from NPC- Coatings

Industry Leaders Object to .06% Lead

Industry panel members (l.-r.) Daniel J. Haley, Jr., Finnaren & Haley, Inc.; Robert A. Roland, NPCA Executive V.P.; and William E. Hood, Indurall Coatings, Inc. testify against the .06% lead proposal.

Testifying March 9 before the Senate Subcommittee on Health, a panel of industry leaders objected to the .06 percent lead level as an "overkill limit" that won't be achieved without "some very serious economic repercussions."

William E. Hood, Chairman of the Board of Indurall Coatings, began the panel's testimony by explaining the position of the small paint manufacturer. He charged that restricting lead in interior paints to .06 percent "could not be accomplished without permanent damage" to the small company's competitive position. For one thing, he said, the cost of analyzing the lead content in paints could "easily equal" the present total manufacturing cost for small firms and thus wipe out profits. Adding that many small companies use the same equipment for manufacturing all their products, Hood stated that the materials needed to make industrial coatings could "contaminate" consumer paints above the .06 percent level.

Senator Harold E. Hughes (Iowa) studies industry statements at Subcommittee Hearing.

Ralph M. Levine, Technical Director for the Dutch Boy Paint Division of NL Industries, reported that even with the technology available to the larger manufacturers, finding substitutes for lead driers will require one to two years' research. Explaining that there are no "off the shelf" substitutes for lead driers, Levine stated that while substitutes may exist, "between one and two years' research will be needed to make the necessary changes."

Levine then challenged the proposed .06 percent standard, claiming that "lead compounds of the types and amounts needed in today's paints do not present a hazard either to today's or tomorrow's children." The Technical Director charged that the .06 percent level "is not based on actual, direct scientific findings of the toxicity of lead in paint," but is rather, "a rationalization from indirect evidence."

This "indirect evidence," Levine said, is based on the work of Robert A. Kehoe. "Regretfully, Kehoe's data and conclusions have been misinterpreted in recent years by those whose arguments are pivotal to the .06 percent limit."

Explaining that Kehoe worked with highly soluble lead acetate in his studies, Levine pointed to the work of two other scientists—Doctors Gage and Litchfield—who conducted animal-feeding studies using actual paint films. The work of these authorities, he said, "indicates limits that are conservatively from 4½ to 9 times greater" than the .06 percent level.

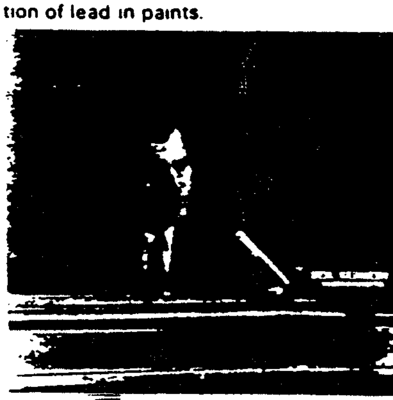
Levine then called for additional research "to find answers to the important unresolved questions related to lead poisoning and paint." The industry, he added, is ready to conduct this research or is willing to support an independent research program.

Representing medium-sized paint companies, John De Gregory, President of Standard Brands Paint Co., Inc., spoke for the entire industry when he told the Senate Subcommittee, "we would certainly never trade the illness of a single child for any amount of monetary gain." De Gregory asked for additional time at the 1 percent or .5 percent level to test substitute products and reformulate consumer lines. The research and development costs involved "could amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars," he added.

In written testimony submitted for the record, Daniel J. Haley, President of Finnaren and Haley, Inc., also presented the case of the small paint manufacturer. Stressing that the .06 percent standard may force many small firms out of business, the industry official warned of increasing unemployment. "Assuming that each small firm employs an average of one hundred persons, our present serious unemployment figures would be increased by more than a million and a quarter," he predicted.

The written statement of Elmer C. Larsen, Vice President and General Manager of the Coatings and Resins Division of PPG Industries, ended the panel's testimony. He proposed the enactment of the .5 percent standard "for the immediate future" and added that the suggestion in late 1971 that lead in paints would be regulated at the .06 percent level "was a shock to an industry convinced that .5 percent was safe with respect to the protection of public health."

Larsen proposed the formation of a joint government-industry research program to "permanently resolve" the question of lead in paints.



Senator Edward Kennedy, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Health, listens to lead testimony.

S-W 001666