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SMOKERS' HACKS: THE TOBACCO LOBBY'S PR FRONT GROUPS

By John C. Stauber

Recent news coverage might lead you to believe that tobacco is on its last legs, as its opponents lobby for aggressive public education and strict new regulations to prevent youthful addiction and to protect the public's right to a smoke-free environment.

If you believe this, you're dead wrong, according to the chief PR lobbyist for the tobacco industry. Although tobacco's addicts are dying by the millions each year, sales are growing world-wide, says Tom Lauria, of the Tobacco Institute.

At a PR seminar in May, Lauria dismissed tobacco critics as simply the latest "political correctness craze." He ridiculed predictions of tobacco's demise, saying that the media has been preparing smoking's obituary for decades.

Despite the bad press tobacco has been receiving, industry profits are soaring, and the industry is opening new, unregulated mega-markets in Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Third World. Even in the United

continued on next page

FLACK ATTACK

Fifteen thousand PR practitioners belong to the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and pledge to abide by its seventeen-point "Code of Professional Standards." The code states that a PRSA member "will only conduct his or her professional life in accord with the public interest."

Does anyone really believe that pushing tobacco products is "in accord with the public interest"? If the PRSA code were taken seriously, how could scores of PRSA members justify their continued work for cigarette companies? Yet a quick survey of PR firms by *PR Watch* could only find nine firms that refuse to represent tobacco interests.

'Corporate social responsibility' is a trendy phrase sweeping the business world. Business for Social Responsibility, a nation-wide association formed in 1992, has seen its membership swell in two short years to more than 800 firms. Some, such as Calvert Invest-

ment and Ben & Jerry's, have pioneered higher standards of corporate citizenship. Other BSR members, such as Time Warner, are understandably suspect. Are they sincere, or just using claims of "social responsibility" as a new PR tactic akin to "greenwashing"?

Companies that claim a higher standard of social responsibility should of course be challenged to prove it by their business practices. One measure of commitment should be an examination of which PR firms a business hires. It would seem quite hypocritical for a member of Business for Social Responsibility to be represented by, for example, an ethical untouchable like Burson-Marsteller.

Socially responsible firms now seeking like-minded PR representation have to look long and hard. While many PR companies push the concept of "social responsibility" for their clients, few seem to take it seriously for their own industry.

—John C. Stauber, Editor

States, most attempts at serious federal or state regulation or taxation are swatted down by tobacco's skilled army of highly paid lobbyists.

Lauria's message to the assembled PR practitioners was that while tobacco may be fighting for its life, it's been fighting and winning for a long time. One way the cigarette industry intends to keep winning is by escalating to unprecedented levels its use of PR front groups, such as the National Smokers Alliance.

SNATCHING VICTORY FROM THE ASHES

Tobacco front groups date back at least to the 1950s when Hill & Knowlton formed the Tobacco Institute Research Committee. (See article on page 6.) But the latest front group, the National Smokers Alliance, is more ambitious and better-funded than any previous grassroots campaign.

Burson-Marsteller runs the NSA with money from the Philip Morris Company. In recent months, as the FDA and some politicians have increased their efforts to

regulate smoking, the NSA has responded with a nationwide mobilization that it claims is bringing thousands of smokers into its ranks each week.

Burson-Marsteller's state-of-the-art campaign utilizes full-page newspaper ads, direct telemarketing, paid canvassers, free 800 numbers, newsletters and letters to send to federal agencies. B-M is targeting the fifty million Americans who smoke. Its goal is to rile-up and mobilize a committed cadre of hundreds of thousands, better yet millions, to be foot soldiers in a grassroots army directed by Philip Morris's political operatives at Burson-Marsteller.

The "National Smoker's Alliance" (NSA) is a sophisticated, hi-tech campaign that organizes tobacco's victims to protect tobacco's profits.

In recent years California has been the front line of the tobacco wars and the state where the industry has suffered its worst setbacks. In 1988 the cigarette companies spent more than \$20 million in a failed effort to defeat a major anti-smoking initiative. Since then health activists have succeeded in passing hundreds of local smoking bans. As a result, California has seen a 30% decrease in cigarette consumption, the most success of any state in reducing tobacco's deadly toll.

Philip Morris is fighting back through the NSA and a lesser-known California PR firm called the Dolphin Group. Funded with a reported half-million dollars from Philip Morris, Dolphin CEO Lee Stitzenberger set up a front group deceptively named "Californians for State-wide Smoking Restrictions." Using this name to fool petition signers, the group has gathered the hundreds of thousands of signatures needed to place a pro-smoking referendum before California voters this November. If passed, the referendum will do away with the hundreds of strong local anti-smoking ordinances in California.

Philip Morris knows that to win a pro-smoking initiative it has to produce troops, people who can willingly argue on its behalf. The NSA is a sophisticated, camouflaged campaign that organizes tobacco's victims to protect tobacco's profits.

In the past, the tobacco industry attempted, not too convincingly, to distance itself from the pro-smoking forces. The Tobacco Institute's Brennan Dawson told the Congressional Quarterly in 1990, "If we were to fund smokers' rights groups and bring them to Washington, wouldn't they then be viewed as an arm of the tobacco industry?"

THREE OUT OF FOUR FLACKS AGREE: NO IFs ABOUT BUTTS

Polling and research by *PR Watch* shows that three out of four prominent PR firms have no qualms about pushing tobacco addiction.

Of 38 companies surveyed or researched, only 9 said they would decline a contract to represent the tobacco industry.

The firms that "just said no" were: Cone/Coughlin Communications; Corbett Associates, Inc.; Cunningham Communication Inc.; Edward Howard & Company; Lukaszewski Group; MWW/Strategic Communications, Inc.; Padilla Speer Beardsley Inc.; The Pires Group, Inc.; and G.K. Sprinkle Consulting.

Firms willing to flack for tobacco interests include: Abernathy MacGregor Scanlon; Apco Associates; Booke Communications Inc.; M. Booth & Associates; Burson-Marsteller; Capitoline/MS&L; Cohn & Wolfe; Council for Tobacco Research; Direct Impact; The Dolphin Group; CME-KHB Advertising; Earle Palmer Brown Public Affairs; Edelman PR Worldwide; Epley Associates, Inc.; Fleishman-Hillard Inc.; GCI Group Inc.; Gavin-Anderson & Company; Jack Guthrie & Associates; E. Bruce Harrison; Hill & Knowlton; Kekst & Company, Inc.; Keller Crescent Company; Lockhart & Pettus, Inc.; RTC Group; Joanne Ralston & Associates; The Robbins Group; Rogers & Cowan; Tobacco Institute; and Watt, Roop & Company.

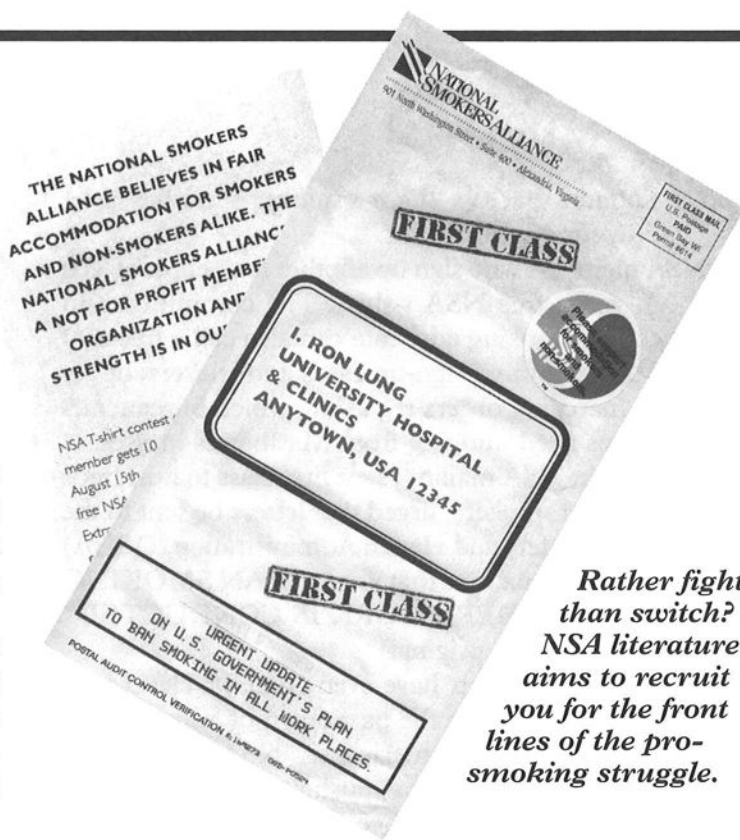
Apparently desperate times require more obvious measures. Writing in the *National Journal* (5/28/94), journalist Peter Stone observed that NSA "is increasingly looking like a subsidiary of Burson-Marsteller," and noted that the PR firm "used its grassroots lobbying unit, the Advocacy Communications Team, to start building membership in the group last year."

Thomas Humber, a B-M vice president, is president and CEO of the NSA. Burson executives Kenneth Rietz and Pierre Salinger are active, as is Peter G. Kelly, a prominent Democrat with the firm of Black, Manafort, Stone & Kelly, which is owned by Burson-Marsteller.

Perhaps the tobacco industry is less concerned these days about fooling the news media, but it still appears important that the public not view the members of the NSA as pawns of Philip Morris or Burson Marsteller. Therefore, the names of the NSA's corporate funders and organizers are kept off of the group's materials.

How does the NSA recruit smoking's victims into becoming its advocates? Through a combination of high-tech direct marketing techniques and old fashioned 'feet in the street' community organizing.

Like every good grassroots group, the National Smokers Alliance has a folksy but strident newsletter for its membership, called "The NSA Voice." According to its June 1994 issue, the NSA is paying hundreds of young activists, mostly unemployed college students, to sign up NSA members in bars and bowling alleys in Washington, Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, New York Seattle and other cities.



Rather fight than switch? NSA literature aims to recruit you for the front lines of the pro-smoking struggle.

Eric Schippers, in charge of the membership drive, reports that "during only the first two months of activity, the Chicago campaign put 180 recruiters on the street and enlisted more than 40,000 members." He claims that such one-on-one organizing has helped swell the NSA ranks to more than 300,000 smokers.

Many NSA members are first recruited via full-page ads (with an 800 number) that exhort puffers to stand up for their rights. Everyone who calls receives the NSA newsletter free for three months, along with 10 membership recruitment cards and stickers to place in stores

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and restaurants that say, "I am a smoker and have spent \$_____ in your establishment."

NSA members who sign up another ten people at \$10 each can win a free NSA t-shirt. The committed and informed pro-smoking advocate can also call a free 800 number to order more sign-up cards and stickers, or get the latest marching orders regarding which bureaucrats or politicians need nudging from Marlboro's masses.

One recent NSA mailing, sent first class to hundreds of thousands of smokers, urged that letters be sent to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to defeat new regulations that would "BAN SMOKING IN ANY SITE WHERE WORK IS CONDUCTED" (capitalization in the original).

B-M's propagandists have even coined a clever play on words that questions the patriotism of anti-smokers by calling them "anti Americans." NSA's newsletter advises, "If 'Anti' America is pushing a discriminatory smoking ban in your workplace, speak up," and "check

the laws in your state with regard to the protection of individual rights."

Burson-Marsteller is more than happy to take the money that Philip Morris is pouring into its pro-smoking campaign, and Philip Morris has plenty of millions to spend. But this campaign is not really about swaying public opinion, a battle which the tobacco industry has already lost. Even half of the smokers say they favor stricter government regulation of their deadly habit.

The tobacco industry's goal is not to win good PR, but to avoid losing political and legal battles. This survivalist strategy has served the cigarette industry well for forty years.

The NSA provides Philip Morris with the shock troops they need to fight back at all levels. If the NSA and other deceptive PR practices can pull off a victory in California this November, more and more PR firms will likely imitate B-M's technique of organizing front groups on behalf of their corporate clients. ■

PR's 'SMART ENVIRONMENTALISM'

A June 20 conference on "Smart Environmentalism" featured a scathing attack on environmentalism by right-wing libertarian Jerry Taylor of the Cato Institute. Some PR advisors advocate corporate co-optation of the greens, but Taylor calls for all-out corporate war. Ridiculing the capitol's environmental lobbyists as a bunch of ineffectual "creampuffs", Taylor called on the assembled PR practitioners to stand up and fight for their companies, not capitulate.

PR Watch attended the conference, which was organized by Ketchum PR and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). Conspicuously absent at the 'Smart Environmentalism' conference were representatives from Hill & Knowlton, E. Bruce Harrison, Dorf & Stanton and Burson-Marsteller, four companies whose anti-environmental PR activities were featured in detail in our previous issue.

Staffers for the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) were invited to testify at the conference regarding the benefits of alliances with industry, but they declined, citing a previous commitment to meet elsewhere with their corporate partner, McDonald's restaurants.

Waste Management Inc., now called WMX Technologies, was represented by director of government affairs, Chuck McDermott. He announced that his company has indefinitely postponed a symposium on

'environmental justice' it had planned to hold last June at company headquarters in Illinois. NAACP head Benjamin Chavis and Vernice Miller of Natural Resources Defense Council had agreed to speak at the WMX symposium, but it fell apart after Greenpeace and grassroots environmental justice activists leveled charges of corporate hypocrisy against WMX. ■



Vernice Miller of the Natural Resources Defense Council and Charles McDermott of WMX Technologies prepare to address the topic of "environmental justice," at the June 20, 1994 "Smart Environmentalism" conference. (photo by John C. Stauber)

BOOK REVIEW

Thank You For Smoking,
by Christopher Buckley.
Random House, 1994.

The current travails of the tobacco industry are hitting the front pages at an opportune moment for ex-smoker Christopher Buckley, the author of a wickedly funny new novel titled *Thank You For Smoking*.

Christopher is the forty-two year-old only child of right-wing icon William F. Buckley Jr. He's also a former Bush speechwriter and a regular columnist in *Forbes* magazine. His new novel is both a wild satire and a dead-on depiction of the inner workings of the tobacco industry's powerful PR/lobby apparatus.

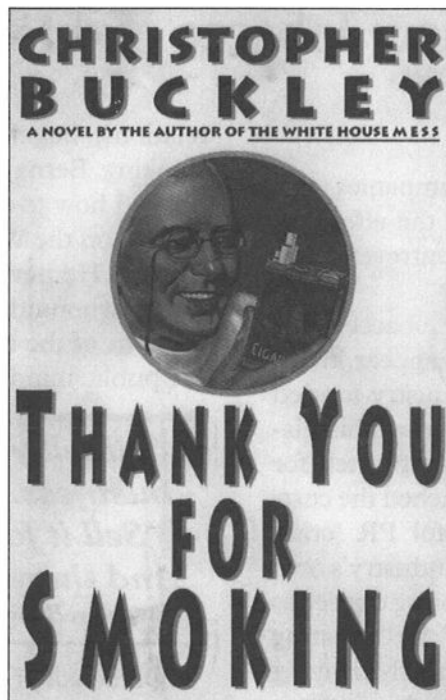
Thank You For Smoking features inside-the-beltway super-flack Nick Naylor, a divorced forty-year-old spokesperson for the 'Academy of Tobacco Studies.' Buckley based Nick on the Tobacco Institute's real-life *femme flack fatale*, Ms. Brennan Dawson.

Nick easily justifies his work with his yuppie version of the Nuremberg defense: "I was only paying the mortgage." But after he is kidnapped and almost murdered — his body plastered with nicotine patches — his smug world shatters.

This hilarious book moves furiously, filled with phony front groups, sleazy politicians, subliminal Hollywood promotions, Oprah and Larry King, corporate criminals, kinky sex, cancer-stricken activists, tobacco industry spies and, of course, ethically bankrupt flacks.

Buckley blurs the line between fact and fiction, with characters closely resembling Margaret Thatcher (who is now in the employ of the tobacco industry), a dying Marlboro Man (referred to in the book as the "Tumbleweed Man"), and a Kennedyesque tobacco foe.

Some of the book's best moments occur as Nick is "doing lunch" with his two closest friends and colleagues, Bobby Jay and Polly. Bobby Jay works for the "Society for the Advancement of Firearms and Effective Training of Youth" (SAFETY), formerly known as the National Right to Bear Arms Committee. Polly works for "The Moderation Council," representing the spirits, wine and beer industries. They call their threesome the "Mod Squad . . . not a reference to the 1960s TV show . . . but an acronym for 'Merchants of Death.' Since they consisted of the chief spokespeople for the tobacco, alcohol, and firearms industries, it seemed to fit."



Other PR flacks mentioned in the book include "the Society for the Humane Treatment of Calves, representing the veal industry; the Friends of Dolphins, formerly the Pacific Tuna Fishermen's Association; the American Highway Safety Association, representing the triple-trailer truckers; and the Land Enrichment Foundation, formerly the Coalition for the Responsible Disposal of Radioactive Waste."

Buckley also has fun with the tobacco industry's tactic of using PR firms to organize "astroturf" grassroots lobbies, when Nick addresses a DC meeting of "the puffers", a front group modeled after the National Smokers Alliance run by Burson-Marsteller:

"They championed the rights of the oppressed smoker who couldn't find a smoking section in a restaurant, or who had to leave his desk and go stand in the snow to have a cigarette. They targeted local politicians who favored anti-smoking ordinances, attacked the surgeon general much more viciously than the Academy itself could, organized 'smoke-ins' . . . and distributed morale-boosting T-shirts and caps with pro-smoking emblems modeled on the old Black Panther salute: upraised fists holding cigarettes. Ostensibly, these were grassroots, heartbeat-of-America (or heart-attack-of-America) citizens groups. . . .

"In actual fact, there wasn't really anything spontaneous about the rise of these groups. They were front groups . . . almost entirely funded by the Academy, with the money being laundered—legally—by giving it to various middlemen who, posing as anonymous donors, passed it along to the groups as contributions. The whole operation cost next to nothing, relatively, and this way tobacco's friends in the House and Senate could stand up and point to them as evidence of a groundswell. . . .

"Though the Academy naturally preferred to keep a low profile in its contacts with the front groups, Nick felt it was important to have them in for a pep talk. So what if they were stooges? They didn't know that."

Thank You for Smoking also pushes the envelope of life imitating art imitating life. Brennan Dawson, Tom Lauria, and other real-world Nick Naylor are busy battling to mitigate the damage done by Buckley's book. According to Buckley, fear of losing cigarette advertising has prompted at least one major magazine to spike a review of his book. But *Thank You for Smoking* is a story that the PR industry will have a hard time killing. Actor Mel Gibson has already purchased the movie rights. ■

SMOKE AND MIRRORS: HOW TOBACCO AND PR GREW UP TOGETHER

by John C. Stauber

Today's controversy over tobacco companies and their role in misleading the public about the effects of smoking looks remarkably similar to the controversies of 40 years ago.

The first scientific studies documenting tobacco's role in cancer and other fatal illness began to appear in the early 1950s. Internal memos from the industry-funded Tobacco Institute refer to the PR fallout from this discovery as the "1954 emergency." Fighting desperately for its economic life, the tobacco industry launched the costliest, longest-running and most successful PR 'crisis management' campaign in history. In the industry's own words, the campaign was aimed at "promoting cigarettes and protecting them from . . . attacks," by "creating doubt about the health charge without actually denying it, and advocating the public's right to smoke, without actually urging them to take up the practice."

WELCOME TO THE 20TH CENTURY

The symbiotic relationship between cigarettes and PR goes back even further than the 1950s, to the early 20th century when both were fledgling industries, and tobacco companies used PR's psychological marketing skills to 'hook' women and then children to their drug.

Edward Bernays, Ivy Lee and John Hill today are legends within the PR profession. Bernays in particular is often referred to as the "father of PR." All three worked on PR for tobacco, pioneering techniques that today remain the PR industry's stock in trade: third party advocacy, subliminal message reinforcement, junk science, phony front groups, advocacy advertising, and buying favorable news reporting with advertising dollars.

During the Roaring Twenties, the American Tobacco Company turned to PR to develop a vast new market—American women—for sales of Lucky Strike cigarettes. The company first hired adman A.D. Lasker, whose advertisements featured female opera stars, their soprano voices somehow unaffected by their love for Luckies.

Lasker portrayed Lucky Strikes as a healthy cigarette by concocting surveys using spurious data to claim that doctors preferred Luckies as the "less irritating" brand. However, his most effective campaign urged women to "Reach for a Lucky instead of a sweet." The campaign increased Lucky sales threefold in just twelve months. (The message, "cigarettes make you thin," reverberates today in the brand name Virginia Slims.)

WHAT DO WOMEN WANT?

It was Edward Bernays, however, who built both the theoretical and practical foundation of modern public

relations, beginning with his promotion of women's smoking. Bernays was a nephew of Sigmund Freud who learned how to apply psychology on a mass scale while serving on the World War I Committee on Public Information. He never disguised the purpose of PR, saying those "who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses . . . pull the wires which control the public mind."

"I'll tell you why I like the cigarette business. It costs a penny to make.

Sell it for a dollar. It's addictive.

And there's fantastic brand loyalty."

Warren Buffet, once R.J. Reynolds's largest shareholder

On behalf of Lucky Strike, Bernays sought the advice of the psychoanalyst A.A. Brill. Brill's message to Bernays and the American Tobacco company was "freedom": sell cigarettes to women as a symbol of liberation.

Following this advice, Bernays staged a legendary publicity event that is still taught as an example in PR schools. He hired beautiful fashion models to march in New York's prominent Easter parade, each waving a lit cigarette and wearing a banner proclaiming it a "torch of liberty." Bernays made sure that publicity photos of his smoking models appeared world-wide.

To his credit, an older Bernays expressed regret at his work, saying if he'd known of the dangers of tobacco he would have refused the account. His admission and opinion remain rare among PR practitioners.

Thanks to Bernays and other early pioneers of public relations, cigarettes built a marketing juggernaut upon an unshakeable identification with sex, youth, vitality and freedom. The work for the tobacco industry, in turn, earned PR widespread credibility and launched the rise of today's multi-billion dollar public relations industry.

Decades of saturation cigarette advertising and promotion continued into the 1950s via billboards, magazine, movies, TV and radio.

THE TRUTH HURTS

In 1952, smoking's link to lung cancer began receiving major media attention. *Reader's Digest* ran an influential article titled, "Cancer by the Carton." A 1953 report by Dr. Ernst L. Wynder heralded to the scientific community a definitive link between cigarette smoking and cancer. Over the next 24 months, dozen of articles appeared in the *New York Times* and other major public publications: *Good Housekeeping*, the *New Yorker*, *Look*, *Woman's Home Companion*. Sales of cigarettes went into an unusual, sudden decline.

**"THE MONEY WAS BETTER IN PUBLIC RELATIONS
FOR A CIGARETTE COMPANY, BUT IT MADE ME
FEEL CHEAP"**



©1994 by Herb Block in The Washington Post

The tobacco czars were in a panic. For help, they turned to John Hill, the founder of the PR megafirm, Hill & Knowlton. Hill designed a brilliant and expensive campaign that the industry is still using today in its fight to save itself from public rejection and governmental action.

Hill is remembered as a shrewd but ethical businessman who tried to keep "quacks" out of the PR profession. In a letter, he once stated, "It is not the work of public relations . . . to outsmart the American public by helping management build profits."

Yet Hill's work to save tobacco in the 1950s is such an egregious example of "outsmarting the American public . . . to build profits" that his company is still in court today answering criminal charges. Hill & Knowlton's role is described as follows in a 1994 lawsuit, *State of Mississippi vs. the Tobacco Cartel*:

The presidents of the leading tobacco manufacturers . . . hired the public relations firm of Hill & Knowlton. . . . As a result of these efforts, the Tobacco Institute Research Committee (TIRC), an entity later known as The Council for Tobacco Research (CTR), was formed.

The Tobacco Industry Research Committee immediately ran a full-page promotion in more than 400 newspapers . . . entitled "A Frank Statement to Cigarette Smokers." . . . The participating tobacco companies recognized their "special responsibility" to the public, and promised to learn the facts about smoking and health . . . to sponsor independent research on the subject. . . . to cooperate closely with public health officials. . . .

After thus beginning to lull the public into a false sense of security concerning smoking and health, the Tobacco Industry Research Committee continued to act as a front for tobacco industry interests. Despite the initial public statements and posturing, . . . there was a coordinated, industry-wide strategy designed actively to mislead and confuse the public about the true dangers associated with smoking cigarettes. Rather than work for the good of the public health, . . . the tobacco trade association, refuted, undermined, and neutralized information coming from the scientific and medical community.

There is no question that the tobacco industry knew what scientists were learning about tobacco. The TIRC maintained a library with cross-indexed medical and scientific papers from 2,500 medical journals; as well as press clippings, government reports and other documents. TIRC employees culled this library for scientific data with inconclusive or contrary results regarding tobacco and the harm to human health. These were compiled into a carefully selected 18-page booklet, titled "A Scientific Perspective on the Cigarette Controversy," which was mailed to over 200,000 people, including doctors, members of Congress and the news media.

BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES

During the 1950s, tobacco companies more than doubled their advertising budgets, going from \$76 million in 1953 to \$122 million in 1957. The TIRC spent another \$948,151 in 1954 alone, of which one-fourth went to Hill & Knowlton, another fourth went to pay for media ads, and most of the remainder went to administrative costs. Despite TIRC's promise to "sponsor independent research," Only \$80,000, or less than 10% of the total budget for the year, actually went to scientific projects.

Hill's work on behalf of tobacco was successful. For forty years now, the tobacco manufacturers have staved off serious regulation. Even today, as the annual global carnage amounts to millions of tobacco deaths, the modern tobacco barons are sitting pretty.

Sitting pretty? Yes, because smoking's bottom line is that the industry makes more money off tobacco than ever, and is now opening up the vast Asian market to its deadly addiction. The future for tobacco profits is bright, thanks in very large part to public relations. ■

Much of the information above is from two excellent articles which we recommend for more in-depth reading:

"The Tobacco Wars: A Matter of Public Relations Ethics," by Scott M. Cutlip, Ph.D. *Journal of Corporate Public Relations*, 1992-93, Volume 3.

"Propaganda, Puffing and the Public Interest," by Richard W. Pollay. Fall, *PR Review*, 1990.

HUSTLING FOR THE JUNTA: PR FIGHTS DEMOCRACY IN HAITI

by Sheldon Rampton, PR Watch Associate Editor

On December 16, 1990, Haiti held the first democratic elections in the country's history. Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a radical Catholic priest, received 67 percent of the vote in a field of 23 candidates, and assumed office on February 7, 1991.

Eight months later, on September 29, soldiers led by Lieutenant-General Raoul Cédras and Colonel Michel François surrounded the presidential palace, seized Aristide and sent him into exile. Bloody repression by the army in the first weeks after the coup killed an estimated 1,500 Haitians. "Boat people" from Haiti began fleeing in large numbers to the United States and other neighboring countries. The United States and the Organization of American States declared a trade embargo against the military regime.

For Cédras and François, the situation was a public relations disaster, but they had planned ahead. The day before the coup, they brought in Lynn Garrison to, in Garrison's words, "lend a hand."

A former Canadian air force officer with shadowy ties to the CIA, Garrison became one of the primary sources for the coup leaders' smear campaign against Aristide. His first task, following Aristide's expulsion from the country, was to go through the exiled president's personal possessions, including diaries, paintings and medicines, seeking evidence to back up the junta's claim that Aristide was unfit to govern.

In Aristide's diaries, Garrison found doodlings of eight-headed monsters, a common voodoo symbol, which Garrison interpreted as evidence of Aristide's mental instability.

Aristide's art collection also included several "Père Lebrun" paintings. Père Lebrun, a major retailer of automobile tires in Haiti, airs television ads in which he pops his head through a tire. His name has become synonymous with a form of killing and torture (known in South Africa as "necklacing") in which a gasoline-soaked tire is placed over the victim's shoulders and ignited. Although art depicting this practice is common in Haiti, Garrison saw the paintings on the walls of Aristide's home as illustrations of a demagogue's enthusiasm for mob violence.

Garrison moved the contents of Aristide's medicine cabinet to a box that he keeps at military headquarters as additional proof for his claims about the exiled president's mental health. But those who have seen them say the medicine bottles appear designed for a man with heart trouble rather than mental problems, and carry no prescription name on the bottles.

Garrison's first task, following Aristide's expulsion from Haiti, was to go through the exiled president's personal possessions, seeking evidence to support a PR campaign claiming that he was unfit to govern.

From these pieces of evidence, Garrison built up a portrait of Aristide as a "psychotic manic depressive with homicidal and necrophiliac tendencies." These charges, coming from an employee of Haiti's Provisional Government who often sleeps on a camp bed at military headquarters as a "security measure," have been amplified and transmitted through the US news media by an array of lobbyists and PR representatives hired by the junta.

The strategy of the military regime has been to create enough doubt about Aristide to prevent the US government from taking decisive measures, buying time until international attention turns elsewhere.

The provisional government's strategy has relied heavily on assistance from the Haitian military's allies within the CIA. According to the *New York Times* (11/1/93), "Key members of the military regime controlling Haiti . . . were paid by the Central Intelligence Agency for information from the mid-1980's at least until the 1991 coup that forced Mr. Aristide from power." The *Times* quoted a government official who, "without naming names," said that "several of the principal players in the present situation were compensated by the US government."

Officially, the US expresses support for Aristide as Haiti's elected president. Behind the scenes, Garrison has worked closely with US Senators Jesse Helms and Robert Dole. His associates include Kevin Kattke, who in 1983 helped Oliver North prepare the US invasion of Grenada; Norman Bailey, chief economist for the National Security Council during the Reagan years; and Henry Womack, who during the 1980s helped oversee construction of bases for *contra* attacks against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua.

Lobbyists and PR firms engaged by the provisional government of Haiti included George Demougeot, who also represents a US apparel firm with an assembly plant in Haiti, and Stephen A. Horblitt and Walter E. Faunteroy of Creative Associates International Inc. Another employee in the junta's PR campaign is Darryl Reaves, a one-term Florida state representative who has worked to arrange interviews and Capitol Hill connections for François and Cedras. Like Garrison, Reaves avoids pub-

licity for himself, telling reporters, "I don't exist." When one journalist inquired too deeply, he responded with obscenities and vague threats that he would have the reporter arrested.

The regime's most visible lobbyist, however, has been Robert McCandless. In addition to the military government, McCandless represents a group of businessmen headed by Gregory Brandt, whose interests in Haiti include cooking oil, cars, tomato paste, and coffee.

McCandless signed a \$165,000 contract with the junta "to direct favorable PR to Provisional Government and unfavorable PR against former President Aristide. When US and OAS tire of embargo . . . try to get aid in money and in kind."

In March of 1992, McCandless accepted \$85,000 from the Provisional Government of Haiti as part of a \$165,000 contract to, in McCandless' words, "direct favorable PR to Provisional Government and unfavorable PR against former President Aristide. When US and OAS tire of embargo and Aristide not returned, try to urge formulation of a new, more humane policy. . . . Eventually, after embargo lifting, try to get aid in money and in kind."

McCandless circulated position papers and editorials in Washington, such as an August 13, 1992 memo in which he characterized the US trade embargo as "a policy of genocide against innocent Haitians" that would cause the deaths of "hundreds of thousands of innocent Haitians" unless it was lifted by the start of 1993.

McCandless also rehashed the Haitian military's claim that Aristide was a "tyrant and a cruel and oppressive ruler." He circulated a "compromise plan" to Washington policymakers, proposing to end the crisis by letting Aristide return to Haiti — not to resume office, but to face trial on charges of embezzlement, inciting mob violence, torture and murder: "Tell the Provisional Government of Haiti that if it will appoint a blue-ribbon citizens' panel and offer Aristide the opportunity to come before them and face his accusers, the embargo shall be lifted. . . . The proceeding must be televised and covered by the world press . . . The outcome will either restore Aristide to the presidency of Haiti or end in his permanent exile from the country."

In letters to Meg Greenfield of the *Washington Post*, McCandless argued that this compromise was the only

realistic solution, because the provisional government's prime minister, Marc L. Bazin, "will be overthrown himself if he even thinks about recognizing Aristide. . . . No caring person backs the Haitian army nor the police. Everyone wants them put under civilian control. But we have to lift the embargo, helping Bazin to get concessions from General Cédras and Colonel François. This is attainable where bringing Aristide back is not."

In the spring of 1992, the Treasury department ordered McCandless to stop representing the Haitian government on grounds that he was breaking the embargo, but he has continued to do so on what he claims is now a "pro bono" basis.

In his PR work for the provisional government, McCandless cashed in on his friendship with conservative syndicated columnist Robert Novak. On July 2, 1992, he sent Novak a note listing an itinerary of personal problems ranging from divorce to pending bankruptcy, and begging Novak to "find a way to make me look good and strong and wise—none of which I feel."

Novak obliged by visiting Haiti at McCandless' invitation and writing a series of columns in support of the junta. In a 1993 article titled "Why So Hard on Haiti's Military?" he accused the Clinton administration of "uncharacteristic rigidity" for refusing "to consider a negotiated settlement of exiled Haiti President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's return to power or even to hear conflicting advice. . . . Warnings about Haiti began even before Clinton took office, when Washington lawyer Robert McCandless offered his invaluable contacts with the Haitian military and police to seek a solution. . . . McCandless again has offered the president use of his relationship with François and Cédras to seek a peaceful solution. The absence of any response supports the conclusion that the Clinton administration will not accept a murky settlement in Haiti."

The CIA provided a document, later proven to be a forgery, which was used to publicly label Aristide a "psychopath."

The CIA's assessment of Aristide also received extensive media attention when Jesse Helms organized a classified briefing with Brian Latelle, the CIA's intelligence officer for Latin America, on October 20, 1993. The briefing was promptly leaked to the *Washington Post*, which reported on October 22, "Sources familiar with the assessment said it describes Aristide's 1980 visit to a psychiatric hospital in Canada." Latelle claimed that

Aristide has psychological disorders and has used 13 kinds of medication. To back up this story, Latelle presented a document, later proven to be a forgery, which purported to be a letter signed by a fictitious Canadian doctor named Harve Martin.

Helms followed up by delivering a tirade against Aristide on the floor of the Senate, labeling him a "psychopath" and claiming that Aristide had urged his followers to practice "necklacing." As evidence, Helms cited a speech shortly before the coup in which Aristide told a crowd, "Your tool is in your hands. Your instrument is in your hands. Your Constitution is in your hands."

The word "tool," Helms explained, actually meant "burning tire."

Helms cited reports from several human rights organizations to back up his claim that Aristide instigated human rights violations. The speech prompted angry reactions from the human rights groups themselves. In fact, their reports had credited Haiti with significant human rights progress under Aristide. "It is ludicrous to compare that progress with the systematic mass murder committed since by the army," said Kenneth Roth, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch in New York. Since Aristide's ousting, at least 3,000 Haitians have been killed by the current regime.

FRIENDS LIKE THESE

Ironically, the most effective PR work against Aristide may have come from his "friends in high places." Throughout the crisis, the US has sponsored negotiations that have undercut Aristide's position, forcing him to make repeated concessions to the junta. When Aristide has failed to comply, US officials have attacked his "intransigence," portraying his obstinacy as the prima obstacle to peace. The Clinton administration's statements of support for Aristide have in fact been little more than PR aimed at covering up the US refusal to take action that could threaten the military's hold on power.

Gregory Craig, a well-connected Washington attorney, has been a key player in shaping the Clinton policy. A former Yale classmate of the Clintons, Craig was hired in 1992 to represent the interests of Fritz Mevs Sr., a Miami resident who made his fortune with a sugar monopoly under the dictatorship of Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier.

Mevs, along with his sons and other family members, have been called the "mini-Mafia" of Haiti. They reportedly shared the military's disdain for Aristide. A report by the National Labor Committee, a labor education group that represents 23 national unions, claims that Mevs was one of the chief organizers of the coup and

that the Mevs family made money smuggling cement in violation of the embargo.

Mevs contacted Craig to discover what measures he should take to protect his interests as the Bush administration considered freezing assets of backers of the coup. After determining that the US government had no proof of Mevs family complicity in the coup, Craig agreed to become the family's personal lobbyist in Washington.

Using his Clinton connections, Craig worked closely with Assistant Secretary of State Bernard Aronson and one of his principal deputies, Robert Gelbard, and played a key role in shaping US policy toward Haiti after Bush left office. Craig set up meetings that helped pave the way for the Governor's Islands negotiations in July of 1993, in which the military agreed to let Aristide return as president. In exchange, the coup leaders were to receive legal amnesty and retain their positions in the military.

"American political officials have never liked Aristide," argued James Ridgeway in the *Village Voice* (10/26/93). "They don't want any part of liberation theology or charismatic religious leaders—especially black charismatic leaders. But the US has been happy to use him to achieve its own political and economic ends, and those of Haiti's business elites. That's why the Governor's Island accords made such sense to the US: they kept both Aristide and the military reined in, in a kind of equilibrium."

Aristide himself never liked the Governor's Island plan and had to be pressured by the US into signing. His suspicions proved accurate when the military backed out at the last minute and a Cédras advisor told *Time* magazine, "the whole thing was a smokescreen. . . . We wanted to get the sanctions lifted. That's why we went along. But we never had any intention of really agreeing to Governor's Island, as I'm sure everyone can now figure out for themselves. We were playing for time." ■

WANTED: PR WHISTLEBLOWERS

As you read this issue, you will note information coming from the inside of the PR industry. We encourage more PR whistleblowing. Conscientious practitioners of the more traditional arts of public relations have a role to play in cleaning up the industry. We accept unsolicited video tapes, memos, minutes of meetings, strategy plans, and other documents.

HOCUS FOCUS

EDITOR'S NOTE: PR Watch #3 was devoted to the problem of greenwashing, where corporations attach themselves to environmental groups or causes to cover up their record of environmental degradation. (Reprints of issue #3 are available from PR Watch.) In response to favorable comments from our readers, we've started 'Hocus Focus,' a regular feature of PR Watch that will examine not just greenwashing, but other efforts of PR firms and their clients to co-opt and/or hide-behind public interest associations.

★ MONSANTO HIJACKS SAFE FOOD COALITION

The Safe Food Coalition calls itself "an alliance of consumer advocacy, senior citizen, whistleblower protection and labor organizations." Formed in 1987, its members include such public interest heavyweights as Michael Jacobson's Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), Ralph Nader's Public Citizen, and Public Voice for Food and Health Policy, which was begun by now-Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Ellen Haas.

Former Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Carol Tucker Foreman is the spokesperson for the Safe Food Coalition, and therein lies the rub. She is also a well-paid Washington lobbyist, and in early 1993 she became a personal lobbyist for the chemical giant Monsanto to promote its controversial milk-inducing cow drug, recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH).

For what is rumored to be a very large fee, Monsanto hired Foreman onto their rBGH lobby team to provide a "public interest cover" for lobbying Congress and the news media. By hiring Foreman, Monsanto acquired a "white hat" lobbyist who can give a false facade of public interest endorsement to their billion-dollar investment in bovine growth hormone, despite the concerns of *Consumer Reports* and others that rBGH threatens the health of both humans and cows.

The ploy seems to be working. With the help of Foreman, the head of the Safe Food Coalition, Monsanto has so far prevented Congress from requiring that milk from hormone-treated cows be labeled. Foreman told *PR Watch* that she saw no conflict of interest between lobbying for rBGH and for the Safe Food Coalition. "The FDA has said rBGH is safe," she said, adding "Why don't you call CSPI? They say rBGH is safe too." She angrily refused to disclose how much money Monsanto has paid her to lobby for rBGH, saying "What in the world business is that of yours?"

Foreman's potential "safe food" conflicts go much deeper than rBGH. Monsanto is also the world's largest producer of herbicides, whose residues are consumed in food and groundwater. People are eating fish, milk and meat contaminated with Monsanto's cancer and birth-defect-causing PCBs. Monsanto is also the producer of NutraSweet™, a sugar substitute whose safety has long been questioned by food activists. "How can Carol Tucker Foreman advocate with integrity for the Safe

Food Coalition when she's paid to lobby for Monsanto?" asked Ronnie Cummins, the director of an international consumer boycott against rBGH. "CSPI, Public Citizen, Public Voice and other members of the Safe Food Coalition should drop her like a toxic hot potato." ■

HILL & KNOWLTON USES SIERRA CLUB TO PEDdle COPPERTONE™

Thinning atmospheric ozone leaves us exposed to more ultraviolet (UV) radiation, increasing skin cancer deaths, cataracts and damaged immune systems. Bad news? Not if you are the drug transnational Schering-Plough, or its PR firm, Hill & Knowlton.

For Schering-Plough, the company best known for Coppertone™ the thinning ozone layer is an opportunity to sell sunscreen. Through Hill & Knowlton PR, Schering-Plough has established "Partners for Sun Protection Awareness," a multi-year PR campaign urging people to "liberally apply a sunscreen . . . to all exposed parts of the body before going outdoors."

Hill & Knowlton's Nina Oligino has persuaded some national environmental groups to add their names to the "Partner" letterhead, including Friends of the Earth, National Resources Defense Council, and the Sierra Club. Apparently these groups are little more than a dash of green window-dressing for the campaign. A representative of one of the groups, who asked not to be named, said that he was ignorant of the Schering-Plough funding and its hidden agenda to sell sun lotion.

Oligino told *PR Watch* that the campaign "is not brand specific" to sell Schering-Plough products, but in fact the H&K media kit promotes "The Coppertone™ Guide to Sun Safety and the UV Index." The Partners media kit is also filled with what H&K calls "factoids" about skin cancer.

The best prevention for sun-caused skin cancer is, of course, to cover up completely, but saying so would be market suicide for the world's largest maker of suntan lotion and purveyor of the sexy "Coppertone™ tan."

The campaign's clever video news release shows hundreds of scantily-clad sun worshippers still over-exposing themselves to UV rays; of course the beautiful people on the beach are seen slathering themselves with sun oil. The video new release does not mention Schering Plough, the funder of the PR campaign. ■

SOUND BITES BACK

Roger Ailes, the PR genius behind Ronald Reagan and Rush Limbaugh, now runs America's Talking, the all-talk cable channel which premiered July 4 in more than 10 million homes. Ailes has his own nightly talk hour on the network.



The World Bank, under increasing pressure from activists for its role in worsening third world poverty, economic exploitation and ecological devastation, has hired the PR firm of Herb Schmertz to bolster its image during its 50th anniversary events this year.

Schmertz, a former VP for PR at Mobil Oil, is reknowned for developing in-your-face 'advertorials,' paid opinion advertisements that's run on the editorial page of major papers. He recommends assertive PR attacks against activists.



Porter/Novelli has announced that more than 100 million U.S. TV viewers unwittingly saw their May video news release promoting Calgene's genetically-engineered FlavrSavr tomato.



TransAfrica's Randall Robinson conducted a dangerous but successful hunger strike that changed the Clinton Administration's policy on Haiti. PR for the fasting activist was handled by the DC firm of McKinney & McDowell, whose other clients include President Aristide and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund.



The CIA's PR director, Kent Harrington, held what once would have been an unheard-of event, a public briefing in New York on May 10. His message was that the Agency is more needed than ever. In the day's understatement, he said "sometimes what I say and know is widely at variance."



PR heavyweights with ties to the Democratic Party — including Kamber Group VP Lyn Cutler, Powell/Tate's Jody Powell and Edelman's Leslie Dach — have formed the 'Back to Business Committee' to help the Clinton Administration fend off a flood of bad publicity.

Cutler, a former vice-chair of the Democratic National Committee, told a May meeting of the Women's National Democratic Club that a public trial of the Paula Jones' allegations would be "very ugly and damaging." "Quite frankly, who cares," she asked, noting that "we have starving children in this country going to bed hungry every night."



Lillian Fernandez is the latest Clinton advisor to become a PR executive with Hill & Knowlton. One of her current H&K clients is Osvaldo Mercuri, President of the Buenos Aires Council of Deputies. According to *O'Dwyer's Washington Report* (5/9/94), H&K will receive a \$2,500 bonus if Fernandez can arrange a meeting with VP Al Gore for the Argentinian official.

Lauri Fitz-Pegado was the Hill & Knowlton VP in charge of the \$11 million Gulf War front group, Citizens for a Free Kuwait. She prepared the Kuwaiti Ambassador's teenage daughter for her bogus and now infamous testimony of seeing Iraqi troops tossing babies from hospital incubators.

Fitz-Pegado has at long last been confirmed by the Senate Commerce Committee to become director of the Commerce Department's U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service, thanks to heavy help from her guardian angel, Commerce Secretary Ron Brown. During her cantankerous confirmation process, Senator Byron L. Dorgan (D-ND) accused her of perpetrating "a hoax on the Congress and the people of the U.S."



Betsey Wright served Governor Bill Clinton as Chief of Staff for twelve years in Arkansas. She moved to DC in 1992 and soon became a lobbyist and Executive VP in Hill & Knowlton's Ann Wexler firm.

Wright is now personally lobbying the First Couple on behalf of the American Dietetic Association, a nutritionist organization that receives hundreds of thousands of dollars from food, agri-chemical and tobacco interests. She also lobbied the Administration against Chinese trade restrictions on behalf of another client, ARCO oil.



The Phoenix Group has been paid more than \$12,000 to represent El Salvador's President-elect Armando Calderón, whose ARENA party has been linked to military death squads.



Sheila Raviv has been named Burson-Marsteller's new CEO in Washington, DC. Ms. Raviv's special expertise is in developing industry coalitions to defeat social change activists.



Nations, too, can greenwash. Environmental groups charge that the Group of Seven leading industrial nations is failing to live up to commitments made at the Group's annual summits. According to Jim Barnes of Friends of the Earth, "20% or less" of the green promises are ever kept.



On a more positive note, the W. Alton Jones Foundation has granted \$125,000 to the Natural Resources News Service to develop green story ideas and promote them to journalists. Joseph J. Trento will run NRNS; he provided research assistance for his wife Susan's seminal book on the Hill & Knowlton PR company, *The Power House*.



Propaganda Review's Spring, 1994, issue is devoted to "anti-environmental propaganda." The issue recycles some excellent articles by Mark Dowie, Bill Walker and others that examine the role of PR firms and the threat posed by the wise use movement. For a copy, call 415-441-2557.