

Lead Industries Association

420 LEXINGTON AVENUE

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MANFRED BOWDITCH
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH AND SAFETY

July 11, 1949

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D., Director
Kettering Lab. of Applied Physiology
University of Cincinnati
College of Medicine
Eden Avenue
Cincinnati 19, Ohio

Dear Bob:

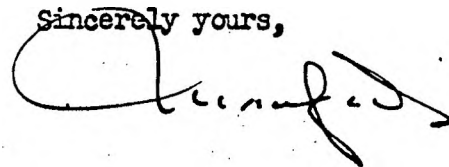
Thank you very much for your letter of July 8. Your expressions of opinion are always refreshing, whether I see eye to eye with you or not.

I am not surprised that you have found so much to criticize in the outline I sent you. We had to get something out in a hurry for a meeting of our Board of Directors, call in the Jam Handy Organization and gave them just ten days to see what they could do. Considering this and the fact that they knew about as much about lead poisoning as I do about the mating habits of the yak, I don't think they did too bad a job. Many of the points which you find faulty have been noted by others to whom it was sent, as well as by your humble servant, and all of them can easily be ironed out by the advisory group which we will most certainly invite to participate if we go through with the project.

What bothers me far more is that you are the only one whose opinion I value highly who has thrown a large bucket of cold water on the idea as a whole. I am glad that you feel that the facts of the problem "could be presented honestly, simply and thoughtfully," for that is just what we propose, and I have enough regard for the capabilities of those who would be involved to think that you are unduly pessimistic in doubting that we "will be able to get this done."

Whatever the outcome, I am grateful to you for not having pulled your punches.

Sincerely yours,



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July 8, 1949

Mr. Manfred Bowditch,
Director of Health and Safety,
Lead Industries Association,
420 Lexington Avenue,
New York City 17.

Dear Manfred:

I have been slow in replying to your letter of May 19, and therefore have been further prompted by your letter of June 24 in the matter of the motion picture on plumbism. I take it from your last letter that you feel that this would be very decidedly worth while, and for personal reasons, therefore, I should like to give you every encouragement in the development of this idea. Unfortunately, however, I do not share the enthusiasm of the other persons with whom you have communicated, and therefore I cannot honestly give my whole-hearted backing to this undertaking. Nevertheless I do not want to appear to be an obstructionist, and I should like to assure you that if you do find it possible to go ahead, I should be glad to give you every possible assistance by way of advice, suggestions or criticisms.

My general reaction to the proposal was not very favorable, since, in my opinion, what is required to clarify this problem is precision of thought and procedure rather than acquaintance with a general set of problems. On going over the outline, I was still further discouraged, in that, from my viewpoint, the whole matter is presented in much too diffuse a manner. I do not consider it possible to deal with the problem of lead absorption as it relates to the community and the industrial worker, without inducing some confusion into both matters. Moreover, I do not think you can present industrial hygiene in the lead trades, and the clinical aspects of lead poisoning, in a clear and clean manner, without confusing both to some degree. As to certain details the outline is very confused and confusing in its facts and concepts. A few examples will illustrate what I mean. In paragraph 2 on page 2 the problem of the painter working on a small home is apparently regarded as the same problem of steel construction work, and if that is not bad enough, the emphasis is put on the ingestion of lead associated with the painter's smoking a cigarette and eating a sandwich. The point of the whole matter is missed completely. Just to make it binding a child with paint on its face is introduced into the picture.

A further piece of asininity concerns itself with gasoline. The exposure of persons to leaded gasoline is not ^{an} occupational hazard, and under the conditions of its handling, the absorption of tetraethyl lead through the skin cannot occur to an appreciable degree. Why,

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then, bring in this problem to confuse the issue?

I mention these matters not to be carpingly critical, but to emphasize the fact that if this is to be done at all, it is to be done with judgment, knowledge, and the avoidance of hokum. Somebody who knows the whole story must pass judgment on every point, and sit tight against all of the efforts made to render industrial hygiene and medicine absurd on the basis of the current concepts and principles of the movie artists and the industrial relations experts. The facts in this problem are relatively simple. They could be presented honestly, simply and thoughtfully. I doubt if you will be able to get this done. Certainly if it is done as proposed, it will be so scrambled as not to clarify the nature of the industrial hazards, the manner of estimating their significance, or the diagnostic problem. This can^{not} all be done in one effort, and, in my opinion, efforts to do so will hardly be productive of good results.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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