

Comment on Report

by the General Manager, Mr. Thomson

As employees of this Company I am sure that you are concerned about the implications of this report for you and your family and how the matters reported might affect your health, the general wellbeing of your family and your future.

The earlier statements which I have made on my own behalf and on behalf of the Company have been honest and straightforward and represent the best knowledge available to us from the Health Department, from the Company's Medical adviser and from detailed examination of medical and technical literature.

Drawing from the same sources, I would like to make the following comments:-

The survey clearly indicates that there is no instance of any of the people tested showing signs of having been affected by lead. This is supported by the statements of local doctors and by the subsequent detailed examination of the few people who were outside the normal range. Comparisons have been made of the survey results with surveys in other countries and the results follow a very similar pattern to any urban area.

The report says that vegetables grown in the area have a higher than normal lead content. This represents the "as picked" condition and what the report says is that if people continue to discard outer leaves and wash the vegetables as any housewife would do then the lead content is reduced to levels which are not significant.

The lead in soil situation is apparently a cumulative one, resulting from the combined effects of the original smelter and the present one. The report emphasises the importance of personal cleanliness to avoid the effect of dirt adhering to the skin or to clothing. This is particularly important for children.

The report says that lead in air figures do not represent a hazard to health and this is borne out by the fact that no cases have been detected where anyone's health is affected.

Engineering and Technical staff have been working on the design of a new Sinter Plant scrubber for some time and work is now proceeding on this on a top priority basis. When it is completed it will make a significant difference to the lead in air figures, and further improvements will result from other modifications to be made in the near future.

Inside the plant we are working in accordance with internationally recognised standards of lead absorption for occupationally exposed people. We believe this approach is correct and we now have 11 years of background to draw from, during which time there has been no evidence of adverse effects on health.

If you have any concern at all in this respect, please discuss it with Doctor Harrison or Safety & Hygiene Supt. George Barnier.

In spite of the reassuring aspects of the Health Department's report, the implications for Sulphide Corporation are quite serious.

A considerable expenditure will be necessary to reach the air standards required and further heavy expenditure will be incurred in treating liquid effluents. As well as capital expenditure, the operating costs of this new equipment will be very substantial and the technical problems associated with design of successful installations are extreme. **For Sulphide to negotiate this difficult period, a real commitment will be required of us all.**

Heavy responsibility will be borne by engineering design and technical staff in respect to new equipment, but those of us directly concerned with plant operation and maintenance have most important parts to play in the immediate future and thereafter. **We have all got to become even more "pollution-conscious" in regard to personal hygiene and plant control.**

As I have said before, our record is a good one; nevertheless, if we are not vigilant and fail to make progress in the face of the inevitable tougher standards of the future, the whole question of the survival of our industry on this site could be called in question.

I believe we are equal to the task.