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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

McGILL UNIVERSITY

MONTREAL,

October 11, 1932.

N.L. Burnette, Esq.,  
Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.,  
Ottawa, Ont.

Dear Mr. Burnette:

You have asked me to let you have a statement regarding industrial hygiene at McGill in time for the American Public Health Association meeting this month.

As you know, I came to Montreal in August, 1927 to take charge of the industrial hygiene work at McGill. The first activity was the creation of the Industrial Clinic at the Montreal General Hospital. It was thought at the time that the best point of contact with industry was through a clinic to which cases of occupational disease might be sent for investigation and treatment. A considerable number of such cases were directed to the Clinic, particularly cases of lead poisoning, and contact was made with the industries from which they came. One plant with an exceptionally severe lead hazard actually erected a new building, partly, I believe, on our recommendation, and several plants have improved their working conditions, by installing various ventilating devices to carry away poisonous dusts and fumes. Several papers have been published on the subject of lead poisoning, copies of which are enclosed.

The occupational poisoning work has been considered a less important activity than others, particularly on account of the fact that the number of cases of occupational poisoning is small compared with other diseases which affect industrial workers. All evidence points to the fact that industrial workers suffer in the main from the same diseases which affect the general population, and that preventive medicine for industrial workers should be directed towards those diseases and not especially towards the so-called occupational diseases. For this reason, it was thought that a valuable service could be rendered industry in particular, and the community in general, if industrial health services could be established in the larger industries, so that the health of the workers could be brought under the immediate supervision of a doctor and a nurse.

A good deal of time was devoted to making contact with industries which, it was thought, would be interested in a scheme of this nature. Considerable success was achieved at first and five plants created health departments immediately under our supervision, while four or five other concerns were stimulated to establish medical departments. These medical departments have all given satisfaction and are still operating, but the industrial depression during the last three years has made progress in this work very difficult.

Industrial Dental Clinic

In connection with the work of the industrial health services,

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