

**Report of a Trip to Italy in Connection with Recent Difficulties
Associated with the Introduction and Use of Tetramethyllead
by Mobil Oil, Italiana.**

Having had the way cleared for a hasty departure, through the efforts of executives of Ethyl Corporation (emergency renewal of passport, etc) and of Socony-Mobile Company (air transportation), my flight departed from Idlewild on Saturday evening and arrived in Rome at about 11.30 a.m. on Sunday, April 9. I was met at the airport by Mr. G. B. Cippolina, Manager, Technical Services Department of Mobil Oil, Italiana s.p.a., Mr. G. Prudente, of the same company, and one of Mr. Cippolina's assistants. A press photographer was also on hand, who, somewhat to my concern as to what he might do and say about them, took numerous photographs of me and two photographs of the group. As it happened, the only one of these photographs which appeared in the press, so far as I know, was in the English newspaper, Daily American, on Tuesday, April 11, accompanied by an innocuous announcement of my arrival in Rome on Sunday.

After taking me to my hotel, the Excelsior, the group, joined later by Mr. R. B. Killingsworth of Mobil, (who had just arrived in Rome) and Dr. E. Ronzo, an Esso physician from Genoa, returned to meet me at 5:00 o'clock. We dined together, had some preliminary discussion of a program of procedure, and agreed to meet next day at the office of Mobil.

On Monday, April 10, in the course of a series of talks with various persons, including finally, Mr. Cippolina, Mr. Killingsworth, an astute gentleman in charge of public relations for Esso (whose name I never learned), and Dr. Ronzo, it was agreed that no publicity of any

kind would be authorized at that time by the oil companies, concerning my visit and its purposes, or on any other aspect of the matter, and that no further attempt would be made to reply to any of the articles that had appeared in the daily press.

An effort would be made to reach the Minister of Health in the Italian Government, his technical advisor Dr. Camarossa, and also Dr. Pietro Didonna of the Ministry of Labor (with whom, in prior years, I had had an exchange of correspondence on the control of the health hazards associated with the manufacture and blending of tetraethyllead), to acquaint these gentlemen with my availability, should they so desire to talk to me or to learn from me the facts with respect to the medical investigations made in the United States in connection with the use and distribution of tetramethyllead.

In due course, this plan of action led to my meeting with Dr. Didonna in his office on Tuesday morning, April 11, accompanied by Dr. Aonzo, for an interview, which turned out to be fairly lengthy and entirely felicitous. We spoke of the problems associated with the manufacture of TML, its blending with gasoline, and the potential occupational hazard of refinery personnel, garage mechanics and filling station attendants (and of others) who would handle gasoline containing tetramethyllead. I provided him with a copy of the report of the initial investigation in San Francisco, and with a copy of the "Interim Report" of the investigation now nearly completed.

Dr. Didonna was especially concerned about the manufacturing hazards, since the responsibilities of his office relate mainly to the conditions which affect factory workmen. He anticipates that tetramethyllead will be manufactured in Italy, and he wished to know what special hygienic problems might arise. And well he might be concerned, considering the

difficulties experienced by the manufacturers of tetraethyllead in Italy. I gave him all the information I could, and acquainted him with the nature and the scope of the investigations which are being made in The Kettering Laboratory concerning the toxicology, the mode of action, and the metabolic aspects of the behavior of tetramethyllead. I also promised to give him such further information as we might obtain and to be responsive, so far as might be possible, to his further communications and inquiries.

It appeared that the Minister of Health and his principal medical advisor, Professor Cammrossa, were reluctant to see me at that somewhat stressful time (for them). This was entirely understandable, since they might well be subjected to even more intense criticism than that previously levelled at them, if it could be claimed that they had been influenced or guided in any manner at this time by an American physician (obviously one working hand and glove with American oil companies). On the other hand, the Deputy to the Minister of Health, who, as he indicated later, was to prepare the Minister's reply to the Parliament, expressed himself as wishing to see me, and as desiring such further information as I might be able to supply. An appointment was arranged for Wednesday morning, April 12th, when, in the company of Mr. Cippolina and Dr. Aonzo, I met with the Deputy and his secretary. After a general discussion, and my presentation of a copy, as well as a verbal resume of each of the Reports of the investigations which had been made in California (including the one now under way, of which, through fortunate circumstances, an "Interim Report" had been prepared), the Deputy asked a series of questions to which I replied, the questions and answers (through the competent service of Dr. Aonzo as an interpreter)

being recorded stenographically by the Deputy's secretary.

It had been agreed that no effort should be made to bring me into any contact with the press. I would have avoided such contact on my own judgment, but, fortunately, it was not necessary for me to express my disapproval of the original idea of some of the Mobil group that a news conference might be desirable. This idea was snuffed out by the combined judgment of Mr. Killingsworth of Mobil and the public relations representative of Esso.

Accordingly, at the conclusion of my interview with the Deputy Minister of Health, there appeared to be no further purpose in my remaining in Rome. Meanwhile, Mr. Bevan of London and Dr. Enrico Vigliani of Milan, (The Italian medical consultant of the British company, when it was Ethyl Export Corporation, a subsidiary of Ethyl Corporation, and since the organization of The Associated Ethyl Company Limited, as a separate and competitive industrial organization. Dr. Vigliani is an outstanding authority in the field of industrial (occupational) medicine in Italy, a respected and friendly colleague, and one who would be consulted by Italian companies (montecatini, S.L.O.I. and Agyp) and by governmental authorities) had been communicated with, and arrangements had been made to visit Dr. Vigliani (who was at Sestriere, a ski club resort near Turin), on Thursday, and Mr. Bevan and his group at 20, Berkeley Square in London, on Friday.

It is believed that the situation in Rome was dealt with as quietly and as satisfactorily as circumstances required, that appropriate information was put in the right hands, that the Minister of Health in the Italian Government can answer effectively (in the technical sense) any questions raised in the Italian Parliament, and that the foundation has been laid for any further communications that may be desired by

the Italian Government.

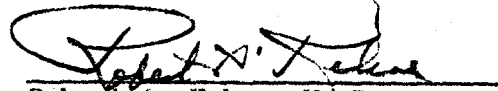
The situation in Italy, from the strictly hygienic viewpoint, is not good, in relation to tetraethyllead and tetramethyllead. Political and commercial, as well as nationalistic, factors will make it difficult to cultivate and maintain proper attitudes toward both the actual and the hypothetical hazards. Italian manufacturers of tetraethyllead will, almost certainly, manufacture tetramethyllead eventually. They will have trouble, probably very serious trouble. This will not benefit this industry, generally, but in Italy, where industrial hygiene is very sketchy, this will disturb neither industry nor the government, greatly.

There may well be further serious difficulties, however, with the press and in public opinion, over the fictitious hazards of the distribution and use of gasoline containing tetramethyllead. This likelihood has been augmented by the unwise and provocative sales promotional campaign of Mobil, in the course of which, tetramethyllead (which is not available to the government-owned company) was identified as the new agent which made it possible for Mobil to market a highly superior quality of gasoline. To the extent that such a campaign has been and continues to be successful, it has invited and will continue to invite any type of attack from a government-owned competitor, that offers hope of success. Thus, it can confidently be expected that in Italy the real dangers of this enterprise will be disregarded or taken lightly, while the hypothetical ones will be enormously overemphasized.

I do not presume to capitalize on the lesson that is to be learned from this experience and these facts. I tend to believe that the exploitation of tetramethyllead should be advanced without fanfare,

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on the basis, so far as possible, of its technical merits .
(in areas where benefit can be discerned), rather than through
somewhat extravagant claims. This, I dare say, is too much (or is it
too little?) to hope for in the present world.


Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.
Director, The Kettering Laboratory

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