

June 15, 1937

Mr. F. E. Wormser
Lead Industries Association
420 Lexington Avenue
New York City
New York

Dear Mr. Wormser:

Thanks very much for calling my attention to Hanzlik's article in the Scientific Monthly. I have known for some time that Hanzlik is reputed to be a bit dogmatic but I have not, until I read his article, put him quite in the category of grossly inaccurate scientific workers. I do not know what he has been working on for the past eight or ten years but it seems rather clear that he has not spent much time on the literature with relation to lead absorption. It seems quite possible, even probable, from what he said in one or two sentences, that he regards our work as biased and "industrially inspired". However, even if this were the case, some familiarity with the literature would convince him that a number of points in our studies have been adequately confirmed in numerous other laboratories, both here and abroad. His statement that "lead is never present in the body in the absence of exposure" is rather silly in view of the data which are available in practically all parts of the world on the lead concentration of human blood, human bones and human excreta. Moreover, his point of view as to the explanation of such findings as have been reported is so sophomoric that it is scarcely worth refuting. I presume that for all his high-hat discussion of "experts", he was quite aware of the fact that in this article he was writing for laymen and not for technical people. He richly deserves to be called for this rather stupid article, but I doubt if it is worth the trouble. Apparently his point of view is that once a man has been called an expert, he is always an expert on the subject, no matter what has taken place during a decade or so in which he has been occupied with other matters. At least I think this is the most charitable interpretation that could be put on his conclusions.

In this whole connection, I think it is rather fortunate that the Department of Agriculture, as well as one or two other government agencies, are doing some physiologic work on this problem of lead

and arsenic intake and output. From all the information I can obtain, they are proceeding rather slowly and carefully and will probably have little to say on the subject until they have convinced themselves where the truth lies in a number of matters. I am sure they are at least aware of the fact that a few other reasonably honest and reasonably experienced people are also working in the field, and I doubt if they would be willing to take a chance on letting their feet slip by the publication of incomplete and inaccurate results. Thus I think there is very little reason to be unduly disturbed by statements such as Dr. Hanzlik's which are unsupported by experimental data. The public is not too smart in every respect, but it has learned to expect some data in support of a statement of fact.

With kindest personal regards,

Sincerely yours,

RAK:is

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

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