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Propaganda, Puffing and the Public Interest: The Scientific Smoke Screen for Cigarettes

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Publicity and American Culture

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Propaganda, Puffing and the Public Interest

Publicity has long played a key role in promoting the public acceptance of cigarettes. Its role changed in response to the 'health scare' of the 1950s, from the recruitment of new (women) smokers to the retention of existing (concerned) smokers and supporting legal and political battles. The efforts of Hill & Knowlton for the Tobacco Industry Research Council in the 1950s are discussed in detail. Based upon archival documents never before made public.

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"The engineering of consent is the very essence of the democratic process, the freedom to persuade and suggest. The freedoms of speech, press, petition and assembly, the freedoms which make the engineering of consent possible, are among the most cherished guarantees of the Constitution of the United States."¹

This value statement by one of America's deans of public relations is echoed in Philip Morris' current national campaign distributing copies of the Bill of Rights. The ads quote FDR to remind us that these are "privileges" and "men have died for them." Freedom of commercial speech, like advertising and publicity, is of particular value to firms like Philip Morris. Some forms of publicity already have this privilege without restraint. The Federal Trade Commission was recently frustrated in its challenge of an R. J. Reynolds advocacy ad because the ad was judged to be "entitled to the full protection of the First Amendment, *including the right to deceive*."²

Publicity has long played a key and contentious role in the tobacco industry's promotion of the public acceptance of smoking, and the associ-

ated political and public opinion battles. The public opinion front was judged especially crucial "because here is where the beliefs, attitudes and actions of judges, juries, elected officials and government employees are formed."³

The Early Role for Public Relations

American Tobacco targeted women in the 1920s in an effort unprecedented in both its extensive use of public relations and its success. Competitors also used public relations to fight its success and excesses. American began by hiring ad agent A. D. Lasker, who had succeeded in selling Kotex sanitary napkins via national magazines. An early campaign for Lucky Strikes featured opera stars whose precious voices were unaffected by smoking. Another cited a survey of physicians claiming Luckies to be "less irritating." These health campaigns were criticized by the American Medical Association and the *New York Times* in editorials, and by the National Better Business Bureau, who called some "the lowest hokum."⁴

Edward Bernays was hired by Chesterfield to do public relations to combat both of these campaigns. Bernays ridiculed the opera star campaign by creating the "Tobacco Society for Voice Culture." Its letterhead slogan was: "So to improve the CORDS of the THROAT through cigarette smoking that the public will be able to express itself in songs of praise and more easily swallow anything." Its satirical aim was "to establish a home for singers and actors whose voices have cracked under the strain of their cigarette testimonials."

To combat the survey of physicians, 5,000 copies of an article from *Editor and Publisher* were distributed to influential people. Its headline: "Cigarette Copy Bunk, Physicians Declare Blanket Endorsement used in Ads Unwarranted." Lucky Strike's health claims were also attacked by R. J. Reynolds' advocacy ads costing \$300,000, about \$2 million in today's terms, "Turning the Light of Truth on False and Misleading Statements in Recent Cigarette Advertisements."⁵

The best known of Lasker's campaigns instructed women to "Reach for a Lucky Instead of a Sweet," previewing today's female brands positioned as symbols of slimmness. Once well established, the ads simply featured shadows with large double chins. Brand sales went up 312% in the very first year, despite the protests of the sugar and candy interests. Ivy Lee, who directed American Tobacco's public relations, resolved this conflict. He persuaded the sugar people that the campaign was stirring public interest in both tobacco and sweets and would do more good than harm for both.⁶

American Tobacco evidenced their judgment about the power of publicity when the infamous George Washington Hill hired Bernays away from Chesterfield's, but still retained Ivy Lee, without telling either about the other. He would ask Lee for advice and critical comment, for example, on an ad campaign concept of Lasker's, and then ask Bernays what he

thought of Lee's advice. Only later did Bernays and Lee discover this duplicity and duplication when they met by chance in Hill's reception room. Hill explained: "If I have both of you, my competitors can't get either of you."⁷

The Modern Public Relations Professionals

The services and personal attention of Lee and Bernays came at a rich price. Hill paid Lee's firm the then substantial sum of \$40,000 per year retainer. Bernays was paid \$25,000 per year retainer, and at first given few responsibilities, being asked only for occasional advice and press releases.⁸

Lee and Bernays were not the classic white-washing, space-grabbing press agents. They were "the propagandist who specializes in interpreting enterprises and ideas to the public ... (a) 'public relations counsel.'" Lee encouraged his clients to set up their own internal publicity departments to handle daily routine operations, so he could consult on "the larger framework of ideas from which to base public policy." Their work was typically indirect, seeking to "set up psychological and emotional currents ... instead of assaulting sales resistance by direct attack."⁹

Bernays, a nephew of Sigmund Freud, learned the art of propaganda serving on the WWI Committee on Public Information. He justified his "molding of the masses" with blunt candor. "The manipulation of the news, the inflation of personality, and the general ballyhoo by which politicians and commercial products and social ideas are brought to the consciousness of the masses ... are necessary to orderly life." Those "who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses ... pull the wires which control the public mind."¹⁰

PR to Make Cigarettes Female and Fashionable

To attack the female market with more psychological sophistication, Bernays, on behalf of Lucky Strike, hired a famous psychoanalyst, A. A. Brill, who counseled that "cigarettes are symbols of freedom." This was ingeniously translated into action by Bernays, who hired models to smoke in public for publicity purposes. In the New York Easter parade, a major spring fashion event known and covered across the nation, smoking models wore placards that identified their lit cigarettes as "torches of liberty."¹¹

Bernays once made green the fashion color of the year, to match Lucky Strikes' package. He organized a "Green Ball" with socialites and a Green Fashion Luncheon. He sent 6,500 letters and kits to department stores, fashion editors, and interior decorators announcing this "trend." He sent press releases of psychologists' declaration that green was the "color of spring, an emblem of hope, victory (over depression) and plenty." He said that for this "engineering of consent ... I drew up a comprehensive blueprint,

a complete procedural outline, detailing objectives, the necessary research, strategy, themes and timing of the planned activities."¹²

The Healthy Era for Cigarettes

Public relations aided the promotion of cigarette smoking among women, supporting and paving the way for the heavy advertising expenditures in all media in the 30s and 40s. The most remarkable aspect of that era's promotion, by today's standards, was the persistent and explicit verbal emphasis on health themes. Camels claimed that "They Don't Get Your Wind." Old Gold promised "Not a Cough in a Carload." Phillip Morris cited unnamed "eminent medical authorities" for their "less irritating" claim, for an additive described in bold red headlines as "an ounce of prevention." Chesterfields "will not harm nose and throat" because they were "much milder."

Camels claimed "More Drs. Smoke Camels Than Any Other Cigarette," but they never disclosed the specific data, gathered at a medical convention. "Unbeknownst to the people who read the ads based on these claims, was the fact that the interviewers had placed in the doctors' hotel rooms on their arrival cartons of Camel cigarettes. The chances are that the doctors ran out of cigarettes on arrival, and conveniently put a pack of Camels into their own pockets."¹³

Coping with a Crisis of Confidence

The health claims, however, prompted consumers to be mindful of health issues. As *Fortune* noted, many campaigns were "riddled with warning and appeals to fear" so that "the present turmoil could be considered an inside job" and the "industry may be promoting itself toward a dead end."¹⁴

The "present turmoil" was the spreading fear of cancer sparked in late 1952 when the widely read and respected *Reader's Digest*, with no advertising revenue at risk, published "Cancer by the Carton." Medical studies linking cigarettes to cancer, while not new, were now being reported in the popular press. *Good Housekeeping* stopped accepting cigarette ads in 1952. *The New Yorker* is said to have literally thrown Kent ad copy, and the associated potential ad revenue, out of their 17th floor window in dramatic objection to a health benefit claim. *The New York Times* published 12 health and cigarette articles in 1953, and 21 more in the first three months of 1954. In December 1953 *Woman's Home Companion*, *Look* and *Cosmopolitan* were each considering articles on the topic. Cigarette sales actually declined, a novel and challenging experience for the cigarette industry executives.¹⁵

The industry responded to the "health scare" in a number of ways. They rapidly developed and launched new products with filters made of

cotton, cellulose, and even asbestos. These were "miracle tips" tested by the "United States Testing Co." which were "just what the Dr. Ordered" offering an "extra margin (of safety)." One unsubtle brand and campaign said "The secret to Life is in the Filter."¹⁶

But relying on new products and health advertising alone would not solve the problem of the "health scare" and might well besaltin the wound. When the industry CEOs convened to take unified action, Hill and Knowlton, their chosen PR firm, wanted to know if the industry's advertising had been a principal factor in creating a 'health problem.' "The companies voluntarily admitted this to be the case even before the question was asked."¹⁷

The Tobacco Industry Research Council (TIRC)

Public relations was used extensively by the cooperating industry to fight the health scare. All of the many tools of public relations were employed: advocacy organizations and advertisements, media monitoring, personal contacts with media managers, ghost writing, media placement, film and pamphlet production, coordinated political action, scores of press releases, and the redistribution of favorable items in large quantity.

The planning group was called together in late 1953 by Paul Hahn, CEO of American Tobacco. He had been issuing statements on his own attacking "loose talk" linking cigarettes to cancer, and he had staff assembling material for a "white paper." All firms were represented except Liggett & Myers. The TIRC wanted to keep unfavorable publicity to a minimum, and to counter it so as to promote the idea of scientific uncertainty and controversy.¹⁸

"A Frank Statement to Cigarette Smokers." Almost instantly, the TIRC spent \$257,276 to place a full page advocacy ad in 448 newspapers of 258 cities, blanketing the nation and reaching an estimated 43,245,000 people on January 4th or 5th, 1954. Weekly, foreign language and negro newspapers were generally avoided, but special versions of the ad were prepared for *Editor and Publisher*, *Publishers Auxiliary*, *American Press*, and 11 tobacco industry publications. The "Frank Statement" questioned research findings, reminded smokers of the "solace, relaxation, and enjoyment for mankind" claimed for cigarettes, and pledged to sponsor "impartial" studies and "let the results speak for themselves." The signing sponsors "accept an interest in people's health as a basic responsibility, paramount to every other consideration in our business... We always have and always will cooperate closely with those whose task it is to safeguard the public health."¹⁹

TIRC Goals and Activities. This ad placement, as dramatic as it was, was merely the opening salvo in the very large public relations program that followed. The TIRC "should sponsor a public relations campaign which is positive in nature ... promoting cigarettes and protecting them from these

and other attacks that may be expected in the future." The active information service for the TIRC had the "following objectives in mind: (1) avoid encouraging or stimulating further publicity on the subject, but (2) assure that those planning to write or talk about smoking and health receive our material, and (3) enable staff to keep Committee members informed of the trend of publicity." In addition, a \$50,000 public opinion poll and depth survey of smoking habits was commissioned, special efforts for congressmen planned, surveys of medical literature authorized for a "white paper," and plans made to announce a position of Research Director.²⁰

Statistical research was undertaken to confound the cancer issue. Among the questions raised and getting executive endorsement were: Why was the rise in lung cancer most marked among men, when the greatest recent rise in cigarette use was among women? Were there variations in lung cancer rates city to city? urban to rural? cold to warm climates? What were the smoking habits of long lived distinguished public leaders? What human ills were historically, but erroneously, attributed to tobacco? This last argument was ultimately "found more marketable and has received the placement emphasis."²¹

The international searches "marshalling scientific facts and published materials to prepare for meeting future attacks" became proactive in purpose. Copies of scheduled conference papers were obtained in advance, coverage planned, and representatives attended the meetings. "Unfavorable publicity was anticipated with preparation of possible TIRC statements."²²

Organization, Coordination and Cooperation. The day to day public relations chores for the TIRC were executed primarily by Hill and Knowlton, whose staff operation for 1954 used all or part of the time of 35 different staff members. The TIRC itself numbered more than 50, predominantly tobacco CEOs, their lawyers, and PR professionals.²³

Hill and Knowlton was and is a pre-eminent international firm, ranked as the country's leading PR firm by newspaper editors and other PR firms in polls by *Printers' Ink* and the *Gallagher Report*. The New York office and its work for the TIRC was guided in the 1950s by its founder and partner John W. Hill. His philosophy of public relations and the management of public opinion recognized that "merely putting facts before people is not always enough. Attitudes tend to be based more on feelings and emotions than upon cold logic ... (so one must) tie in with the deep motivations of people." Public opinion is based on what people hear, see and read, with individual responses dependent upon each individual's "racial, religious, political or economic interest, their background of culture and tradition, and their degree of education and level of intelligence."²⁴

Hill and Knowlton did not, of course, operate in a vacuum. Public relations specialists from the cigarette firms and their agencies provided advice and assistance through the PR Advisory Committee. Tommy Ross, partner of Ivy Lee, apparently had the closest working relationship. In

addition to the phone calls and face to face meetings there may have been, many letters were exchanged in 1954, with Mr. Ross providing solicited comments in detail on plans and progress reports.²⁵ As the TIRC public relations activities were taking shape, the principals of Hill and Knowlton also obtained the comments and suggestions in face to face meetings with senior executives of the principal advertising agencies, including comments on the copy of the "Frank Statement." A meeting of the Research Directors of the agencies discussed polls and depth surveys, an action strongly encouraged by Young & Rubicam to guide and track the public relations program.²⁶

The need for a coordinated approach was felt from the very beginning. R.J. Reynolds, through its ad agency and its PR agent, Grant Clark of the Bureau of Research Information, had been planning to spend "around a million dollars" on "full page ads in some 10,000 papers," an action made unnecessary by TIRC's "Frank Statement." Mr. Clark was "instructed to put Hill and Knowlton first" and claimed he had the needed "connections" with the medical journals, Public Health Service and American Medical Association. He continued to issue press releases until one prompted the CEO of Philip Morris to suggest that "no releases go out, now that we have formed a parent holding company (TIRC), except through Hill and Knowlton ... any other procedure would get us in serious difficulties."²⁷

Getting off to a Fast Start

The first few months of TIRC activity were important, intense and in secret. The files and procedures evoke Bernays' "comprehensive blueprint for action." The report summarizing the early activities took 24 pages and its cover letter identified it as "highly confidential" in three of its four paragraphs, suggesting that "no additional copies be made and that this copy not be placed in files."²⁸

Files on Experts and Media. The TIRC library included: a cross indexed card file of medical and scientific papers from some 2,500 medical journals, with most pertinent information obtained in full; special files of all pertinent press clippings; a cross indexed card file on medical opinions as noted from press, radio and other popular media; full texts of speeches, announcements, and panel discussions which were germane and available; files drawn from documents of the U.S. Health, Education and Welfare, Internal Revenue, Agriculture departments, the U.N., and other official bodies.²⁹

Media Monitoring and Meetings. One of the major benefits of having "carefully monitored" the press, radio, television and newsreels was that it allowed timely personal contact and letters to the editors requesting revisions, retractions, cancellations or rebuttals to unfavorable stories. When *LIFE* wrote "New Cigaret-Cancer Link," a meeting was held four days before the publication date where many TIRC responses were

considered. These included a strong protest with simultaneous release of the protest to the general press, a full page ad in *LIFE* to rebut the story, a counteracting story in *Look*, and a "factual protest to *LIFE* to be followed by a conference with Henry R. Luce, Editor-in-Chief ... (to request) prominent attention to TIRC's position." The luncheon meeting that did result was "friendly and congenial." Although Mr. Luce did not attend, his assistant and six other editors and science writers did. The TIRC team emphasized the need for a "balanced presentation" and "editorial responsibility in handling stories that rouse unwarranted fears." A visit of Luce's editors and writers to TIRC and Hill and Knowlton headquarters was planned. Similar meetings and correspondence occurred with many others, even *Reader's Digest* and William Randolph Hearst and his top executives.³⁰

"Helping" the Media. There were too many items to be listed in the summary report, but specific mention was made of personal contacts with *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and *Business Week*. "Considerable source material" was provided to Hal Boyle for an Associated Press story sent nationwide, and to Donald Cooley for his story in *True* magazine. Further research and personal conferences provided aid to Cooley in his writing of a paperback for newsstand sales called *Smoke Without Fear*. When published, "1,000 advance copies (were) sent to city editors, science writers and other newsmen of leading daily newspapers throughout the country." Editorial writers, including those on the *New York Daily News* and "influential Washington papers," wrote "several positive editorials" after receiving help. Editorials pre-written by TIRC and distributed by the U.S. Press Association were used heavily by "home town" dailies and weeklies.³¹

Early in the PR program, a survey was done of national magazines and syndicate writers to find who was working on tobacco stories. "Contact was established with authors and editors. Such regular checking continues as standard practice, requiring numerous contacts weekly." This proved helpful in permitting timely inputs and a chilling influence that yielded revisions and killing of planned stories. An article by Bob Considine for *Cosmopolitan* was subject to "seven revisions and five qualifying additions to the story which was already in type." A TV show was "postponed after discussion." A pamphlet written by the Science Editor of the American Cancer Society was "discussed several times" by the TIRC Publicity Committee, "underwent several revisions" and was "guided to completion" by Hill and Knowlton. The author had earlier been subject to a "special conference" when he was critical of the TIRC.³²

General News Releases. During the first six months, 11 general news stories were distributed, each supported by "direct personal contact." An illustrative case history told of the steps taken to publicize a talk by a Dr. Hueper at the International Cancer Congress in Brazil. A check of the program found his talk on environmental cancer and an advance copy of the paper was obtained and studied. No press distribution of the talk was

planned by Hueper, but "personal delivery of the Hueper release was made to important newspapers and services as well as distribution to science writers, editorial writers and feature writers ... Stories questioning the link between smoking and cancer were given wide attention, both in headlines and stories" despite the fact that many of the science writers covering the convention "failed to mention the Hueper talk in their dispatches."³³

Illustrative Examples. The April release of "A Scientific Perspective on the Cigarette Controversy," and a June press conference introducing a Dr. Little of Maine as the Chairman of TIRC's Scientific Advisory Board, illustrate the preparation, execution and follow up during 1954.

"A Scientific Perspective ..." was a compendium of quotations from 36 "distinguished cancer authorities." The 18 pages of excerpts quarrelled with both "the alleged statistical association" and lab studies where mice painted with cigarette tars developed cancers. It presented those studies, carefully culled from an international search, with inconclusive or contrary results. These were handsomely laid out, with bold italic marginal headlines featuring key phrases, such as "None of Evidence Conclusive," "Questions Role of Cigarette," "Unwarranted Conclusion," and "Tobacco Relatively Unimportant." The preface was careful to state that the TIRC did "not suggest that these views represent the entire body of scientific opinion on the subject." It also reiterated an "interest in people's health as a basic responsibility and paramount to every other consideration."³⁴

A total of 205,000 copies of this booklet were printed, with the majority, 176,800 sent to the nation's medical community. The booklet, with a covering press release, also went to a press distribution of 15,000, and copies were sent to all members of Congress. News magazines received advance copies and, several days in advance, "key press, network, wire services and columnists contacts were alerted by phone and in person. The booklet was hand delivered ..." Hill and Knowlton field offices around the country "alerted local press, radio and TV to the story." A week after the mailing, a follow up personal letter from TIRC's Chairman went to "114 key publishers and media heads." Substantial stories were used by AP, UP, INS and Dow-Jones wire services. The New York dailies carried stories, as did "hundreds of papers and radio stations throughout the country." Special "staff-written stories developed with the help of Hill and Knowlton field offices" appeared in newspapers like the *Cleveland Star* and *Chicago American*.³⁵

The press conference announcing TIRC's research program and personnel was held at New York's prestigious and academic University Club concurrent with that year's AMA convention. All of the wire services, New York newspapers, news and business magazines, television and radio networks, and Movieton news were personally contacted to learn who would cover the story. The release, statement and photos were given "full distribution." Because of the news magazines' special schedules "the essen-

tial facts were given to them several days in advance." TIRC staff "serviced the tobacco trade publications ... medical journals, veterans publications, National Association of Science Writers, medical colleges, dental journals and colleges ... and cancer organizations" among others. Special film, owned and edited by TIRC's publicity department, was provided to CBS, ABC and Dumont, with only NBC choosing to shoot their own footage. Records of attendance were kept, and follow ups included delivery of rushed transcripts within three hours.³⁶

The press conference was very successful, with all the news services and networks carrying the story, despite the fact that the AP and INS science writers were attending the AMA convention. The reach of this was considerable, as AP radio alone serviced 1400 stations, and "there is no telling how many additional TV and radio stations picked up the story from the above sources and wire service dispatches." The debriefing did note three problems: "Dr. Little was a bit more candid than anticipated; ... too many H&K people there in proportion to press attendance; ... (and the) take over" by TV and film crews and their equipment suggested scheduling them separately from the print press.³⁷

The pattern of exhaustive distribution of releases and reprints, coupled personal invitations and follow up, was apparently the rule rather than the exception. Press releases went out periodically announcing increases in the cumulative amount authorized for research purposes. TIRC issued statements via its scientific directors, whose appointments, papers, editorials and speeches were given wide dissemination in press releases like the one headlined "Anti-Smoking Theories Not Based on Complete Scientific Knowledge." Studies that aided the industry cause, even if remote, were distributed too. A New Zealand study of immigrants, for example, was reported in the *Washington News* as "This Takes Cigaret Smoking Off the Hook." A *Research Booklet* was mailed to 134,549 recipients, primarily physicians under 65, hospitals, medical schools and libraries, cancer societies, medical journals, and selected members of the National Research Council and American Medical Writers' Association.³⁸

Budgets and Priorities. Money never seemed to be in short supply. Throughout the 1950s, the TIRC authorized budgets for Hill and Knowlton consistently larger than the actual expenditures. During this same time period, the leading manufacturers also increased their brand advertising budgets more than 60%, going from \$76 million in 1953 to \$122 million in 1957. Of the total TIRC expenditures in 1954 of \$948,151, Hill and Knowlton was paid almost exactly a quarter, \$223,994. Another 26% went to the media costs of the "Frank Statement" ad. Sixteen percent was consumed by TIRC administrative and operating costs, which included the costs of reprints. Of the remaining 33%, or \$314,448, some \$156,268 in grants had been approved but not paid out in 1954. This means that the much ballyhooed grants to scientists in 1954 actually amounted to at most \$158,000, less the overhead

costs of running the subsidiary Scientific Advisory Board. As this was budgeted at \$78,000 for 1955, it seems that only about \$80,000, or less than 10% of the total TIRC budget of 1954, actually found its way to the selected scientific projects. The lion's share went to public relations, including the advocacy advertising, reprints and related TIRC operating expenses.³⁹

Success with the Media. By mid-February 1954 the clipping files already contained 416 items, including radio scripts. The majority of these were judged by Hill and Knowlton to be favorable to the industry. Indeed, even after eliminating the many items merely announcing the formation of the TIRC, the "favorable stories" outnumbered unfavorable "tobacco critic's publicity" by more than a 2 to 1 margin. Favorable stories, including syndicated serials by INS, Scripts Howard, New York Post syndicate and AP, were reported to be 16 times more numerous than publicity from the American Cancer Society, U.S. Public Health, and Veteran's Administration combined.⁴⁰

Despite the volume and repetitiveness of the press releases, the media continued to carry them. "Newspapers, fearful of offending cigarette advertising, have given full coverage to the industry's statements." One ad executive noted that "The public ... was also put under heavy sedation by the public relations program of the tobacco companies which effectively cushioned every piece of unfavorable news ... with standardized rebuttals."⁴¹

A 19 page booklet of selected "Editorial Comment on Tobacco and Health" evidenced their success in getting favorable stories in the media and their efforts to foster a bandwagon effect by displaying editorial opinion that was uniformly favorable. Reprints of favorable articles, book reviews, and letters were individually circulated as well. A *Harper's* article, "Do We Have to Give Up Smoking?" was mailed to "all doctors under 65 years of age, to press and broadcasters, and other public opinion leaders."⁴²

Carrying On

Ghost writing. "The Fight Against Lung Cancer," a 1955 work nominally by John Pfeiffer, "has been prepared ... and is designed as the basis for a TIRC document and for other public distribution material, for articles and for policy statements." Another book being titled by Hill and Knowlton in 1956 in consultation with the publisher had considered titles like "Smoking — Science and Nonsense" and "Smoking and Health — Fact vs. Fiction."⁴³

On the Political Front. In early 1958, Hill and Knowlton was involved in political and lobbying battles to defeat labelling legislation because the (Tobacco) Institute which had been formed to do this job was not yet ready to function." This state by state effort required Hill and Knowlton to "plan for opposing the legislation, select people to appear at the hearings, and develop a line of opposition argument." Hill and

Knowlton also sent regular mailings to all Members of Congress. The entire list received all issues of *Tobacco News*, *Tobacco and Health*, The Annual Report of the Scientific Director, and individual items as they appeared like *Tobacco, Source of Pleasure*, *Source of Wealth*, *Tobacco and the Health of a Nation*, and *Tobacco and Americans*. State specific materials were "frequently delivered to individual office of Congressmen."⁴⁴

Consolidating and Clarifying its Position. A restructuring in 1958 created the Tobacco Institute (TI) which still survives. The CEO of American Tobacco, speaking for TI's Directors, wrote to Hill and Knowlton regarding "certain important questions of policy." He indicated that the "major objective should be: To defend the tobacco industry against attacks from whatsoever source on tobacco as an alleged health hazard, including efforts to impose labelling requirements." Taking the position that health charges were "unfounded," he counseled against "frontal attacks" on the motives of groups like the American Cancer Society, preferring instead to challenge them and muddy the waters by "presenting contradictory evidence." The TI should present the view that "smoking is not harmful to normal individuals," although "overindulgence or excess in anything may be harmful."⁴⁵

A Small Scandal. The planting of stories, and reproducing them for mass distribution, was still in evidence in the late 1960s. In 1968 the Federal Trade Commission exposed the Tobacco Institute's role in placing stories in *True* and the *National Enquirer*. The latter's headline filled the front page with a bold declaration that "Cigarette Cancer Link is Bunk." The nominally different authors were in fact the same person, paid and fed material by the Tobacco Institute, and soon to join the staff of Hill and Knowlton. Ads in the daily press encouraged readership of the *True* article. Hundreds of thousands of reprints were sent to doctors, educators, researchers and members of Congress with an "editor's message" attachment rather than disclosing TI's role. The American Medical Association mailing list was obtained with the pretense that it was for a circulation campaign for *True*. The FTC judged these as "not the acts of an industry either confident of its facts nor solicitous of its reputation."⁴⁶

Evaluations and Discussion

A Tobacco Institute internal memo of 1972 reviewed the preceding twenty years, and described its activities as a "holding strategy" defending the industry on "three major fronts — litigation, politics, and public opinion." The tactics included "creating doubt about the health charge without actually denying it, and advocating the public's right to smoke, without actually urging them to take up the practice." A decade earlier, an internal memo stated: "Historically, it would seem that the 1954 emergency was handled effectively. From the experience there arose a realization by

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the tobacco industry of a public relations problem that must be solved for the self-preservation of the industry."⁴⁷

To accomplish this holding strategy, the world was scoured for scientific and medical opinions that contradicted or confounded the ever growing evidence of tobacco's carcinogenic nature. That which could be found was reproduced, re-packaged and distributed with the full machinery of the nation's leading PR firm in high gear. The essential tactic was to gather, reproduce, and scatter seeds of scientific doubt to magnify and maintain the appearance of a scientific controversy.

Despite claims that the TIRC existed to fund impartial research, and pursue public health as "paramount to every other consideration," the activity reports and budgets show that influencing public opinion was actually the primary, perhaps exclusive, objective. A 1974 internal memo from Lorillard's research director to its CEO stated that: "Historically, the joint industry funded smoking and health research programs have not been selected against specific scientific goals, but rather for various purposes such as public relations, political relations, position for litigation, etc. Thus, it seems obvious that reviews of such programs for scientific relevance and merit ... are not likely to produce high ratings."⁴⁸

The judge in the recent and temporarily successful liability trial, *Cipollone v. Liggett et al* (NJ 1988), was required by a motion of the cigarette defense to review the evidence. He judged that the jury could reasonably conclude that the TIRC and the work it performed was "nothing but a hoax created for public relations purposes with no intention of seeking the truth of publishing it ... The intensity of the advertising and public relations was sufficient to create the desired doubt in the minds of the consumer, and overwhelm or undermine pronouncements as to the dangers... (The magazine entitled *Tobacco and Health*, and mailed free to practically every doctor in the country ... was a blatant and biased account of the smoking 'controversy.'" The evidence supported, in his view, an "industry wide conspiracy to accomplish all of the foregoing in callous, wanton, wilful and reckless disregard for the health of consumers in an effort to maintain sales and profits ... (a conspiracy) vast in its scope, devious in its purpose and devastating in its results."⁴⁹

Another measure of the success of this sustained public relations effort is the extent to which, even today, most citizens, including well educated readers, tend to substantially underestimate the scientific consensus and the degree of medical health risk. Few people realize that there have been 20 Surgeon's General reports over 25 years on cigarettes, and that none of these has been equivocal about the health hazards of cigarettes. Some develop specific themes like nicotine's addictive properties. Some the ever growing evidence about cigarette's health hazards. In 1989, 390,000 Americans, more than 1,000 every single day, were estimated to have died from their cigarette smoking and nicotine addiction, more than from heroin,

crack, fire, homicides, auto accidents and AIDS combined.

These are men and women "who have died" in the name of the freedom to engineer consent. A measure of the success of contemporary cigarette PR programs is the extent to which, despite this death toll, the cigarette debate is often framed as a free speech issue, not a health issue. This "repositioning" ignores the deaths and other enormous medical and social costs in deference to feared infringements on the alleged freedoms of commercial speech. This repositioning effort is joined by associations of other advertisers who have "an offensive strategy for eliminating and blocking restrictions ... *Efforts Should be Made to Recast and Refocus Issues*. By broadening the terms of the debate over restrictions, a proposal to restrict particular types of advertising may become intertwined in broader issues that are not readily capable of resolution." Remembering, too, that it is "the freedoms of speech, press, petition and assembly, (are) the freedoms which make the engineering of consent possible," it's no wonder that Philip Morris champions these privileges vigorously.⁵⁰

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