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"We Have Lost Credibility,"—Roland; Pleads for Voluntary Action

Washington, D.C., Sept. 14—Robert A. Roland, executive vice president of the National Paint, Varnish and Lacquer Association, made the following statement in a message to the Association's membership in the latest issue of Coatings, the organization's newsletter:

"Did a major plant burn? Has one of our leading companies gone bankrupt? Has a prominent industry figure died? No, our industry has suffered none of these losses. In some respects what has happened is a far greater tragedy because it has a profound effect on every coatings manufacturer as well as on the Association itself. What we have lost is something that it has taken us many, many years to develop, and, quite frankly, is almost irreplaceable.

"We have lost credibility.

"As you well know the industry has worked diligently for many years to combat irresponsible and uninformed publicity regarding lead in our products. This has been a difficult educational effort as well as one involving a great deal of technical work. The Association has voluntarily adopted a standard of not more than 1 per cent lead in interior paints and backed this up with a product labeling program which conforms to all local regulations

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and has been generally accepted on a national basis for all interior products.

"Very recently the City of New York sampled retail outlets and found that many products offered for sale did not comply with that city's labeling requirements and in some cases, analyses showed that products recommended for interior use contained excessive amounts of lead, i.e., above the 1 per cent level. This information has been widely published, not just in New York, but throughout the country. Reacting to that, editorial pages in many cities have called for total bans on lead in paint products and a petition has been filed with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Food and Drug Administration, requesting that all paint products containing other than minute traces of lead be banned.

"Unquestionably, there are many areas of legitimate dispute concerning this action by the New York City Bureau of Lead Poisoning Control. Some of the products were old inventory no longer manufactured. On others the appropriate label was used but other text or graphic material on the container may have negated its effectiveness. The method of sampling, and perhaps even the method of testing, could be challenged but all of this would lead, in my opinion, to a rather futile presentation by industry which would have little effect on the general public or the regulatory officials. The fact remains that in spite of the industry's best efforts, and this certainly includes the voluntary cooperation of the vast majority of manufacturers, to insure that their products comply with the voluntary 1 per cent standard for lead in interior paint products, there exist in the marketplace products which do not meet this standard and are not properly labeled.

"Our last issue of Coatings carried a front-page warning on this subject. It is my purpose through this editorial to alert all member companies of the extremely grave nature of this situation. I urge you to take all steps [illegible] in your company to make sure that every product offered for sale [illegible] this includes existing inventories in [illegible] hands of retailers conforms with [illegible] or local regulations and with labeling requirements promulgated [illegible] the Association.

"As mentioned two weeks ago [illegible] samplings are going to be [illegible] not just by New York City, but by [illegible] Federal Government and I am sure other local governments as well. Th[illegible] simply is no defense at this point [illegible] time for a failure to comply.

"We believe and have demonstrated over the years that voluntary industr[illegible] action is a real and effective force for handling problems of this kind. However, it takes only one failure for the 'consumer lobby' to grab the headlines and make a case for more government control. I believe our industry, with few exceptions, has responded to the problem of lead in paints, but our credibility has been seriously damaged. Now is the time when we must make every effort to prove to the public and to the legislators that voluntary action is the proper remedy. There is nothing more your Association can do without your support."

(Signed) Robert A. Roland
Executive Vice President

American Zinc Transfers Kleffner to New York

St. Louis, Sept. 15—American Zi[illegible] Company has transferred Robert [illegible] Kleffner to its New York office to a[illegible] sume responsibility for sales of [illegible] oxide in the eastern territory. He [illegible] report to Ronald J. [illegible], regional man[illegible] ager for the area.

Mr. Kleffner joined American Zinc in February 1970 and has been cover[illegible] ing a sales territory in the Midwest and South. He is a graduate of Rock[illegible] hurst College, Kansas City, and ser[illegible] in the navy.