

March 30, 1950

Honorable Robert Crosser, M. C.,
Chairman, Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce,
House of Representatives,
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Crosser:

My attention has been called to the introduction of House Joint Resolution 416, which would authorize an appropriation to provide for the initiation of a nation-wide survey of air pollution.

I should like to be able, briefly, to explain why, in my opinion and in that of my associates in this Laboratory, every possible impetus should be given by the United States Government to the development of an adequate program of investigation of this subject. Since any effort to fill in the background on which such opinion rests would result in a treatise on the subject, I cannot hope to do more, in this medium, than merely to express this opinion, unsupported by the evidence that should be forthcoming.

In addition, however, I am impelled to say that both hygienic and economic consideration require that the series of problems involved in this matter be attacked vigorously and solved to a point that will provide for reasonable and feasible measures of industrial and community control. It is certain that legislative and regulatory measures will be required to provide such control, despite the fact that there is no body of adequate information that would direct and implement such legislation and regulation at present. The measures likely to be taken by local governing authorities to meet the complaints and demands of irate and apprehensive citizens of urban and even agricultural centers, will certainly be inept, unsatisfactory and often oppressive, and will result in the dislocation of community life and industrial operations, while being costly and wasteful in the extreme. It is not too much to say that the problems of community air pollution will have to be solved before long, that the eventual cost of this will mount to billions of dollars of the national wealth, and that this wealth will be squandered fruitlessly unless the nature of the varied problems can be elucidated by careful preliminary investigation.

Some question may properly be raised as to the authority by which the foregoing statements have been made. Such authority can scarcely be established except on the record and on the testimony of other and disinterested persons. Therefore, I can only cite the experience of the past twenty-odd years, during which this Laboratory has been engaged in the investigations of hygienic problems

Honorable Robert Crosser - (2) - March 30, 1950

which stem from the progressive industrialization of this nation.

It is scarcely necessary to comment on the social and economic difficulties, amounting almost to chaos at times, which have followed in the wake of the revolutionary changes in the structure of American industrial and community life during the past half century. It is not such common knowledge that these changes have created a large number of difficult and serious hygienic problems, on the solution of which the health and welfare of our people depend. The pollution of streams and of the air we breathe with a large number and variety of potentially harmful community and industrial wastes is only a part of this general problem. The entire matter may be likened in scope and importance to the conservation of our natural resources (including human resources), on which the ultimate success and even survival of our population must be based.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

RAK ef

C.C.: Mr. James J. Murphy