

May 31, 1960

Dr. Wilson Thomas Sowder
Florida State Board of Health
1217 Pearl Street
Jacksonville, Florida

Dear Doctor Sowder:

I had the pleasure, recently, of discussing a problem relating to the public health with Dr. Malcolm Merrill and some of his associates, in which I appeared in the role of a consultant to the manufacturers of lead-containing antiknock compounds for use in gasoline. The matter concerned in our discussion was the imminent likelihood of the use of tetramethyl lead as a substitute in part or in whole for tetraethyl lead. Since this product was soon to be used in California (and certain other western states), and since there was and is a very considerable interest in lead in the air of certain cities in California, it was thought to be desirable to discuss this matter with the state health authorities.

This matter arose out of some recent technological developments, and had been discussed with the proper people in the U.S. Public Health Service, after an investigation carried out by members of the staff of The Kettering Laboratory. Included in the advice given by the Public Health Service, to my complete satisfaction and that of responsible officers of the industries concerned, was the recommendation that the health authorities in the states in which this product is projected for use be informed of this prospect and be informed of the evidence bearing on the potential hazard associated with its use.

As will be apparent to you, I am sure, the task of visiting and interviewing the health officers in all of the states is a fairly formidable one. What is more of a problem to me is the undoubted fact that interest in this problem in many of the states will be slight, and it will be difficult to present the subject in a realistic manner to those who have had no reason to be concerned with it. I am not even slightly interested in avoiding the issue, where it should be dealt with, but I have no wish, on the other hand, to create an issue by having to force it, so to speak, on men who are busy with real rather than potential hygienic problems. It occurred to me, therefore, that this might be presented briefly to the State and Territorial Health Officers, or a Committee thereof, at the next meeting of the group. Through this means contact could be made whereby information could be supplied, appropriately, desired. I sought Dr. Merrill's advice on this matter and found that both he and Dr. Clark, of his staff, appeared to believe that this suggestion was feasible.

It seems likely that Dr. Clark has written to you, or will do so, or that he

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Dr. Wilson Thomas Sowder

- 2 -

May 31, 1960

will take such other action in this regard as may be appropriate. I have thought it wise to bring it to your attention directly and to offer my services to supply information to you or to the organization in such manner and at such time as you may suggest. It now appears that several of the oil companies will move fairly promptly toward some use of this product, and that any questions concerning the safety of its use should be raised and answered, if possible, prior to these developments.

I shall be out of my office from June 10 until very nearly the middle of July, and, therefore, any reply which you may make to this will not have my attention until after that time. However, I shall be glad to respond to your wishes at the earliest possible time, thereafter.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

RAK:ss

cc: William Clark, M.D.

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