

CONFIDENTIAL

November 12, 1954

Mr. J. H. Schaefer
Ethyl Corporation
100 Park Avenue
New York City 17

Dear John:

C I have at hand various letters and memoranda received from yourself and Dr. Bock, on the problem of plant absenteeism, including your last note (11-9-54) with its enclosures. On word from you by telephone that the latter was forthcoming, I postponed my reply until it had been received.

O I am glad to note that a serious attempt is to be made to deal with the abnormal rate of absenteeism by the cultivation of a sound understanding among all concerned. In appraising the part that our medical staff should play in the entire matter, I find myself to be in complete sympathy, in principle, with the position of Dr. Bock, but not quite in agreement with him in certain details. Perhaps I can make my position clear to you and also to him and Mr. Bond through this communication, in the full recognition that the role to be played by the medical staff will require careful examination and a full discussion at a later date, within the medical staff and also within the larger group, including the medical staff.

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Y There are, I believe, two separate problems in this situation, one of which is partially medical in character, the other non-medical. The first of these concerns job placement. The fitness of a man for his job in physical and physiological terms, in part, is, a medical problem, and to the extent that the physicians can aid in bringing together the requirements of the job and the capacity of a man to perform it, the result may be a source of satisfaction to all concerned. We should be prepared to do all we can in that direction, as a means of reducing the incompatibilities which lead to dissatisfaction. I am in complete agreement with the program of Esso in this respect, and I am prepared to look carefully into what we can do to increase our proficiency in that direction. I must warn management, however, that the limitations of medical efforts in this direction are considerable. There is a great deal of fulsome talk about this medical function, but only a modicum of accomplishment, for a number of reasons which I shall not attempt here to discuss. However, the responsibility of an industrial physician to strive to achieve the best and most satisfactory disposition of personnel within the working population of a plant, is part of his job, for the promotion of both satisfaction and productivity in the day's work.

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The other problem is that of discipline. Other things being settled, the man who likes his work does his best to perform it, overcoming many obstacles in the process, but even so there are malcontents, persons who are naturally lazy, and more particularly in this period, there is an underlying struggle between owners, managers and labor organizations over the division of the proceeds of production. This struggle has been intensified in our time, and it can be expected to go on for some time to come. The physician in industry is concerned with the health of the people of an industry, and with other matters relating to the physical and mental health of the community. He is involved, of necessity, in the economic and social struggle of our time, but he must not be a party to it within his range of professional duties. If he becomes an instrument of management or labor, he loses his capacity to act soundly in matters related to health, and moreover he loses his competence to visualize his own proper function. He cannot, therefore, concern himself directly with matters of discipline. These are solely management functions, and the medical man, while an advisor to management in policies related to health is not a part of management.

At this time it is not easy for the medical man to define his position with reference to the details of industrial operations, because the scene is new to him and changing. Therefore, he must be thoughtful and conservative and above all exceedingly jealous of the professional role which he must maintain at all costs. I would say that we in Ethyl Corporation, which has unique problems to deal with, in relation to highly hazardous operations, must be doubly cautious. What someone else does - such as Esso, for whose Medical Director I have the greatest respect - is fruit for consideration, but is not acceptable precedent.

I am prepared, as I am sure Dr. Bock and his associates at the plant are, to examine our position and policies carefully and in concert with the examination of the whole plant procedure in dealing with this matter. I am not willing to be precipitated into any course of action which may jeopardize the good will which we have been so long in building among the people in the plant, because of a present economic problem, or because someone elsewhere has apparently contributed something to the solution of the economic problem. We are willing to learn and willing to try, and above all we are willing to enter into the broad consideration of this admittedly serious problem, in order to aid in the achievement of a sound and continuing solution of it. I should like to discuss this situation with Dr. Wade and his associates in Esso, to know their purposes, policies and procedures and to secure from them their own appraisal of what they have learned and accomplished in the process. I know Dr. Wade well enough to be sure that he has acted carefully in developing a policy with the medical staff at Baton Rouge, and that he will be looking critically at its application to determine its effects. I think we may learn something very useful from their experience.

The foregoing remarks, aside from their statement of the principles which

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guide our professional activities, are intended to support and interpret, in my words, the comments of Dr. Bock on the proposals presented to him. He, as befits his immediate responsibility for the daily work of the medical staff of the plant and his experience in daily contact with the people who act on the two opposed sides of this situation, is more realistic, I dare say, and less experimental in his outlook than I am. I need not explain his position or make any apology for it, but I feel constrained to point out that neither his attitude nor mine can properly be interpreted as an unwillingness to cooperate, in every way that does not conflict with our primary function, in the solution of a problem of which we are not unaware and to which we are not at all indifferent.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

RAK of

C.C.: Mr. C. W. Bond
Dr. Roy C. A. Bock
✓ Dr. K. V. Kitzmiller

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