

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THRESHOLD LIMITS

DR. L. T. FAIRHALL (U. S. Public Health Service): It is obviously difficult, where a large number of substances is involved, to review the maximum allowable concentration values in detail at an annual meeting. For that reason, provision was made early in the organization of the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists for a Committee on Threshold Limits to study this question and to report to the Conference at its annual meeting. The composition of this Committee is not fixed but is changed by annual appointment and the threshold limit values are similarly maintained in a fluid state by annual revision. For a number of years the Committee has subjected these values to careful scrutiny and attempted to bring them into close conformance with practice.

During the present year, it was felt that the concept of maximum allowable values had now reached a stage where more extensive participation of the members of the Conference in the formulation of these values based upon personal experience in the field would be of decided assistance. This year, therefore, your Committee has for the first time, I believe, made a direct attempt to obtain a statement from each member of the Conference with reference to the annual threshold limit values and the response from the individual members has been most generous and helpful.

In view of the annual revision of threshold limit values, it has been the purpose of the Conference to seek values which, on the one hand protect the individual workman, and on the other would impose no impossible burden on the manufacturer. This balance is difficult to achieve but can be attained by just such a series of adjustments as is provided for in the Constitution of the Conference. There is no industrial poison so potent, so virulent, that it cannot be manufactured safely under carefully controlled conditions. The manufacture and widespread use of such a substance as lead tetraethyl and the preparation of extremely poisonous war gases are good illustrations of this. In fact, the chemical manufacturing industry in general has been able to maintain a high standard of safe industrial practice by the installation of suitable control measures for the protection of its workers. There is no reason why such safe industrial control measures cannot be extended to industry in general wherever industrial poisons occur.

In addition to the comments of the members of the Conference, a few criticisms from other sources have reached us concerning the 1947 values. These may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. Concerning the membership at large, criticism has taken the form that (a) values were arrived at by consulting the membership at large, and (b) that the members were not consulted.

2. The publication of the values in the Industrial Hygiene Newsletter made it appear that the values were those of the U. S. Public Health Service. Whether this was wishful thinking or not, the source of the 1947 values was clearly indicated at the time of publication.

3. Criticism has also taken the form that the values given were not arrived at or based upon scientific evidence. The latter has particularly interested