

LEAD Action NEWS

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The journal of The Lead Education and Abatement Design (LEAD) Group Inc. Address correspondence to the Editor, LEAD Action News (LEADAN), c/o The LEAD Group Inc, PO Box 63, Dulwich Hill NSW 2203 Australia. Ph: (02) 550 0095 Fax: (02) 569 2634 Lead Action News vol 3 no 2 Autumn 1995

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Editorial

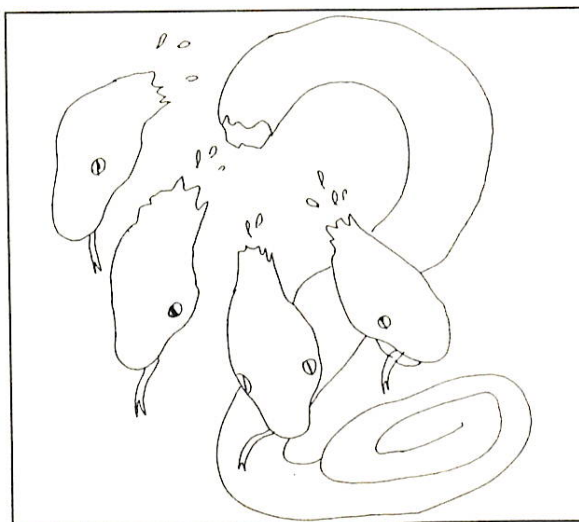
Editorial - by Elizabeth O'Brien and Ann Gethin

The main focus of this issue is 'The ecological unsustainability of the car' and how lead is pertinent to this. Our lead article is "The environmental cost of the car" and we have two articles on lead acid batteries, one about Australia's recycling efforts and another about the false environmental promise of lead acid battery powered electric cars and some thought provoking graphics. Reproduced, is an item from a Sydney anti-freeway group and the sentiments expressed apply equally to other cities, to the car manufacturing industry and all its supporting industries.

The multiheaded hydra makes another appearance this newsletter (see LEAD Action News Vol. 2, No. 4) as we report on yet more reasons to get the lead out (see page 6-7 of this issue).

Elizabeth O'Brien attended the Women and Environment Conference in March at an incongruously ritzy Melbourne hotel next to the casino. Despite the surrounds I brought home a 'new way of seeing' which helped to

conquer bureaucratic indifference in the following month (see articles on the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development: pp. 10-11).



In May The LEAD Group was invited to a consultation with some of Australia's government and industry delegates to the OECD lead control act meetings. The meeting was incredibly frustrating for its lack of documents and basic lack of intention to consult. More of this in the next issue.

While we're talking indifference, Australia recently acquired a national Code of Practice for the Control and Safe Use of Inorganic Lead at Work. As you will learn in the article on page 13, it is already out of date!

Research reports this month include articles by Lead Group Expert, Brian Gulson on home recontamination (p. 2) and by Needleman and Bellinger on the need for research into the links between senility and lead poisoning in earlier life etc.(p. 15) We ask - "why isn't the government paying for it?"



Home Recontamination

The following article appeared in *The Science of the Total Environment* in 1995.

"Paint as a source of recontamination of houses in urban environments and its role in maintaining elevated blood leads in children".

Brian L. Gulson, Jeffrey J. Davis, Jason Bawden-Smith.

A detailed lead isotopic and scanning electron microscope investigation of particulates from three houses in urban Sydney, previously decontaminated by their owners, has shown that they have been recontaminated over varying periods, as short as 6 months. The source of recontamination is lead paint from adjoining dwellings whose paint is thoroughly deteriorated, as well as from unknown sources. In one house, the external to internal lead loading was >10:1. The pathway from the lead paint contaminants is both airborne and mechanical transport in to the houses. Recontamination of houses provides an explanation for the maintenance of elevated blood levels in the children residing in these houses. Recontamination can be a major urban problem applicable in any community which uses leaded paints on dwellings in the past. It is a matter of concern for families with young children and couples, especially women who are, or intend to become, pregnant.

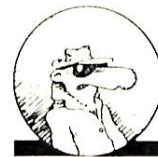
Why don't we ever have any recalls due to lead poisoning risk eg toys, crayons (see article p 12). Lead in ammunition is a growing use of lead - we our voice to the US call to stop producing look-alike guns.

We hope you enjoy this edition of Lead Action news - next edition will feature soil contamination and should also have some good news about commonwealth funding for The LEAD Group. OECD Council act - more on this in next newsletter.

Acknowledgments

Editorial committee: Ann Gethin, Carol Bodle and Elizabeth O'Brien.

Thanks to Les Robinson
Social Change Media



The LEAD Group Inc.
invites all our members to our
Annual General Meeting
to be held at
4:30 pm Monday

6th November 1995

at the offices of
CTI Consultants Pty Ltd
4 Rothwell Avenue,
CONCORD WEST NSW 2137

Agenda:

- election of committee;
- presentation of National Coordinator's and Treasurer's Reports for the period 17-9-94 to 31-5-95;
- strategy for 1995-6

The Environmental Cost of the Car

by John Whitelegg

This article appeared on page 10 of the Sydney Morning Herald on Tuesday, August 3rd, 1993. Reproduced with kind permission.

The private car is an environmental, fiscal and social disaster which would not pass any value-for-money test, according to a German report.

Researchers at the respected Environment and Forecasting Institute in Heidelberg take a medium-sized car and assume it is driven for 13,000 kilometres a year for 10 years to compute its financial, environmental and health impacts "from cradle to grave".

Long before the car has got to the showroom, they find it has produced significant amounts of damage to air, water and land ecosystems through the extraction of raw materials alone.

We're not even on the road yet and this one car has produced 26.5 tonnes of waste and 922 cubic metres of polluted air.

In 10 years, this one car (with a three-way catalytic converter and using 10 litres of unleaded petrol for every 100 kilometres) will produce 44.3 tonnes of carbon dioxide, 4.8 kilograms of sulphur dioxide, 46.8 kg of nitrogen dioxide, 325 kg of carbon monoxide and 36 kg of hydrocarbons.

It will pump another 1,000-odd cubic metres of polluted air into the atmosphere and will strew the roadside with 18 kilograms of worn bits of road surface and tyre and brake debris.

The environmental impact continues beyond the end of the car's useful life. Disposal of the vehicle produces a further 102 million cubic metres of polluted air and quantities of PCB's and hydrocarbons.

In total, each car produces 59.7 tonnes of carbon dioxide, 2.04 billion cubic metres of polluted air and 26.5 tonnes of rubbish.

While this detail is impressive (and wholly absent from the environmental claims of motor vehicle manufacturers and motoring organisations), it is still not complete.

Some of the more startling revelations are in the researchers' wider analysis of social and environmental costs.

Germany suffers from extensive forest damage attributed to acid rain and vehicle exhaust emissions. The researchers calculate that each car in its lifetime is responsible for three dead trees and 30 "sick" trees.

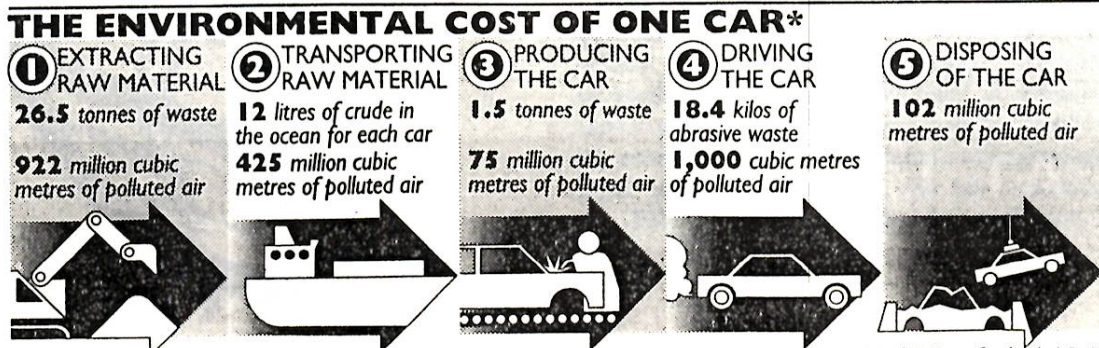
They illustrate the German experience with road traffic accidents: each car, they say, over its lifetime is responsible for 820 hours of life lost through a road traffic accident fatality and 2,800 hours of life damaged by a road traffic accident.

Statistically, they suggest, one person in every 100 will be killed in a road traffic accident and two out of every three injured.

Land-use data are also brought into the equation to show that Germany's cars, if one includes driving and parking requirements, commandeer 3,700 square kilometres of land - 60 per cent more than is allocated to housing. Every German car is responsible for 200 square metres of tarmac and concrete.

The total impact of the car over all the stages of its life cycle also produces a quantifiable financial cost. The Heidelberg researchers estimate this to be 6,000 Deutschemarks (about \$A5,220) a year per car, covering the external costs of all forms of pollution, accidents and noise after income from all sources of vehicle and fuel taxation are taken into account.

This is a State subsidy equivalent to giving each car user a free pass for the whole year for all public transport, a new bike every five years and 15,000 kilometres of first-class rail travel.



Lead-acid Batteries - The Problems

by Elizabeth O'Brien and Ann Gethin

The move towards zero emission vehicles is hailed as the definitive technological answer to the problem of air pollution from vehicle emissions from increasing numbers of cars travelling increasing distances on an increasingly overpopulated planet - see article on electric cars - p5.

Currently 64% of world lead production goes to lead acid battery manufacture and the prediction is that this proportion will rise to 70% of world lead production, which itself continues to rise annually.

Most people view the use of lead in lead acid batteries as safe and acceptable because power can be generated to recharge the batteries at power plants at a distance from human populations thus minimising the human health effects of emissions, and because the lead, acid and plastic in batteries are all recyclable.

And if you think that's just a projection - here's some local facts about the current situation:

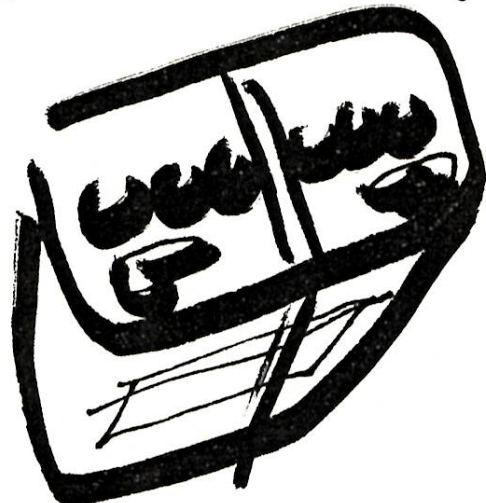
- three lead acid battery plants operate within Australia in SA, Queensland and NSW. The former two are each surrounded by a non-residential buffer zone of 2-3 km. The Apollo Battery Plant in Marayong, near Blacktown in Sydney's west is surrounded by 67 schools or preschools within a one and a half kilometre radius;
- of three fires at Apollo in the last twelve months since it opened, one was allegedly responsible for 5-10 tonnes of lead being emitted from the plant;
- the EPA has not complied with stipulations in the development approval, to provide data on air, soil and dust lead levels and the community is lobbying for daily air lead monitoring due to lack of information on baseline contamination levels in the surrounding area;
- even though the lead acid battery industry claims a recycling rate of over 90%, up to one third of Australia's batteries have been recycled outside Australia in Third World countries, sometimes by children and always with much less stringent control for occupational health and safety and environmental protection, and also in contravention of the Basel Convention which comes into full force in 1997.

The Commonwealth Environmental Protection Agency "hazardous waste act policy reference group" met recently to discuss the problem of lead acid battery waste. Australia produces about 3.8 million waste batteries each year and in past years about 2.5 million have been recycled. The remaining 1.3 million have been exported, or in recent months stockpiled in Australia. As of this year Australia will have the capacity to recycle all the lead acid battery waste produced domestically. This means that exporting used lead acid batteries from Australia will no longer be permissible under the Basel Convention (previously exports have been allowed due to lack of sufficient recycling capacity).

A possible loophole to this ban may exist in an article of the convention that allows export to countries who require the waste as a raw material for their recycling or recovery industries. However potential exporters would still have to meet the requirement that transboundary movement be reduced to the minimum consistent with the environmentally sound and efficient management of such wastes.

We would interpret this as meaning that countries recycle their own waste wherever possible - therefore there are no grounds for Australia to ship out its old lead batteries.

The ban on trade in lead-acid batteries received a negative response from The Australian Bureau of Industry Economics. Their dire predictions include that exports could reduce by 90%. We wonder why this is seen as a problem - surely this is the intention of the ban (if not 100% reduction)! They also argue that the ban will lead to a reduction in the number of batteries recycled in Australia. In the light of increases in recycling capacities (as detailed above) this also appears to be a spurious criticism.



Electric cars and lead pollution

by Ann Gethin

Electric cars have been thought of as one answer to our dependence on fossil fuel burning vehicles. Their main appeal is that they produce no air pollution at the point of use so provide a way of shifting emissions to less polluted areas.

Unfortunately also "out of sight" are the environmental consequences of manufacturing and recycling the lead-acid batteries electric vehicles require to run on.

A recent report in *Science* (Lave et al., vol. 268, p 993. May 1995) drew attention to the problem of lead batteries in electric cars: "Smelting and recycling the lead for these batteries will result in substantial releases of lead to the environment". The researchers compared the power, efficiency and environmental effects of electric cars with petrol powered vehicles. Not only are electric cars comparatively slower and far more restricted in the distance they can travel but release more lead into the environment as well.

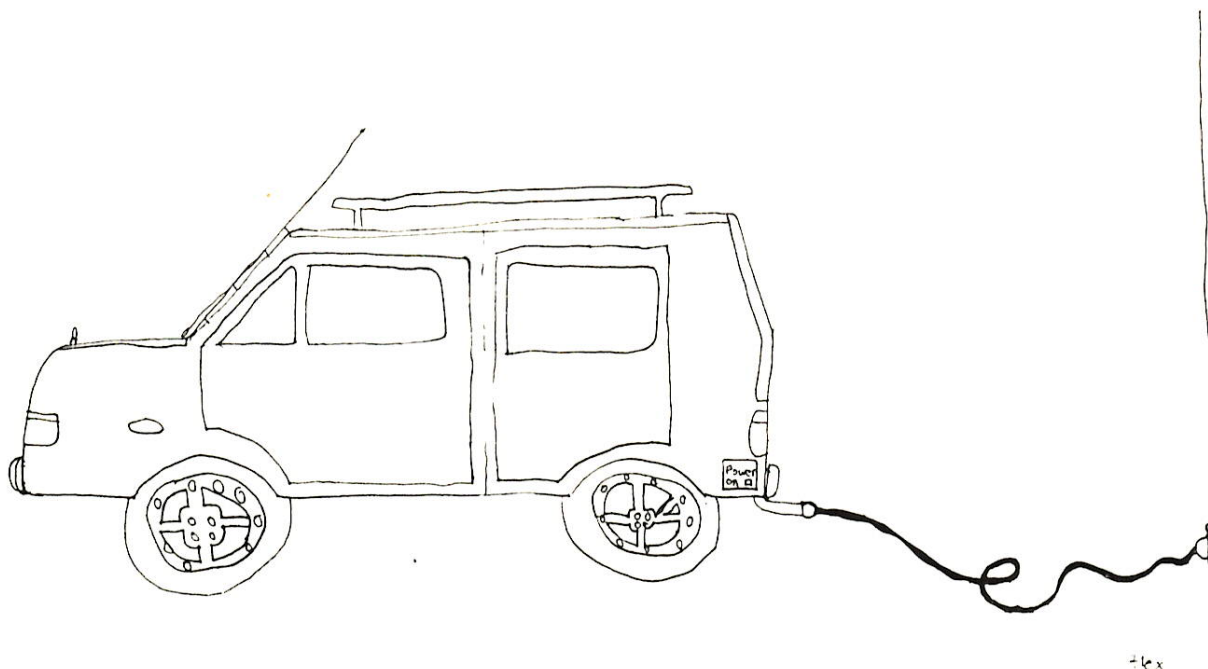
The study showed that an electric car with batteries made from newly mined lead releases 60 times more lead than that of a car using leaded petrol. (Their example uses the

relatively high 2.1g/gallon leaded petrol used in the US in 1972 and in some Australian states up to the 1990).

Although the lead discharged in lead smelting and reprocessing is generally less available to humans in the U.S. than that dispersed by leaded petrol cars driving where people are living (only one percent of U.S. petrol sold is leaded) - there are still significant hazards. Lead processing facilities release lead into the air and waterways, and lead in solid waste leaches slowly into the environment.

Clearly electric cars, despite their "good for the environment" image create far more of a problem than leaded petrol cars. In addition "If a large number of electric cars are produced, the demand for lead for batteries will surge, requiring more lead to be mined." (ibid., p.995)

Manufacture needs to be halted until an alternative safer power source is found. This rules out current alternatives such as nickel-cadmium and nickel metal hydride batteries which are also highly toxic and far more expensive. Researchers speculate that sodium-sulfur and lithium-polymer technologies may eventually be used. ●



Electric car by Alexander Claud, aged 10.

Total Environment Centre's View of NSW Parliamentary Select Committee

by Jeff Angel, Director - TEC

The NSW Parliamentary Select Committee upon Lead Pollution published its report in December last year. TEC appeared before the Committee and assisted with some aspects of the report. We generally support the recommendations of the Committee, but don't think they go far enough, in that they do not call for legislative change.

Some examples:

Health goals

Our position is that the "health goal" for lead in air has to be made into a standard, and a step-wise reduction of ambient levels incorporated in the NSW Clean Air Act for the following levels:

1.0 µg/m³ by 1996

0.5 µg/m³ by 1998, and

0.15 µg/m³ by 2000.

Lead in petrol

We call for legislation to ensure that petrol sourced (i.e., refined) in NSW meets a maximum level of 0.2 grams of lead per litre of petrol. As things stand at present, it is possible for petrol sold in country areas to contain lead up to 0.84 g/litre. Additionally, we call for legislation to bring down the lead content of petrol to 0.05 g/litre by the

beginning of 1996, and to zero added lead by the end of 1996.

Lead shot, lead sinkers

We would like to see these banned. Anti-duck hunters in NSW seem to disagree with us, on the grounds that replacing lead with steel shot for duck shooting might seem as though that is all that needs to be done - which is clearly not the case. However, the anti-duck shoot campaigners in Victoria say that steel shot has the effect of making it too expensive for some shooters, thus cutting the number of ducks that die by shooting as well as the greater number of ducks that die by lead poisoning.

We are concerned that the Lead Reference Centre promised for early 1995 by the former Environment Minister, Chris Hartcher, has been put off until July this year - this makes us uneasy as to whether it will really happen. More importantly, we want such a Lead Reference Centre run by a NGO - such as The LEAD Group. NGOs (non-government organisations) are best placed to run community services of this sort, we believe - the NGOs have more credibility, and are more committed to actually helping people than a bureaucracy can ever be. ●

Batteries in Landfill

People often ask us whether ordinary household batteries contain lead. Well, they don't but nor are they environmentally sound. The following article appeared in Warmer Bulletin, May 1995, p23.

The contamination of landfills by batteries is a world wide problem. In for example Germany 800 million batteries were sold in 1993. The waste component to tips was 4400 tonnes mercury, and 10 tonnes of silver.

A number of countries like Belgium and Austria have set up collection systems, but only Switzerland has set up a plant to recycle batteries. It is funded by imposing into each battery sold a disposal fee from 5 to 50 reppen [equivalent to 4 to 40 cents] to cost of battery to cover the recycling process." ●

Exhaust Fumes Worse Inside Cars Than Outside

After hearing from a mother who was convinced that her baby became lead poisoned by travelling in the car on the side of the leaking petrol tank inlet, we were interested to unearth the following article which appeared in The Age on 10/9/92.

A report compiled by Greenpeace from studies in USA, Britain and Europe says that people inside cars are exposed to far higher levels of pollution than cyclists and pedestrians. The levels of benzene inside cars were two to eighteen times higher than the levels outside. The levels of carbon monoxide were two to fourteen times higher, and the levels of nitrogen dioxide were 1.3 to 2.5 times higher. For carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide the levels exceeded the recommended safety limits. For benzene this is no safe level.

The pollution levels were increased by congested traffic, lower speeds, older cars and faulty exhausts. ●



Sydney Harbour Tunnel Air Lead Shock

A study carried out for the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) in October and November 1994 looked at the composition of exhaust gas emissions from the NSW motor vehicle fleet. The data gained from this study was to be used to validate the motor vehicle component of the Metropolitan Air Quality Study emissions inventory as well as information on the mass emission rates to enable models to be established for road side pollutant concentration estimations.

The ventilation exhaust system of the harbour tunnel enabled pollutant concentrations of carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, oxides of nitrogen, benzene, total hydrocarbons and other air toxins to be measured while the breakdown bays of each tunnel were used to measure total suspended particles (TSP), particles contributing to PM_{10} , lead in TSP and dioxins.

The average lead concentrations found were 4.2* and 5.7 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in the Southbound and Northbound tunnels respectively. The average TSP concentration in the Southbound tunnel averaged 218 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (ranging from 160-260 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) while the levels in the Northbound tunnel were higher, averaging 372 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (ranging from 178-497 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$). The higher values found in the Northbound tunnel are due to the position of the sampler on an uphill gradient where vehicles are under load.

An average of 128 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ was recorded for $PM_{2.5}$ (a range of 73-197 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$). This corresponded to a range of 0.19-0.46 for the ratio of $PM_{2.5}$ to TSP concentration. High particle concentrations were observed with peak morning traffic and continued to vary with changing traffic volumes.

*The Australian ambient lead in air standard is 1.5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (micrograms per cubic metre) 90 day average.

Leakage of Underground Petrol Storage Tanks

This article appears in the Surface Coatings Australia Journal, Vol. 30, No. 3 in March 1993.

Underground tanks have long been used to store liquids but they have not all been **properly protected against the effects of corrosion**, says **David Blackburn** the **Australasian President** of the **Australasian Corrosion Association (A.C.A.)**.

There have been several notable leakages of underground storage tanks in recent years. For every reported leaking tank there must be many more that have leaked or are leaking now that have gone unnoticed or have not been reported as having leaked.

Recently in New Zealand there was an underground tank which leaked 15000 litres of petrol from a service station. Some of this petrol found its way into sewers and Telecom ducts causing severe problems.

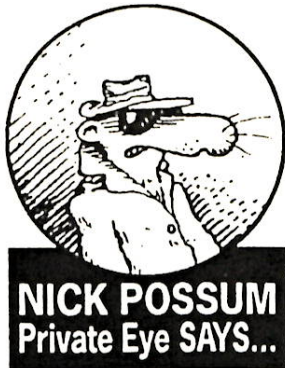
The United States Environmental Protection Agency said that thousands of the estimated three to five million underground tanks in the USA containing dangerous goods are leaking. They also estimate that there will be many more leaking tanks in the years ahead. They cited one case of a woman who ran off a cup of water from the tap, let it settle then set fire to the surface liquid which

was obviously a contaminant which had entered the water supply system.

In Australia, there have been many problems caused by leaking tanks and pipes. These leakages have caused severe problems, both in terms of loss of product and contamination both to the product in the tank and to the surrounding soil and water sources. The cost of finding and repairing the leak can be very high, as is the cost of cleaning up the contaminated soil and other contaminated items.

David Blackburn says that the majority of tanks have never leaked because they are properly protected against corrosion, properly maintained and have never had any mechanical damage. These corrosion protective measures are put into place before and during installation. An unprotected steel tank or pipe placed in the ground will corrode because of reaction between the steel and soil, or because of the presence of stray direct currents in the ground.

David Blackburn recommends that for expert advice on corrosion protection on the installation of underground tanks or pipes or on the repair of same, contact the Corrosion Prevention Centre, Phone (03) 544 0066, who maintains a Consultants Register and will refer you to experts with appropriate expertise.



DO THE RIGHT THING

Take a stand against greed, corruption, and stupidity

What sort of city is your work helping to build?

What sort of city do you want our young people to inherit?

The leaders of the road industry and their political puppets are pushing Sydney down the road to a Los Angeles disaster!

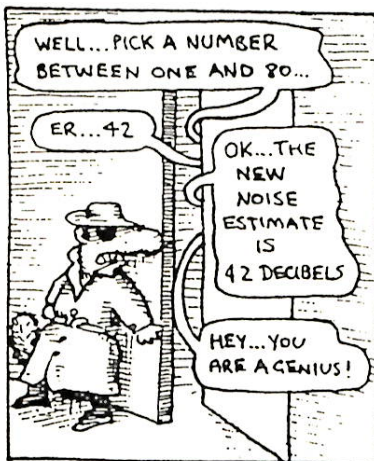
The private tollway operators need to generate more and more traffic to make their investments profitable.

Greed, corruption, and stupidity have pushed honest and rational urban planning out of the driver's seat!

The tollway operators don't care what this will do to the lives of ordinary Sydneysiders like yourself.

They don't care about the horrendous increase in traffic their motorways are creating.

□ As a result of the M4 extension, traffic on the M4 and Great Western Highway jumped 33 per cent in just two years! (Bruce Baird, quoted in the Parramatta Advertiser, 27 July 1994).



□ The M2 consortium is eagerly anticipating a 25 per cent jump in traffic in the north-west sector as a result of the M2 (SMH 24 February 1995).

The tollway operators don't care about rapidly increasing air and noise pollution.

They don't care about the destruction of our precious urban bushland remnants.

If this continues our children will inherit a gridlocked, smog-choked megalopolis stretching through the Blue Mountains

in the west, up to Newcastle in the north and down to Wollongong in the south.

You have a moral obligation to help expose the double-dealing, stupidity and greed which are corrupting the public service and the engineering profession.

Reveal what you know about the lies and scams. Talk to a journalist. Contact a veteran conservationist. Post a document. Your confidentiality will be protected.

Sydney's future is in your hands.

TALK TO SOMEBODY DISCREET & RESPONSIBLE

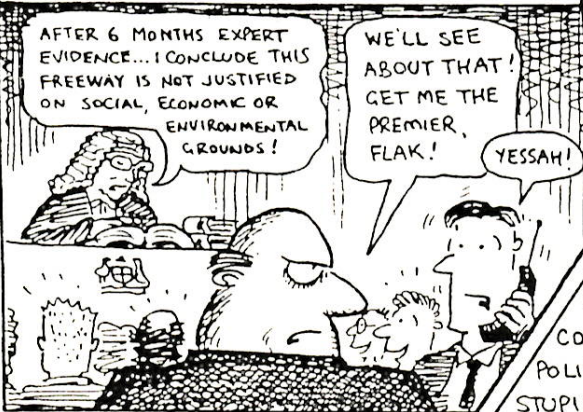


Believe it or not!



WHEN YOU SEE HOW POWER IS ABUSED IN SOME COUNTRIES...IT MAKES YOU PROUD TO BE AN AUSTRALIAN!

IN SOME COUNTRIES MASSIVE PROJECTS ARE ALLOWED TO GO AHEAD EVEN AFTER OFFICIAL INQUIRIES HAVE FOUND THEM TO BE UNJUSTIFIED OR MISCONCEIVED!



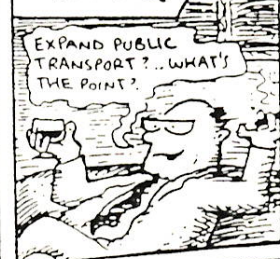
IN SOME COUNTRIES MAJOR BANKS LEND MONEY FOR PROJECTS WHICH DAMAGE THE HEALTH OF MILLIONS AND MAKE CITIES UNLIVEABLE!



IN SOME COUNTRIES POLITICIANS ARE SO STUPID, UNINTERESTED OR CORRUPT THAT THEY ACCEPT VIRTUALLY EVERYTHING THEY ARE TOLD BY POWERFUL BUREAUCRATS!



IN SOME COUNTRIES EX-EXECUTIVES OF OIL CORPORATIONS HAVE BEEN GIVEN CONTROL OF ENTIRE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEMS!



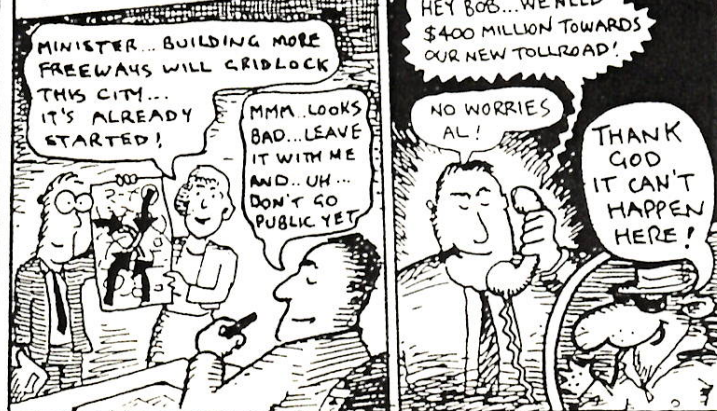
IN SOME COUNTRIES THE EGOS OF ENGINEERS ARE PANDERED TO NO MATTER WHAT THE COST TO THE PUBLIC INTEREST!



IN SOME COUNTRIES, PRIVATE TOLLWAY CONSORTIUMS WHICH MAKE BAD BUSINESS DECISIONS ARE BAILED OUT BY HUGE LOW INTEREST GOVERNMENT LOANS!



IN SOME COUNTRIES PUBLIC POLICY HAS BEEN COMPLETELY PERVERTED BY VESTED INTERESTS!



UN CSD Intersessional Meeting on Phasing Lead Out of Petrol

*by Maria Rapuano and K.W. James Rochow
Alliance to End Childhood Lead Poisoning*

The U.S. and Mexican governments co-hosted an International Workshop on Phasing Lead Out of Gasoline on March 14-15, 1995 in Washington, D.C. The Workshop was officially an intersessional technical meeting of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development.

A primary objective of the Workshop was to allow countries to share strategies for the successful phase out of leaded gasoline. Ministers (chiefly energy and the environment) from over 20 countries were represented, as well as NGOs (including the Alliance) and the private sector.

All attendees agreed -- and the technical and cost-benefit presentations overwhelmingly confirmed -- that lead should be phased out of gasoline internationally. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that it would follow up the Workshop by carrying out several activities: produce and disseminate proceedings of the Workshop; prepare a resolution based on themes developed in the Workshop for presentation at the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD); host meetings in Puerto Rico and Mexico to focus on phasing out leaded gasoline in the Americas; marshal technical resources under current EPA programs to assist in developing phase-out plans; and to strongly urge the CSD at its forthcoming April meeting to become a central clearing-house of information on the leaded gasoline issue.

Lead petrol phase out decision at UN Commission on Sustainable Development

Representatives of the NGO Earth Summit Watch who attended the third session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UN CSD) from 11th-28th April 1995 in New York called on the Lead Group for help. Jacob Scherr and Jared Blumenfeld of Earth Summit Watch wrote that the Australian Leaded delegation was the sole exception to full CSD acceptance of a proposed decision on leaded petrol. The proposed decision was basically that those countries who had developed action plans for leaded petrol phase out, as well as international financial institutions should assist developing countries in various ways to bring about a global phase out of leaded petrol.

Blumenfeld reported that the Australian delegation raised a series of procedural objections. They misrepresented Australia's won efforts to reduce leaded gasoline at home as inconsistent with the language of the proposed decision. (One of the members of the delegation admitted to us that their concerns were a "red herring".) they said that they would be willing to negotiate, but proposed as a substitute that nations "develop appropriate national programs to address all hazardous chemicals, including lead".

The LEAD Group then wrote a media release and a fax to environment minister John Faulkner who was attending the UN CSD meeting in New York making the following points:

- The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) is one of the outcomes of the Rio Earth Summit of three years ago, which some commentators have criticised as a continuation of the talkfest. The proposed global phase-out of leaded petrol, without increasing aromatics, and preferably through the use of biomass ethanol, is being hailed by NGO observers at the UN, as the first real actionable decision on the part of participating nations, as opposed to general statements about the environment unbacked by real commitment.
- This is why the actions of the Australian Ambassador for the Environment, Penny Wensley, and her team, in raising what are piffling and nit-picking objections to the statement calling for a phase-down of lead in petrol, are so disappointing.

- As well as petrol, the phase-out would apply to lead in paint, in food and beverage containers and drinking water, if the Australian Environment Minister, John Faulkner, can, in the final days of the CSD Meeting, turn around the growing concern of other nations, that Australia bows to domestic vested interests on environmental matters.
- It is a great pity that Australia, which acted so decisively at home in the past - for example, being one of the first countries to legislate for all new vehicles to run on unleaded petrol after 1986 - should now appear in the international arena as blocking decisions with such significant implications for public well-being, particularly that of millions of young children.
- The eyes of the world are again on you Mr Faulkner, this time over the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development proposed decision regarding global phase-out of leaded petrol.
- Both Graham Richardson's world-beating legislation [that all new vehicles in Australia should run on unleaded petrol after 1986] and the huge consensus forged by Ros Kelly's Lead Roundtable in July 1993 [that speeding the phase out of lead in petrol was the priority for lead risk reduction activities in Australia], have brought substantial progress at home in reducing the lead content of petrol, and resulting exposures to our children and the environment.
- We are thus puzzled as to why the Australian delegation at the CSD did not support the international consensus, including all developing countries, to reduce the health and environmental harm caused by leaded petrol.
- We urge you to make Australia's stand at the CSD consistent with what we are doing at home, and in so doing, you will be making an even bigger contribution than either of your predecessors. Any other course of action would make Australia appear hypocritical and damage our nation's reputation as a global environmental leader.
- We trust that you, Mr Faulkner will act to secure our nation's support for this vital global initiative.

On May 1st Jacob Scherr and Blumenfeld wrote to the LEAD Group "thanks so much for your quick action which helped to completely turn around the Australian delegation. Around 4am - a few hours after we spoke - they dropped all of their procedural objections. In fact, ambassador Penny Wensley then took the lead in gaining a consensus with the G-77 [Group of 77 developing countries] and the EU [European Union] on the language - for which we expressed to her our appreciation.

"We plan to monitor the implementation of this decision, and would welcome your further co-operation. Below is the excerpt from the final decision from the Commission on Sustainable Development regarding the phase out of leaded gasoline. We were very pleased with this language, which, by UN standards, is highly specific and prescriptive."

Excerpt from the final decision from the Commission on Sustainable Development

The Commission takes note of the initiatives of the Summit of the Americas (Miami, 9-11 December 1994) and the follow-up US and Mexico hosted International Workshop on Phasing Lead out of Gasoline (Washington, D.C., 14-15 March 1995), in particular the efforts by developing countries and the commitments made by countries in the Western Hemisphere at the Summit of the Americas to develop action plans to achieve a phaseout of the use of lead in gasoline.

The Commission calls upon all countries to consider and all interested countries to develop action plans with a view to phase out or reduce the use of lead in gasoline, and invites them to inform the CSD of their decisions and progress as appropriate at the fourth session of the Commission in 1996. To this end, in the context of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, donor countries and international financial institutions should assist developing countries in the financing and transfer of relevant technologies in accordance with Chapters 33 and 34 of Agenda 21. Furthermore, developing countries are encouraged to disseminate their acquired knowledge, including the use of biomass ethanol as an environmentally sound substitute of lead in gasoline. The Commission further calls upon countries to guard against the replacement of lead in gasoline with the excessive use of aromatics that are also harmful to human health.

Niton's XL Spectrum Analyzer



This article appears in Discover Journal in October 1994.

It's been almost a hundred years since Wilhelm Röntgen discovered X-rays, a feat that Lee Grodzins believes to be "probably the most important single discovery for modern physics". Important too for Grodzins' design of the XL Spectrum Analyzer, the first handheld device that uses low-energy Z-rays to measure the amount of lead in paint. Knowing whether there's lead in a home is important, given that ingesting or breathing lead dust can result in brain injury, blindness, and even death.

Grodzins' \$12,000 instrument has enormous appeal for lead inspectors because it's the first pocket-size machine that can quickly and accurately measure the lead present in paint on exposed surfaces, where it is most likely to be inhaled or ingested. The XL can analyze a painted wall and determine the amount of lead in the paint within 20 seconds. The device isn't fooled by what's behind the paint--substrates and construction materials that may contain lead but that don't post a risk to the home's inhabitants. With results from the XL, homeowners can zero in on the offending lead rather than undertaking a more expensive and intrusive abatement procedure over a wider area.

A professor of physics at MIT for 35 years, Grodzins decided to test the lead-measuring potential of low-energy X-rays. Unlike the high-energy X-rays used in more traditional monitoring equipment, low-energy X-rays don't penetrate beyond the surface of materials like painted walls. Based on this property of the X-rays, Grodzins was able to determine mathematically the amount of lead near and on the surface of an object. Charles Parsons, head of research and development at Niton--Grodzins' environmental products company, in Bedford, Massachusetts--transformed Grodzins' ideas into an accurate lead detector.

Call to Stop Producing Look-Alike Guns

From Safety News, produced by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. - Ann Brown, chairman of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), challenged the toy industry today to stop producing toy guns that look like real guns. Last week, several major toy retailers announced that they would no longer sell real-looking toy guns. The CPSC chairman called on toy manufacturers to stop producing the look-alike guns. Speaking to the Toy Manufacturers of America meeting in Miami, Chairman Brown said, "I applaud the action of Toys R Us, Kmart, Sears, Target, Kaybee, and Bradlees

to stop selling toy guns that look like or could be modified to look like real guns. Fatal accidents with guns involving kits are tragic. Real-looking toy guns may be a small part of the problem of violence in our society, but is the part of the problem we can solve. Today, I challenge the toy industry to stop producing any guns that look like or could be modified to look like real guns. This would be a meaningful contribution to the safety of American children."

Recall for Art Set with Lead Poisoning Hazard

From Safety News, produced by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. - In cooperation with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), Shure Products Inc., Chicago, Ill., is voluntarily recalling about 14,000 "Kaleidoscope Art" sets, item no. 820.

Although the product box is labelled "non-toxic" and conforms to ASTM D4236" (an art products safety labelling standard), these crayons contain enough lead to present a lead poisoning risk to young children, who might eat or chew on the crayons. Shure Products and Toys R Us, the retailer for these sets, initiated the recall after CPSC laboratory analyses showed that Kaleidoscope Art set crayons had high levels of lead.

The Kaleidoscope Art sets, which Shure imported from China, were sold nationwide by Toys R Us from January through August 1994. Each Kaleidoscope Art set contains a box of eight crayons, six sheets of "line art" (geometric shapes to colour), and a six-inch kaleidoscope. Children are supposed to colour in the geometric shapes and view them through the kaleidoscope. The set is labelled "Ages 4 and up".

Consumers who own the Kaleidoscope Art sets should take them away from children **immediately** and return them to Toys R Us for a refund. For more information about this recall, consumers may call Shure Products Inc., at (312) 633 9002 or write to Richard Moy, consumer affairs manager, Shure Products Inc., 1474 West Hubbard Street, Chicago, Ill. 60622.

CPSC learned of the problem with these art sets from the New York State Consumer Protection Board. According to Shure, they had the products tested in the appropriate manner at a private testing laboratory.

Although CPSC and Shure Products Inc. have not received any reports of injuries or illnesses involving Kaleidoscope Art sets, the commission and the company are conducting this recall to prevent the possibility of injury or illness.

New Worksafe Australia Standard

by Fred Salome

Control of Inorganic Lead at Work

Worksafe Australia last October published its standard *The Control Of Inorganic Lead At Work* with an accompanying *National Code of Practice for the Control and Safe Use of Inorganic Lead at Work*.

Although published October 1994 the Standard was substantially completed in 1991. Final ratification was delayed due to action in the Federal Court on the question of sex discrimination in setting differing requirements for women who are of reproductive capacity, pregnant or breast feeding than for others.

This matter was resolved in November 1993 when the Court ruled that Worksafe had a duty to clearly indicate the health affects for **all** workers who may be exposed to lead and to set appropriate health and safety standards.

Because of this delay the standard is out of date on the permissible occupational exposure level of lead-in-air, and the definition of lead paint.

Atmospheric Lead Exposure Levels

The standard sets the maximum level of lead in air permitted to be inhaled by workers over a normal 8 hour working day at the current exposure standard of 150 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. This is the figure listed in *"Exposure Standards for Atmospheric -Contaminants in the Occupational Environment"* last reviewed in 1991.

The standard requires medical removal from lead-risk jobs if the PbB exceeds 50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$, and for all pregnant or breast-feeding employees regardless of PbB.

It defines a lead-risk job as one that might cause the PbB to rise above 30 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ (less for some women). The Code of Practice gives a correlation between PbB's of 30 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ and exposure to lead-in-air concentrations of 30 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

No direct linear correlation exists between lead exposures and PbB. The actual compound of lead, its bio-availability and particle size, and the exposed person's metabolic system impact on this relationship.

Nevertheless it is clear that workers inhaling lead levels approaching the permissible exposure standard of 150 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ may readily end up with PbB's well in excess of the limits set for medical removal.

According to US OSHA legislation the permitted exposure level (PEL) is 50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, one third of the Australian limit. US law (under the current Title X legislation) also defines an Action Level (intended to be a warning signal to employers that a job is approaching the PEL) of 30 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

At the Action Level monitoring of lead-in-air concentrations, employee training and medical surveillance of employees (ie. monitoring PbB's) become compulsory. The US Action Level is equal to the Australian figure defining a lead-risk job.

An exposure standard of 150 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ is inconsistent with the objective of preventing elevated blood lead levels in workers, and we urge Worksafe to revise the exposure standard for lead downwards to a figure of 50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at the earliest opportunity.

Definition of Lead Paint

The standard contains a schedule of "lead processes" which includes *"Machine sanding or buffing of paint (with more) than 1% ... of lead"*. Because of this, the same figure of 1% lead content has been included in the new draft *Standard Guide to lead paint management - Industrial Applications*.

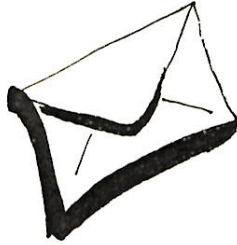
However **sanding or buffing** paint is not the same as **removing** paint by abrasive blast cleaning or power grinding. Abrasive blast cleaning is the commonly preferred method of removing lead paint from steel. Lead-in-air levels of 50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ can be exceeded when blast-cleaning paint with 0.06% lead.

US studies have shown that lead paint removal workers recorded higher PbB's (and lower life expectancies) than general lead-industry workers. Lead paint removal has been identified as major causes of lead poisoning among workers and OSHA regards a lead-containing paint to be one containing any amount of lead.

In 1991, the Australian NH&MRC limit for lead in paint was 0.5% for domestic use. This figure was lowered to 0.25% in March 1992 and in 1997 will be further lowered to 0.1%.

We urge Worksafe to amend its standard to include the removal by abrasive blast cleaning, power tool or hand tool cleaning of paint containing greater than 300 ppm (0.03 %) by dry weight of lead.

Letters



Dr. & Mrs. N.D. Barrett,
Maroubra
18th July, 1994

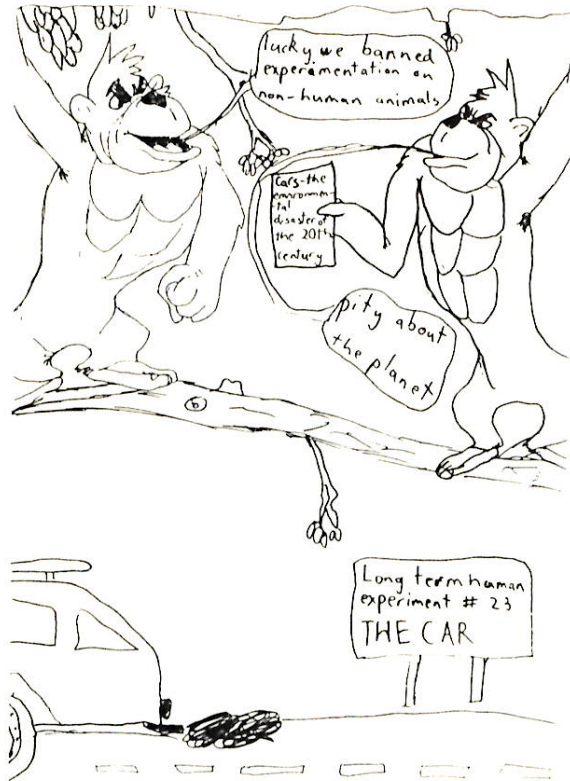
Dear Elizabeth,

We are going to live in Brazil for a few years! Before we go, I can report more good news. In the 6 months we've lived in Maroubra Angus' lead level has halved!!! He is 0.56, Erica is 0.42 and Michael is 0.37. We are very happy

Thankyou for your wonderful help when we initially discovered Angus' problem.

Regards,
Margaret.

Cartoon by Greg and Alexander Claud, aged 10.

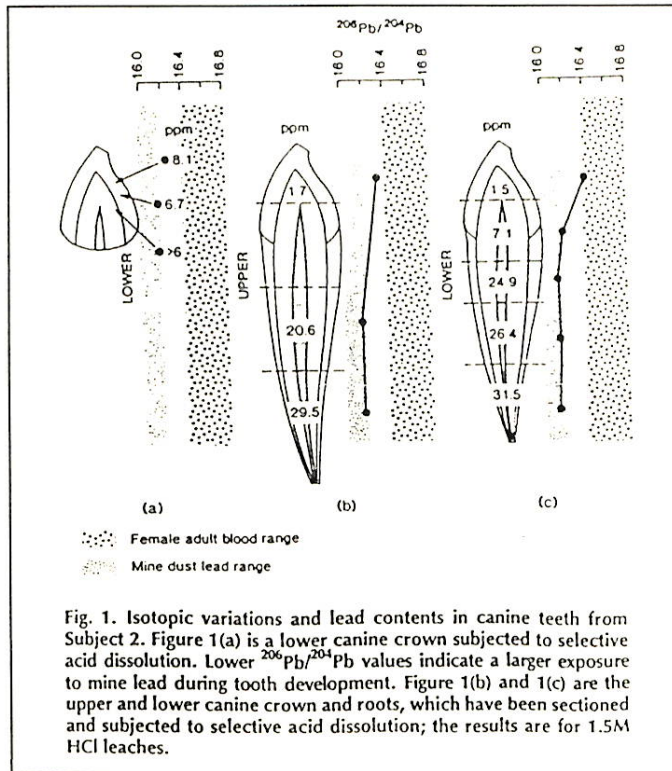


Lead in Deciduous Teeth - A Comment

by Brian Gulson,
Macquarie University, Graduate School of Environment and CSIRO, North Ryde.

The article by Anne Winner in LEAD Action News Volume 2, Number 3 contains excellent information for those dealing with school children, especially in view of the most recent research in the U.S. which reinforces the

earlier work of Needleman et al., correlating tooth and blood leads with behaviour and attention deficits in the classroom.



However, the section on lead concentrations may be slightly misleading. I have been analysing teeth from children (and adults) from different communities including Broken Hill, Sydney and recently-arrived migrants from Eastern Europe for both lead concentration and lead isotope ratios; the latter give information about the source of lead.

I have found that, even though analysis of a whole tooth is simpler than other methods, it can camouflage important information about the earlier lead exposure of the child.

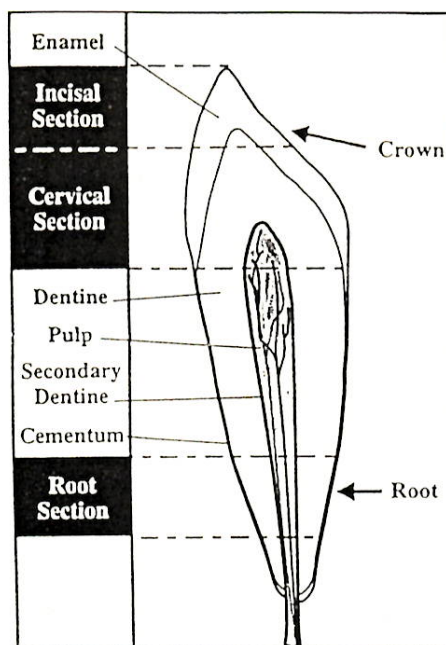
To gain this information, the crown of the tooth is sliced into sections; the crown is all that is generally available for analysis in children as the root is resorbed (and thus the tooth falls out as it loses its "anchor"). The incisural section, which is mainly enamel and a small amount of primary coronal dentine (Figure 1) provides information about the lead burden of the mother during gestation and earliest childhood. The cervical section (section closest to the gums), consists mainly of secondary dentine and provides

information about the integrated lead exposure of the child from birth to the time of exfoliation of the tooth (when it falls out). It provides information during the critical time of maximum blood lead (~12 to 30 months) when mouthing activity is greatest.

These data and some from the literature show that the enamel generally contains less lead than the dentine, especially in a child who had intensive mouthing activity and/or lived in a lead environment (mining, smelting, old home renovations).

Hence analysis of a whole tooth may underestimate the lead exposure of the child. In fact, even the sectioning approach may underestimate the lead exposure in some children as analysis of rare roots of teeth have shown even higher amounts of lead than in the coronal dentine (Figure 2).

In light of these results, I would like to suggest that the "normal" values of Graeme Waller's analyses noted in the article, should be lower. Graeme's mean value was 5.2 ppm Pb, but the data were skewed, as one might anticipate in biological samples. The majority of his data were < 5 ppm Pb. hence, the majority of unexposed



children i.e. BPb <10µg/dL, should have lead concentrations in whole teeth of <5 ppm, given that the lead concentrations in the enamel are generally <2 ppm. ●

Areas for Future Lead Research

The following is an extract from "The Health Effects of Low Level Exposure to Lead" by Prof. H.L. Needleman & Dr. D. Bellinger. First published in Annual Review of Public Health 1991 12:111-40. © 1991 by Annual Review Inc.

Most studies of childhood lead exposure have focused on psychometric intelligence, i.e. reading and math achievement. Little attention has been paid to higher order behavior, such as ability to get along with peers and to accept the prevailing social mores. There is growing evidence that lead-exposed children have difficulty in attention (64); some evidence suggests that exposure is associated with aggressiveness (48). Attention deficit with hyperactivity, coupled with antisocial behavior, is a strong predictor of criminality (52, 55). Criminal behavior has been found to be higher in males, blacks, and urban dwellers. It displays itself early in life; criminals are more likely to have been hyperactive as young children and to have come from disorderly homes with poor housekeeping (106). All of these factors are associated with lead exposure. Carefully designed case control and forward studies of the association of lead exposure with antisocial behavior are clearly warranted.

The studies of Kitchen et al (42, 41) and Nation et al (61) suggest that studies of lead exposure in drug and alcohol abusers are worth pursuit. Case control studies of older

individuals who are past the ages of peak exposure should benefit from new advances in the technology of in vivo lead measurement.

Almost all studies of lead toxicity have focused on young children, and more recently on fetuses in utero. Because the fetus clearly is not protected from lead, maternal exposure has become a subject of considerable interest. Hormonal changes associated with pregnancy might mobilize lead stores, which would create an endogenous source of fetal exposure, even if external exposure during pregnancy is low (56, 100). Less attention has been paid to paternal exposure and its consequences for the father and his potential offspring, despite evidence that suggests that lead is a gametotoxin. Studies of male reproductive function and fetal consequences of paternal exposure are needed.

Another ignored issue is the effect of early lead exposure on the aged. Most lead is deposited in bone, where it is relatively inert. But with aging, bone demineralizes, which possibly provides an endogenous source of ongoing exposure (96). No information on the sites of redistribution of bone lead is available. Does some of this lead get to the CNS? Is lead one factor in the disordered memory and cognition found in some older patients? ●



Women and the Environment Conference

by Elizabeth O'Brien

Using the terms of the dominant, patriarchal culture the growth in gross domestic product (GDP) in Australia between 1994 and 2003 is expected to be steady, with an average GDP of around 2.3% per annum. In that time the population growth is expected to be around 1.2%, yet the growth in the stock of motor vehicles is expected to be around 2%.

In 1994 while population growth was 1.2% the growth in the stock of motor vehicles was double that, at 2.4%. The vehicle kilometres travelled, i.e. the distance travelled by each vehicle, is expected to rise steadily in the period. People will have more cars and travel further in them. On the other hand, the domestic supply of crude oil, condensate and liquid petroleum gas is expected to decrease during the period, so that from a peak in 1995 of 87% self sufficiency in petroleum, we are expected to have a decline to 41% self sufficiency in the year 2003, just eight years away.

During this time, crude oil prices in real US dollars 1994 value are expected to increase from an average of 16.44 in 1994 to 20.86 in the year 2003. More people using more cars travelling greater distances at higher prices, but with a growth in real Gross Domestic Product of around 3.1%. If all this makes no sense to you, join the club.

At The Women and Environment Conference in Melbourne in March 1995 organised by the Australian Conservation Foundation, a paradigm shift was suggested. The above example about petroleum is just one of many of the ways that we are deceived into believing that growth in the use of our resources is a good thing economically. The paradigm shift that is required is to factor in to our national accounting system, the work that the environment contributes and the work that women contribute, in the main, because women are unpaid workers.

These two areas are not currently accounted for in the United Nations System of National Accounting (UNSNA). At the moment the environment is seen as a completely free source of resources and as an infinite sink for contamination, pollution products of the life style that we have created. That is the environment's contribution. If we started to account for environmental degradation and to see these finite resources such as fossil fuels as being worth something to the earth, to all of us, to future generations, we would have a very different measure of our effect through what is now known as "economic growth". We would, in fact, see negative effects on our planet which to any observer are obvious. Yet they are not recorded in economic analyses.

Lead provides us with an archetypal example of "economic success" as defined by the patriarchal system. Lead is a natural component of crude oil. That's why unleaded petrol is not lead free petrol. Lead is used in boy's toys and has been for hundreds of years. We are using more lead for lead acid batteries and for ammunition (and cable sheathing) every year, whereas, due to the occupational and public health and environmental risks lead poses, all other uses of lead are declining.

You can't have guns without lead. Or at least you couldn't until recently. You can't have cars without lead. There is no such thing as a lead free car. Even the zero emission vehicles being touted as the answer to our pollution problems from motor vehicles, use twice as much lead as traditional vehicles in the battery. The battery is not the only use of lead in cars, it is used in engines and all metallic parts, there's been an awakening to the environmental and health disaster that adding lead to petrol causes, and some progress on that (you can read about that in another story in this newsletter), but what about lead and militarism?

Militarism is good for the economy. In a paradigm shift such as we are suggesting at the Women and Environment Conference, militarism, the production of weapons, the arms trade and dealing in money, which creates an incredibly large contribution to our economy at the moment, would not be counted any longer. On the other hand the destruction wrought by the sale of weapons, by the making of weapons, by the taking of resources from the ground and the contamination of the planet would be taken into account. Militarism would no longer be justified. Lead has had an essential role in the development of weapons. Even nuclear weapons use components which degrade to lead. Hundreds of thousands of years after nuclear weapons have radioactively decayed we will be left with massive lead contamination. The Chernobyl Meltdown contained massive lead contamination at the time it happened because lead is used as radiation shielding. Tonnes of lead were melted that day and remain in the ground.

But what of lead in the economy, other than militarism and other than motor vehicles? Apparently you can't make electronics equipment without lead, lead is used in radiation shielding and glass, on computer screens, television screens and in hospitals. Lead is used in chemicals, the ratio of lead used in chemicals is increasing, the total amount of lead produced in the world is constantly increasing, and with the growth in the population of motor vehicles and ammunition use, there

seems no end to that increase. So in Australia we have a four hundred million dollar export industry in lead; therefore it is justified to remove lead from the ground forever where it was safe and non polluting, to contaminate mining communities, to contaminate vast tracts of land between mining and smelting communities due to faulty transporting practices, to contaminate the environments of our smelting communities, to poison people and every other species. This lead export then goes to other countries and our government claims that it has no transboundary effects, and therefore the trade of lead should not be controlled, by the OECD. If it has no transboundary effects why would anyone buy it? Where does our lead go? What is it used for? What would an analysis of its life cycle show us? Life cycle analyses have been undertaken in Toronto. The Canadian lifestyle is so developed now, that were everyone on the planet to have a similar lifestyle, the amount of space required to support that lifestyle would be the equivalent of not one but two extra earths.

We do not have an infinite resource which we can plunder, the earth is not an infinite sink to absorb our contaminants. In intergenerational equity terms, the lead industry is a crime against our children. In social justice terms the poor suffer the most from lead contamination: the poor who can't afford to live anywhere but mining or smelting communities, the poor who live in the inner cities, along busy roads or in older housing, the poor who can't afford anything but a pre 1986 vehicle in Australia and poorer countries who are now importing lead and other toxins in order to catch up with our developed country lifestyle. As Octel (the world's only producer of the lead additive for petrol) found, if you can't sell lead to developed countries then you can guarantee its sale to underdeveloped or developing countries, by having legislation in those countries which allows the sale of vehicles that can only run on leaded petrol, nearly ten

years after Australian vehicles were all designed to run on unleaded petrol.

And our lead industry says that if the OECD seeks to control how much we export, and for what purposes, to OECD countries, they will simply have to take their product to non OECD countries. They see that as an imposition on them. But they will deal with it in the bid to sell more lead.

What is required in order to reduce the drain on resources that the lead industry creates, and the ceaseless addition of lead to our air, water, sediments, dust, soil, sewage sludge, solid waste stream and food? What is required is a turnaround in the growth of the sale of motor vehicles. Lead acid batteries currently take up 64% of world production of lead. The projection is that in less than a decade that will be 70%, if the growth of motor vehicles is stopped, if we start reclaiming our cities to be livable places where public transport is safe, reliable, fast, efficient, and does not provide us with endless congested traffic and pollution, then we can have less lead mined and smelted in the world.

There has been enough lead taken out of the ground that with careful recycling we should never need to take any more. The lead industry claims massive success in recycling lead acid batteries and yet the amount of lead taken out of the ground grows every year.

Why? Sixty four percent of our lead is in lead acid batteries and 93% of that is recycled. We should be taking less out of the ground every year. One thing that the industry never mentions is that one third of the lead acid battery recycling of Australian batteries occurs via the export of lead acid batteries to Third World Countries in the Asian region, in contravention of the Basel Convention which forbids the trade from OECD Countries to non-OECD countries of hazardous waste. ♣



Graphic by Rose Lennon, aged 7.

Lead in Literature

Yes, Environment Minister



by Anne Roberts and Elizabeth O'Brien
With credit to the writers of the TV series
"Yes Minister" and "Yes, Prime Minister" from the BBC

Setting: New York, United Nations Snazzy Hotel, 5 am on the first day of high-level decision making at the Forum for a Livable Earth (FALE) meeting.

Sir Comfrey Austen-Martin: Now, Minister, we are agreed, are we not, that the purpose of today's meeting is to continue the international exchanges begun at the Planet Summit in 1992?

Minister, Jeff Perigreen: Well, yes, Comfrey - but don't you think we ought to contribute to the debate on the global phase-out of leaded petrol?

Sir Comfrey: Contribute? Yes, of course, Minister, but only insofar as it is made plain that, in the fulness of time, and all things considered, putting the case as bluntly as possible, and with due consideration, that it is in the national interest to neither agree nor disagree, rather than agree or not agree, at least, not at this juncture, nor in the foreseeable future, given the precarious nature of the trade cycle, the balance of payments deficit, and the threatened devaluation of the Swiss franc - to -in short, withhold decision, on a country, that is to say, national basis, to any such phase-out.

Minister: ... ah...well, as to that - I'm not entirely sure, you know, Comfrey - what I mean is, isn't that a bit risky, what with all the fuss back home about the effects of leaded petrol on the IQ of young children, not to mention high blood pressure in adults?- I've been reading some of that stuff, you know - it's really quite worrisome. Especially with an election coming up soon. We don't want to appear uncaring, you know. Death at the polls! (Laughs uneasily)

Sir Comfrey: Minister, Minister. It's a well-known fact that environmentalists (curling his lip at the word) overstate their case by a factor of - well, a considerable factor. A little bit of "onus probandi" (burden of proof) thrown at an environmentalist will slow them up no end. Bog them down, in fact. (Laughs, then looks stern) One has to go beyond the emotionalism: demand rigorous proof, studies of Chinese children, Tibetans, Indo-Chinese, Laplanders - cohort studies, epidemiological

studies, chamber studies, toxicological studies... Even then you can always say that a causal connection is in no way proven. At the same time, you have to insist on your genuine (if I may be so bold) caring attitude towards the health our fellow nationals. No, Minister - your duty lies beyond mere sectional interests - it falls to you to consider the national interest - and very well you are doing it, too, if I may say so.

Minister: Thank you, Comfrey. It's not always easy to keep the Big Picture in view. I was beginning to think that some of the people who voted for my Government - I mean, of course, the working people of our great nation (sighs, looks noble), were starting to believe those arguments as to health effects. It makes it very difficult for me, you know. I have to think of jobs, employment, that sort of thing. It's so unfair, really. What I mean is, who gets the blame if a mine closes down? People might talk as if they blame the environment movement, but it's us they'll vote against!

Sir Comfrey: Quite so, Minister. (Silence for a minute or two while the Minister and Sir Comfrey drink coffee which George, Personal Private Secretary to the Minister, has just poured. The Minister eyes a bagel dubiously.)

Minister: Incidentally, Comfrey, why are we up at this absurd hour - it's positively inhuman!

Sir Comfrey: It's the Americans, Minister. They have a theory that the earlier it is in the morning, the fresher the brain. And that a meeting that lasts from early morning to late afternoon is bound to achieve more results. Quite barbaric, really!

Minister: Yes, I suppose so - but look here, Comfrey, I am worried, you know - it's even beginning to look as though someone here in New York has been feeding the press back home every detail of our objections - leaving out the reasoning, I might say, and concentrating on the objections themselves. It's made us look rather, well, rather uncaring, about people's health and wellbeing.

Sir Comfrey: Never, Minister!

Minister: I'm afraid so. The truly worrying thing is that some of the newspapers back home are beginning to claim that it was the environmentalists' vote that made the difference in the last election - the one no-one expected us to win.

Sir Comfrey: Surely not, Minister! Your party has long enjoyed the support of business and industry!

Minister: Exactly! And yet that's what's so hard to get across to voters - that we stand for the national interest, not narrow sectional interests. But tell me, Comfrey, what are we going to do about the criticism about the Government's pushing for the Organisation for Economic Development at Any Cost (OEDC) as being a more appropriate forum for discussing these development issues than the UN Forum for a Livable Earth (UNFALE)? I must admit that I'm not entirely convinced, myself.

Sir Comfrey: I've been thinking about that Minister, and I now believe that it would be a gracious and generous gesture if we were to drop the OEDC proposal, and agree that UNFALE is, in fact, the best forum for discussions of this sort. It can be argued by us that the decision comes as a result of careful weighing up of humanitarian considerations - the press back home will react positively to that, which will be timely, in view of the coming election. It will also take by surprise, and therefore spike the guns, of that tiresome woman - community mother, what have you - proving her to have been, all along, totally mistaken in her despicable

allegations. Furthermore, the decision itself will, despite my initial objections, not substantively nor irrevocably alter the underlying situation vis-a-vis trade obligations.

Minister: What are you trying to say, Comfrey?

Sir Comfrey: George...?

George: Minister, what I think Sir Comfrey means is that it will be possible, without damaging the national industry or trade, to agree, within the UNFALE framework, to a decision on calling for a decision to call for a ban, at some time in the future, on leaded petrol, since, inevitably, by making the decision within UNFALE it will mean that it will lack the force of a similar decision within the ambit of OEDC, and thus be effectively non-effective.

Minister: Could you just elaborate on that, Comfrey?

Sir Comfrey: Well, Minister, a decision within UNFALE will remain just that: a pious wish for a global phase-out of lead in petrol and a few other consumer products. No one will take the decision seriously, except those - including environmentalists - who believe in the value and significance of symbolic gestures. The World Wide Toxic Trade Old-Boys Organisation (WWTTOO) will see to it that nothing actually happens.

Minister: So that the interests of lead exporters will continue to be served?

George and Sir Comfrey: YES, MINISTER!!

ASBESTOS LINK: DONATIONS NEEDED

The LEAD Group library has acquired some recent editions of Asbestos and Lead Abatement report from the US. We are impressed with the journal and would like to subscribe. We have been offered a special price of (only!) US\$355.00 - so would be totally thrilled if some kindly benefactor(s) could help us get the money together. Send all cash, cheques etc to The LEAD Group.



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