

October 27, 1936

Dr. Keith Fairley
31 Collins Street
Melbourne, Australia

Dear Dr. Fairley:

It has been some time since I have written to you, and since my last letter a matter has developed in this country which I think requires some discussion.

From time to time over a period of some years, we have had cases of mild poisoning in connection with the cleaning of tanks used for mixing and storing leaded gasoline. The first of these cases resulted in our issuing instructions for the avoidance of lead exposure in this occupation. In general these instructions have been carried out fairly well, but in specific instances instructions have been neglected and new cases of poisoning have developed. Recently the flagrant disregard of all instructions resulted in three fatal cases among seven acutely intoxicated workmen.

It gives me some anxiety to recognize that the mechanism which we have previously used in putting our instructions into operation has fallen down. We have previously depended upon the distributors of leaded gasoline to supply these regulations in their own plants. It seems apparent that in the United States we can not depend upon the adequacy of this mechanism. I must, therefore, question in my own mind whether there may not be similar slip-ups in other countries.

In view of the difficulties here, we have undertaken to make a thorough investigation of this whole problem, on the basis of which we shall be prepared to recommend adequate procedures. At present such recommendations would be premature. However, it seems to me it would be very wise if we were to take steps to remind all of the distributors of leaded gasoline of the necessity of following our regulations if they are to avoid serious difficulties. I should appreciate it very much if you would have a discussion with Mr. Tully in order to determine between yourselves what action can most feasibly be taken at this time to remind various distributors of this situation. Obviously we do not wish to cause undue alarm, but it will be necessary to bring to their attention the fact that these

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dangers are real but that they can be combatted by the use of the precautions which have been suggested and under no circumstances should such precautions be omitted.

There are a number of questions in this entire problem that we do not fully understand. We should be able to answer these questions through the investigations which we are now carrying on. From time to time we shall communicate with you further as our information develops, and I hope eventually to make such recommendations as will solve this problem to our satisfaction. Meanwhile we should take such measures of precaution as will assure us that this question will not be wholly neglected.

I appreciate the letters which you have sent me from time to time and I hope you will continue to write me on all the matters which come to your attention.

Cordially yours,

RAK:is

cc Mr. Lewis

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

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