

July 8, 1943

(19)

Mr. Philip Drinker,  
Chief Health Consultant,  
United States Maritime Commission,  
55 Shattuck Street,  
Boston 15, Massachusetts.

Dear Phil:

I have been a little slow in writing to you about the potential hazards of the shipbuilding operations, which I had the pleasure of looking into with you the week before last. I finished the day with Dr. Schaefer and saw the launching of the ship, some time after having a talk with Mr. Willis. Concerning the latter, you may have heard that we did not do so well. Whether I got off on the wrong foot in the first part of our talk, or whether Mr. Willis' rather obvious bad humor created the difficulties, I am not quite sure, but in any case, Mr. Willis was quite unconvinced of the desirability of making their shipyard a "guinea pig" for the purpose of finding out what the Maritime Commission wanted to know. I trust that by this time Dr. Schaefer shall have ironed out the difficulties, and that it may be possible to go ahead with the observations.

I have no hesitation in telling you that in my opinion, the conditions with respect to lead exposure are quite hazardous. But for the relatively short period of exposure, and for the intermittency of the work, I am quite sure that cases of poisoning would have been seen by this time. In any case, I cannot imagine this work continuing in this manner without its bringing about the proper combination for the production of lead poisoning in a certain number of cases. As to the number and the severity of such cases, I would not like to hazard a guess, but that such cases will occur seems quite certain to me. I tried to explain this to Mr. Willis, but he took a point of view that we would create trouble where perhaps it might not occur otherwise. I do Mr. Willis the kindness of attributing his attitude to a state of irritation that had resulted either from the hot day or from difficulties in the Yard just before he came in to talk with us. Otherwise I should say that this is