

LEAD INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION

480 LEEDINGTON AVENUE

NEW YORK 17, N. Y.

HOUSE PAINTS:

John R. MacGregor, President
John R. MacGregor Lead Company
Chicago, Illinois

The story of white lead is sad and I will, therefore, be brief. In 1929 the dollar sales of paint to trade sales, that is to stores, was in round figures 150 million and white lead sales were 136,000 tons for that year. In 1951 Paint trade sales were 617 million and white lead sales were 23,000 tons. If White Lead usage during this period had kept pace with other paint sales there would have been 544,000 tons used in 1951. Of course lead supply accounts for part of this shortage, but with ample supply 45,000 tons might have been used. This loss is due to changes in paint formulation. A pure white lead paint will cost the producer about \$3.75 per gallon, while the average paint now being produced will cost from \$1.75 to \$1.85 per gallon.

A few years ago these newer paints would not have been regarded as good paints, because they rapidly wash away. These paints that wash away are advertised as self cleaning and, under certain conditions, look whiter than pure white lead paint. They are not paints that last long, nor under all conditions do they look better than pure white lead paint. It depends upon the place of exposure which paint will look best. In factory regions white lead paint which does not wash off will hold the dirt just as a window does, but in districts not filled with soot and smoke it remains clean and white.

Tremendous advertising emphasizing whiteness only and omitting reference to wearing quality has led home owners to believe these new paints have the long life of lead paints and in addition remain whiter. This is not true. In fact the paint slogan "Save the Surface and you Save All" which suggests protection is seldom heard now.

The competition against white lead has been fierce and often unethical. Stress has been placed on whiteness, but nothing said about short service. No one disputes the statement that white lead wears longer than other white paints. Our Federal Government uses pure white lead paints in large volume. They specify that it should be used where frequent painting is not contemplated.

Recently many paint formulators are finding that they must use white lead in their primor coats. It may be that this is the start of a return to our products.

*Presented at the 24th Annual Meeting, Lead Industries Association, April 18-19, 1952, Chicago, Illinois.



John R. MacGregor

-2-

A discussion on various causes of this loss of place in painting would be out of place here, however, I believe you will be interested in some photographs taken over a period of years. They show that quality was not a factor in tonnage losses. It seems to me that price was the sole consideration and present advertising seeks to make an advantage out of a fault. Our Lead Industry advertising of white lead advantages will undoubtedly help the trend to better formulation and the increased use of white lead.