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*Three cheers for the Apple; let its praises ring
With power of its sway; o'er all fruits the King.*

Washington State Horticultural Association

March 23, 1938

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Dr. Robert A. Keyhoe
Kettering Laboratory
University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, Ohio

Dear Sir:

At the instigation of Dr. W. A. Ruth, Chief in Pomological Physiology, University of Illinois, I am writing for your opinion relative to the possible toxic effect on human beings from eating apples which have been sprayed with lead arsenate.

What is your opinion as to the possibility of any person being poisoned from eating apples or other fruits sprayed with arsenate of lead? If you have an opinion as to the maximum that may be ingested with food without harmful effects, please state that maximum in your answer if you care to answer this question.

We have a statement from the Chelan County Medical Association signed by 25 prominent physicians and medical men located in the county, mostly at Wenatchee, a city of 16,000 people, in which they state: "The undersigned members of the Chelan County Medical Society have never observed or treated a case of arsenic or lead poisoning in which the history indicated that there was any connection with the ingestion of apples, pears, or any of the other tree fruits grown in this locality." Possibly this expresses the experience of a great many medical men located in the apple producing sections of the United States.

In this North Central Washington region, approximately 5 million pounds of arsenate of lead are supplied to orchardists annually. Certainly it is possible that these men applying this vast quantity of lead arsenate would be subjected to considerable exposure by absorption or inhalation. It would likewise be quite evident, and we here have to assume it would be a fact, that the per capital consumption of apples is greater here in the largest apple producing section, than that of any other area equal in population. Many apples are eaten by growers, orchard workers, and children with practically none of the residue removed. This practice has been prevalent for many years.

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It is logical to assume that if lead arsenate were as poisonous as some presume it to be that cases of poisoning would come to the attention of some of the 25 medical men that signed the report.

If from no other cause, it would seem that industrial exposure would have supplied enough lead in the systems of orchard workers so that eating apples would have overbalanced the normal equilibrium and poisoning would have occurred in some instance.

This committee will certainly appreciate your prompt reply, and if you so wish, we will treat it as confidential. However, we should like to have the privilege of quoting it if the case demands.

Very truly yours,



P. A. COMBELIC, Secretary
Washington State Horticulture Ass'n.
Spray Residue Committee

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