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May 9, 1985

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TO: Committee Members

Reginald L. Lester
Managing Director

FROM: Reg Lester *R*

SUBJECT: North Carolina Health Council Convocation

The above group held a convocation on "Tobacco: A Dilemma for North Carolina Health Workers," May 7-8 in Raleigh. The format and purpose was similar to the North Carolina Council of Churches' hearing in November, 1983. I spoke to the group and staffed the event, offering comments, making clarifications and correcting misstatements.

I will distribute soon an extensive review of this group, meeting and probable results. I thought, however, in the meantime you would be interested in a few topline observations and in some of the news coverage of the event. (Three clippings are attached.)

My major observations are:

(1) The health community is very aware of the political power of the agricultural segment of tobacco. They will seek to split the tobacco growers and cigarette manufacturers and form a new coalition with the tobacco farmers. When asked if the growers would be interested in talking about alternatives, I replied that we appreciated the opportunity to talk with all groups and interests about growers' problems, but did not make any commitments to work with them.

(2) The major impetus for this meeting and follow-up campaign came from the University of North Carolina's School of Public Health and Health Services Research Center. (They have already received a large federal grant to conduct a smoking cessation study.) Bill Finger of the North Carolina Public Policy Research Center helped prepare this meeting. You may remember him as the editor of The Tobacco Industry in Transition. He also assisted with the Council of Churches' hearing and report.

(3) There is a growing boldness on the part of the state's intellectuals (newspaper editorialists, social activists, health professionals, religious leaders) to climb on the anti-tobacco bandwagon. We may be faced with a new, unique and potentially strong anti-tobacco enemy in the number one tobacco state.

We will continue to monitor this situation and keep you informed.

RLL/bb

Attachments