



# 19770111 Advocate newspaper article re: New Zealand lead industry “procedures not archaic” – Dr Wilson

Article includes:

He [Dr I. S. Wilson] was commenting on a letter in a recent [on 11th January 1977, “recent” could be 1977 or 1976] medical journal in which two Christchurch doctors said “an urgent reappraisal of the parameters used for screening occupationally-exposed lead workers and a thorough updating and enforcing of the obsolete 1950 lead process workers regulations, is necessary.”

[Editor’s note: could anyone provide the reference referred to above, the “letter in a recent medical journal” please?]

**Procedures not archaic – doctor**

Wellington, NZPA.—New Zealand and monitoring procedures and regulations setting maximum levels of lead in the bodies of lead process workers are not archaic, according to the Health Department’s assistant director of occupation health, Dr I. S. Wilson.

He was commenting on a letter in a recent medical journal in which two Christchurch doctors said “an urgent reappraisal of the parameters used for screening occupationally-exposed lead workers and a thorough updating and enforcing of the obsolete 1950 lead process workers regulations, is necessary.”

**MUCH THE SAME**

Dr Wilson said monitoring procedures were very much the same as those used overseas.

“And although these procedures are being reviewed there is no indication that they are archaic,” he said.

“Levels and monitoring procedures are the same as those used at present in the United States.

“There is no indication that, if correctly enforced, the New Zealand regulations will not provide protection for the workers, although implementation can be a problem with all legislation.”

Safe levels for lead workers, as well as those exposed to mercury and arsenic, were being reviewed all the time.

If these levels were exceeded workers could be suspended and under the Factories Act, factories had to adopt safe procedures.

“Therefore we are able to

keep the whole thing under control.”

He said the Hazardous Chemicals in Industry Committee set up late last year, which will be holding its first official meeting on January 18, would be looking at permissible levels as well as legislation which applied to lead and other dangerous substances used in industry.

Dr Wilson, who is chairman of the committee, said the meeting would consider things to be looked at.

Dr Wilson would not comment on the specific cases of lead poisoning reported by the two Christchurch doctors without a report from the medical officer of health in Christchurch.

“We don’t know to what extent statements given to the doctors have been verified,” he said.

Cases of lead poisoning as reported by the Christchurch doctors did happen occasionally and no legislation would completely correct this.

Dr Wilson said the responsibility in these cases lay with the department, the employer and with the workers in particular.

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