

LEAD INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION

430 LEXINGTON AVENUE

NEW YORK 17, N. Y.

LEAD IN PLUMBING

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We have indeed had a very interesting day listening at this morning's session to the miners and producers giving their enthusiastic talks with regard to the supply of lead. As we have read in the trade papers for the past several months and confirmed here this morning, the St. Joseph Lead Co. and the American Smelting and Refining Co. are adding facilities to increase their production. The producers assure us of a plentiful supply of lead in the near future for reasons outlined by them. In addition, I have been given official information that Jugoslavia, for the years 1952 and 1953, also intends to do likewise. This news of course is very gratifying to us consumers, particularly with what we have experienced in shortages for the past year and a half.

In this afternoon's session we have listened to the consumers who use lead in the manufacture of their products and who represent a cross section of the industry. In each instance, with the exception of the Tetra-Ethyl Gas and Storage Battery people, everyone makes a statement that the tonnage of lead to be used within their industry will be less for the balance of 1952 and the year 1953 than was used in 1951. As the result I, like yourselves, am a bit bewildered as to where this increased production of lead is to be used and at the same time maintain market prices.

It is my assignment to speak in behalf of the industry I represent, which is the plumbing industry. Since we manufacture sheet lead, lead pipe, traps and bends, caulking lead, solders, etc. we know that our requirements for the balance of 1952 and for the year 1953 will be about 60% to 70% of the tonnage that we used in 1951. I feel confident that our experience is about average for all manufacturers who cater to the plumbing industry. This decreased tonnage is attributable to modernization, substitution and circumstances.

By modernization I mean, for example, a brass tubular trap is used under a sink in the place of a lead trap. A big percentage of the larger cities have discontinued the use of lead bends. For the past twenty years, prior to 1936, a manufacturer, similar to our company in size, would sell an average of 35000 traps and bends per month. This would mean an approximate tonnage of 125 to 150 tons. For the past ten years, this average tonnage is 40 to 50 tons with no hope of ever regaining this market.

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For lead pipe it is a case of substitution, wherein for the past sixteen years, copper tubing has made great inroads in the building industry for service lines where lead pipe previously had been used. In 1936 and prior, a manufacturer with two pipe presses, would average between 400 to 450 tons per month. This, today, has been reduced in tonnage to approximately 50 to 75 tons per month. In addition to this natural condition, we have had circumstances, at various times in the past five years, wherein we were unable to ship our customers' requirements due to lead shortages. In addition, extremely high prices of pig lead has encouraged the users to look for substitutes.

On sheet lead, copper too has made inroads. For many years, where sheet lead was used in bathrooms, particularly for shower pans, sheet copper has succeeded to cut this tonnage considerably.

This afternoon we have heard in detail reports from the cable manufacturers, typemetal, ammunition, paint and others, wherein they have expressed their opinion that their tonnages to be used in the future will decline considerably. With this in mind, and to the knowledge of everyone, if you consider the available tonnages offered to the United States from Europe and other foreign ports and except for war, there is every indication that this source will continue, I again repeat and ask the question "just where is this increased tonnage of lead to be used?"

In conclusion I want at this time to take advantage of this opportunity in behalf of our own company and I feel confident I speak in behalf of all companies who manufacture products for the plumbing trade, to compliment and thank the Lead Industries Association for their fine co-operation and splendid field work that has helped us to sell the tonnage of lead products that we enjoy at this time.

It is with regret that the Lead Industries Association does not have at least four men doing the same field work as Homer Yetman, who in my opinion, over many years, has done a splendid job in fostering the continuance of the use of lead in the building trade. Unless we continue to improve on the necessary work within our industry I am afraid that the amount of lead that will be required won't be sufficient to keep half of the manufacturers of these products in business.

In closing it is my sincere wish that my recommendation will be accepted and that we as a whole will not experience in future years shortages that we had in the past.

It has indeed been a pleasure to have been with you this day and trust we can all have the pleasure of meeting each other a year from now.