisoning results from the absorption of tetraethyl lead, even in small quantities over considerable periods of time, it is always an acute central nervous system intoxication. The reference to nutritional disturbances, paralysis of motor nerves and susceptibility of other diseases, as mentioned by Henderson and Haggard is pure moonshine. I have tried to imagine just where this idea came from, for I am under the impression that I have seen most of the information published and unpublished that has been available on this subject. I cannot for the life of me account for the statement.

I should be glad if you would transmit this information to Davison at your convenience, telling him that there is no published information on this subject.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

RAK ef

Copy by Air Mail.

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YOUR REF.

1st November, 1946.

Dr. R.A. Kehoe,
University of Cincinnati,
College of Medicine,
CINCINNATI.

Dear Bob,

I enclose copy of a letter from Davison in which he asks me to obtain your comments on a statement which appears in a book entitled "Noxious Gases" by Henderson & Haggard of Yale University.

I am very glad to say that Davison is turning out extremely well and we are most pleased with his work.

It is probable that I shall be coming to New York some time in January next and look forward with much pleasure to seeing you at that time.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely yours

T.R.A. Bevan

T.R.A. BEVAN.

Encl.

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BRITISH ETHYL CORPORATION LTD

NORTHWICH

CHESHIRE

Our ref: ED/JE. K.2

30th October 1946

T.R.A. Bevan, Esq.,
The Associated Ethyl Co. Ltd.,
Artillery House,
Artillery Row,
LONDON, S.W.1

Dear Mr. Bevan,

I have recently read a standard text book called "Noxious Gases", by Henderson & Haggard of Yale University, published 1943 by Reinhold Publishing Corporation, New York, which gives two paragraphs on tetraethyl lead. The second paragraph, on page 240 of the book, is quoted in full:

"In acute poisoning, lead encephalopathy may develop with symptoms of increased intracranial pressure, meningeal irritation and acute mania. Chronic poisoning by tetraethyl lead resembles the ordinary and far more common chronic form of lead poisoning from paint and lead dusts, and is characterized by nutritional disturbances, paralysis of motor nerves and increased susceptibility to such diseases as pyorrhea and tuberculosis."

From all I have read this paragraph appears incorrect and I can find no published literature to corroborate some of the statements made. I spoke to Cassells about it and he is of the opinion that chronic poisoning from tetraethyl lead is unlikely to occur. From some of the correspondence received from Dr. Kehoe it would appear that chronic lead poisoning may occur.

I would be most grateful if Dr. Kehoe could comment on this paragraph and let us have copies of any published literature on chronic lead poisoning from tetraethyl lead.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

E. DAVISON

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