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WASHINGTON, NEW JERSEY

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F. J. Schlink, President and Technical Director

May 9, 1938

Dr. Robert A. Kehoe
Care of
College of Medicine
University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, Ohio

Dear Dr. Kehoe:

It is late to be answering your letter of December 27, but there are one or two points in it which I think should be brought to your attention, because you clearly have a misapprehension about us, and I think possibly about Dr. Cardiff too.

I think, as to your second sentence, Dr. Cardiff has probably said all or many of the things attributed to him, because he is a frequent contributor of publicity material for his point of view to western fruit-trade journals, and several people, including Dr. Cardiff, have taken pains to see that we were supplied with copies. Second, I think scientific men make a great mistake in standing so far aloof from the trouble and turmoil of the world of applied science that they do not concern themselves to correct misapprehensions of a gross nature which appear in print. I know all of the arguments for not being bothered with the trivialities and temporalities of day-by-day misrepresentations of newspapers and trade journals; I also know the results which commonly flow from scientific men's failure to concern themselves with such practical matters, particularly in the low esteem ⁱⁿ which scientific men tend to be held on account of their ~~unconcern~~ ^{for present} with the public welfare. The fact that you resent what you consider to be exaggeration in a "holy" cause is no reason for not concerning yourself, if I may say so, with misrepresentation in a self-serving cause. That is a little bit like the famous economist who disposed of Your Money's Worth in a review in a learned economic journal, by explaining that such wastes as we discussed in the book were, of course, real and existent, but they didn't make any difference because wastes in industry tend to cancel each other out.

You also speak of confusion. Modern social scientists know that it is also most confusing to propose a separatism between emotional response and honest and productive thought. As understanding of the human mind advances, it is discovered that the supposedly aloof scientist is just as self-serving in his way as the supposedly emotional or sensationably minded man of the street or of hustings. Avoidance of the arena where other people are being scratched up in controversies is itself a form of self-service, and the common man who is wrong about many things, to be sure, is right in his appreciation in general of those who do not shrink from combating a wrong or correcting a misrepresentation in

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emotionally disturbing situations. He resents coolness and aloofness indeed on a large scale, as he did in the case when Mr. Hoover was made to seem so by the emotionally effective Mr. Charles Michelson.

I was not proposing that you should fight windmills; I was proposing merely that when you see a widely promulgated mistake involving your work or professional interests, you should turn from your regular duties long enough to try to correct it. I do not consider that a matter of choice in a scientific man -- and I have known a good many and worked with many as well -- I consider it mainly a matter of simple duty, especially when a question of toxicities involving a very large fraction of the total population is involved.

I agree with you that there has been too little sound clinical and experimental work in the field, but you cannot blame us or the emotionally-minded people whom you resent, for that. It seems to me that an excellent opportunity for resentment existed at the moment when Congress passed legislation stopping the work which it had previously approved on the toxicity of lead arsenate, and the Food and Drug Administration not only stopped it, but also destroyed the expensively acquired evidence already available in the bodies of the experimental animals. It seems to me that any toxicologist who is strong for sound clinical and experimental work would have a duty to become at least reasonably emotional about the destruction of many thousands of dollars worth of such work of the very highest grade and authority known to modern investigators in his field. The wrong done by Congress, it seems to me, is within the scope of proper interest of toxicologists who would have used the findings had they not been rendered unusable by administrative action or failure of administrative action, and proper publicity to a dangerous situation, on the part of other toxicologists.

In a way you see, you are arguing both ways in your letter: there should be more factual, scientific information and fewer emotional expressions in regard to it; yet when factual material is suppressed or prevented from being developed, it would appear, following your own nomenclature, that the time has come for some degree of being emotional about the suppression, and it has not come to my knowledge, though I have followed the case closely, that the well-qualified toxicological experts of the country have seen their duty in the premises and done it.

As to your having yet to see a case of ill-health demonstrably deriving from the use of contaminated fruit, we know of a number, and officials and advisers of the federal government have not only known of a number, but have given evidence of them before a congressional committee. Results of such evidence in this or a similar case were also suppressed by the act of a congressional committee and the fact of suppression made a matter of public record (and uncontroverted thereafter) in one of the left-wing journals, *favorable to the New Deal & its food administration*. Your comment in this connection reminds us somewhat of the home economist from the State of Washington who felt that we had no right to consider that a case of poisoning had occurred from fruit in any case where the person died or became ill under circumstances which did not permit the attendance of a physician or pathologist especially qualified in the field. It was not a coincidence that she was from the State of Washington. She was emotionally bound up in the appropriations to a certain public institution, though she thought she was being very unemotional about the whole matter. No ordinary physician, she held, had any business passing

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on a case of arsenic poisoning, and ^{even} if he thought it was arsenic poisoning, it very likely wasn't unless he had been to the right institution and studied under the right people. By this calculus there are certainly no demonstrable cases of arsenic and lead poisoning due to contaminated fruit, because few people have been thoughtful enough to have their serious illness or death occur under proper and super-professional auspices.

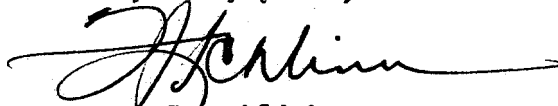
I do not wish to quarrel with you on this point at all; I realize that most scientific men have their blind spots and their strong will-to-disbelieve in fields where they feel that the only expertness is ~~that~~ of their own and that of a few colleagues who happen to agree fairly closely with them. However, there are a large number of authorities, and they are the best possible authorities as measured by the customary criteria available to scientific men, who disagree strongly and outspokenly with you. Just why anyone living in this complicated age should suppose that it is wrong to conduct propaganda in favor of the public health but right to do research which, reasonably interpreted, calls for propaganda or some socioeconomic use, I am unable to determine. That attitude toward scientific work was much commoner fifty years ago than now. It was almost the standard view in highly protected institutions in the government service as late as 1915 when I was in the Bureau of Standards. It is now regarded as a bit old-fashioned to seek to wall off science from life in such a sharply partitioned fashion. As a matter of fact, a good many writers in the social sciences have discussed the subject and the blindness of those who are supposedly teaching others to see, in such fields as your own. You will find the point ^{briefly} but well presented in the book The New Universe, by Dr. Bakor Brownell of Northwestern University, pp. 4, 5, and 6 - March 1927 printing.

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I do not in the least mind your somewhat acid comments on my own work and that of our organization. That viewpoint is entirely a matter of your own attitudes, opinion, ^{and} personal and official connections and interests. We do not raise any question as to your right to take the position that the application of your science to human affairs, whether it is misapplied or not applied at all, does not interest you; just as you would not wish to quarrel with us in our feeling that science in vacuo has ^(self-serving) no special significance for us except as a frequently interesting psychological phenomenon.

I know you will have full tolerance for my having been correspondingly frank with you in replying. It is by such definite and clear-cut (I hope) interchanges of points of view that the world progresses (if it does).

Very truly yours,


E. J. Schlink

enc: "Health Hazards in Contaminated Foods,"
by P. J. Hanzlik