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South-Central Lead -Free Petrol Campaign : Letter

Sinn Féin The Workers' Party

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Sinn Féin
The Workers' Party

Crumlin Branch
c/o 50 Rutland Avenue, Dublin 12

May 15, 1981

Sir,

With reference to ^a recent articles in your newspaper on the dangers of lead in petrol, I wish to point out that SFWP-The Workers' Party has been conducting a Lead-Free Petrol Campaign for the past four months in the Dublin South-Central Constituency. We have been actively collecting signatures - already upwards of 5,000 - in the inner city areas of the Liberties, James Street, and the Coombe where there is a heavy density of traffic, as well as in Crumlin, Kimmage Drimnagh and Walkinstown. The response to our petition campaign has been tremendous, illustrating that people are very well aware of the long-term health hazard, particularly to young children, posed by lead in petrol. They are equally conscious of the fact that although EEC regulation prohibits the sale of petrol which contains more than 0.40 grammes of lead per litre, petrol sold in Ireland contains the enormous lead-dilution of 0.64 grammes per litre. This makes petrol sold in Ireland the most lead saturated - and dangerous - in Europe!

We have launched the Lead-Free Petrol Campaign to highlight this monumental health hazard, and we will be making this an election issue in the forthcoming campaign. We demand that the following steps be taken immediately: 1) that legislation be passed making it illegal to sell petrol above the EEC limit, and 2) that the Government implement a plan for the phasing in of lead-free petrol over a 2-year period. We further demand that the costs involved be paid for out of the vast profits of the multinational oil companies.

Three further points bear mentioning: In answer to those who say it can't be done, Britain has, as of May 12th, announced that lead in petrol is to be reduced by two-thirds not later than 1985; this would bring the lead content down to 0.15 grammes per litre. While this is a crucially important



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-2-

step, it is nevertheless disconcerting that lead-free petrol is not to be introduced, a step taken years ago by the United States, the Soviet Union, and other countries.

It is further interesting that the British government, now conscious of the threat posed by lead poisoning, has taken steps to ensure that grants be made available to householders to replace lead water-piping. We would further demand that similar steps be taken in this country where there is still a large housing stock of old premises, such as in the inner city.

Finally, following the recent announcement that the Minister for Energy is negotiating the building of an oil refinery either in the Shannon Estuary or in Bantry Bay, we demand that the refinery ^{be} is capable of producing lead-free petrol. While SFWP-The Workers' Party would welcome the building of a modern, clean oil refinery in this country - one capable of providing all our energy needs and of processing our own oil when it comes on stream - we would be demanding that legislation be passed preventing the sale of petrol with a lead content greater than 0.15 grammes per litre. Anything less threatens the health of our growing population.

Anyone interested in signing our petition or helping in the campaign, should contact me at the address below.

Sincerely,

Eric Byrne
Chairman
South-Central Lead-Free Petrol Campaign
50 Rutland Avenue
Crumlin, D. 12