

Verbatim excerpts from an address on "Some Economic Opposition to Health Insurance", delivered by James Rorty before the National Conference of the American Association for Social Security, April 9, 1958, at Hotel Astor.

The Journal's food prospects and the cigarette prospects are several times as valuable as lay prospects for the same products. The Journal's readers are doctors who have prestige and authority, and maybe they can be induced to recommend the advertiser's product to their patients. The cigarette prospects have probably the maximum value, because if the cigarette manufacturer can get the doctor not only to smoke his cigarettes but to recommend it to his patients, that is what is known in the trade as a "money". What every cigarette smoker wants is assurance that his doctor O. K.'s his vice. In point of actual fact, one cigarette advertiser currently running page advertisements weekly in the Journal and in thirty other medical publications, by advancing the claim of "medical acceptance" for his product, has boosted the sales of his product from nothing to over \$20,000,000 worth in five years.

* * * * *

The cigarette company already mentioned is the Philip Morris Company, Limited. Its caissons, figuratively speaking, deliver ammunition every week to the advertising bins of the Journal and at less frequent intervals to thirty other medical journals. The methods and ethics of its advertising campaign are not exceptional, as advertising goes. I have described this campaign in an article which for six months I have been trying vainly to get published. Briefly, the facts are as follows:

When the Philip Morris Company launched its new popular priced cigarette in 1955, it based its advertising promotion on the use of a new hygroscopic agent, diethylene glycol. There existed at that time a considerable body of medical and chemical literature showing that diethylene glycol is toxic. Whether or not it is harmful in very small quantities as used in cigarettes, nobody knew then and nobody knows now. That it is highly poisonous when used in quantity as a solvent for drugs was proved last Fall when at least 72 persons died as a result of taking Sulfanilamide Massengill, in which diethylene glycol, later shown to have been the toxic agent, was used as the solvent for the new drug sulfanilamide.

When this happened, another cigarette company abandoned the use of diethylene glycol in its product and returned to the more commonly used hygroscopic agent which is glycerine. The Philip Morris Company, however, continued to use diethylene glycol and continued its advertising in the Journal and elsewhere featuring the use of diethylene glycol. Presumably it felt justified in this policy by an editorial statement of the AMA Journal in its issue of October 30, 1957, that

"There is no evidence that its (diethylene glycol's) ordinary use in industry or as an ingredient in the manufacture of cigarettes, is harmful."

There is still no evidence of this sort. On the other hand, there is also no evidence that diethylene glycol, as used in cigarettes, is not harmful. The chief of the Food and Drug Administration states:

"Diethylene Glycol has been shown to be toxic and foods containing it are regarded as adulterated within the meaning of the Food and Drugs Act.... The Food and Drugs Act gives us no authority over cigarettes. We have had no occasion, therefore, to investigate the possible harmfulness of diethylene glycol as an ingredient in cigarettes. Certainly no harmful substance should be added to cigarettes, although the amount of this substance which proved toxic in the recent sulfanilamide disaster is of a very different order of magnitude than that which could possibly be incorporated in cigarettes."

As a layman, I can permit myself no opinion on the question of whether or not diethylene glycol as used in cigarettes is harmful. But I submit to you, with his permission, this statement by Dr. A. J. Carlson, head of the department of physiology of the University of Chicago, and a scientist of international reputation:

"I know of no reliable evidence as to whether the amount of diethylene glycol in Philip Morris cigarettes is or is not injurious to man. Reliable evidence on this problem would be a long and expensive undertaking, because the injuries, if any, will be slight and chronic in the amount of diethylene glycol that would enter the body from smoking these cigarettes. However, it would seem a clear matter of wisdom to exclude this poison from cigarettes, at least until possible evidence of harmlessness is available. Everybody knows the difficulty of securing reliable evidence in cases of substances that have or may have very slight but chronic injurious action. The reasons, of course, is that many of the organs and systems in our bodies may be injured extensively before any evidence of such injury is available in the intact of the animal or man because of our large factors of safety in many of our organs and systems.

"Dr. Fishbein's editorial statement that 'There is no evidence that diethylene glycol as used in cigarettes is harmful' is of course true, but the contrary statement is also true, namely, that there is no evidence at present that it is harmless. I think the people responsible for the advertising copy of Philip Morris cigarettes are using, unduly, if not unfairly, the so-called medical approval of these cigarettes."

The last sentence in Dr. Carlson's statement requires some explanation. The Philip Morris advertising in the medical press for the past three years or more has featured the research findings of Dr. Michael G. Mulinos, of the department of pharmacology of Columbia University, Dr. Frederick B. Flinn, of New York, and others. These findings, based on research paid for by the Philip Morris Company, were to the effect that because of the use of diethylene glycol, Philip Morris cigarettes are less irritating to the throat than other cigarettes. The findings of other research, including that of Dr. Carlson and his associate Dr. Harold Holck, this research being paid for directly or indirectly by the glycerine interests, contradicted these findings.

Although the Philip Morris medical advertising features the use of diethylene glycol, the lay advertising, including the extensive radio advertising of this cigarette, does not mention diethylene glycol by name. The following radio "commercial", transcribed stenographically from the Philip Morris program of December 18, 1956, over Station WEAJ is an example of this advertising. After

referring to the scientific research supporting the claims that Philip Morris cigarettes are less irritating, the commercial continues:

"Everyone knows that for 87 years Philip Morris has been creating famous cigarettes and selling them under the personal Philip Morris name. But not until a keener smoker gets the sense to try a Philip Morris himself does he discover that the same distinction goes into this new modern method of manufacture. Then he joins with all others in spreading the glad news that Philip Morris enables you to smoke as often as you please, as freely as you please, and yet find complete enjoyment in the Philip Morris tobacco."

A statement frequently employed in these broadcasts, in the past at least, is "Consider these claims only in the light of their acceptance by the medical profession."

I leave this audience to judge whether Dr. Carlson's doubt as to the fairness of this advertising is justified. Incidentally, neither in the medical advertising nor in other advertising has the Philip Morris Company mentioned the existence of a substantial body of scientific evidence, published by highly reputable scientists, which contradicts the Philip Morris claims.

It is obvious to me that the investigation of the question as to whether or not diethylene glycol is harmful as used in cigarettes, and the further question as to the fairness of Philip Morris advertising, is properly a job for an impartial public body. I would suggest any or all of the followings: the U. S. Public Health Service, the Food and Drug Administration, the Federal Trade Commission. I might add to this list, although it is not a public body, the National Better Business Bureau which has recently called attention to an alleged "whispering campaign" in this connection. Finally, I would suggest to the Committee of 450 that it memorialize the Trustees of the American Medical Association concerning the Philip Morris advertising, the circumstances of its original and continued acceptance by the Journal, and particularly the fairness of the Philip Morris claims concerning the so-called "medical acceptance" of its advertised claims for its product. Personally, I shall be glad to produce for the purposes of such investigation, the manuscript of my forthcoming book entitled "The Medical Dictatorship" in which a more extended treatment of this and related subjects appear.

MR GREENWALD continued: We then, as Dr. Mulinos has just mentioned to you, did a considerable amount of research, and after that research work was completed we took that information to Dr. Fishbein. Based upon the facts which we then presented, The American Medical Association accepted our advertising and permitted us to make statements which were in conformance with the findings of our research.

Now, Dr. Fishbein was very helpful to us in telling what we should do, how we should do it, how we should advertise, that we should keep our advertising ethical, dignified and proper; and we appreciated that. We had imposed upon his good nature we felt, and at one time I said to the President of our company, "I feel somewhat embarrassed asking for so many courtesies from Dr. Fishbein. I think that it would be wise on our part, and I would like to compensate Dr. Fishbein for any services that he might render our company."

I was authorized by our President to offer Dr. Fishbein a retainer, which I did; and Dr. Fishbein thanked me for the offer, and told me that his one job was editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association, and any courtesies that he could extend to us would be his pleasure.

MR. RORTY: Would you care to mention the amount of the retainer you offered?

MR. GREENWALD: I was authorized to offer \$25,000, but I did not offer \$25,000.

* * * * *

MR. RORTY: Dr. Mulinos, do you feel that the broadcasts - I quoted an example of the Philip Morris broadcasts - have fairly represented your findings to the public? Do you approve of the statement that I quote? I quoted from a Philip Morris broadcast. The accuracy of that statement, of course, can be corroborated and checked with the cooperation, I am sure, of Mr. Greenwald by the records of N.B.C. I would like your position on that.

DR. MULINOS: I am perfectly willing to answer the question, but I hate to take up the time of this meeting that will be necessary to go into that.