

May 28, 1969

Mr. Edward Gross
Science Service Inc.
1719 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Mr. Gross:

Let me begin this letter by saying that in my opinion this article should not be published. It is, of necessity, and through no serious fault of yours, a deplorably superficial coverage of the subject, which cannot contribute usefully to the sound judgment of the public or to that of the scientists of the country, to whom, presumably, it is mainly directed. In fact, as I said to you on the telephone, the continued discussion of this subject in the press and other lay publications, can only add to the confusion which lately has surrounded this matter, and contributed to the apprehension of many persons.

I do not suppose for a moment, however, that you or other writers would be dissuaded from writing about this subject, and therefore, I will do what I promised to do. I do urge you, however, not to quote me or other persons in your article. Such statements as you have quoted from Dr. Patterson and myself, cannot possibly carry any weight with thoughtful people who do not know either of us, personally, or professionally, and therefore are irrelevant to the issues, while contributing some spurious dramatic character to the writing.

I started to write into the manuscript some modifications of your language. However, I gave this up after the first page, because mere editorial changes here and there could not alter the incorrect slant of the statements. Instead, I have commented, at some length, in a series of notations, separate from your manuscript. Your acceptance of my views will take the zip out of your article, to be sure, but then there is no zip to this subject in its present state. The issue here is not one of polemics between individuals of different experience and different views. It is rather the unexciting collection of more evidence over such a period of time as may be required. It is possible that the concentration of lead in the common environment of man under a variety of influences, may reach such a level as to be threatening. Methods are available for establishing the facts in this regard well in advance of any harmful effects, and there should be no reason for undue concern for the future. In saying this I do not minimize the importance of a careful professional surveillance of this and many another potential hazard to the public health as these are induced inevitably by the tremendous technological developments of our time. But I am sure that this cannot be done effectively if we are to be badgered continuously by every lay writer who has a yen to tell a story. What we need in this country in relation to our multitude of hygienic and social problems - not all of which are merely potential threats - is a great deal more of hard work and systematic observation, and more money (much of which at present is going down the military drain) for the support of such work, and a great deal less of talk and other forms of sound and fury.

Incidentally, your left handed comment on the presumably biased source of some of the funds employed by the staff of the Kettering Laboratory has in itself a wholly misleading significance. When in 1930, the Kettering Laboratory began its work of

KE 00424

May 28, 1969

research, advisory service to industry, and, a little later, its graduate training of professional personnel in the field of industrial (occupational) medicine and hygiene, there was no source of funds other than those which were supplied by industrial organizations whose interest in having an unbiased source of information and advice to which to apply, at the actual cost to themselves of the services which could be provided for them in a public educational institution under the policies set by its Board of Directors. The lead problems of industry, in relation to their own employees and also to the public, were subsidized by a group of industrial organizations involving the lead trades. The problems associated with the production and use of fluorides, including the aluminum manufacturers, were supported by this group, and so on until there were scores of organizations who participated in the support of the Kettering Laboratory (and in its various educational activities, under agreements made between their officials and the Board of Directors of the University of Cincinnati). Under these policies, the work of the Laboratory (including the portion of it which I directed in person) became known in this country and abroad. Do you not agree that your fragmentary remark is more than a little misleading? I recognize that you cannot record the history of this Laboratory and its policies in your paper, but need you question its integrity, as indeed you have done, if only inadvertently. This would be appropriate to a scandal sheet, but hardly to Science Service.

I trust you will not misinterpret my comments as being hostile. They are not so intended. As an elder scientific investigator and a physician long concerned with the public welfare, I am merely suggesting that it is high time that we, as members of a community, should take a serious and responsible view of our primary functions of leadership and guidance.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.
Professor Emeritus of
Occupational Medicine

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LE 00425