

Dear editor,

In his analysis of the FDA's deliberations on whether to ban menthol in cigarettes (*Tobacco Reporter*, December 2010), John Luik frets over a possible decision that would be "ideology-based" rather than "science-based." He cites the submission by Lorillard (whose best-selling cigarette is the menthol brand Newport) in which concern is expressed that various presentations on menthol by FDA staff were "scientifically inaccurate" and "omitted significant portions of the scientific record."

Luik cannot be unaware that until the past decade this same tobacco company publicly refused to accept the overwhelming scientific evidence that cigarette smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer in smokers. (The company is still holding to its denial in every one of the individual tobacco product liability suits against it.)

For Lorillard to bemoan a lack of "objectivity and fairness of the science process used for FDA tobacco regulation" is the height of hypocrisy. In every debate on any aspect of smoking over the past half-century—be it smoking and lung cancer, or the harmfulness of long-term exposure to passive smoke—the tobacco industry has claimed that more research is needed in order to find proof. And if one does not trust the tobacco industry on matters of science because of its now well-documented history of deception, sophistry and obfuscation, then must one be called an ideologue?

In citing Dr. Michael Siegel's and my Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Shadow Panel, Luik refers to us solely as anti-tobacco activists. His characterization gives short shrift to the fact that both Dr. Siegel and I have worked our way up the ladder over the past quarter-century by means of publication of numerous

articles on tobacco-related issues in first-line peer-reviewed scientific journals, in an academic community largely fearful of the political influence of the tobacco industry and weak-willed in counteracting tobacco use.

Luik might also have noted that I was the lone expert witness who testified against the FDA bill at both the Senate and House hearings. I stated that it would be absurd to place cigarettes under the putative control of the same agency that regulates cancer chemotherapy drugs. Unlike cigarettes, medications used to treat cancer can be pulled from the market by the FDA for causing harm.

Sincerely,

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Director

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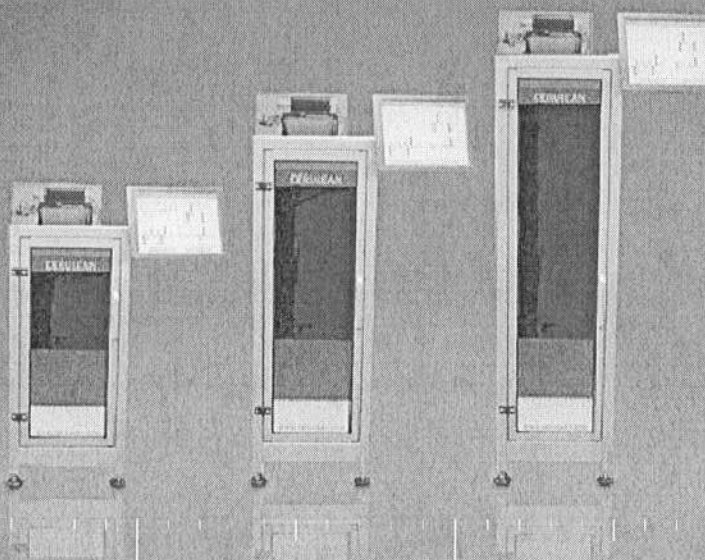
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