

April 11, 1966

Arnold J. Lehman, Ph.D., M.D.
U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare
Food and Drugs Administration
Washington, D. C. 25

Dear Arnold:

I have an inquiry from a generally competent manufacturing company for an opinion on a matter of hygienic policy which I can answer technically, I believe, subject to experimental proof. (Incidentally, for your information, while I have retired from the Directorship of the Kettering Laboratory, I am continuing to look after the problems relating to lead until I have a satisfactory understudy to take over the responsibilities which have been carried over beyond my official term. I also have some long neglected writing to do, and this is best done with the help of our excellent bibliographic staff.)

The problem relates to the development of lead-containing enamels to be used as coatings for the inner surfaces of tanks to be used for "service in food application and in particular for the storage and fermentation of beer." Provided these have satisfactory properties for the avoidance of leaching of lead (and other potentially harmful substances), they may be expected to improve the present situation which has not been wholly satisfactory in all instances.

The question here is whether there is a policy in the Food and Drugs Administration which would ban, for all practical purpose, all lead-containing materials on the inside of food processing and storage tanks for foods and beverages. I find that I cannot answer this question. The further practical question is whether there is any point in the further work that would be required in the development of such enamels.

It may be that this inquiry should be directed (as a matter of form) to someone other than yourself in the Administration. I have no way of knowing what the protocol should be, since I've had little contact with your group recently. On the other hand, I prefer, at this point, to put the question to you, for both personal and professional reasons, in complete assurance that you will guide me in obtaining the answer elsewhere, if necessary.

I am sure that you are aware that, for many years, I have had a very ardent interest in protecting the food of the country against contamination with lead, and I would not advise or aid anyone, in such matters, against my own judgment. I shall appreciate, greatly, therefore, any information that you may choose to give me.

With kindest personal regards,

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

RAK:wp