

PARIS, LE January 15th, 1935

Dr. R.A. Kehoe
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University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, Ohio.

Dear Dr. Kehoe ;

I want to give you some details on Ethyl in France from the point of view of the feeling in Aviation circles.

With military pilots, all is well, and there are no complaints; but in civilian aviation, where the military planes are tested before being delivered to the Air Ministry, we had to register lately several complaints, all of which came from the Villacoublay field.

These complaints can be divided into two classes :

1° - Mechanics who have to handle Ethyl gasoline do it only with a great fright, consider it as a dangerous poison and accuse it of all kinds of mishaps. They are sick, get head-ache, belly-ache, colics and saturnism, which their Union doctors recognize sometimes, without any ground.

2° - The pilots and flying mechanics complain strongly about being intoxicated every time they have to fly with Ethyl gasoline, and some of them do not dare throttling down their engines coming down from high altitude; they get head-ache, etc ..., and naturally Ethyl gasoline is also the cause. They prefer to cut entirely the engine.

With Dr. Coste we made an inquiry on these complaints; the men are so positive in their affirmations, that there is no use arguing.

For the 1st class, Dr. Coste could not detect the slightest sign of saturnism among the few men who consented to be examined by him, and naturally he could not either find saturnism in the second class.

It is true that in the first class the men, in reason of the poor conditions of work --emptying tanks all the time-- have their hands well soaked with Ethyl gasoline, but even that could not give them any trouble.

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R.A. Kehoc

As to the pilots and the flying mechanics, without any doubt it is a question of carbon monoxide, for in all these military planes there is little or none exhaust pipes. They are cut to the root and of course the passengers breathe in a flow of carbon monoxide, mostly with a rich mixture, when throttling down.

It also seems that there is, on account of poor ventilation, of the cock-pits, some trouble due to gasoline vapor. (unburnt)

They all say that with benzol gasoline they have no trouble !

In high circles, these complaints have been judged to their real value.

a) Men excited by Union leaders, who want to get a little advantage from the use of Ethyl, for a few firms, have even imagined to distribute milk free to offset the risks due to Ethyl gasoline !

b) Pilots and mechanics intoxicated by carbon monoxide; the constructors are afraid of decreasing the performances by putting exhaust collectors or improving the fairing of the cockpit, so they accuse Ethyl of what is happening.

Now a committee appointed by the Air Ministry is investigating some old facts dating back from 1931, which took place in Chalais-Meudon. There, in a Government Agency, where Aviation engines are tested on the bench, several workmen had complained of being intoxicated by exhaust fumes, and this naturally on account of Ethyl. Their doctor, Dr. Cristofini, had told them it was Ethyl. So the use of Ethyl was even forbidden in that place. Later, Dr. Coste and Dr. Garsaux (a Doctor of the Air Ministry) had examined 12 men and had not found the slightest sign of saturnism. And you know that Dr. Garsaux having replaced Ethyl Gasoline with plain gasoline colored in red, the symptoms had been just the same, which showed the real nature of the complaints. But this old affair has popped up again, and it seems that one of the men (Moutairon, I believe) who had worked, not on the testing bench at all, but in a laboratory where there was some handling of pure Ethyl Fluid, has engaged a suit against the Government.

He says he had been intoxicated and it seems that he has a certificate signed by a Government expert, no less than Dr. Brouardel, admitting that he suffers from saturnism. The Committee is going to investigate that case. Dr. Coste was heard by that Committee on January 15th, and I am telling you that the latter is composed of men who consider these complaints according to their real value.

Pr. Lormand, who went to the United States knows the question very well and there is absolutely no fear that their opinion will be contrary, in any way, to Ethyl.

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Kehoe

Dr. Coste has asked to see this man, Montairon, but it is not sure that he may see him, on account of the action before the Courts.

I shall let you know about the development of that affair. I myself shall be heard by that committee later on. I will be, very likely, asked some questions on the recent complaints of Villacoublay, and I am asking you to state once more, in a letter to me or to Dr. Coste, your opinion concerning the hazards due to the handling of Ethyl gasoline.

I know your opinion, and your report deals with this question, but naturally the Committee will not read your long report. The best would be a short letter giving you opinion, and up to date, because dated 1935, will be of a great weight.

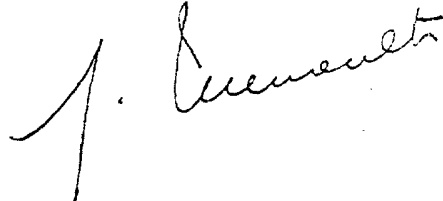
I insist because I realize that the only point which is doubtful in the minds of the members of the Committee is whether the handling of Ethyl gasoline does not present more risks than the handling of plain gasoline. I know you think it is the same. For the Committee, hearing it once more from you will do no harm.

As to the mixing plants, every thing is fine; all is o.k;

Please excuse that long letter

and believe me

Yours very truly



P.S.-- You know the question of increasing the content in motor gasoline from 0,3 to 0,8 will be raised very soon by the Oil Companies. Should you have some more recent information to help me to discuss, and confirm to Dr. Bordas and other members the inanity of their previous fears, it would also be very useful.

Could you also give me some information :

1° - On the various troubles caused by plain gasoline on some very sensitive subjects. (skin rash, head ache, vomiting, etc...)

2° - On the symptoms of carbon monoxide intoxication .

With anticipate thanks.

Best regards to Mrs Kehoe.

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