

February 15, 1961

Mr. Alfred P. Sloan, Jr.,
Twenty-fifth Floor
International Building
630 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Sloan:

After pondering for some little time the wisdom and the propriety of my writing to you in order to interest you, if possible, in certain plans which have to do with the immediate present and the future of The Kettering Laboratory, I have come to the conclusion that I should acquaint you with the situation, up to a point, and allow you to decide whether or not you wish to pursue the subject further. I am the more persuaded that this is the proper thing to do when I recall an interview with you in 1924, at your request, in which the directness and simplicity of your approach to the matter under consideration was a revelation to me. On this account I am led to believe the present issue can be as easily dealt with one way or the other, without embarrassment to either of us. I shall state the case, therefore, and be prepared to abide by your decision.

I am not sure that you have had occasion to follow the activities and developments of this Laboratory over the years. It seems unlikely that you have. I shall begin at the beginning, therefore, and sketch briefly the high lights and the present status of the Laboratory.

We began our work on the hygienic problems associated with tetraethyl lead, in the General Motors Research Laboratory in the summer of 1924, when my duties in this Medical School could be shelved temporarily. Subsequently, when the public health aspects of the matter came into focus, I thought it proper to bring the entire program of research into the University of Cincinnati Medical College where I intended to continue in academic activities. This met with the approval and co-operation of the officers of Ethyl Corporation. A few years later the work had grown to a point that required more space, and with the interest, on the part of Frigidaire Corporation, in our taking on an investigation of household refrigerants, we required more space. Such space and additional equipment were provided by a gift of \$130,000.00 to the University of Cincinnati made jointly by Ethyl Corporation, E.I. duPont de Nemours and Company, and Frigidaire Corporation. The resultant, partially equipped building, completed in 1930, was the first wing of the present Kettering Laboratory in the Medical Center of the University of Cincinnati.

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Through my association with Ethyl Corporation, the petroleum industry, certain phases of the motor car industry, and the chemical industries, represented first by the duPont Company, I came to learn something of the hygienic problems that confronted American (and foreign) industry as well as our industrialized society, in our pursuit of technological progress, and I undertook to establish here, in this University, a center for research on the general hygienic problems of industry and of the community generally, and for service and advice to industry. This purpose has been served in what has seemed to me to be a highly satisfactory manner. Our work has expanded, and with it our staff has grown in numbers and in varieties of technical expertness. We have been consulted and involved in almost every major hygienic problem of industry at one time or another for the past thirty-odd years. During World War II, we found it necessary to expand our facilities, and, as soon as possible after its end, we planned and constructed a second wing of the Laboratory, which was financed by about twenty of our major sponsors. This was completed in 1949 at a cost of about \$640,000.00.

Meanwhile in 1947, we had initiated a type of professional training, new to the United States, whereby graduate physicians were further trained in occupational (industrial, environmental) medicine. Our main purpose was to fill an obvious void in the industrial organization whereby adequately trained physicians could plan and carry out (with managerial support) adequate programs of preventive medicine and industrial hygiene. This type of training has become the general standard for this purpose, and there are now five other schools engaged in similar training, leading to Specialist Certification by the American Board of Preventive Medicine, of which, through our efforts and those of others, Occupational Medicine became a unit in 1955, with the full recognition of organized medicine. More recently we have added a program for training industrial hygiene engineers in parallel with physicians.

All of this has been done on behalf of industry, and it has been financed by our industrial sponsors, at no expense to the City or the University of Cincinnati, without special gifts, endowments or funds from other sources (except for a limited amount of Federal funds for special research projects in which the Military Services or the Public Health Service have been interested. We have not been at odds with governmental agencies, however, or with the U.S. Public Health Service, but have worked with them, with a high degree of mutual respect and confidence. I should say that we occupy a most favorable position at this time, being recognized as the oldest, largest, and most influential group in research and graduate professional instruction in this field in the U.S.A. We have a staff of about 130, about half of whom are trained professionally, and our annual budget approximates \$1,000,000.

In view of the fact that I retire from the University (at age 70) at the end of the academic year 1963-64, I undertook, on my retirement as Ethyl Corporation's Medical Director (at the end of 1958), together with the principals on the staff, to examine our position, and to determine what should be done further to achieve our purposes. For one thing we require further facilities, and after some consultation with certain of our

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sponsors, we have developed plans for a third wing of the Laboratory. We also require funds for educational purposes (since this cost is burdensome as an overhead item), and a modest sum, of which the income would support research and development in anticipation of industrial needs. (An example of past needs, which we had great difficulty in meeting, was the development of methods for investigating the pollution of air and water. Industry, with but few exceptions, was not ready to invest in research on those problems. Fortunately, we scrounged some funds from various sources, and we were somewhat prepared, therefore, when the problem descended. For one thing, and because of the foresight of its officers and technical people, we were able to supply Ethyl Corporation with the means of defending its position in the matter of the pollution of the air with lead from automotive exhausts.)

We are now at a point where, for the first time, we need some financial help beyond that supplied by our industrial sponsors. This might not be the case were it not for the present economic uncertainty, which has retarded our financial timetable. We have plans and specifications for a new wing, and the bids for the construction of this come to about \$1,200,000.00. About \$700,000.00 is available from our sponsors, and other sums will be pledged or provided before long. In view of our other needs, I hope to obtain about \$2,000,000.00, within the next three years. But we are in urgent need of \$250,000.00 or thereabouts in order to enter into contracts for the construction work, and to get this under way. I have considered various ways by which such a sum could be obtained, and this has led me to turn to you for advice and help. It has seemed to me that the contributions which can be made by this Laboratory to the health and well being of American industry and the American community might appeal to you, and that you might be in position to act upon it. I cannot hope that the importance of our efforts will seem as great to you as they do to me. (I am fully convinced that the hazards and stresses of the new environment created by modern technology is by far the most significant series of hygienic problems with which this nation is confronted (excluding, of course, the international political problem).) I have no intention, moreover, of persuading you, beyond the simple statement of what we have done in the past, and of our own needs in the future.

This has turned into an unduly long letter, which may indicate that my enthusiasm has gone beyond my judgment in presuming upon your interest and imposing upon your time. It is my primary intention, however, to ask if I might meet and talk with you soon, at your convenience, and lay before you such facts and figures as you might wish to inquire about. If this is not feasible, or to your liking, I trust you will not hesitate to so inform me.

I attach hereto a fairly straightforward account of the history and activities of the Laboratory. We have not attempted to put out a "slick" brochure, nor to "sell" the Laboratory to anyone. Our posture through the years has been to pursue, quietly and discreetly, the problems brought to us by industry, in much the same spirit as that of a physician who does what he can for his patients and keeps their troubles to himself. At the same time, we have always published our findings in such manner as to fulfill the proper functions of a University group of investigators.

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If you should find it possible to discuss this matter with me further, and wish to suggest a time and place for an interview, I shall be pleased to meet your convenience.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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Enclosure

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