

October 28, 1936

Mr. Lester P. Roberts
Casilla de Correo No.1704
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Dear Mr. Roberts:

I take this means of calling your attention to a situation that is giving us some anxiety. As you are no doubt aware, the cleaning of tanks for leaded gasoline is attended by certain dangers, and from time to time in this country we have seen cases of poisoning which have resulted from the failure to carry out the precautionary measures which we have advised in this operation. We have recently had a serious recurrence of this situation in that a group of seven men were acutely poisoned and three of the seven died. The circumstances connected with this unfortunate affair have led us to believe that we do not fully understand the factors which are involved in dangerous exposure from this source. Moreover it is quite apparent that the mechanism which we have employed in putting precautions into effect has not worked. It is doubtful if we can expect the distributors of leaded gasoline to handle this matter with entire satisfaction. We are making a very careful investigation of the whole problem as the basis for subsequent recommendations, and in the course of a few months we should know just how extensive is this problem, and also how we will have to handle it. For the present, outside of the United States we shall have to rely on the mechanisms which now exist for carrying out precautions.

In order that we may not have any recurrence of difficulties during the period of our investigation, it seems to me to be entirely necessary to see to it that the distributors of leaded gasoline in all parts of the world are reminded of the necessity of carrying out the regulations which appear in Section 5 of our book of regulations. I do not mind telling you in confidence that these regulations may not be entirely adequate for all situations. I am sure, however, that if they are carried out as set down, there will be no serious difficulties. It is my opinion that there will be no difficulty at all, but I am not quite certain of my ground at this point. I would suggest that you make such effort as is possible, and as promptly as possible, to remind the proper individuals among the distributors in South America

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of the existence of our regulations for this operation, and of the necessity for rigid adherence to them. Since leaded gasoline has been in use in South America for such a relatively short time, it seems improbable that there will be any considerable work of this type in the near future. Moreover in view of the somewhat delicate situation there it would be inadvisable to throw an unnecessary scare into the minds of the people who are involved. On the other hand, the matter should be stressed as well as it may be and you will have to use your best judgment in the matter of how you go about this. It is my feeling that very little discussion will be required and that you can bring this matter to the attention of the distributors without any undue alarm. I should appreciate hearing from you as to what you have been able to accomplish in this direction in the near future. Moreover I shall keep you in touch with what goes on here, and you will be advised of the eventual conclusions of our investigation.

With kindest regards,

Cordially yours,

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Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

cc Mr. Lewis
cc Dr. Edgar

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