PLAY IT AGAIN

Play It Again is a section of the journal where we republish quotes, gaffes, and immortal lines from friends and foes of tobacco control. It is compiled by Gene Borio, the webmaster of Tobacco BBS, which is the premier tobacco newsgathering site on the internet. Send contributions (including an original version or photocopy of the sourced item) to him at Tobacco BBS, PO Box 359, Village Station, New York 10014-0359; fax 001 212 260 6825. Send quotes from online stories (including the full article) or scanned documents (in GIF or JPEG format), to gborio@mindspring.com

“Working to make a difference. The people of Philip Morris.”

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Philip Morris' USA's massive effort to lift itself from the bottom three of corporate reputations has been examined in several articles. Certainly, its unprecedented $160 million media saturation campaign, along with similar if less costly efforts from Brown & Williamson (B&W), RJ Reynolds (RJR), and Lorillard, offer ready cover for politicians, charities, and others to accept industry largesse with equanimity. In addition, jurors may get the impression the industry has changed, and feel that awarding large punitive damages may end up depriving worthy causes of much needed funds.

Most Tobacco Control readers are well aware of the general purposes of the industry's unprecedented struggle to inject itself into the public dialogue, but the extent and specifics of the movement can be startling. Thus, this edition of Play It Again focuses on the industry's game of “give and tell”.

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A few examples

“The American Lung Association asks that ABCNews.com review and revise its procedure for accepting advertising on its health related sites. Ads by Philip Morris should cease immediately. An industry that causes death and disease throughout the world has no place on a health information website.”

ABC's online “Infirmary” section had included an ad for Philip Morris—until a protest by the American Lung Association. Source: American Lung Association calls on ABC News to remove Philip Morris ads from health website, “American Lung Association” 2000 October 10.

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“This dialogue is supported by [Philip Morris Logo]”


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“In late October, Lorillard’s Youth Smoking Prevention advertising will begin on a variety of cable and network programming, including

‘Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade’ on NBC; ‘The Britney Spears Holiday Special’, ‘The N'Sync Holiday Special’, and ‘Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery’, all on Fox; and TNT's airings of ‘I Know What You Did Last Summer’ and ‘The Wedding Singer’. ”

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“At 4:00 pm, Mayor Armstrong will help children decorate the city's official holiday tree with ornaments donated by Brown & Williamson... At 7:30 pm the REAL Santa Claus will make his famous ride down Jefferson Street aboard his special float and up to the main stage where at 7:40 pm he will help Mayor Armstrong and Ms Strange use the magical plug to ‘Light Up' the city. Fireworks and an assortment of holiday lights will brighten the night sky.”

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“SURGEON GENERAL’S WARNING: Smoking By Pregnant Women May Result in Fetal Injury, Premature Birth, And Low Birth Weight.”

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From the Industry

“We are delighted to be able to support a project that will develop understanding of what corporate social responsibility means today. Along with others we are working hard to address both the changing expectations of multinational companies and the issues surrounding our industry. We are very serious about demonstrating responsible behaviour in an industry seen as controversial.”

Michael Prideaux, BAT’s corporate affairs director, on the funding of Britain’s first International Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility at Nottingham University. Source: Tobacco Firm backs corporate ethics professorship, “Times Of London” 2000 December 3.
“Our companies want to fully participate in important public policy discussions on the regulation of tobacco. We recognize that some criticism and cynicism flowed from our views on disease causation and addiction. We focused on what is not known, rather than what is known. Today I affirm that we are in step with the public health authorities. We agree that smoking is addictive and causes disease in smokers. The message of the public health authorities is our message.”


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“In order to best represent our 55 000 employees in the United States and millions of shareholders, we really want to participate in the political process in a bipartisan fashion.”


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“Federal and local legislation has been proposed to deal with the [youth smoking] issue. And, naturally, anti-smoking groups have spent a good deal of time and money discouraging youngsters from smoking. Unlike our proposed project, they present smoking as . . . unhealthy . . . Despite the tobacco industry’s repeated assertions regarding youngsters, we continue to be seen as the problem—and certainly not part of the solution.”


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“Our goal is to encourage kids not to smoke, with the objective that it’s a cool thing to do to not smoke.”

This catchy phraseology is from Steve Watson, vice president of external affairs for Lorillard, which sponsors the Ten H.I.P. Awards. Source: Sundin, S. Ponte Vedra Beach teen wins an award as nonsmoker, “Florida Times-Union” 2000 October 14.

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“The company said delegates to the conference will not see any presentations from Brown & Williamson and any reference to the company in the conference report will be in the interest of disclosure only. The company also said it has offered to meet presenters, travel and accommodation costs, if required.”


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Comment and analysis

“Why is Brown & Williamson looking for the best practices when the CDC has already found and published them?”


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“Advertising is propaganda. There is always some element of bad faith when it appropriates a cause. However earnest the agency people are, if the cause doesn’t push the goods, they’ll drop it.”


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“Anything that might make children change their position or think that to use tobacco is normative is the wrong message . . . Name recognition is the greatest form of advertisement.”


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“The tobacco industry is using charitable donations to buy the good name and support of community organizations . . . By aggressively publicizing these donations, big tobacco is trying to convince the public they’re now good corporate citizens, even though their product continues to spread disease and death.”

Pat Etten, spokeswoman for LA Link, a California umbrella organisation for anti-tobacco groups which are urging community groups to reject donations from Philip Morris. Source: DeArmond, M. Groups urged: reject Philip Morris, “AP” 2000 August 31.

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“Head down past the Philip Morris symphonic orchestra, take a left when you see the Philip Morris sponsored county hospital, a few blocks further you should pass the Philip Morris AIDS prevention program, and when you see the Philip Morris homeless shelter you are almost there.”


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Comments from recipients

“If we were adequately funded, we wouldn’t have to consider taking this money.”

www.tobaccocontrol.com
University of Alberta students’ union vice-president Chris Samuel. The student union voted to accept a massive cash gift from an undisclosed tobacco company. Source: Palmer, D, U of A mulls tobacco gift, “Edmonton Sun” 2000 October 31.

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“I can’t paint a picture any prettier than the money.”

Scotty Morris, Big Bad Voodoo Daddy’s frontman, describing how the seven non-smoking band members overcame their scruples about joining the MERIT tour. Source: Tayler, L. Cover story: Jingle Rock/Rock and roll once was the voice of the anti-establishment. “Newsday” 2000 June 11.

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“Virtually anything worthwhile that’s happened in our region, Philip Morris has been a part of it.”


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 “[O]ur rule on dietary supplements is that we won’t run advertisements if a supplement includes ingredients that are likely to harm people . . .[O]ur policy on tobacco advertisements and on all advertisements is about choice and freedom . . .What sort of freedom would it be that allowed us only to choose or to read about or to advertise that which is good for us?”


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“BAT is a successful well-run company and if they want to work with us then we are very happy to work with them.”


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“It gave me some insight into how seductive corporate influence can be at the most basic level of good food and good drink . . .You can’t help but remember who provided it.”

Harvey Weisel, a DNC delegate from Seattle, on a UST bash. Source: Silver, B. Winning, dining on tobacco company’s dime, “Tacoma News Tribune” 2000 August 16.

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“I have not received a contribution myself from Philip Morris. I do know that they have a number of other companies other than just tobacco. They have cookies. Some of us like cookies. We would accept contributions from the cookie dimension of Philip Morris, but not necessarily the tobacco.”


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**Insights on the rationale**

“Our corporate image is not good for our stock price, and it’s not good for our ability to attract and retain the best and brightest people.”


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“Social responsibility in the cigarette business is actually a competitive advantage.”


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“The industry should carefully audit and appraise its governmental relations activities to make certain that growing public and leadership opinions about its undue influence are never buttressed by disclosures of industry improprieties or illegal actions. The industry’s lobbying and campaign effects should not be ballyhooed. Our aim is a clean iron fist inside a clean velvet glove.”


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“You have to try to understand whom you have to neutralize in advance . . .we have put a huge amount of time into helping all the organized groups of professional and volunteer firefighters . . .when we need them to stand up and say, “not cigarettes” that cause fire in 99.9% of the cases, we get their cooperation . . .because we have cultivated them and helped them achieve some of their goals. . . We had turned them around and made allies, third-party defenders for ourselves.”


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“This organization has extraordinary influence on government and consumers and we must find a way to diffuse this and reorient their activities to their prescribed mandate. In addition, we need to think through how we could use our food companies, size, technology, and capability with governments by helping them with their food problems and give us a more balanced profile with the government than we now have against WHO’s powerful influence.”

Excerpt from a memo by Geoffrey C Bible, now chairman of Philip Morris, about the company’s ‘Boca Raton Action Plan.’ Source: Fairclough, G. Philip Morris, Other cigarette firms tried to foil

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“There are truly good people working to make Brown & Williamson a responsible company . . . I ask that you don’t kill that dream.”


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“What you’re doing is not punishing an individual that did something 20 years ago . . . you’re punishing the Philip Morris of today . . . Why pass a message that it doesn’t matter if you’ve changed?”


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“The RICO claims seeking injunctive relief have no basis given the way we do business today and our obligations under the MSA. These claims are now moot.”


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“We should also begin to work to establish a mind-set in the public at large that bankrupting huge industries such as tobacco is unthinkable . . . Why can’t we begin to get articles placed and books written which develop scenarios for when the unthinkable happens?”


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Wacky ’baccy

“To suggest that we target those individuals [the mentally ill] is crazy.”


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“Our response to WTO has been to spend 300 million yuan on a research and development centre and improve the quality of our brands. In March last year, a research centre in Kentucky found that our tobacco, grown using only natural fertiliser, causes the least harm to consumers. Actually, it is good for health - it calms the mood and stops old people from becoming muddled and getting Alzheimer’s disease.”


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Nicely put: apt insights on tobacco issues

“I bought ’em an extra 20 or 30 years . . . But you know, it’s temporary. One of these days, we’re going to have to pay up.”

Legendary tobacco litigator David Hardy, of Philip Morris law firm Shook Hardy, according to Gary Huber in “Civil warriors: the legal siege on the tobacco industry”. Source: Parloff, R. Coughing it up “New York Times” 2000 September 24.

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“Give them five years, and red will mean Marlboro and blue will mean Mild Seven.”


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“All the anti-tobacco ads in the world have no impact when Julia Roberts lights up.”


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“I am a good person. Selling a product that kills people makes me uncomfortable. I realize cigarettes are addictive and kill more than 430,000 people each year. Tomorrow I will look for a new job.”


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“[It appeared] the jury accepted the defense contention that bathtub refinishing is more likely a cause of lung cancer than 30 years of smoking Salems.”


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“We use lawsuits as an opportunity to tell our side of the story and tell how we work.”


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“Not one of these CEOs has come in here and said: ‘We’ve committed fraud. We’ve misrepresented. We’ve lied. We’ve concealed. We’ve been part of a decades-long disgusting conspiracy, but we’re not that way any more.’ ”


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“We cannot punish a tobacco company—any more than we can punish a ham sandwich . . . Tobacco companies are inanimate corporations. Taking money from them will
not punish the high-level malefactors who are no longer there . . . The way to punish misconduct by executives is to sue them personally or prosecute them criminally . . .


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“We think it’s good when tobacco companies address issues that are of significance to public health.”


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“They have a good story to tell. The people running these companies now are not the ones running the companies in the ’50s when most of this alleged wrongdoing occurred . . . They really and truly have reformed their business practices.”

David Adelman, tobacco analyst with Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, on the next phase of the Engle trial. If their wrongdoing is only alleged, what have they got to “really and truly” reform? Wilson C. Tobacco industry to fight against punishing verdict for smokers, “AP” 2000 May 13.

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“[Y]ou have an obligation to go out and tell smokers what you know . . . What are you going to do? Not tell people about it? Just sit on it?”

Reynolds chairman, Andrew J Schindler, on publicising the company’s review panel findings that Eclipse was potentially less hazardous than regular cigarettes. Fairclough, G. Small tobacco firm stakes out smoking’s next battleground, “The Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition” 2000 October 2.

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“The Banyankore [Museveni’s tribe] used to smoke but I don’t think there was an incident of cancer . . . I think the problem is in the way people smoke. Why swallow the smoke? To get rid of the urge you do not have to swallow the smoke . . . These people might have found wisdom in smoking.”