

# Ad controversy

## Houston Post rejects cancer group's cigarette parody

The *Houston Post* rejected a doctor group's parody of a cigarette ad, saying the takeoff violated the newspaper's standards against "derogatory" ads.

"It was extremely derogatory. I wouldn't have accepted it even if it were one of our retailers talking about another retailer," *Post* vice president/advertising Ray Dallman said in a telephone interview.

At issue was an ad created by Doctors Ought to Care (DOC), a Houston-based group of anti-smoking activist physicians, that parodied advertisements for Dakota, a new cigarette brand R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. is test marketing in the city.

Dakota's newspaper ad shows a picture of the Dakota pack juxtaposed with a box of Marlboro cigarettes.

"Houston is known for conquering space, great barbecue and individuals who make up their own mind. You decide," the headline reads. The

brand's tagline is "Where smooth comes easy."

DOC's parody ad reads, "Houston, home of the largest medical center in the world, asks you to make up your own mind." Altered pictures of the Dakota and Marlboro packs appear.

The altered Dakota label has the word "tumors" where "cigarettes" would appear. Rather than "full flavor," the words "still born" appear at the bottom of the parody box. "Marlboro" has been reworded to read "Barfboro." "The kid's favorite," the box reads, "20 Radiation Treatments."

At the bottom of the doctors group ad are the words, "Dakota DaCough DaCancer DaCoffin."

DOC founder Dr. Alan Blum said in a telephone interview that the *Post* at first agreed to run the ad, and then rejected it four hours before press time.

Blum said the paper offered varying reasons for refusing the ad, at first saying they feared a trademark suit and later saying they had a "new policy" against ads that denigrated brand-name products.

However, the *Post*'s Dallman said the paper had "never" agreed to run the ad, and that the policy was not new.

"This went to our advertising acceptability committee and was rejected. This paper won't accept derogatory ads," Dallman said.

Dallman also vigorously denied suggestions that the paper was "caving in" to tobacco interests.

"Not a bit. We really haven't had any tobacco ads to speak of. Tobacco just started coming back with this test market but, as long as cigarette advertising is [for] a legal product, we will accept it," Dallman said.

Dr. Blum said DOC would submit the ad to the rival *Houston Chronicle*.

*Chronicle* advertising director Dwight Brown told *E&P* that he had not yet received the ad, and could not say whether it would run.

However, he suggested the *Chronicle* would probably run the parody.

"More than likely, as far as I know, we will run the ad," he said, "unless it is really terrible. If we're willing to accept cancer [public-interest] ads, we'll probably accept this. We don't get too hung up on [controversy] unless it's in poor taste for the readers."

— Mark Fitzgerald



## ADVICE AND DISSENT

They're contentious and contagious. They're the McLaughlin Group. (clockwise from left) Jack Germond, Eleanor Clift, John McLaughlin, Fred Barnes, Morton Kondracke, and Pat Buchanan.

Made possible by a grant from GE.



THE McLAUGHLIN GROUP

Check your local listing for station and time.

*We bring good things to life*

## Redesign unveiled at the World-Herald

The *Omaha (Neb.) World-Herald* has introduced a number of improvements designed to make the paper easier to read.

The changes were promoted through color teaser ads that began to run two weeks prior to the introduction, culminating with a double-truck the day before, Sunday, telling readers what to expect in the next day's new paper.

Among the changes are four major sections with more news, features and color, as well as an index, reorganizing news and features and anchoring more items.