

Letters

Think again about running for mayor

To the Editor:

Gallatin Division Dean Herbert London should do a little more thinking before wasting time and money on a mayoral campaign. Does he really think that by fining "drug users until they can't afford the poison" will actually help solve the so-called drug problem? Who does he think a "common user" is — a millionaire?

A junkie who spends the whole day panhandling or wiping windshields on the corner of Bleeker or the Bowery is not going to have any savings in the

bank to pay a fine. He or she is more concerned with scraping up about \$10 for the next five minute high — not with whether or not they'll have enough money to pay a fine.

Assuming the city will enforce such a penalty, what will happen to users who are unable to pay? Will they go to jail? Probably not — unless the city makes more jail barges. (And the city won't make more jail barges because no community wants them floating nearby.) So the users will have to be let back out on the streets. End result:

nothing accomplished.

I admit I don't have a solution (if I did I'd run for mayor myself), but I think a mayoral candidate coming from an institution of higher learning should at least run a campaign which doesn't embrace such obviously faulty ideas such as fining common drug users.

Robert Roth
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Tisch brothers' donation clouded by smoke

To the Editor:

To the dismay of some of NYU's admirers, it is about to rename University Hospital after two executives who have long been closely associated with a tobacco company.

In the news release announcing Lawrence and Preston Tisch's sizeable gift, one of several they have given to NYU, it stated that their income is largely derived from Loews Corporation of which Preston is President and Lawrence (who is also President of CBS), is chairman. Both brothers are also members of NYU's Board of Trustees.

What the release does not mention, is that, besides Loews Corporation's interest in real estate, insurance, hotels, etc., it owns 100 percent of P. Lorillard and Company, makers of Kent, Old Gold, Newport, Satin and True Cigarettes.

It is unfortunate, from my point of view, that it is still legal for tobacco companies to market their products, but, although it is within the law to do so, it is inappropriate for a distinguished university to show its gratitude, however great it may be to benefactors who are in that business by naming their equally distinguished health facility after them.

The irony of such a commitment can be appreciated if it is realized that Lorillard has an eight percent share of the entire cigarette market. This

means that it probably has been, and still is, contributing to some 31,000 of the 395,000 smoking-related deaths that occur annually in this country.

I suggest that those who decided to rename University Hospital should make rounds on its floors, or for that matter, on the floors of any hospital. They will see as physicians have for many years, the enormous scope of the tragedies caused by smoking. Perhaps, they would then realize what a sad travesty it is that Lorillard uses the slogan "Alive With Pleasure."

At present, most of University Hospital's staff are probably unaware of the Tisch-tobacco connection. When they learn of it, many are likely to have strong feelings on the subject. For one thing, they might be embarrassed and even resent working in a hospital that bears a title that implies what it does. For another, staff members who feel strongly about the ill-effects of smoking, might be concerned that it would compromise their freedom to speak out against tobacco use or/to continue quit-smoking campaigns within the hospital.

Moreover, scientists contemplating research in the planned bio-molecular laboratory, made possible by the Tisches' grant, might hesitate to undertake studies that could be contrary to tobacco industry interests.

But, above all, let us not forget the patients themselves: those who are

suffering from smoking-related emphysema, cardiovascular diseases, pathologic pregnancies and cancer. They, and those close to them, will find it difficult to understand why this name change was permitted.

If NYU renames its hospital in this fashion, it might further encourage other tobacco giants, who notoriously use their huge wealth to improve their image, to associate themselves, this time, with health facilities. If they do, with this precedent in mind, they are not above insisting that it be named after them. What a grim joke it would be if a lung cancer patient were to seek treatment in an R.J. Reynolds Medical Center or a Philip Morris General Hospital.

I do not, under any circumstances, want to discourage much-needed generous giving, but using "the Devil's money to do the Lord's work" is a delicate assignment and must be responsibly handled.

There is still time for NYU to take back its commitment to change University Hospital's time-honored name. It will take courage to do so and it will serve notice that NYU, "a private university in the public service" cannot be bought.

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