



Environmental Health Department

November 6, 1972

To: All Members of the LIA Environmental Health Committee

Gentlemen:

There have been many articles appearing in newspapers and magazines which have certainly over-emphasized the seriousness of conditions at Imperial Smelting Corporation's Avonmouth Plant.

We are enclosing two articles which describe the results of screening tests conducted on children of smelter workers, children residing near the Avonmouth area, and children residing at large distances from the smelter. It was reported that "there was no evidence that atmospheric pollution from the smelter complex was leading to increased absorption in those exposed in the works vicinity."

Sincerely,

D. R. Lynam, Ph.D.
Assistant Director
Environmental Health

ec

enc. 2

Blood samples allay lead poison fears

Blood sampling tests to establish the amount of lead absorption among young children in Bristol have led to a reassuring report to the city's public health committee.

Screening tests were carried out on 882 children under five and 282 of school age. Of the younger children, 130 were from the families of lead workers.

Not a single child was found to be suffering from lead poisoning. Only three had raised blood lead levels.

EXTENDED

And of these three, Dr. John Skone, Bristol's Deputy Medical Officer told the committee yesterday, two from lead workers families had Asian parents and in one case, fairly full use was made of eye makeup powder containing 25 per cent lead.

In the third case in the house where the child lived, some internal paintwork was flaking. Most of this con-

tained lead and the child was known to be in the habit of chewing and sucking objects including paintwork on windowsills.

Dr. Skone was presenting an interim report on the special tests carried out following concern at the beginning of the year about the possibility of people living near the R.T.Z. Smelter at Avonmouth being at risk.

It had been suspected, he explained, that lead workers could transport lead dust back into their homes, putting their families at risk to increased lead absorption.

The tests involved 679 children from a random sample and 73 from families living in the area but not connected with the smelter.

Later the investigation was extended to children at St. Bede's and Lawrence Weston schools and a third school, eight miles from the smelter.

On the whole, the results were reassuring, Dr. Skone said.

They had established that children under five living in lead workers families appeared to absorb more

lead than those drawn from a random sample but in no case had the increase absorption been excessive or amounted to lead poisoning.

EXPOSED

The investigation was still going on.

He added that although the smelter was not in operation while the under-five were being tested, workers were exposed to dust even more than usual through plant cleaning activities.

When the school children were examined, the plant was fully operative. There was no evidence that atmospheric pollution from the smelter complex was leading to increased lead absorption in those exposed in the works vicinity.

Dr. Skone said there had been complete co-operation on all sides and went on to pay a special tribute to members of the City Analyst's staff who had worked long hours using delicate apparatus to make sure the results they obtained were completely accurate.

POISON REPORT CLEARS LEAD PLANT

Western Daily Press
28. 9. 72.

Western Daily Press Reporter

THE Imperial Smelting Corporation plant at Avonmouth, Bristol, has been cleared of causing lead poisoning to children in the area.

But extra precautions should be taken to make sure that workers do not carry lead back to their homes, Bristol's Medical Officer of Health Dr. Robert Wofinden said yesterday.

The Public Health committee yesterday received a written report of the interim results of Dr. Wofinden's investigation into lead levels.

For the past two years his staff have been testing blood samples from children of the smelter workers, children in the Avonmouth area and a third sample from the whole of Bristol.

None of the children has been found to be suffering from lead poisoning.

Two children from the lead workers' families had high lead levels. They came from Asian families which used eye make-up powder containing lead.

New Tests

Children of plant workers have more lead in their blood than the rest of the tested children.

The public health department should have discussions with the unions and management to find ways of preventing lead being carried home, Dr. Wofinden recommended.

His deputy, Dr. John Skone, said: "There has been a lot of public debate about this subject. On the whole the results are reassuring."

He told committee chairman Alderman Mrs. Helen Bloom Corporation staff were absolutely satisfied the employers had done everything possible to co-operate in finding a solution to pollution problems.

THE BIRTH rate in Bristol has dropped by 18.9 per cent this year, compared with a national drop of only 8.3 per cent.

The drop was most marked in June last year, Dr. Skone said. But no explanation has yet been found.

LIA-76441