

June 12, 1951

Honorable James J. Murphy, M. C.
1608 New House Office Building
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Murphy:

I have delayed replying to your letter of May 14 directing my attention to H. J. Resolution 218, for the reason that I have not been able to develop great enthusiasm for the idea which seems to differentiate this from certain other congressional efforts relating to air pollution. I cannot presume to have any direct or indirect knowledge as to how the United States Public Health Service and the Bureau of Mines have prepared themselves individually and jointly to fulfill the responsibilities set forth in this resolution. That both agencies have real cause to be concerned with the problems of air pollution is evident, but I am by no means certain that the way to get something done about these problems is to divide the responsibility between them.

The importance of the study of air pollution is great, although I think the resolution is not dealing in facts when it says on line 1 of paragraph 3 that "air pollution has caused many deaths and illnesses among the people of the United States." The problem of the public health in this relationship is one that requires study, and very careful study, because the facts are not known. This presumably is in the province of the U.S.P.H.S., not exclusively, of course, but certainly as a primary responsibility, in view of the nation-wide character of the situation. The matter of property damage and of the general economy is, I suppose, of primary concern to the Department of the Interior. It involves also the Department of Agriculture, since horticulture and animal husbandry are deeply and demonstrably involved.

I should think that a hearing involving a specific proposal or procedure is not the way of approach, but rather that a hearing should crystallize the issues and open the way to a proper and effective procedure based on the responsibilities of the Government of the United States.

I should be happy to support the proposal for a hearing on the subject, and I should be entirely willing to appear in such a hearing, but I am not prepared, at this time, to support any specific program for dealing with the investigative program. It is necessary that money be made available for investigation, and it is imperative that such money be expended productively. I have no conviction as to how the latter can best be guaranteed in legislation. If the

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Honorable James J. Murphy - (2) - June 12, 1951

responsible governmental agencies have the willingness to cooperate - and I trust that they have - they will do so, if the statutes do not prevent, but if they do not have such a willingness, legislation will not create it or give it force.

I have thought it best to reply to you, rather than to direct these opinions to the attention of Chairman Crosser and thus be opposed, as it might seem, to your resolution. If you should wish me to support the principle of a hearing for the purpose of determining what legislation might be required, I should be glad to do so. In any case, I shall be pleased to hear from you on any aspect of this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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