

COVER ESSAY

Geoff Bible's class

S Chapman

Geoffrey Bible, former CEO of Philip Morris, faces a life of luxury during his retirement—and has quit smoking to ensure he lives long enough to enjoy it



Former Australian citizen Geoffrey Bible retired as chief executive officer of Philip Morris at the end of August, after spending nearly 35 years with the company, taking the helm in June 1994. Bible gave up smoking in 2000 on his doctor's advice. As Stan Shatenstein commented: "While we would never expect a lingerie company's male CEO to wear a bra, it's inconceivable that a car company boss would choose not to drive, or that the head of the Meat Board would become a vegetarian as retirement approached. But tobacco companies appear to have no trouble with their executives' defections from the ranks. Is it possible that with the prospect of rich retirement stretching out ahead of him, Bible feared early death at the end of the tobacco road?"¹

In an obsequious valedictory published in fellow Philip Morris board member Rupert Murdoch's *Weekend Australian*,² mere mortals were asked to salivate over the tiresome challenges he now faces: "Will he go skiing in Switzerland, where he owns a chalet, or swimming in Bermuda, where he owns a house, or head to the course for another golf lesson?" In 1999 Bible received US\$21.2 million from the company: \$1.63 million in salary, a \$4.4 million bonus, restricted shares worth \$6.48 million, and retirement and other payments worth \$537 690. He also got options worth \$8.11 million on the days they were granted.³ Murdoch was quoted in the article describing Bible as "so honourable" and "extremely effective". A man who has "confronted the issues".

Oxford University's Sir Richard Peto has calculated that there will be 150 million tobacco deaths in the first quarter of this century.⁴ Philip Morris is the world's leading manufacturer of cigarettes with 13.8% of global sales. If this position is maintained, the company's products will cause 20.7 million deaths worldwide before 2050, about half in middle age.

"Honourable? I'm searching for a different word.

Below, we reprint some of Bible's inimitable "confrontations with the issues".

"I repeat, there is no such thing as "tar" in the human lung—the lung cannot be, and is not, blackened by it. The President of the American Thoracic Society has testified, and I quote: "I know of no way to distinguish the lungs of a smoker from those of a non-smoker". Unquote. So you smokers in the room can take heart: your lungs are as pink and pretty as those of the non-smoker sitting next to you."⁵

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And selections from his cross examination in the Minnesota Trial (March 1998)

On smoking and health . . .

"I'm unclear in my own mind whether anyone dies of cigarette smoking-related diseases."

"I don't think I'd set money above public health . . . (but) I have responsibilities to employees, stockholders, to the community generally . . . I would say they're all equally important."

A. "[I] really felt that everybody in the world believes smoking causes disease."

Q. "You don't; do you, sir?"

A. "I don't know."

Q. "Are you aware of any reputable scientific organisation anywhere in the world that says that smoking doesn't cause disease?"

A. "No, I am not."

"I was once asked a question if pregnant women should smoke and I said it'd be wise to not."

On youth smoking . . .

Q. ". . .The decline in the percent of teenagers who smoke, their decreased levels of consumption, and the decline in their absolute numbers means that the industry can no longer rely on an ever increasing pool of teenage smokers to replace adult smokers lost through natural attrition." Do you see that?

A. "Yes."

Q. "Natural Attrition." People who die; correct?

A. "Well, I would say die or quit."

"The teenage years are also important because those are the years during which most smokers begin to smoke, the years in which initial brand selections are made, and the period in the life cycle in which conformity to peer group norms is greatest." "The Decline in the Rate of Growth of Marlboro Red". 1975 internal Philip Morris memo. Trial Exhibit 2557.

"I am ashamed. I'm embarrassed about that, yes."—Geoffrey Bible

"In all the years I've worked at Philip Morris, I've never heard anyone talk about marketing to youth . . ."

A. "We should not be marketing cigarettes to young people. It is certainly anomalous to the Philip Morris I know."

Q. "If we keep seeing more anomalies, sooner or later it becomes usual, doesn't it?"

A. "Well, it's a large company, and we sell a lot of products."

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"You may recall from the article I sent you that Jeffrey Harris of MIT calculated . . . the 1982-83 round of price increases caused two million adults to quit smoking and prevented 600000 teenagers from starting to smoke. Those teenagers are now 18-21 years old, and since about 70% of 18-20 year olds and 35% of older smokers smoke a PM brand, this means that 700 000 of those adult quitters had been PM smokers and 420 000 of the non-starters would have been PM smokers. Thus, if Harris is right, we were hit disproportionately hard. We don't need this to happen again." 1987 Philip Morris Internal Document "Handling an excise tax increase" (Trial Exhibit 11591).

Q. "And then he goes on to say, 'Thus, if Harris is right, we were hit disproportionately hard. We don't need that - to have that happen again.' Correct?"

A. "Yes, that's correct."

Q. "And he's talking about the teenage smokers or potential smokers who didn't start; isn't he?"

A. "That's what he's saying, yes."

Bible on Philip Morris' efforts to prevent youth from smoking

Q. "So Philip Morris spent, if my calculations are correct—and I'd ask you to accept them—one tenth of 1% on youth prevention that it spent on advertising, marketing and promotion; is that right, sir?"

A. "Well I'd need to do the calculation."

Q. "Would you accept that?"

A. "Well 1% of 15 billion I expect is 159 million. Am I right?"

Q. "Yes."

A. "And that to me would be about—20 million is one-eighth of that roughly, so I'd say that's about .125."

Q. ".125 of 1%".

A. That's what I would say, uh-huh."

On addiction . . .

"Different people smoke cigarettes for different reasons. But, the primary reason is to deliver nicotine into their bodies . . . Similar organic chemicals include nicotine, quinine, cocaine, atropine and morphine. While each of these substances can be used to affect human physiology, nicotine has a particularly broad range of influence . . . During the smoking act, nicotine is inhaled into the lungs in smoke, enters the bloodstream and travels to the brain in about eight to 10 seconds." (Philip Morris Confidential "Competitive Analysis"; undated-probably 1993. Trial Exhibit 11559.)

"The question is put as to why people smoke. The answer is proposed that one smokes to obtain nicotine. It is contended in this paper that nicotine, especially packed, is the cigarette industry's product." ("Motives and Incentives in Cigarette Smoking (A Summary)" Philip Morris Research Center, 1972. Trial Exhibit 10,423.)

"We are of the conviction, in view of the foregoing, that the ultimate explanation for the perpetuated cigarette habit resides in the pharmacological effect of smoke upon the body of the smoker, the effect being most rewarding to the individual under stress." ("Smoker Psychology Research" by Helmut Wakeham, Philip Morris Vice President; presented to the Philip Morris Board of Directors in 1969. Trial Exhibit 10299.)

Q. "And Dr Wakeham goes on and says [in a paper presented to the Philip Morris Board of Directors, Trial Exhibit 10299], 'But the psychosocial motive is not enough to explain continued smoking'; correct?"

A. "Yes, he says that."

Q. "Some other motive force takes over to make smoking rewarding in its own right; correct?"

A. "Yes, that's what it says."

Q. "Long after adolescent preoccupation with self-image has subsided, the cigarette will even preempt food in times of scarcity on the smoker's priority list. Do you see that?"

A. "Yes, I do."

Q. "Now does that ring a little bell that that might be addiction?"

A. "Not to me, sir, no."

Q. "Not to you?"

A. "No, sir, it doesn't."

Q. "Does the term 'adolescent' ring a bell with regard to the age we're talking about?"

A. "Yes, it does, and I'm ashamed of that."

Q. "You're ashamed of it."

A. "Yes, I am."

REFERENCES

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- 4 UICC. Tenfold increase in global tobacco deaths predicted (press release), 24 June 2001. <http://www.uicc.org/publ/pr/home/01062405.shtml#fs>
- 5 Bible GC. Freedom to advertise. Speech to The Column Club, Melbourne, Australia, 27 October 1983. <http://www.pmdocs.com/getallimg.asp?if=&DOCID=2024272360/2372>