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Public Health Aspects of the Use
of Leaded Gasolines

March 28, 1961

The recent communications from American Smelting and Refining Company and the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company of Canada, Ltd. which have been forwarded to Ethyl by the Lead Industries Association have raised the question of the status of information to combat possible efforts to limit the use of leaded gasolines because of public health considerations. I believe that our most effective answer to LIA might be along the following lines:

Refer them to Public Health Service publication No. 712 which is the report of the Advisory Committee on Tetraethyllead to the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service on "Public Health Aspects of Increasing Tetraethyl Lead Content in Motor Fuel." This report is the most complete summary available and has the advantage of USPHS sponsorship.

Inform them that we are participating with the Public Health Service in the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee that: "The Public Health Service, in collaboration with the manufacturers of tetraethyl lead, the petroleum industry, and other appropriate organizations, conduct studies to provide more definitive data on levels and trends of atmospheric lead contamination in selected urban areas and of the body burden of lead in selected population groups. If these studies should bring to light new data of significance, you may wish to reconsider the recommendation of this Committee."

Mention that my interpretation of the preliminary results of the program on atmospheric lead contamination now being carried out by the USPHS is that both the lead in air and the lead in body burden data being obtained currently are in excellent agreement with the information reviewed by the Ad Hoc Committee. It is my anticipation that the year long studies of the atmosphere as well as lead body burden in Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and Los Angeles will provide up to date, public information confirming our contention that the use of leaded gasolines does not adversely affect the public health.

KE 0012920

March 28, 1961

On the situation in the state of California, it is correct that Mr. Griswold of the Los Angeles County Air Pollution Control District has made public mention of possible need for legislation to control the amount of tetraethyllead in gasoline in the Los Angeles area. The same concern has also been expressed by Supervisor Dorn of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. I have been in contact with Mr. Griswold to determine, if possible, what action he intends taking. It appears that his concern over the use of leaded gasolines is specifically related to the problems which they may impose in the development of suitable catalytic devices for the reduction of unburned hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide. It is hoped that the catalytic devices which are being submitted to the State Motor Vehicle Pollution Control Board for certification may serve to reduce his concern in this area. To our knowledge all of the reputable organizations active in the development of catalytic devices are aware of the possible complications of leaded gasoline and are therefore carrying out their development programs on fuels of normal tetraethyllead content. The performance data on the U.O.P. "Purzaust" catalytic converter, which has been formally submitted for certification, were obtained on gasolines containing 3.0 ml TEL per gallon.

We have not been aware of any activity to control TEL usage by Dr. Linsky of the Bay Area Air Pollution Control District but will investigate this in the near future. As far as the State of California is concerned, it is my understanding, after discussions with representatives of the State Department of Public Health, that it is not their intention to take any action as regards fuel composition. In fact, I have been informed that there is presently no legal basis on which the state can even contemplate action of this nature.

Regarding the activities of Dr. Warren of the Geology department at the University of British Columbia, we have been aware of his statements regarding lead in soil and vegetation for some time. It is Dr. Kehoe's opinion that his findings correspond, at least qualitatively, to observations that have been made in a number of countries over the last 30 years and that the results are not being regarded with apprehension. On the basis of a request relayed through Dr. W. L. Faith of the Air Pollution Foundation from Dr. Warren we have furnished Dr. Warren several references on the lead content of vegetation and also a reprint of an article covering some of the data. I believe that the medical people of our Canadian company are much more conversant with the British Columbia situation than are either Dr. Kehoe or myself. The question of lead in soil and in vegetation has not been raised, to my knowledge, by either the people in the U.S. Public Health Service or in the California Department of Public Health.

While I am sure that the above presents only a partial answer to the over-all problems of leaded gasoline and possible public health considerations raised by LIA, it is about the state of the situation as I see it. It might be advisable to suggest to Mr. Radtke that I would be available to review the various aspects of this involved situation with him at his convenience.

MEH:br

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CC: Messrs. R. K. Scales

H. J. Gibson

Dr. R. A. Kehoe

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