

December 3, 1936

Dr. Florent Coste
41 Rue Cardinet
Paris - 8E
France

Dear Doctor Coste:

Since writing the foregoing letter, it has occurred to me that I have been intending for some time to inquire about certain details of your work. It is now apparent that there are a considerable number of plants and men under your supervision, and I am not quite certain as to the frequency with which you are visiting the plants and examining the men. Although I do not want to impose my own views upon you in this regard, yet it seems worth while to point out to you that after the plants and the men have demonstrated their ability to operate properly, it should not be necessary to re-examine them more than twice a year. It has been well established by our years of experience in this country that if the plants are properly built and properly operated, there will be no cases of lead poisoning. Therefore the work of the medical men consists essentially in maintaining a critical supervision of the men and of the operations for the purpose of making certain that proper methods are consistently followed.

In as much as the question of lead absorption among the men is the most important aspect of the supervision, I should like to know what laboratory procedures are being carried out with respect to this question. Specifically, what microscopic work is being done on blood smears, and how is it being done? I have very little doubt that this is being done, and competently, but I should like to know how your program compares with our general routine. I wonder, also, whether you have made use of any chemical means for the study of the lead excretion of any men about whom there may have been question. I am not sure of the facilities that you have at your disposal in this connection, but I should like to point out that unless you are quite certain of the adequacy of the methods which are being employed in any of the laboratories which are available to you, it would be wise to submit any samples of this type that you may wish to have examined, to Dr. Dodds who is working collaboratively with me in the Biochemistry Laboratory at Middlesex Hospital Medical School. Any samples could be taken care of through Mr. Thenault and Mr. Bevan. I do not wish by this to disparage the work of any of the men in France, but I am aware of the extreme difficulties of obtaining accurate results on

materials of this kind. I am also aware of the very embarrassing situation which may arise from obtaining inaccurate and misleading results. Actually I only know of three or four laboratories in the world whose analytical results I would accept as certainly correct.

It has also occurred to me that the increasing medical work in France by reason of the increasing use of Ethyl Fluid, might come to be a burden which you would be unprepared to carry indefinitely. Naturally I should prefer to have you carry on this work, and I hope you will be able to do it. On the other hand, if it becomes necessary for you to delegate some of the work to an assistant, I should be very much interested in knowing the type of man whom you have in mind, and the character of the assistance which you might see fit to require. As you know altogether too well, perhaps, the work is rather exacting in its demands on judgment and tact in dealing both with men and with plant officials. I am, therefore, always much concerned over the selection of men for this work. Obviously we require the most competent men who can be obtained if we are to avoid the difficulties which are always lying in wait for us in this occupation.

I should very much appreciate any information which you can give me along these lines.

Cordially yours,

RAK:is

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.