

Lead Bills Go Down the Drain

Congress Quits Without Taking Action on Paint

Washington, D.C.—Paint manufacturers saw their efforts to get a more livable lead paint bill go down the drain with the adjournment of Congress for this year.

In the House of Representatives, the amended lead paint bill, a part of the federal Housing and Urban Development Act of 1972, died when the omnibus housing legislation failed to get out of the House Rules Committee for a vote.

The bill was recently amended by the House Banking and Currency Committee to provide for a more equitable lead level in paint of .5 per cent, replacing the drastic 0.06 per cent limit established earlier.

The House legislation also was recently amended to provide a federal preemption clause, preventing states and cities from establishing their own lead standards.

A companion measure in the Senate calling for a research program to establish what levels of lead in paint are safe also expired with adjournment. Death of the two bills leaves in effect the one per cent lead standard incorporated in the existing Lead-Based Paint Poisoning Prevention Act.

However, lead levels are scheduled to drop to .5 per cent at the beginning of 1973 under regulations adopted earlier this year by the Food and Drug Administration.

John Montgomery, legal counsel for the National Paint and Coatings Association, expressed disappointment that no paint legislation was passed. Montgomery was particularly disturbed over the loss of the federal preemption amendment which the paint manufacturer's association was counting upon to halt the proliferation of differing paint laws enacted

by state and local municipalities.

Montgomery also counted as a loss the failure to get a government lead research program established as was provided in the Senate lead bill. But there were some bright spots in the picture.

"At least we are not getting stuck with a 0.06 per cent lead limit," he said. "And we will now have a chance to start all over again with the opportunity to testify before House and Senate committees and bring in up-to-date research findings."

NPCA recently announced it would finance and conduct its own research to determine the safety of various levels of lead in paint manufacture.

Although lead content is scheduled to drop from .5 per cent to 0.06 under Food and Drug Administration regulations at the end of 1973, Montgomery said there were indications the FDA would first wait to see what Congress does before enforcing the action.

More Paint Plants Use Waste Water Recycling System

Argo, Ill.—Several more midwest paint manufacturing plants are recycling their waste water to cooperate with the clean water campaign.

The paint companies formerly discharged thousands of gallons of contaminated waste water and solvent solutions used for cleaning their large paint mixing tanks into public sewage systems, the Wellco Chemical Co., said.

The plants have now capped off their sewer systems and installed a system of high-pressure washing equipment and water soluble cleaning chemicals. The system is designed to recirculate and re-use newly developed stripping solutions and rinse water, eliminating the necessity for plant sewers, said Wellco.