

December 19, 1938

Mr. F. E. Hart
Anaconda Wire and Cable Company
Marion, Indiana

Dear Mr. Hart:-

I have no doubt you remember the suggestions which I made at the time of my visit to your plant. However some of our observations indicated that there might be some factors in the lead absorption of your workmen which were not fully accounted for by my observations. Accordingly I have thought it best to make a brief report, giving you the benefit of all the data and information which we obtained and making such certain recommendations to you for the avoidance of further difficulties.

I have just heard from Mr. Shaner concerning the outcome of the suit against your company. I am not surprised at this result and, as a matter of fact, I think you are rather fortunate that the verdict was not larger. On the other hand I wish to confirm my belief, without which I would not have testified in this case, that this man did not have lead poisoning and that it was not a factor in his present disability. Of course he may have had some rather mild symptoms of plumbism at the time of his initial illness, but I doubt this, and there was no evidence in the record, so far as I saw, which justified one in making a diagnosis of lead poisoning. On the other hand, there was no proof that he did not have lead poisoning. This was the weakness in your case, since you were confronted with the testimony of at least two local doctors who believed that the symptoms were referrible to lead absorption. This is the problem which all employers of workmen in the lead trades have to be able to meet. The diagnosis of lead poisoning is regularly made on the history of exposure; That is to say, the occupational history of the employee that indicates that he is engaged in work which involves some contact with lead-containing materials. The average doctor does not make any attempt to evaluate the magnitude of the exposure and he tends to ascribe any existing illness to the effects of lead absorption. If he is not straightened out at that time by a thorough study of the patient, which demonstrates

the facts one way or the other, he will thereafter hold to the conviction that his diagnosis was correct. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the employer to obtain medical assistance and advice which is more competent than that of the general practitioner of medicine. It is for this reason that I have made reference in the attached report to a means by which the facts can be obtained in doubtful cases of illness among employees. I think the time is coming and, in fact, not far away when employers in the hazardous trades will be compelled to exercise the utmost precautions in the avoidance of exposure. Despite this fact, I think there will be an increasing necessity for the utmost precision in the medical supervision of workmen in industry.

I trust you will find the report which I send herewith of some interest and value.

Very truly yours,

RAK:is

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

KE 04413