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July 17, 1969

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

Robert T. P. deTreville, M.D.
President, Industrial Hygiene
Foundation of America, Inc.
5231 Centre Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15232

Dear Bob:

I have been seemingly negligent in replying so tardily to your letter of June 19, and now you have returned from your vacation, no doubt, to find no reply on your desk. I regret very much the necessities which have intervened to give my behavior in this the appearance of discourtesy. Such an appearance is misleading, however, for I've been very busy contending with a number of editorial duties and other demanding tasks which kept my correspondence in obedience. Perhaps, however, I may take refuge in the old saw that it is "better to be late than never."

If my delay in writing has retarded your efforts in the direction indicated by your correspondence with medical organizations and your proposal that I write, somewhat as you have indicated, to the Kettering Alumni, I do not find myself too unhappy about it. In fact, I must express myself here bluntly. I think your letter to Henry Howe was naive and unwise; I consider that Duane Block was expressing the views that could have and should have been anticipated fully. You are, I believe, starting at the wrong end of this matter and backing "the wrong horse," or perhaps, "a lost cause." Moreover, there is hardly an idea in the letter to the Alumni that I could possibly espouse. I am not prepared to write to President Nixon about much of anything, and I do not consider that "industrial hygiene" is the name of the professional activity which we should undertake to develop. I say this not because I am not enthusiastically behind all efforts to improve the situation of industrial health, but "industrial hygiene" in the U.S.A. is not its name. There is a deep-seated tradition in this country which defines "industrial hygiene" as environmental control by technical and engineering means. This is indeed the Washington, D.C. idea, but even more it is the settled conviction of all of the medical organizations. You cannot buck it, and you cannot even make your views of it understood. Certainly we need "industrial hygiene" as it is labelled currently, but we desperately need the coordinated efforts of well-trained physicians with well trained technical people in industry. We do not have the physicians, not even their understanding, and you are talking sheer nonsense (as far as the A.M.A. and most of the I.M.A. will view it) in promoting this idea. By so doing, you will defeat not only your own efforts in this direction, but those of any other person or group, by your proposal. For example, in the face of the formal procedure within the A.M.A. hierarchy for the appointment of members of its official Councils, your suggestion that Dave Fassett be appointed will be regarded (probably silently) as either a piece of effrontery or in matter of naivete. Or, again, that the President of A.M.A. should write such a letter as your propose, is to suggest that he is prepared to ignore the role of the physicians of the country in the field of industrial health, and to back the industrial hygiene engineers in taking over this responsibility. You will not believe this, but I tell you that it is literally true. This is what he cannot fail to believe is the meaning, to him, of "Industrial Hygiene."

What I have said about his matter in the foregoing remarks is blunt, hard doctrine, and I would not say it if it were not necessary. You cannot afford to put yourself

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and the Industrial Hygiene Foundation in this position, which will be regarded as foolish. One can be eccentric or mean or opinionated and troublesome, but he cannot be ridiculous and survive.

May I make one additional remark which might well be misunderstood by a less devoted and conscientious person than yourself. You, professionally, are in no position to initiate or achieve a reform in this field. This is true, in part, because you are not old and gray, but it is the more true because the Industrial Hygiene Foundation, for many reasons, is not the organization of leadership from which to sound the clarion call to the professions involved. This must be done, either by the professions themselves (which would be the desirable way), or by a virtual revolution from the ranks of those whom the professions are so weakly (in terms of numbers and geographical scope) undertaking to serve. Speaking from the sidelines, especially through the political avenue, will not now or (I think) ever turn the trick. I advise you to drop this, therefore, before it reacts on you to chill your ardor.

And now, happily, I can speak kindly and approvingly of your program for the Annual Meeting of the Industrial Hygiene Foundation. It is good, and it continues the good (and eventually productive) educational program in this field. This is what each one of us, in his particular field - university education and training, research and guidance organization (university groups, Industrial Hygiene Foundation, and private professional groups), formal professional organizations (Academy of Occupational Medicine, AIHA, IMA, etc.) - can do to bring about an attitude of mind and an understanding of the task, which, one day, will make it possible to do what you want to do now. The fact is that we do not have the backing from our own profession to make much of a splash in the medical community. But time and circumstance are on our side. Sheer danger to the life and health of the people, as it grows in the present situation, will compel the physicians - who will probably be the last to learn, because of their intense preoccupation with what they are now doing increasingly well - to recognize that their present efforts are not being expanded in the right direction. Although we (as physicians in various roles) simply cannot unite under a credible masthead to view the present scene and meet it with appropriate action, it will not be long before we shall have to do this, unless we are (as organized groups) prepared to find our influence diminishing more and more and giving away to other groups which will be more responsive to the needs of the country.

Please forgive me for lecturing you.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.
Professor Emeritus of
Occupational Medicine

RAK:wp

P.S. I shall devote a brief memo, attached, to the article of which you sent me a reprint.

RAK