

March 8, 1940

Mr. F. S. Shepard
Socony Vacuum Oil Company
26 Broadway
New York City
New York

Dear Mr. Shepard:

Mr. O. B. Lewis of the Ethyl Gasoline Corporation has informed me of your interest in talking with me at an early date about the use of proportioneer equipment. Mr. Lewis has stated that you are very well satisfied with the operation of the equipment at East St. Louis. It was his impression that you were anxious to extend the use of this equipment to other plants.

I should be very glad to see you and discuss this matter with you at an early date, and I hope this can be done some time soon when I am in New York. I will let you know either directly or through Mr. Lewis when I expect to be there, and I shall try to suit my convenience to yours.

Meanwhile I should be less than frank if I did not repeat what I have said before in this connection. From the point of view of a general program of safety in the handling of Ethyl Fluid and the blending of leaded gasoline, I am exceedingly skeptical about this proportioneer equipment. It has, I believe, certain fundamentally objectionable qualities, and in addition there may be other difficulties in connection with its use which only time and experience can reveal. With these ideas in mind, I should be reluctant indeed to take the responsibility for approving the use of this type of equipment. I am quite willing to be convinced by experience, but I think it is fair to say that present experience does not entitle any of us to an opinion as to the adequacy of this equipment for the purpose for which it was intended over any long period of time. If we should find that the use of this type of equipment eliminates certain hazards which exist at the present time,

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without augmenting other hazards and without introducing any new ones, I shall be the first to recommend its use. If, on the other hand, it does introduce certain new hazards without materially influencing others, I shall continue to be unalterably opposed to its use. I should say in this connection that the mere convenience associated with the use of such equipment can not be regarded as an adequate basis for its use for this purpose. You may draw the conclusion from this note that I am not completely open minded about the use of this equipment. I shall have to plead guilty to that accusation for, as I have indicated above, there are fundamentally objectionable qualities to this type of equipment which make it absolutely necessary that it should prove its own case beyond any peradventure. We are not at liberty to change from a type of mixing which has demonstrated over a period of years that it is safe, into one which may have definitely hazardous features beyond those which can actually be seen as a matter of principle. This is, I believe, not a question of anyone's individual or technical skill, nor it is a question of loyalty to anyone's ideas or point of view. It is purely a question of relative safety and in my opinion it can not be decided on any other basis. The proportioneer people have in one or two instances attempted to discuss this question with me on the basis of the use of modern engineering methods. Such an argument is irrelevant and impertinent since, as I repeat, we are concerned only with one thing, the development of the maximum security in the handling of an intrinsically dangerous product.

Sincerely yours,

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Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

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