



The Advertising Association

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28 October 1983

BY HAND

The Editor,
Campaign,
Haymarket Publishing Limited,
22 Lancaster Gate,
London, W2 3LY

Dear Sir,

I would like to set the record straight on several facts emerging from Ron McKay's rather misleading piece headlined "AA Boss caught in Tobacco Storm" (Campaign 21/10/83).

1. If either Mike Waterson or I is caught in a 'storm' neither of us is aware of it: the only person directly to contact either of us on the subject has been the Campaign reporter.
2. The suggestion that Martin Plant has "protested furiously" to the AA is wholly untrue. All Dr. Plant has done is to send the AA a copy of a note he wrote to Hong Kong expressing the fact that he was perplexed over Waterson's references and felt they were inappropriate. Hardly furious protest.
3. Your article quotes Plant as being worried about the use of the word "Doctor" to describe him. I am afraid we were misled by the fact that he uses notepaper with Royal Edinburgh Hospital in the title; that he is a leading figure in the world of alcohol research; and that he always prefaces his name with "Dr.". As it happens, we were in error: but there was no intention whatever of misleading the audience in Hong Kong, or indeed anyone else.
4. Mike Waterson's use of the Plant quote was an attempt at getting across the fact that some eminent non-industry people who had taken the trouble to examine the evidence had arrived at the conclusion that advertising does not appear to increase the size of large mature markets. In the context of the programme it seemed entirely appropriate to use research conclusions deriving from the alcoholic drink market in a debate on the impact of advertising on another market with many similarities.

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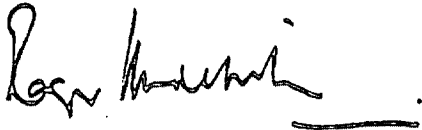
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5. It was suggested that the tobacco industry funds AA's activities of this kind. To the extent that the companies are members of ISBA, and thus of the AA, that is true. But they do not subscribe disproportionately, nor do they grant us special funds.

But having said that, there still remains the question of whether or not the AA should be defending cigarette advertising. I need hardly say that the AA Council is only too well aware of the problems which this raises and of the sincere and deeply held convictions of many people in the business. What is at issue is not smoking, but as you sir mentioned in your article in this week's "Marketing", whether, if it is legal to sell something, it should also be legal to advertise it too. The AA believes that it should. Given that policy, we have vigorously, and I think successfully, set out to put the case, in the full knowledge of the hostile reaction which will inevitably result from some quarters (though in this case it took nearly three months to happen).

Whether or not we deserve the Tin Star awarded by your Diary page must be for your readers to decide. It will not change the AA's policy of maintaining a high profile on what we believe a matter of advertising principle.

Yours sincerely,



Roger Underhill
Director-General

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