

A tracheostomy for the Marlboro man

THE AGE

750 Spencer St., Melbourne 60 0421 (Classified 60 0611) 32 Pages Price 14 cents (incl. GST) 128th Year 25c

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ON JULY 22, only hours before the start of the press run of the issue of July 24, the Journal received a letter by courier from Sly and Russell, a Sydney law firm, urgently requesting that we forward an advance copy of "A tracheostomy for the Marlboro man" to them "so that our client (Philip Morris Ltd) might have an opportunity of considering it prior to publication with a view to drawing any inaccuracies to your attention". The solicitors asked that we "please ensure that no reference is made to the trade mark (Marlboro) in the article or its heading".

The Journal appeared as usual. Few other articles in recent years have engendered as much correspondence. To date, the Journal and the author have received more than 30 letters. Only one of these was critical of the Journal for publishing the article and the BUGA-UP poster on the cover.

The reason for publishing the satirical cover was to emphasise the point that the epidemic of cigarette use among adolescents is being actively promoted by means of bold and heroic brand-name imagery. "Generic" lectures to patients or children about "the dangers of smoking" are aimed at striking fear about an abstract end-result rather than preventing the problem of juvenile-onset cigarette-buying. Looks, sex, and money comprise the formula of most advertisements but especially those for cigarettes. When cigarette corporations and their solicitors start complaining about a handful of doctors and others, then that is a sign that ridicule of cigarette pushers in an on-going multimedia campaign may be the magic bullet in the battle for children's health.

Editor.

Sir: Your journal deserves congratulations for so courageously publishing the striking cover illustrating the hazards of smoking (MJA, July 24, 1982).

BARTON

... a further one cent a month's Budget.

... have decided to announce a special excise levy earmarked for roads.

The Prime Minister, Mr. ... and the Transport Minister, Mr. Hunt, promised to examine the proposal.

The plan touched off a debate on the issue of the impact of an excise on the price of petrol, and whether the ... should be exempted for roads. Each two cents increase in the price of petrol adds about 0.3 cent to the consumer price index. With the price increase ... on the petrol pumps, the ... will increase a CPI index of about 1 per cent.

... will be increased to more than 1 per cent because of the ... by the NSW Premier, Mr. ... to impose a three cent a litre "licence fee" on petrol sales in NSW.

... Wran announced the rise at the Premier's Conference.

The Treasury sparked the ... on the second issue. For many years it has been resisting what it calls the "hypothecation" or earmarking of revenue. The department argues that any increases in Government receipts should flow into consolidated revenue, particularly in a year of 1982-83, when revenue is limited by recession.

... is believed to have approved the excise increase on its fiscal attraction, combined with a recent hike in the price of petrol from the oil levy.

Below inflation

... overseas oil prices ... price of Australia ... about 70%



Bid to stop Marlboro send-up fails

By MARK METHERELL

The Philip Morris tobacco company has failed in legal manoeuvres to prevent reference to Marlboro being published in an article about spoofs on the Marlboro man in the latest Medical Journal of Australia.

The Journal cover features a picture of a Sydney man who smoked through a tube in his throat after undergoing a tracheostomy, an operation to treat cancer of the larynx, or voice-box. The picture was entered by the anti-smoking group BUGA-UP in a \$25,000 photograph competition staged by Philip Morris last year to find a "Marlboro man of Australia".

The journal article, titled "A tracheostomy for the Marlboro man", said that if the scientific community were to take a more active role in ridiculing cigarette advertisements, particularly those aimed at young people, then efforts to reduce cigarette sales may meet with greater success than the finger-wagging campaigns of the past.

Publication of the article has brought strong criticism of the Australian Medical Association from a spokesman for Philip Morris. The spokesman, alluding to the recent allegations of medical fraud and over-prescribing, said that the AMA was diverting attention to other industries when it should

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drew attention to the experience in the United Kingdom of a "filibuster" by two Members of Parliament (representing constituencies with major tobacco interests) who prevented legislation limiting cigarette advertising from passing through the House of Commons.²

The decision to publish the *Medical Journal of Australia* of July 24 in the face of possible legal action deserves high praise and should herald a debate on the means by which the medical profession decides to tackle the most important preventable cause of ill-health in developed countries.

Alex Wodak,
12/5 Iluka Street,
Rose Bay, NSW 2029.

1. Drew LHR. Drug related deaths: Australia—1969 to 1980. Australian Alcohol/Drug Review. Proceedings of the Australian Medical Society on Alcohol and Drug Related Problems, Second Annual Conference (Adelaide), July-Aug 1982. Canberra: Canberra Publishing and Printing Co, in press.
2. Bittoun R. A tracheostomy for the Marlboro man. *Med J Aust* 1982; 2: 69-70.

Sir: Congratulations on having the courage to address such an important social issue as the health effects of smoking in the manner that you have.

Your vigorous approach is reflected in the cover of the *Journal* of July 24. While it might not appeal to the more conservative, the cover conveys a clear message and has been much appreciated by patients.

Staff in our psychiatric hospitals and community mental health centres teach people how to cope with stress and live healthier, more drug-free lifestyles. It is ironic that in attempting to help people cope with emotional disability we, as staff, sometimes pay too little attention to other health issues such as smoking.

It is good to see the *Journal* devoting more attention to preventable illness.

John Grigor,
Mental Health Division,
Health Commission of Victoria,
GPO Box 4029,
Melbourne, Vic. 3001.

Sir: I write to comment on "A tracheostomy for the Marlboro man" with the much talked-about picture on your front cover.¹

The dissemination of information about this destructive habit of smoking has for far too long been timid. In most smokers, the "habit" is a true addiction, and a direct approach to the reason will seldom persuade the addict to give up. It is often the oblique or humorous angle which will score a point.

My own clinical concern has been the difference between smokers and non-smokers undergoing anaesthesia and surgery, for the risk factors in the two groups are quite different. Your "Marble Row Man" is not unlike occasional patients who smoke within 24 hours of a rhinoplasty, with tears

streaming down their face and epistaxis powered by uncontrollable coughing.

Hunter J. H. Fry,
16 Howard Street,
Kew, Vic. 3101.

1. Bittoun R. A tracheostomy for the Marlboro man. *Med J Aust* 1982; 2: 69-70.

Sir: The Australian Consumers' Association would like to commend the *Journal's* decision to publicise the work of the anti-smoking group BUGA UP.* There can be little doubt that their work has brought to public attention, in the most memorable way, the health risks of smoking.

While one may have reservations about their recourse to civil disobedience as a means of getting their messages across, in years to come, historical perspective may regard them as vanguards of social change in this important area. Many now view the suffragette movement, the anti-war demonstrations of the 1960s, and the present anti-nuclear movement as turbulent but necessary means of achieving ends that are vital to fundamental questions about civilisation.

If the medical profession were to ignore the achievements of BUGA UP, there would be justifiable cause for "head-in-the-sand" accusations. To side against BUGA UP would be to implicitly side with the tobacco industry, their only vocal critics. The only course open to a profession dedicated to preventing tobacco-caused disease is to give recognition to other groups who share this goal. In doing this, the *Journal* is to be congratulated.

Simon Chapman,
Council Member,
Australian Consumers' Association,
28-30 Queen Street,
Chippendale, NSW 2008.

* Billboard Utilizing Graffitiists Against Unhealthy Promotions.

1. Bittoun R. A tracheostomy for the Marlboro man. *Med J Aust* 1982; 2: 69-70.

Sir: I was interested to read the short paper by Renee Bittoun entitled "A tracheostomy for the Marlboro Man" and would agree that there is need to ridicule cigarette advertising.

I note that recall of advertising for Marlboro cigarettes was almost universal among 10 to 11-year-old children in recent Australian studies, indicating just how seductive this particular advertisement is. The advertisement is still in the same areas in which I have been seeing it for many years, so any campaign along the lines suggested in the article will have a slow effect.

For the life of me, I cannot understand why that advertisement sells cigarettes since it is obviously the hat that maketh the man. That it is a very handsome hat I have no doubt means something very masculine to the youngsters who are seduced into smoking cigarettes.

I therefore think we should point out to the public that the advertisement is really

advertising hats and not cigarettes at all. Hats prevent skin malignancies if they are worn regularly, and I think Australia should be a nation of hat wearers. Any professor of community medicine or minister of health worth his or her salt should not be seen in the open without one. We do have a hat heritage which seems to have been lost and perhaps could be revived by a hat museum. Wearing a hat in the open should be as much a habit as buckling the seat belt before starting the car.

Although I agree that ridiculing advertisements will certainly be of help, perhaps the idea that this particular advertisement is advertising the hat (that makes the man masculine) rather than the cigarette (which detracts from his masculinity) might well be worth spreading around.

John N. Burry,
North Terrace House,
19 North Terrace,
Hackney, SA 5069.

1. Bittoun R. A tracheostomy for the Marlboro man. *Med J Aust* 1982; 2: 69-70.

THE FOLLOWING letter by Dr James Smibert might be best described as an "unpublished letter to the Editor". It was sent to The Age (Melbourne) but was not printed. The author then submitted it to the Journal. The Editor of The Age did not wish to comment for publication in the Journal. In fairness, most newspapers (and medical journals) receive more letters than can be published.—Editor.

To the Editor of *The Age*: On Thursday, July 29, you published on your front page (of *The Age*) the reaction of Philip Morris Ltd to the *Medical Journal of Australia's* front cover "spoofing" of cigarette advertisements. Philip Morris had counter-attacked the medical profession for "over-serving" and other alleged crimes.

That afternoon I phoned the following letter to Access Age:

"The reaction of the Philip Morris company to the *Medical Journal of Australia's* front cover was predictable. While the medical profession may contain a few black sheep, at least the majority is not engaged in trying to make a profit out of marketing a known poison for human consumption."

My short letter was not published, and I wonder why? Was it because the person in charge of Access Age is a chain-smoker? Or, was it because *The Age* would prefer to criticise the medical profession rather than the tobacco industry?

Or, are their full-page colour advertisements for cigarettes to big a source of income to jeopardise? Or, do they not accept that a packet of cigarettes a day trebles human mortality under the age of 65?

James Smibert,
400 Albert Street,
East Melbourne, Vic. 3002.