

American Tobacco Official Enlightens Antibac Senator

The New York Times last week ran the missives below in its "letters" column. Senator Maurine B. Neuberger, the legislator who recently proclaimed that no jury of twelve men and women could exonerate cigarettes as a cause of lung cancer, authored the anti-tobacco letter. Answering her charges — in the pro-tobacco letter — was Robert K. Heimann, a public relations officer for the American Tobacco Co.

Senator Neuberger's Letter

In The Times' business and financial section for March 18 there appeared an analysis of the impact of lung cancer research upon the cigarette and advertising industries.

The article noted that despite the proliferating evidence that cigarette smoking causes lung cancer, the tobacco industry adheres to the position that the causal connection has not been proved, indeed probably does not exist. The writer cites a recent report by the American Tobacco Company that its employes smoke twice as much, live longer, and have fewer deaths from cancer and heart disease than the general public. Typically, the report concluded:

"These results are in direct opposition to the hypothesis that cigarette smoking per se causes higher mortality rates generally and/or lung cancer and/or heart disease."

Are they? The following pertinent discussion appeared in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute on Oct. 15, 1958:

"... It is well known that mortality comparisons cannot be drawn directly between employe groups and the general population, since the death rates for many groups of employed persons are lower than death rates for the general population with age, sex and race taken into consideration. This is true because there is a strong tendency to exclude from employment those persons who have acute or chronic diseases or who are seriously disabled from any cause and those employes who develop permanent disabilities from disease or other causes are usually discharged, retired or dropped from the list of regular employes. Reasons of this nature

undoubtedly account for the deficit in deaths from all causes noted in the group of employes under consideration."

Different View

A radically different picture of the relative health of tobacco industry employes emerges from the Society of Actuaries. The society, whose cold and disinterested analysis of statistical data forms the basis for insurance rates, reports that the rate of death and permanent disability claims for tobacco industry employes is significantly higher than the rate for comparable employes in other industries.

Dr. Michael B. Shimkin, Associate Director for Field Studies of the National Cancer Institute, has stated that the causal relationship between smoking and cancer "is as clearly demonstrated as any biological association can be." Dr. Shimkin and others have estimated that 20,000 lung cancer deaths are caused by cigarette smoking annually.

The Times' article, "Cigarette Men Eye New Threat," fairly captures the callous myopia of the affected industries in regarding the association between smoking and lung cancer solely as a threat to their commercial interests.

Lung cancer does pose a threat to the cigarette industry; it also threatens a substantial segment of the advertising industry. It is a grave threat to national health. And it is a threat that neither the distortion of scientific data nor the most inventive advertising campaign can abate.

Maurine B. Neuberger,
United States Senator from Oregon.
Washington, March 27, 1962.

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Mr. Heimann's Letter

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point.

We added that the significance of our data did not lie in that fact. Rather, it lies in the facts that (1) the employes' lower-than-average mortality exists concurrent with a pattern of distinctly heavy smoking, and (2) respiratory cancer mortality is as much below average in this heavy smoking population as is mortality from other or all causes.

Group's Turnover

All three mortality studies—Dorn-Baum, Haag-Hanmer and Cohen-Heimann—indicate that employes on leave, those retired for disability and those retired for age are included in the mortality calculations, and that turnover among the whole employe group studied is negligible.

Dorn-Baum stated that "There is no evidence that the lower mortality of the workers in cigarette factories can be attributed to rapid labor turnover or to dropping seriously ill employes from the payroll." Thus Mrs. Neuberger's assertion, "Reasons of this nature undoubtedly account for the deficit in deaths from all causes noted in the group of employes under consideration," is not valid.

The research to which Senator Neuberger refers was not initiated by the American Tobacco Company. The first mortality calculations were made by two scientists of the National Cancer Institute, United

States Public Health Service, at their request, covering the period October, 1946, through 1952. The scientists, Drs. Harold F. Dorn and William S. Baum, found that the employes' total mortality rate was "definitely lower" than average.

Independent Study

An independent study of these employes' smoking habits was then made by five scientists from the University of North Carolina. Their survey was described by Dr. R. H. Rigdon, Professor of Pathology of the University of Texas and an experienced cancer researcher, as "the best that has been published. The techniques used to establish the amount smoked emphasize the uncertainty of the data obtained by others, even including myself."

Mortality rates from 1953-56, published by Haag-Hanmer, confirmed the Dorn-Baum findings; the extension of mortality calculations to 1957-60 by Dr. Cohen and myself constitute further verification.

We believe the findings of these four separate studies, obtained without recourse to sampling or estimates, are contradictory to the theory that cigarette smoking per se "causes" increased mortality from all causes, from respiratory cancer or from heart disease.

Senator Neuberger's letter mentions data from the Society of Actuaries. Since the data do not refer to smoking habits they have no direct relevance to the widely publicized theory which attempts to link cigarette smoking with lung cancer.

Robert K. Heimann,
The American Tobacco Company.
New York, April 3, 1962.
