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EDITORIAL

The 0.06% Lead Limit: It's Set

THE GUILLOTINE that has been hanging over the coatings industry—the imposition of a limit of 0.06 per cent lead content for interior paints—has been set for the beginning of 1974. Now, the question comes up: How can we escape without losing our heads?

Before we worry about losing our heads, it's necessary first to keep our heads. Getting excited and lambasting politicians for opportunism, regardless of the accuracy of the charge, won't show anyone how to reformulate away from lead driers, which is the crux of the problem, because the earlier 1 per cent lead restriction had already assured the banning of lead-containing colorants, such as chrome yellows and greens.

Fortunately, the Food and Drug Administration has acted in character, at least in this regard, and is permitting more than 18 months for the industry to cut back lead content to 0.06 per cent.

That means we still may have time to do what should have been done months ago, when it became apparent that limits would be cut drastically—when the American Academy of Pediatrics came out for 0.06 per cent: We still are able to bring together a panel of eminent paint chemists and practical formulators to discuss possible measures for development of materials that can end the problem of loss-of-dry of paints that are to be deprived of lead driers, the material that prevented these problems (see article on page 9)

We also have time to select analytic equipment to test each paint patch to make certain that lead contaminants from raw materials or the atmosphere are insufficient to cause a breach of the rules.

It is generally agreed that many, and perhaps most, paints can be reformulated away from lead driers. However, enough products may suffer from loss-of-dry to make it necessary for an all-out, industry-wide, full-fledged cooperative effort to come up with answers.

The industry closed ranks once before and financed a cooperative research project to meet the problem of Rule 66 solvents. It can forget competitive pressures and do it again to meet the challenge of lead removal.

Fortunately, at least one family of products has been found suitable for lead-drier replacement without loss-of-dry problems. They are materials described as Schiff-bases, characterized as complexing agents with double-bound nitrogen. One member of the family is available as a proprietary product that sometimes causes slight discoloration of white paints.

As luck would have it, other members of the family were exhaustively explored for drier use by Dr. Raymond Meyers of Kent State University, one of the truly eminent scientists working in the coatings field. They were put on the shelf in the mid-fifties because then they appeared interesting but not necessary. They're necessary now.

Development work is needed now—not next week.

The Federation of Societies for Paint Technology, the technical arm of the industry, should take the lead in calling together its most imaginative chemists, while the National Paint and Coatings Association, which led in garnering support for the Rule 66 solvents study, should get together the money men to provide funds for research and development effort.

Eighteen months is a short time. Getting the ball rolling tomorrow toward the target of research and research funds will be another day too late.—A.B.

Dean and Barry Paint Sets Sales Record

Cleveland, March 14—R. S. McKay II, president, Dean and Barry Co., reported that paint sales in 1971 established an 80-year record. Sales increased five per cent at both the manufacturing and retail store levels.

The company has re-elected Mr. McKay president and treasurer, Jack C. Evans vice president, and George H. Chamblin secretary and general counsel. Wayne J. Graf, Oscar E. Carlin and M. C. Slack were re-elected directors.

Babcock & Wilcox Report

New York, March 15 — The Babcock & Wilcox Company has reported that 1971 earnings more than doubled those of 1970 and continue to show a strong trend of recovery. Net income totalled $20,664,000, or $1.67 per share, compared with $10,021,000, or 81 cents per share in 1970.

Shipments in 1971 were $959,092,000 compared with $826,424,000 in 1970.

New orders totalled $867,938,000 in 1971 and the backlog was $1,948,507,000 compared with $2,039,661,000 at the end of 1970.

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