On January 25, New York University announced that, in recognition of a $20 million dollar donation from Larry Townsend and Preston Richmond, The University Hospital at NYU Medical Center would be renamed The Townsend Richmond Hospital. The announcement prompted an ex- change of letters between Berendes, NYU's president, and Dr. William G. Cohen, a senior attending neurosurgeon Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. Excerpts from the letters appear below.

The Townsend contribution will go toward construction of a new, 3,500-room rehabilitation building, which will also include housing for nurses and residents. The gift—estimated single donation in NYU Medical Center's history—brings to over $1 million the amount the Townsend family has given to NYU. Other major gifts include $12 million in 1978 to build Townsend Hall at the Washington Square campus, and $6 million in 1979 to endow the Townsend Richmond School of the Arts. In addition, Larry Townsend has been chairman of NYU's Fund for the University for ten years, Preston Townsend is also a board member.

Cohen, whose specialty is lung cancer, has attacked the remaining on the funds that, through the Townsend Richmond Corporation, the Townsend brothers own Loew's Corporation, which makes Newport, Kent, and True cigarettes and other brands. Together with media guru Tom Schwartz, Cohen has also put together a radio spot—a staple on WMCA—inviting listeners to “keep on smoking those cancer newtovars...they have decided to have the hospital leave you.”

Schwartz and Cohen are consistent in their attacks, with Schwartz calling the cigarette industry's "guerrilla war" against tobacco interest "NU's 'nuclear' weapon". NYU's tentative fundraising ceremony will be held sometime this fall, though the hospital's stationery already reflects the change.

February 1, 1989

Dear Bill,

Thank you for your letter of February 1, 1989. As you may be aware in voicing your opinion, you will, I am sure, want me to be equally candid in reply. Aware of your concern, I agree with neither your analysis nor your conclusions.

We at New York University are deeply grateful to the Townsend family for this extraordinary gift, and we are proud to have the name of this hospital.

It is obvious, however, for the university knowingly to accept funds, that were the result of unlawful activities, is not, of course, indicative of the instant ease. Nor is your representation accurate that this gift is from "lobock's" own pocket. Loew's Corporation and I am a director.—also in insurance, watch, hotel and shipping business. Courtoice, Loew's Townsend, is president, and chief executive officer of Loew's. Loew's Townsend, is president, and chief executive officer of Loew's.

You are also wrong in your assertion that "such funds were given for their PR effort: to launder the tobacco company's nicotine-stained image..."

I have been in business for several years and am aware of the public relations efforts that Loew's Corporation (the 'Townsend brothers' main holding company) and Loew's Corporation and Company who make Kent, Old Gold, Newport, Satin and True cigarettes have made.

More and more... institutions are refusing to accept tobacco companies' donations, even if they are asssured that there would be no strings attached. They feel, as do I, that the time has come when principle should prevail over standard business prac- tice, if such a principle is known to be amoral.

This is not a personal dislike against Larry and Preston Townsend, both of whom I know, and I am sure you also know, are motivated not for philanthropy, however, they are part of a system that enables the recipient to evade, to use cynical means to buy respectability. By association, then, the Townsend's accept their gifts, are tainted as well.

I am, of course, anxious to hear your reac- tions to this.

My best to the beautiful M. and, of course, to your own. William G. Cohen, M.D.

February 12, 1989

Dear Bill,

Thanks for your letter of February 1, 1989. As you may be aware in voicing your opinion, you will, I am sure, want me to be equally candid in reply. Aware of your concern, I agree with neither your analysis nor your conclusion.

You asked if I had any comments about accepting funds for the hospital, I am uncertain as to what other groups are doing, but the argument has been made that there is a special problem with tobacco-related diseases, since there is a clear indication that tobacco smoking is a cause of cancer.

It is obvious, however, for the university knowingly to accept funds, that were the result of unlawful activities, is not, of course, indicative of the instant ease. Nor is your representation accurate that this gift is from "lobock's" own pocket. Loew's Corporation and I am a director.—also in insurance, watch, hotel and shipping business. Courtoice, Loew's Townsend, is president, and chief executive officer of Loew's.

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Having for several years dealt with both Larry and Bob Townsend, I can safely assure you that at no time have I heard a word from either to justify your alleg- ation that their contribution "was given... to launder the tobacco company's nicotine-stained image...".

Also, you completely overlooked your own... conclusion. You were to accept your logic, no educational or cultural institution should accept contributions from, for example, manufacturers of automobile... cars, to use your words, "main and kill hundreds of thousands of peo- ple each year".

I would also object to your asser- tion that "Larry and Preston Townsend... are part of a system that enables those responsible for Holocaus...taints..."

Beyond the intricacies of this..."taints"... I hope you would on reflection agree, does not accentuate the significance of the Holocaust.

You know that I have great admira- tion for you both as a person and as a physician, and I, therefore, take your censure as a mark of our friendship.

With very best wishes.

Sincerely yours,

William G. Cohen, M.D.