

September 14, 1942.

AIR MAIL

Mr. C. L. Risso-Gill,
Paseo Colon 285,
Buenos Aires,
Argentina.

Dear Charlie:

I have been slow in replying to your several letters received in July and August, but since none of them were urgent, I have allowed them to wait until a number of other matters were taken care of.

1. With reference to Venezuela and Dr. Ottolina, I am very glad to know you have been able to clarify the situation, to simplify the medical work, and also to reduce the unjustified expense.

2. I think you are wise in the arrangements you have made with Dr. Camelier. I could wish that it were possible for us to make an important contribution to public health in the course of our work in South America and elsewhere. On the other hand, this is very difficult to do, particularly in South America, without getting into serious complications. I think, therefore, we had better stick to our primary job, as you have indicated.

3.
In the matter of Dr. Dustin's visit, I have expected to hear from him, but as yet have not done so. I should be pleased to see him, if and when he pays us a visit.

4. On the question of cleaning tankers, there is some doubt as to the seriousness of the problem. We have obtained some information on it, and our observations to date have not revealed any very serious dangers. Potentially, however, the problem is not very difficult from that of gasoline storage tanks. It is quite conceivable that lead compounds may settle out of the gasoline to make sludge at the bottom of these tanks. It is also possible that as scale forms on the sides and drops to the bottom, there will be considerable quantities of sludge after a time. To the extent that the sludge accumulates, opportunities for serious lead exposure may develop. It seems likely that this is a problem which is disposed of largely because of the frequency of emptying out the contents of the tanker and cleaning up the sludge. It also appears that the precautions taken in emptying and cleaning up the tankers are quite considerable. The dangers of fire and explosion are always present, and apparently considerable care is taken against exposure to gasoline vapors.

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What we have attempted to do here is to call the attention of the distributing companies to the similarity between tankers and storage tanks, pointing out to them the necessity of taking precautions in proportion to the difficulties they encounter in cleaning out the compartments. We feel that the only safety lies in their understanding the principles of their work and the means by which lead hazards are produced. In general, however, we think that the precautions taken against gasoline vapors will protect against the lead exposure.

5. I have on hand quite a number of copies of the article referred to in your letter of August 14. Actually, I have quite a large number of all of these articles, and I can send you copies of them from time to time as you need them. I am sending you a number of copies of the article in question, and, therefore, I think it will be unnecessary to have more of them printed at present.

6. In the matter of protective clothing, we are finding considerable trouble in obtaining rubber goods of any kind. No doubt, we shall have to substitute other materials for rubber. The synthetic rubbers thus far have given quite satisfactory results, and no doubt, some of them are more resistant to gasoline and tetraethyl lead than is rubber. Neoprene, for example, is very good.

7. Along the line of your letter of August 18, to Fossett, we have recently had an inquiry from him concerning the possibility of using substitutes for rubber. Perhaps you will hear from him further on this subject and you will realize how this is coming about.

8. It occurs to me to refer back to the subject of tank cleaning and to call your attention to the fact that we know very little about the methods of cleaning tankers outside of the United States. If you have the opportunity to see just how this job is done at some of the points you visit, it would be advisable for you to look into it. I imagine rather large numbers of tankers are being used at some of the points which you visit periodically. Any information which you can obtain for us about the methods of cleaning would be very useful, whether you obtained the information directly or from the responsible people at the several points.

9. I should also call your attention to the fact that there was recently what may be called an "accident" in the Jersey Company plant in San Salvador. A number of men went into a tank to clean it, apparently without any precautions, and all of them were poisoned. Apparently their exposure was fairly brief, and by sheer good fortune, all of the men survived. I mention this because it means that we can not trust implicitly in the efforts of the customer companies to handle this problem. It is much the most dangerous problem with which we have to deal, and it is necessary that

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we should do everything that we possibly can to keep alive the consciousness of this danger on the part of people who have anything to do with it. The precautionary measures should not be shortened or made easier. We shall only escape serious and frequent accidents if we play this danger up. We must not under any circumstances say things which tend to produce relaxation of precautionary measures.

I hope things are going well with you. I have an idea you will be rather busy in the course of the next year or so and that activities related to leaded gasoline will increase. If your difficulties increase, let me know about them, for I shall give you all the help I can.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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