Letter to the Editor

Smoking Machine Review

EDITORS – In the News Analysis section of *Tobacco Control* (September 2002), SHATENSTEIN (1) gave a critical response to a review I had written on the development of smoking machine methodology, published in *Beiträge zur Tabakforschung International* in early 2002 (2). Unfortunately, his interpretation was clouded by sarcasm and derogatory comments rather than based on the scientific development of the subject. For the record, I wrote the review entirely on my own initiative, to correct inaccuracies created in a previous paper by BIALOUS and YACH (3). I did acknowledge several colleagues knowledgeable in the subject who had checked its accuracy or supplied information; that was part of my own peer review process. SHATENSTEIN has incorrectly inferred from this that the review was “an industry wide rejoinder” on behalf of “Big Tobacco”.

I believe that everything in my review was scientifically correct and that I described the development of the subject, and its use by relevant parties, in the correct historical perspective. As indicated above, I went to some lengths to check its accuracy with as many experts as possible. SHATENSTEIN was not objecting to the science or historical development that I described but, I suspect, to the fact that I am employed by a tobacco company to do the science. His inherent assumption appears to be that my review was written for devious reasons as, he probably believes, is all research undertaken by the tobacco industry. In their original article, BIALOUS and YACH (3) went further and stated, more than once, that tobacco industry scientists use cigarette design to “cheat” the smoking machine. They are wrong. My experience in tobacco science over thirty years is that research undertaken within tobacco industry laboratories world-wide is done to the highest standards, by knowledgeable and dedicated scientists, aimed at improving tobacco products from all perspectives.

In recent months scientists from both the health community and tobacco industry, myself included, have resorted to quoting and counter-quoting reports and internal company documents across the pages of scientific journals (e.g. 2–9). The topics have included aspects of machine and human smoking of cigarettes. As I, and others have pointed out, some of the quotations from internal company documents have been highly selective or taken out of context, and some inferences have been made that are inaccurate or simply wrong (2,4,5,8). This is sad. Perhaps the time has come for both sides to review, or even do, the work together.

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2. Baker, R.R.: The development and significance of standards for smoking-machine methodology; *Beitr. Tabakforsch. Int.* 20 (2002) 23–41.
3. Bialous, S.A. and D. Yach: Whose standard is it, anyway? How the tobacco industry determines the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards for tobacco and tobacco products; *Tob. Control* 10 (2001) 96–104.
4. Baker, R.R.: Whose standard is it anyway? Letter to the Editor; *Tob. Control* 10 (2001) 394.
5. Jacob, F.: Whose standard is it anyway? Letter to the Editor; *Tob. Control* 10 (2001) 394–395.
6. Bialous, S.A. and D. Yach: Author's (*sic*) reply; *Tob. Control* 10 (2001) 395–396.
7. Kozlowski, L.T. and R.J. O'Connor: Filter ventilation is a defective design because of misleading taste, bigger puffs, and blocked vents; *Tob. Control* 11 Supplement 1 (2002) i40–i50.
8. Lewis, L.S.: Filter vent blocking. Letter to the Editor; *Tob. Control* 11 (2002) 285.
9. Kozlowski, L.T. and R.J. O'Connor: Authors' reply; *Tob. Control* 11 (2002) 285–286.