

# Global Partnerships for Tobacco Control

## Essential Action

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December 21, 2000

<Name>  
<Department>  
<Institution>  
<Address>

Dear <Name>:

It came to our attention recently that you have agreed to serve as a peer reviewer for the Philip Morris External Research Program, a reincarnation of the Philip Morris-funded Center for Indoor Air Research (CIAR).

Essential Action is a non-profit organization based in Washington, DC that focuses on issues related to international corporate accountability. Our Global Partnerships for Tobacco Control program links groups working on tobacco control in the U.S. and Canada with partners in other countries to share vital information and work on joint tobacco control projects and campaigns. The goal of the program is to support and strengthen international tobacco control at the grassroots level. To date, over 315 groups from more than 85 countries and 35 U.S. states have signed up to participate in the program. Participating groups include: research institutions, hospitals, medical associations, faith-based organizations, schools, local government agencies, tobacco control advocacy groups and consumer organizations.

Given our strong interest in tobacco control both locally and globally, we are concerned that you have chosen to associate yourself and your institution with a company that has a disturbing track record of putting profits over the interest of public health.

Whatever your reasons for participating in Philip Morris External Research Program, internal Philip Morris documents make clear that the company uses ties with doctors and researchers to legitimize its activities. Despite the company's current multi-million dollar PR campaign designed to convince the public that it has "changed," there is no concrete evidence to support the rhetoric. If anything, the truth is to the contrary. Philip Morris is simply marketing its cigarettes more aggressively overseas, where it now derives almost two-thirds of its tobacco revenues.

In Vietnam, for example, Philip Morris continues to employ young women to distribute free cigarettes to youth, despite making a public pledge in the fall of 1999 to end the practice. In Senegal, it is not uncommon to see children as young as one-year-old wearing Marlboro baby clothing. In Romania, Philip Morris uses posters sporting good-looking young Americans on red motorcycles and skylines of famous U.S. cities to advertise its "L & M" brand. And in Malaysia, the company has found a way to circumvent strict regulations against tobacco advertising, by establishing "Marlboro" clothing shops and "Marlboro" adventure trips. All around the world,

Philip Morris cashes in on the powerful myth of the “American Dream,” selling cigarettes by promoting smoking as the “American” thing to do.\*

Philip Morris's continued disregard for the health and well being of the world's people is one of the primary factors behind the global epidemic of tobacco-related disease, which according to the World Health Organizations will kill 10 million people annually by 2030, 70% in developing countries. Given such mind-boggling, sobering statistics, it is imperative that doctors, researchers, public health officials, teachers, and non profit organizations focus their attention on the most effective methods of preventing people from starting to use tobacco products and helping those who do to quit.

While it may not seem that you are doing any great harm serving as a peer reviewer for Philip Morris, your association with the company is damaging to the cause of public health as well as your reputation as a researcher. Lending your name and institutional affiliation to Philip Morris lends the company the legitimacy it is desperately seeking – legitimacy which itself may serve to make smoking appear more palatable, both in the U.S. and abroad.

As you may know, Philip Morris established CIAR in 1998 “to sponsor high quality research on indoor air issues and to facilitate communication of research findings to the broad scientific community.” Few researchers who received funding from the Center knew of its ties to the tobacco industry, nor understood its larger agenda, which was to thwart efforts to ban smoking in public places (the most effective means of preventing passive smoking and de-normalizing smoking).\*\* Research that was funded by CIAR was used to legitimize Philip Morris’s position that improved ventilation systems were the answer to public concern about second hand smoke – and that second hand smoke was not really as harmful as tobacco control advocates claimed.

Philip Morris did not publicize its ties to CIAR initially, because it understood that many researchers feel more comfortable receiving funding from a supposedly “independent” research center rather than directly from a controversial tobacco company. Now things have changed, and Philip Morris is seeking credibility through the guise of “openness,” suggesting that its public support for research removes the taint associated with CIAR and secretive research funding.

In fact, there is every reason to believe Philip Morris’s aims are as nefarious as ever. We expect that Philip Morris will use its “new” research program to try to persuade governments around the world not to implement vital tobacco control legislation.

Instead of taking our word for it, we encourage you to examine what the industry itself has said, internally, about its past and future research agenda (see attachment).

We believe that the majority of people on the list of peer reviewers are well-intentioned researchers who are genuinely concerned about promoting public health. In the past week, we have spoken with several of the researchers on the list. All have welcomed dialogue on this issue, and a few are already seriously considering cutting their ties to Philip Morris, despite longstanding personal and financial relationships with CIAR.

We understand that, like many of people on the peer reviewer list, you may have received substantial financial support from CIAR in the past and/or have a close working relationship with Max Eisenberg and Lynn Channing. Under such circumstances, your decision to accept the

invitation to serve as a peer reviewer for the Philip Morris External Research Program may have seemed routine.

In light of the multiple concerns we have laid out, we strongly encourage you reconsider your decision to further associate yourself with Philip Morris. Specifically, we ask that you: 1) Refuse to accept any money that Philip Morris offers you, and return any money already given. 2) Notify the company that you will refuse to participate further in the company's External Research Program as a peer reviewer or in any other capacity.

We trust that you share our interest in promoting public health worldwide and hope you will reconsider your involvement with Philip Morris, both for the sake of public health as well as your reputation as a researcher.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Anna White  
Coordinator, Global Partnerships for Tobacco Control  
awhite@essential.org

Robert Weissman  
Co-Director, Essential Action

\* For more information on Philip Morris's marketing practices abroad, we encourage you to read Essential Action's report *Addicted to Profit: Big Tobacco's Expanding Global Reach*. You can access it online at [www.essentialaction.org/addicted/](http://www.essentialaction.org/addicted/). We would also be happy to send you a hard copy version.

\*\* Just last month, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that lung cancer rates had decreased 14 percent in California over the past decade (compared to decreases of only 2.7 percent in other regions of the country). The good news is a direct result of the state's tough anti-smoking measures, which include raising tobacco taxes, establishing effective anti-smoking and education programs, and *restricting smoking in public buildings and workplaces*.

Attachment: In the Tobacco Industry's Own Words

## IN THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY'S OWN WORDS

### WHAT TOBACCO INDUSTRY DOCUMENTS HAVE TO SAY...

#### ...ON RECRUITING SCIENTISTS WHO WILL SUPPORT THE INDUSTRY'S AGENDA

In a memo from a 1988 industry meeting in London, details of PM's international strategy to "coordinate and pay so many scientists on an international basis to keep the environmental tobacco smoke controversy alive" is clearly laid out. The document states that "the consultants should, ideally, be ... scientists who ... have no previous record on the primary issues." For commentary on this memo by Simon Chapman see <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/314/7094/1569>

#### ...ON STRATEGIES TO COMBAT TOBACCO CONTROL INITIATIVES INTERNATIONALLY

In a BAT document dated 23 March, 1993 from Dr. Sharon Boyse to colleagues in Latin America (Venezuela, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Costa Rica, and Guatemala) with the subject "ETS Consultancy Programme," states explicitly:

"As you are aware, one of the ways that restrictions on smoking in public places and the workplace can be prevented is by lobbying for indoor air quality and ventilation standards, using the argument that studies have shown that inadequate ventilation is the major contributor to poor indoor air quality, and not ETS.

At our request, Covington & Burlington have put together a proposal to lobby for the adoption of such ventilation standards in appropriate countries in Latin America, which is attached, and is based on a similar programme *that has been successfully carried out in the USA.*" [our emphasis]

#### ...ON PM'S FUTURE SCIENTIFIC DIRECTION

In a confidential 1999 document, PM categorizes projects according to a range of strategies, including: Accommodation; Credibility; Identification and Prioritization of Scientific Issues; Identification of Emerging Issues; Global Communication Process; Communication of Scientific Information; and Worldwide Integration. Some interesting examples:

Scientific Integrity Initiative (CR/SCIN):

→ Have an Independent consultant check on the constitutional rules of universities that guide the acceptance of industry monies.

→ Establish a world wide list of universities that have either private research institutions attached, or that are in close cooperation with such institutions.

→ Check on the procedures that were used by other industries to found research bodies that work now as reputed independent Institution (e.g. ILSI) and use them as templates.

Scientific Relations (CR/SR):

→ Establish an informal "club" of industries that are prone to, or in the same litigation situation, as the tobacco industry.

→ Establish a compendium of possibilities to give visual signs of the "new openness" (coverage of anti conferences, sending industry papers to anti journals, seeking discussions in the public)"

<http://www.pmdocs.com/getallimg.asp?DOCID=2064716845/6856>

...ON THE CENTER FOR INDOOR AIR RESEARCH (CIAR)

CIAR's RESEARCH & REVIEW PROCESS (Note similarities to Philip Morris's "new" External Research Program)

<http://www.pmdocs.com/getallimg.asp?DOCID=2024211839/1847>

CONFIDENTIAL - ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSALS 1998 by Helmut Reif (Fascinating document that ranks proposals according to PM's ETS objectives)

<http://www.pmdocs.com/getallimg.asp?DOCID=2063596699/6722>

STATUS REPORT ON CIAR-SUPPORTED PROJECTS (Includes: name, project title, PM contact, total budget)

<http://www.pmdocs.com/getallimg.asp?DOCID=2063813811/3819>

LIST OF PAPERS PUBLISHED BY CIAR-FUNDED RESEARCHERS (Many names are also on PM list of peer reviewers)

<http://www.pmdocs.com/getallimg.asp?DOCID=2063813820/3837> (January 1999)

REQUESTS FOR APPLICATIONS (Many names are also on PM list of peer reviewers)

<http://www.pmdocs.com/getallimg.asp?DOCID=2023053317/3320> (1993)

<http://www.pmdocs.com/getallimg.asp?DOCID=2063813598A/3630> (1998)

RESEARCH PROPOSALS

<http://www.pmdocs.com/getallimg.asp?DOCID=2023523507/3601> (1991)

EXAMPLE OF HOW CIAR RESEARCH WAS USED FOR POLITICAL MEANS

(Comments of Max Eisenberg on Occupational Safety and Health Agency's "Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Indoor Air Quality")

<http://www.pmdocs.com/getallimg.asp?DOCID=2057835381/5385>

EXAMPLE OF CIAR INFLUENCE OVER A RESEARCH PROJECT

<http://www.pmdocs.com/getallimg.asp?DOCID=2028386271>

SOME BACKGROUND ON MAX EISENBURG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CIAR

("in it for the money," "well connected to EPA")

<http://www.pmdocs.com/getallimg.asp?DOCID=2021528173>

THE DEMISE OF CIAR

Draft document dated 9/14/93

"\* CIAR represents credible, quality science and a vehicle for its support and conduct

\* Credibility derives from support of independent investigators and the involvement of the CIAR SAB

\* Some scientist can accept support from CIAR but NOT from tobacco cos.

\* What will replace CIAR? No vehicle for conduct and monitoring of research projects (US and overseas)"

<http://www.pmdocs.com/getallimg.asp?DOCID=2024211850>