

January 25, 1962

D. H. Hofreuter, M.D.  
50 Poplar Street  
Wheeling  
West Virginia

Dear Doctor Hofreuter:

I am attaching to this note a copy of a sketchy memo prepared for me by Dr. Sterling at my request, after I read the article on "The public health significance of atmospheric lead", in the Archives of Environmental Health. As a matter of courtesy and in order not to seem inconsiderate of our very pleasant associations, I have felt that you should know my views and those of Sterling.

You will remember that the "working group" on this same problem is a cooperative activity in which we participate with the Public Health Service and others, and I have wished to make certain that this work and the report which comes out of it shall be a truly cooperative affair. When I read the article, I concluded, despite its generally satisfactory presentation of the facts, that certain of the implications derived therefrom were not justified; that indeed, these had been considered somewhat casually and that unwarranted assumptions had been made. I did not credit you with the responsibility for these (to me) faults, but I did think that such things would have to be dealt with in our joint report, and I wanted it understood that I would offer strenuous objection to any similar faults in the handling of the data from Philadelphia and Los Angeles.

The most objectionable feature of the article, aside from the obvious implication that the "significant" differences between the several groups are due to atmospheric lead (which is by no means certain), was the handling of the matter of smoking and smokers. For several good reasons, I consider this to be an utterly insignificant factor in the absorption of lead by people generally. This is not a very important matter, perhaps, and it is certainly not a thing about which I would be expected to react violently. On the other hand, as evidence of a willingness to draw unwarranted conclusions, it disturbs me. I have undertaken for a long time, out of many more data and much longer experience, to avoid this type of mistake.

It was and is my impression that some of our respected colleagues in the Service are a bit too anxious to find untoward effects in association with various forms of air pollution, and it was against this not remarkable bias that I felt it necessary to inveigh. I repeat that I had not thought of you in this light, and I was not, therefore, criticizing you. In any case, I would not say behind your back anything that I would not say directly to you, and I should not want my remarks

D. H. Hofreuter, M.D.

- 2 -

January 25, 1962

to come around to you by second or third hand.

I sincerely hope that your disappearance from the local scene and its associations will not separate you entirely or permanently from us in Cincinnati and in this field of interest and work. On the other hand I do hope that you have found a satisfying outlet for your capabilities and energy.

With kindest regards.

Sincerely,

---

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

RAK:ss

Enclosure