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Battery Plant Endangering Residents!

(Trenton Paper "8/17/72")

By HENRY BRYAN
Staff Writer

North Trenton residents living near the Gould Battery company plant on Calhoun Street may be in danger of lead poisoning, according to a report by a health study group of Nader's Raiders.

Lead poisoning can lead to permanent brain damage and mental retardation, according to doctors.

A physician who participated in the study said yesterday that the potential lead contamination could be caused by particles coming from smoke stacks at the Gould plant, 467 Calhoun Street.

The Nader group made its study as a result of complaints by members of Trenton Local 106, United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers of America.

Firm Is Struck

The local went on strike last Wednesday over lead poisoning issues and a salary dispute.

Dr. Sidney Wolfe, director of the Health Research Group in Washington, D.C., formed by consumer advocate Ralph

Nader, said that in addition to the lead poisoning danger for workers inside the Gould plant, residents in the neighborhood also were threatened as a result of improper company safety precautions.

Dr. Wolfe said that on one of

two trips to Trenton on Sept. 26, he took samples of rain water on Dunham Street next to the plant and tested the lead

content of the red dust accumulated on the sidewalks.

He said the water contained one to two percent lead and the dust 88 percent lead, which could result in lead poisoning to children playing in the area.

The doctor of internal medicine attributed the problem to "sloppy company maintenance," and very lax safety precautions.

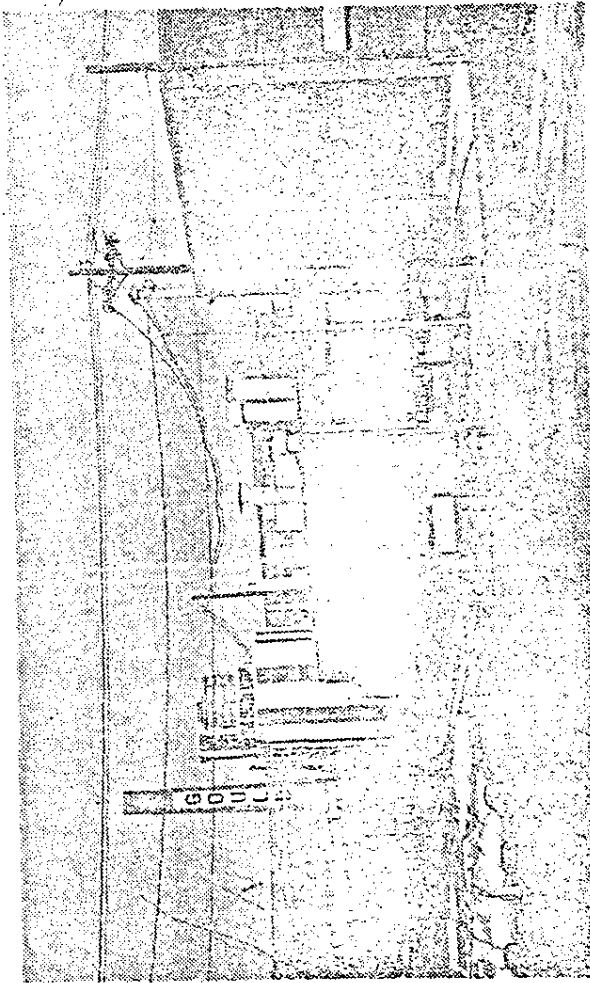
School Endangered

Company smoke stacks could also be feeding enough lead dust in the air to endanger youngsters attending nearby Monument School, Dr. Wolfe said.

He said that Gould's Trenton plant would be used by the Nader group as an example for some 200 other battery-making plants in the country.

Fred Watts, president of Local 106, said that some 170 union workers at Gould went out on strike Wednesday after rejecting a three-year company contract. Watts said that since then, the union appears headed toward a contract settlement, including some

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Staff Photo By Calvin Soliday

GOULD CONTROVERSY — Gould Inc., maker of industrial batteries, located at 467 Calhoun Street, has become the object of a study by a branch of Nader's Raiders into the danger of lead poisoning to workers and the neighborhood.

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Could Plant Danger To Area?

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company concessions aimed at combating the lead danger.

Dr. Wolfe's study concluded that the urine test used by the company to determine lead content in the body is "worthless."

Switch To Blood Test

The company, according to Watts, has agreed to do away with the urine test and replace it with blood tests every six to eight weeks for workers in high risk jobs and every three months for others.

Dr. Wolfe, who has studied company medical records of employees since beginning his investigation a year ago, says some 13 men have contracted lead poisoning in the last 18 months.

On a tour of the plant, Dr. Wolfe said he found that main-

tenance of the company ventilating system had been "lax," with large holes in the ventilating ducts, which are used to filter the air.

In a meeting with Gould officials Oct. 5, Dr. Wolfe said that he advised them to improve their maintenance procedures in the plant and cleanup operations around the plant. He also suggested that the company be responsible for administering blood tests for each child living in the neighborhood.

No real Measures

Since then, he said, he understands that some improvements have been made in the ventilation system, but that no apparent attempt has been made to check the possible infection of neighborhood

children, especially on Dunham Street.

If lead poisoning is contracted, Dr. Wolfe said, a child can suffer brain damage or mental retardation. Advanced cases are often associated with lead-based paints. He said workers may suffer muscle paralysis if the disease is allowed to go unchecked and it could shorten the life span.

Thomas Spain, superintendent of Trenton's Gould plant, had no comment on present negotiations with union officials, or the Nader report. He referred questions to a Chicago public relations office for the company.

According to Spain, Gould Inc. has one other battery-making business in Kankakee, Ill., and does a combined \$40 million a year business at both plants.