

Alice Hamilton

ALICE HAMILTON (1869-1970) earned gratitude and respect, even from many of the industrialists whose businesses she studied. As Bradley Dewey, president of Dewey and Almy Chemical Company, wrote in 1934 to the technical director of a firm that sold solvents:

I don't know what your company is feeling as of today about the work of Dr. Alice Hamilton on benzol [benzene] poisoning. I know that back in the old days some of your boys used to think that she was a plain nuisance and just picking on you for luck. But I have a hunch that as you have learned more about the subject, men like your good self have grown to realize the debt that society owes her for her crusade. I am pretty sure that she has saved the lives of a great many girls in canmaking plants and I would hate to think that you didn't agree with me.

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Activities

Writing

- Define "industrial toxicology." Make a list of the subjects Alice Hamilton had to study to prepare for her work as a doctor who was concerned about the health of people who worked in factories.

Working Independently/ Problem Solving, Reasoning and Creative Thinking

- Homework assignment: go home and look at the toxic ingredients in four or five products in your home (ask parents for safety). What do you think the consequences might be if you do not adhere to the labels' suggestions?

Learning Resources and Information Technologies

- What are some of the agencies today that work to ensure worker/consumer safety?
- What are some of the jobs people do there? What people do they protect?

Problem Solving, Reasoning and Creative Thinking

- Think of some examples of other pioneers who discovered dangers and weren't dissuaded from telling the truth. Why do you think they spoke out?