

March 23, 1961

Mr. John H. Ludwig, Chairman,
Robert A. Taft Sanitary Engineering Center
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
4674 Columbia Parkway
Cincinnati 26, Ohio

Dear Ludwig:

I am slow in commenting on the proposed press release sent out with your letter of February 28, and have probably forfeited any chance to suggest a modification of it. If so, nothing of immortal consequence will have been lost. I have not had the time even to look up from my desk at the passing scene, and, therefore, what has transpired has been beyond my power to concern myself with.

I do not like the first line of the release, however, and I make no bones about it. There has already been a case of alleged lead poisoning from exposure to lead in the ambient air in Philadelphia, and the initial implication of this release, regardless of our understanding of the wording, will add fuel to the apprehension and misunderstanding that result from the mere activities of investigation. Moreover the implication of this first clause is in error. There is not a scintilla of anxiety among knowledgeable people on this score, except as we are concerned with what the future may produce. Therefore, the potential risk which is being investigated should be played down - way down - rather than up.

In my philosophy, the less said about investigations of this type, the better it is for every one, including especially, the investigators. Publicity is an unmitigated nuisance, which does no one good, and restricts the freedom of the investigators. I wish we could gain acceptance of this idea in this age of publicity for the publicity seekers. We tend to accept this as a sacred public responsibility which I am convinced is rubbish.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

Please see attached postscript.

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Mr. John H. Ludwig

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P.S. My suggestion in relation to the initial statement in the release (which is probably too late in coming to you) would be to phrase it along the following explanatory but innocuous lines:-

"Investigation is being directed toward a potential hygienic problem of the future, in connection with the contamination of the atmosphere of cities with lead from a variety of sources, including the exhausts of automobiles. This investigation reflects, in some measure, the interest of public health agencies in developing hygienic standards for atmospheric lead."

Such phraseology in my view would take the curse off the news release, in relation to public apprehension, by eliminating all direct reference to "adverse effects upon human health".

R. A. K.

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