

October 28, 1948

Dr. Lloyd M. Farner,
Division of Industrial Hygiene,
University of Washington,
903 Smith Tower,
Seattle, Washington.

Dear Doctor Farner:

In further reply to your letter of September 13, I shall undertake to give you the benefit of our experience.

When this Laboratory was founded in 1930, funds were made available by three industrial organizations in an outright gift of building and minimum facilities made to the University of Cincinnati. It came about in this manner. We had been working on the problem of tetraethyl lead for some years, and we had made some progress toward the understanding of this problem. During that period the chemical industries of the United States had begun to find out that their expanded activities were leading them into trouble. Accordingly, certain organizations came to us with the request that we investigate certain of their problems. We were willing to do this, but we had neither space nor facilities. We pointed out that if they would supply the necessary tools, we would be happy to undertake the work under appropriate safeguards for the University. Funds were made available without strings to supply our minimum needs.

After the Laboratory had been built and was in operation other industries came to us with their problems, and there has been a continuing expansion of our work since. We have never had any funds except those provided by the sponsors of the investigative program. Out of such funds we have purchased new equipment. We have also expanded our personnel, and we are now enabled to do a rather large amount of work largely on our own choice. Our policies have developed with time, and our guiding principle through the years has been that we do not undertake a job which is not a straightforward medical problem, which we ourselves consider to be worthy of our efforts. Our work is done without any conflict with the policies of the University, and we have insisted upon the maintenance of complete independence with respect to the manner of the conduct of work and the manner and time of the publication of results.

Our staff is a full-time staff, engaged by the University just as would be the members of any other department. As the work has expanded we have added personnel, undertaking always to make appointments that would be regarded as permanent. We have had some disappointments, of course, but in general we have had more work than we could do, and we have expanded our staff only within the limits of the reasonable certainty of continuing work. This has been possible, largely because there is more work to be done than we have been able

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to do. In general, we have preferred to associate ourselves with industrial organizations who have understood our policies and have been sympathetic with the position and responsibilities of a University group. We have preferred to do work in which we maintain a relationship with a given industrial organization, undertaking to solve its toxicologic problems as they develop from the research stage into the production stage. In a number of instances, during the war and since, we have undertaken jobs for the Federal Government at their request. We have also obtained certain grants from time to time of Federal funds for the prosecution of a problem that extended beyond the limits of industrial responsibility. For example, we are carrying out the systematic study of certain contaminants of the atmosphere in the City of Cincinnati partly through industrial sponsorship and partly with the support of the Government. These funds are provided in every instance, for the disposition of the Laboratory staff. We do not have our work done in the Laboratory by independent fellows or by graduate students, but by full-time staff members who are answerable entirely to ourselves. We do not believe it is feasible to do work of this kind in any other way, since we feel that we have to put a stamp of complete approval on every bit of work that comes out of this Laboratory. We have not had a project sponsored by a labor organization. We would have no objection in principle, for we will accept a bonafide problem from any reasonably satisfactory source, so long as we can maintain our complete independence in the prosecution of the work. Indeed we would be very glad to include representative labor organizations among our sponsors, if for no other reason than that such a relationship would clearly indicate that we are not representing any special or privileged group in the community.

In the matter of our being able to refer work to other laboratories, we should be glad to do so. In the first place, certain types of problems can be handled better in one place than in another. If we could be assured of the competence of a given group, we should be glad to direct work in their direction when the opportunity afforded itself.

In my opinion, you will be able to obtain financial support for such a laboratory as you have in mind. I believe such a laboratory can be self-supporting. On the other hand, it will be advantageous if certain funds are available which enable you to prosecute certain problems beyond the point where certain practical considerations terminate. In other words, you will want to do certain items of work on account of your own interests, and it is highly advantageous to be able to do this at least to a limited degree. Therefore, if you can find some continuing source of funds which will enable you to do such work on even a limited scale, you will be at an advantage. If you plan to do teaching, you will either have to do it on a small basis or you will have to find independent budgetary support for it. Thus far we have supported our teaching program largely as an overhead charge on our general research program. This can be made to work, because we have had long-term relationships with a number of industries that understand our problem as well as their own. Nevertheless, in any time of economic stress

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this additional burden of cost might be too much, despite the fact that it is a small proportion of our total budget. Industry cannot afford to indulge in philanthropic enterprises, and if a teaching program is to be secure, it should be supported by funds intended primarily for that purpose. I sincerely hope that within the next few years we shall be able to find sources of funds which will provide for our teaching program, and which will give us some financial support for experimental work for which at present we have no specific sponsor. Funds in the latter category, in my opinion, should not represent a very large proportion of the total budget. It is my considered opinion that a laboratory of this type should survive or perish on its ability to serve and at the same time to educate industrial management, in the solution of its hygienic problems. One can neither do research work nor teaching in this field without actually working in industry. It is necessary that one understands the problems of industry and that one approach them in a realistic manner with the full recognition that industrial organizations engage in production and marketing for profit, and not for philanthropy. This philosophy, of course, can result in a very narrow point of view, or it can develop into a broad policy which recognizes that industry must serve the basic needs of the community and at the same time not inflict upon it a series of difficult problems in the field of industrial and public health. Our community has become an increasingly complicated one, and it becomes necessary that the expansion of industry should not result in damage to the health of industrial workers and injury to the overall health of the community. Industrial populations are a part of the community, and their health must be guarded carefully as a national and individual asset. Also the streams which carry our water and the atmosphere which we breathe must be maintained in such a manner as not to inflict upon us all, serious and unknown injury. In order to accomplish this goal of a rapidly expanding industrial economy we shall need extensive and continuing investigation on a broad base. The present facilities available in this country are barely able to touch these problems. We shall have to do much more. In my feeling this is both an opportunity and responsibility for American industry.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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