

whose wells were contaminated with the pesticide ethylene dibromide (EDB). For many years EDB was used routinely in 116 tobacco fields in the Connecticut River Valley, and tobacco is the only crop in the state on which EDB was used. The tobacco companies were also ordered to pay for a study of EDB contamination in the Connecticut River Valley and to monitor ground water near wells found to have EDB concentrations above the maximum allowable level.

Cigarettes and sports stars

TO THE EDITOR: In the excellent *New York State Journal of Medicine* of December 1983, devoted to smoking, I was impressed the most from a personal standpoint by the paper of Dr Mary Ann Cromer,¹ in which she pointed the finger at me along with Billie Jean King and Martina Navratilova for playing in professional tennis tournaments promoted by Virginia Slims cigarettes. In feeble defense I offer the following.

As professionals we had little choice but to play the "Slims" circuit because it was the major circuit of tournaments. To not play would be tantamount to stop earning a living from professional tennis. For Billie Jean and Martina this is not a realistic alternative. Fortunately for me, I have returned to the practice of medicine and I no longer play in professional events nor do I make any appearances at events sponsored by a cigarette manufacturer. I was never happy, nor am I now, with the fact that a cigarette company is the major promoter of women's professional tennis.

Just for the record let me add the following. Billie Jean King, Martina Navratilova, and Renée Richards are all three totally opposed to smoking and are dedicated to setting a healthy example for tennis players and non-tennis players alike.

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1. Cromer MA: "Precious baby." *NY State J Med* 1983; 83:1292.

In reply: Dr Richards and I seem to have very different points of view on alternatives to cigarette company sponsorship of sports and on the bargaining power of athletes over the products and settings to which their image is juxtaposed.

Although Martina Navratilova continues to participate in Philip Morris' Virginia Slims cigarettes tennis circuit and has worn an outfit at Wimbledon with the logo and colors of another cigarette brand, to the best of my knowledge neither she nor any other current professional tennis player has ever sported a non-smoking symbol on her uniform. Nor have there been any attempts to counteract the association of cigarette brands with the image of successful professional tennis players.

If women athletes—or the parents of participants as young as 14—truly wished to clear the air, they could demand that the tournament be renamed for something other than a cigarette brand name, that the cigarette advertising banners be removed from court-side and the scoreboards, that cigarette advertisements be deleted from souvenir programs, that free distribution of cigarettes be stopped, that the logo of the tournament be changed from that of a woman holding a tennis racket in one hand and a cigarette in the other, and that an alternate sponsor be sought.

Such changes would reduce the exploitation of women by the tobacco industry.

In a related incident, the Boston branch of the American Medical Women's Association has protested the use by a cigarette company of an athletic facility on the Boston University campus for the Virginia Slims tournament. But letters to the University's president have been largely ignored. Somehow I doubt an objection by Dr Richards would be similarly ignored. Would she care to prove me wrong?

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The rare courage of public role models

TO THE EDITOR: Your December 1983 issue devoted entirely to smoking-related articles was a real landmark. You are to be commended for bringing together so many of the world's most authoritative voices, joined in outrage against smoking. As the head of Group Against Smoking Pollution (GASP) of Massachusetts for the last six years, I have learned firsthand how powerful the tobacco companies have made themselves, and how pervasively their network of influence extends around the world.

The proliferation of cigarette-sponsored sports and entertainment events, as referred to in the *Journal*, is particularly interesting since it reflects a strategy by which the industry enables its name and logo to become associated with socially redeeming cultural events. However, not all public figures have allowed their name and reputation to be exploited in this way.

For example, a world class runner and Boston Marathon winner, Bill Rodgers, refused to participate in a road race in New England last year after learning that one of the sponsors was a tobacco company (American Brands). This year in Canada, downhill ski champion Steve Podborski refused to accept the winner's cup in a major race in protest against the sponsorship by a tobacco company (R J Reynolds-MacDonald); the Canadian national slalom champion, Jim Read, returned his trophy for the same reason.

At the other end of the spectrum is Billie Jean King who when asked by GASP last year in Boston why she allows her name to be associated with Virginia Slims cigarettes, replied that she believes in "free enterprise and that it's up to the woman herself."

In the entertainment field, in 1982 GASP contacted several stars of a music series being promoted as the "Camel Concerts on the Common." Singers James Taylor and Peter, Paul, and Mary were outraged that they had not been told of the cigarette sponsorship and announced that they would perform in the concert series only if it were not associated with Camel cigarettes. In a cloud of unfavorable publicity, R J Reynolds pulled out.

These are instances where public figures have taken courageous stands against being involved in sophisticated and deceptive cigarette promotions. They provide models of action for all those athletes and entertainers who say it just can't be done.

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Defeating the tobacco lobby

TO THE EDITOR: On behalf of the American Heart Association I would like to commend the *New York State Journal of Medicine* for its excellent December edition devoted entirely to ciga-