

Buenos Aires, November 13th, 1936.

Dr. Kehoe,
University of Cincinnati,
Kettering Laboratory,
School of Physiology,
CINCINNATI, Ohio.

Dear Dr. Kehoe,

Your letter of September 28, just recently arrived as it was carried by steamer rather than air mail due to insufficient postage. I realize now that my letter of September 16 was not in sufficient detail to allow you to make proper decision on this matter and shall therefore set down the complete story.

Mr. Humpstone (President West India Oil Co.) expressed considerable concern and was worried because a doctor from what corresponds to Workman's Union examined the men at the San Antonio plant and claimed that at least one definitely had lead poisoning and others showed signs of lead intoxication. Fortunately none of these men were blenders. The West India Company doctor claimed the men did not have lead poisoning but his word did not carry much weight and a complete delegation of doctors, Health officials etc. from the union were going to make a thorough inspection of the whole plant. I understand that the inspection has since been made but a report has not been rendered. Mr. Humpstone believes that the inspectors may be sincere but doubts it because the West India has its own safety system and medical facilities and does not belong to the union to which the examining doctor is connected. He thinks this may be a move to attempt to force the company to join this organization and that the idea may have blossomed from a widespread whispering campaign that Esso gasoline is poisonous.

On another occasion the Superintendent of the plant who had assisted in some of the early reckless blends started to lose his teeth and claimed that he had lead poisoning - the company doctor in this case could not affirm or deny this and it was necessary to call in a consulting doctor from the Telephone Company, who found legitimate reasons for the loss of teeth and no evidence of lead poisoning and he was able to convince the man that he did not have lead poisoning.

The fact that the Company doctor was unable to back up his contention that the men at the plant do not have lead poisoning is in itself not necessarily a sign of weakness on the part of the doctor as considerations other than medical were undoubtedly involved especially if Mr. Humpstone's idea on the subject is correct. However, in the case of the plant Superintendent a weakness seems indicated, unless of course the fact that the second doctor was an outsider was the deciding point with the man being examined. Also the second doctor was corroborating the Company's doctor's opinion. In any event the above would suggest that ability to defend his contentions and inspire confidence is not one of the Company doctor's main points. This has also been checked by verbal opinions. It was because I considered this point to be very important from Ethyl Export standpoint, that I made the original recommendation that a doctor possessing this ability (together with the others I learnt from you) be appointed by Ethyl Export to supplement the Company doctor's examinations and be consultant in cases similar to the above where men working in the blending plant are involved. For the work at San Antonio assuming no complications the Company doctor is perhaps quite satisfactory, but he

representation Ethyl Export has in the whole of Chile where motor gasoline is being marketed and it seems to me that a more capable man is required preferably one not working for West India also.

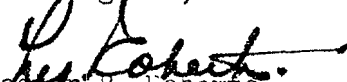
The extent of my investigation in Santiago was to ask for recommendations from Dr. Armado Tarraguiabel, who is head of the Medical School of University of Chile and who has reputation of being the best and most well informed doctor in Chile. He recommended a Dr. Cruz Coke, who has a very excellent reputation and is professor of Physiology Chemistry at the University of Chile. I made no commitments and confined my statements that usually the Ethyl Corporation designed a consultant to work under your supervision to examine men for control purposes periodically.

In Argentina there is a somewhat similar problem, only of course motor gasoline is not being sold at present. The two present aviation plants YPF and Standard have their own doctors. Shell Mex is just completing an aviation plant but does not maintain a medical staff so that it will be necessary to appoint a doctor. Assuming lead will eventually be allowed for motor gasoline, first class medical representation will probably be desired. There is no great hurry in this matter as Shell estimate one blend will be nine months supply. They have just ordered the fluid (one 10 gallon drum) and I can make the first blend for them if medical arrangements have not been previously made. I shall be glad to be of any service if you will advise what you care me to do in this matter and if you wish further information regarding the Santiago situation.

During my visit with West India Santiago a young medical student happened in and requested published information in Spanish and French on lead poisoning. He is writing a thesis on this general subject and has done some research. His results on gasoline lead poisoning he says indicate that motor gasoline is alright due to its low lead content, but aviation is slightly harmful to the average Chilean. His point being that the average Chilean not being 100% physically shows signs of lead poisoning at a lower level of intake than other average healthy people.

I have received and wish to thank you for the copy of lead studies you recently sent me also the papers in German and Spanish you sent sometime ago.

Best regards,


Lester B. Roberts.

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