March 4, 1931

Dr. Morris Fishbein,
Editorial Department,
Journal American Medical Assn.,
535 North Dearborn St.,
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Dr. Fishbein:

It occurs to me, after receiving your letter of March 2, that I should substantiate my statement that the painting industry is still one of the most hazardous of the lead industries. I have at hand some statistical data reported by a Sub-committee on Dangerous Occupations, of the American Public Health Association. The figures are those collected by Hoffman, based on an examination of 682 death certificates from lead poisoning for the period 1925-1929. One may question the validity of these figures in the absolute, but I think it is safe to say that their trend represents the facts very well. The deaths are tabulated as follows:

Lead Workers (metallic lead)	25
Metal Miners	14
Painters	349
Paint Mixers	8
Plumbers	11
Carpenters	10
Potters	1
Storage Battery Workers	6
Printers and Stereotypers	2
Tin and Copper-smiths	15

The deaths from lead poisoning represent in the main massive exposure to lead compounds in which it is common to find encephalopathy. Deaths unassociated with encephalopathy in lead poisoning are usually complicated by other things. The figures therefore merely express those industrial situations in which exposure is very great.

Further data from the twenty-first report of the Ohio Department of Health, show the following tabulation of reported cases of lead poisoning for the year 1929 as regards painters:

Automobile trades, painters, polishers, sanders and spray painters	13 cases

Figures from other sources indicate roughly the same general trend. I merely present these as illustrative.

In the matter of your statement as regards tetraethyl lead poisoning, my objection was not that reference was made to tetraethyl lead which produces a type of poisoning in large doses more serious perhaps than any other lead compound. The misleading portion of the statement consisted of the fact that reference was made to the seriousness of the poisoning associated with anti-knock gasoline containing tetraethyl lead, whereas all of the evidence indicates that lead poisoning from this type of distribution of tetraethyl lead is non-existent. The experimental and clinical facts indicate that in the commercial concentration of tetraethyl lead in gasoline no appreciable absorption takes place, even under the worst conditions of exposure.

Very truly yours,

RAK:EJ