

October 8, 1970

Mr. A. S. Hawkes
% Mr. W. J. Rusher
Ethyl S.A.
1 Rue Paul Lauters
Bruxelles 5, Belgium

Dear Art:

I learned some days ago, when I was in the office of A. B. Horn in Baton Rouge that you had been delegated to continue your work as the counterpart of Dick Scäes in Europe. Or, that, at least was my understanding of the matter.

In any case, and particularly if I am right in the interpretation of the information I received, I should like to learn something of the activities of Dr. Katin in Germany. I gather that he, more than any other one person, is concerned about the dangers of leaded gasoline and that he is very ready to have something done about it. If you have any direct or trustworthy information on the status of the matter in Germany, and of the part Dr. Katin is playing in it, I would like to learn from you about it. As a matter of fact, I would like to hear from you on any other matter but I shall limit myself here to the problems of Ethyl S.A., so far as troubling you with my requests. It is probably no secret to you, but I trust your judgment in matters of this type, and therefore I want to know your views.

Our work, here, on the determination of "tolerable" concentration of lead in the air for healthy men has been virtually completed, or so it appears. The entire set of result collected over the period of more than 5 years are being assembled for the purposes of statistical analysis (in order to squeeze as much as possible from them). It appears from the initial survey (with but little statistical probing) that the tolerable level (when considered on the background of the lead intake in food and Beverages) lies somewhere between 10 and 20 micrograms of lead (Pb) per cubic meter of air. Some time will be required to test

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the conclusion up and down and sideways, but the level is certainly of this order of magnitude, and at these levels there is no disturbance in the biochemical responses of the body to the presence of significant quantities of lead in bringing about an increase in urinary excretion of coproporphyrin and delta-aminolevulinic acid. That is, we have found no interference with the enzyme systems involved in the synthesis of heme, sufficient to alter the urinary excretion of precursors of hemoglobin.

There is a log of concern about these and related matters in the U.S.A. at present and, more particularly, there are a lot of political doings, much more in the field of public relations (more frankly spoken of as "politics") than in that of hygiene. I expect, therefore, that these matters will be decided on frankly spurious grounds rather than on valid evidence. Unfortunately, the carry-over from the U.S.A. to Europe (and elsewhere) will be considerable regardless of the grounds on which decisions are made. Likewise, many in the U.S.A. will be greatly influenced by actions taken, presumably in the public interest, in Europe. This, I suppose, should be taken calmly as inevitable, but I hate to see this go that route, if only because we shall be in deep difficulty in a great many issues of this type, unless we can learn, as a people, to depend on evidence for our decisions of policy. Not being entirely cynical, I still have some hope that human beings collectively can exercise some degree of intelligence in their affairs.

But I shall cease and desist in this vein, for the present, and express my pleasure at being able to communicate with you, while extending my every wish for your happiness and well-being.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

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