

October 5, 1934

Dr. Keith Fairley
107 Collins Street
Melbourne, Australia

Dear Dr. Fairley:

I have just returned from a trip of investigation into the manner of safely spreading the commercial activities of the Ethyl Export Corporation in the European countries. Until a short time ago business operations of the Corporation in Australia were handled through the London office, and all matters including medical supervision were in theory, at least, the responsibility of Mr. Bevan, the London commercial representative. It now develops that it is more logical to handle the entire matter through the New York office, and in as much as I am personally and professionally responsible for all medical matters related to the operations of the New York office, I have become interested in obtaining as much information as possible about the developments in Australia, and in making contacts with Mr. Tegner, and with yourself.

I have every reason to believe that there is nothing in the present situation in Australia which requires my immediate attention. On the other hand, it seems to me quite conceivable that you and I may profit mutually in some degree from acquaintance with each other even through correspondence. It is certain that I can profit to the extent of at least knowing just what questions, if any, are arising and just what is being done in this connection in all parts of the world in which I have at least a nominal responsibility. Accordingly I should be very happy if you would communicate with me and let me know just the manner in which your work is being carried out at the present time, and especially if there are any questions which have arisen in which I can be of any assistance to you. I shall be very glad to acquaint you with our general program both in this country and abroad in providing for entire safety for workmen engaged in mixing Ethyl Fluid with gasoline, and I should be glad also to give you available information as to the steps which we are carrying out in this laboratory in following questions of public safety which are involved in the distribution of lead-containing gasolines.

There is one point to which reference was

like to make inquiry. I shall not give the exact quotation but I noted that Dr. Badham stated that his department was concerned in a measure with checking the safety of men employed in the mixing operations. His words were to the effect that although no cases of lead poisoning had developed among these workmen, there were evidences that some degree of lead absorption was occurring. I am not quite certain as to what evidences of lead absorption he may have been referring to. I assume that he probably meant that some of the men so engaged were showing basophilic stippling in their blood. We have been following a representative group of these men in the United States over a period of years since 1926, and in addition to blood examinations on all men, we have followed the lead excretion of a representative group. The results of our analytical examinations indicate beyond any reasonable doubt that the lead absorption of these men is insignificant. Now, if the equipment used for mixing in Australia is equaled in excellence with that used in America, and if the regulations for the promotion of safety in Australia are adequate, there should be no more hazard in this occupation other than there is here. I must, therefore, question the meaning of Dr. Badham's remarks in his report, and I wish to know as much as I can without making a trip to Australia at the present about the manner in which the whole program is being handled there. I shall enter into correspondence with Mr. Tegner to obtain the facts and details as to the equipment and its handling, but I will be very much pleased if you would let me have the results of your experience and if you will give me your opinions not only on the safety of the present activities, but of anything which in your opinion might improve conditions, granting that there is any need for improvement.

I am particularly anxious to keep in touch with all of the medical men who are concerned with this problem not only because it is my responsibility to do so, but also because I want to make sure that the experience which we have had and the facts which we have been able to develop by a rather extensive experimental program are made generally available and useful.

Cordially yours,

RAK:IS

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.