

ETHYL EXPORT CORPORATION

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30th August, 1937.

Dr. R. A. Kehoe,
Department of Physiology,
College of Medicine,
University of Cincinnati,
CINCINNATI.

Dear Dr. Kehoe,

I have just returned from a trip to Italy and Mr. Bevan has asked me to write to you concerning several points affecting the general situation which were observed.

As you know, Fluid of Italian manufacture is being handled in a very poor fashion in Italy and I was able to obtain a small amount of concrete data although, as you will realise, there are many difficulties placed in the way of obtaining a complete picture. There is no doubt that Fluid is being handled in a very loose manner from cans, although we have been given information to the effect that this practice is to be discontinued.

I am arranging to send to you under separate cover a sample tin showing the manner in which the Fluid prepared by Ravenna (Societa Lavorazione Olii Industriali) has been distributed; it is, in fact, little short of disgraceful. I am given to understand that these tins contain 1 Kg. of Fluid and are packed simply in a wooden box separated into cells by thin wooden partitions, and there is no question of a double sealed container being used as is our practice.

The Siap, at their Venice installation, were required, on the order of the Air Ministry, to prepare a mix of this Fluid amounting to 100 cans. These arrived in such a badly leaking state that the Siap refused to handle them, and apparently on their representation an Army doctor and two sergeants were sent down to deal with the matter. The method it was proposed to use to effect the blend was to pour these tins into an empty 10-gallon drum and for the Fluid to be aspirated by means of the eductor.

Siap feel that it would be of practical use for a memorandum to be submitted by us to the necessary authorities, emphasising the dangers associated with the handling of Ethyl Fluid, and although it is admitted that it may be looked upon by the Italian Authorities as emanating from an interested party, they are of the opinion that if it is backed by evidence

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It is believed that following this incident the practice of distributing Fluid in tins has ceased absolutely and that it is now supplied in drums modelled on our own. During the tour I happened to observe one of these Italian manufactured drums of 10-gallon size at one of the oil companies' plants, which appeared to be a fairly satisfactory job, although of course I had no opportunity of carrying out a very close inspection of it. The empty weight of this was about 65 lbs. and it was fitted with double bungs of similar pattern to our own.

One of the chemists of the Siap, during the course of casual conversation with an Air Force officer at one of their installations, obtained confirmation of the fact that inside the Air Service Fluid has been loosely used by means of cans of various capacities, and he was led to believe that there had been cases of illness attributable to its use, although I do not know how much weight can be placed on this information.

The Nafta in Italy have just completed two new blending installations at Naples and Venice, and owing to the fact that it was impossible to obtain an import permit for our standard eductors it was absolutely necessary for them to produce duplicates of this part and the swing joints themselves in Italy, but I must say that they seem to have made an excellent engineering job of these, and from an engineering point of view the plants are very satisfactory. They have now, as a result of continued pressure, obtained the necessary import permit, and we have requested them as a matter of principle to instal our standard parts.

The plant engineer of the Nafta who was responsible for the erection of these plants informed me that it was necessary for these to be approved by a Commission of Explosives and Dangerous Products and the Public Health Department, and a joint inspection was made by these two bodies before plants could be passed for operation. Actually Fluid was not used until I myself visited them and personally supervised the initial mix.

The main point of this, however, is that Mr. Bellini (the plant engineer) during conversation with Dr. Sica of the Public Health Department, mentioned the fact that it seemed rather strange that the Government should insist on such a very rigorous inspection of these plants in which Ethyl Fluid is being handled in drums strictly in accordance with our regulations and therefore in a manner of absolute safety, whereas it was loosely permitted to distribute and mix Fluid in dangerous canned packages. Mr. Bellini informed me that Dr. Sica admitted the incompatibility of the situation, but stated that steps were being taken inside the Government to control the distribution and mixing of Ethyl Fluid on sound lines.

In conclusion it was discovered that the Nafta were guilty of an excessive abuse with regard to the frequency of mixing at their plant at Spezia, as many as five single mixes being made in one day. Naturally this was taken up very rigorously with them, and Mr. Bevan has in a letter, both to the Asiatic Petroleum Co. and Nafta, strongly emphasised that we could not countenance such a flagrant breach of our contract.

Dr. R. A. Kehoe.

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DATE 30-8-37

I hope that the information contained in this letter will be of interest to you, and we would be very pleased to have your reactions to it in due course.

Yours very truly,

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