

EXCERPT OF RADIO INTERVIEW WITH
GLORIA STEINEM, WNYC, NEW YORK, NEW YORK, 1986

Gloria Steinem:

...health articles [on] the dangers of smoking and I think it's pretty hard to find anybody in the United States who doesn't know, really, the dangers of smoking.

When we first started the magazine, we debated, rather naively, I confess, but anyway, sincerely about whether or not to take cigarette ads, and we decided that we would take them only if the health warning, which was then not on the ads, was put on the ads. Because, again, we thought our role was to be, you know, to give information, not to replace paternalism with maternalism, so to speak. In the interim, frankly, and on that basis, because five companies did put the health warnings on the advertisement, we took the ads. But frankly, we could not survive without those ads at the moment, and I don't know any other magazine—there are very few magazines of our size or seriousness that could survive without it—

Interviewer:

It seems like cigarettes and liquor are your big advertisers—

Steinem:

Well, it's hard, actually. So you know we made a decision in good conscience without any sense of economic dependency and I felt comfortable with that decision at the time. But I'm also here to tell you frankly that at the moment unless we could find a donor that could replace—if anybody's listening, because we are a foundation, we are now non-profit, you know, who would replace that income, we could not frankly be able to publish.

Interviewer:

Because this is a major problem since now what with women and lung cancer, that correlation has gone up in the last few years, surpassing men and lung cancer.

Steinem:

It's not surpassing men yet, but it has gone up quite a lot. But you know, about this, though, I think I am in agreement with the caller, but I would just like to point out this other thing which Barbara Seamens who is a feminist health expert has pointed out. She finds it sort of suspicious—and I don't mean on the part of the caller but just in general—that women's magazines get more criticism for running cigarette ads than men's magazines or general interest magazines and that we as a feminist magazine probably get more criticism than any other women's magazine. She's saying "well wait a minute, why is this?" you know.

Caller:

Well, hello? This is very sad. It strikes me as something of a rationalization that others are at least as bad as we are—

Steinem:

Uh hum—

Caller:

And I expect more of you, because you've done wonderful things, and—

Steinem:

Well, let me ask you frankly because I think this magazine belongs to all of us. It's a foundation, it's the public's possession. You know it should be working for the public good. Do you think that it would be better to stop publishing?

Caller:

No. No. I wouldn't, I don't think—

Steinem:

Well, how would you solve this problem? 'Cause we're always looking for help here.

Caller:

Well, I don't know the answer to that. I don't know enough about advertising. Although I'm a professor of management, I don't know enough about advertising in your particular situation. Let me tell you, however, that when I started teaching many years ago, some 30 years ago...