

May 15, 1967

Mr. Leslie A. Chambers, Director  
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University Park  
Los Angeles, California 90007

Dear Les:

I hasten to reply to your letter of May 12 and to give you my best estimate of the progress which I hope to make between now and the meeting in New York on June 1, on the Guide.

In concurrence with your direct request, I shall prepare a report of the status of the revision of the Guide. It will be up to-date as of our time of meeting. I shall also make some reference to my other assignment - that of preparing a statement on the effects of air pollution on human health.

Incidentally, while I've been working on the Guide (and on certain other inescapable matters) I've been examining various articles, some supplied by Vernon MacKenzie but mostly those from other sources. (In this connection, I'd like to have a copy of your last talk on this subject, if it is available in reprint form.) I am glad, actually, to have delayed the preparation of this statement and to have allowed myself a considerable latitude in time and contemplation. Quite a lot of water has gone over the dam, recently, in this matter, especially as to the crystallization of attitudes of mind in various circles, and I believe we are in much better position to produce a useful statement than could have been done at an earlier time. Moreover, my own experience during the past year has taught me much that I needed to know about the quality of the thinking that is entering into this matter.

The statement above brings me to tell you why the job on the Guide has not been completed long since. I've been bedeviled by a series of crises, so to speak, in the affairs of the producers and distributors of antiknock lead compounds (and to a lesser extent, other industries involved in the production and use of lead, as Lead Industries Association). The antiknock people have every right to call on me to present the data, and the conclusions that arise therefrom, as the former have been obtained in the Kettering Laboratory, with their financial support, during the past 35 years. To back off from this issue would be to emulate the timidity of a Mr. milque toast.) These crises have been brought on by the deep but misplaced concern of various people in and out of governmental agencies, as to the hazard to the public health induced by lead in the ambient atmosphere. The impulse to put a ceiling on the lead content of the atmosphere (sometimes for reasons that have nothing to do with the general situation), has resulted in hearings and discussions and controversies in which I could not help being involved, and I've spent an unconscionable amount of time on them and in preparation for them by documentary means. There seems also to have been an unusual amount of trouble with lead poisoning in industry in all parts of the country, during the past few years, almost certainly because of a much greater

industrial

awareness of the existence of the problem without much better understanding in insurance, labor and governmental compensation circles than heretofore. I've been unable to escape a series of consultations and medico-legal actions in this connection. It is extremely difficult, when not impossible, to avoid these professional activities, some of which come under the heading of professional duty. The foregoing matters, in which I am in the middle, plus requests for help that have come from people who think I must have little to do, now that I have "retired," have made significant inroads on the time I could spend on my assignments as a member of the PAC on Air Pollution. Despite all of these things, I have made progress, and I hope to make still more before June 1, 1967. I plan at present to have my draft reproduced, as far as it goes, in sufficient number of copies for the members of the Committee. This will serve the purpose, at least, of giving a fair representation of the style and contents of the Guide, for as extensive and intensive criticism as the members may wish to apply, and should accelerate the completion. Or, if the Committee wishes to handle the project differently, from there on, in view of my slowness, it may do so with my blessing, rather than any resentment that I might be expected to have. While I would not object at all to being relieved of the rest of the job, I am entirely willing to complete it, and will be entirely content to accept the decision of the Committee.

Sincerely yours,

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

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