

Future of T.R.C. Research and the T.R.C. Organisation

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At the last meeting of the Executive Committee of the Tobacco Research Council several members agreed that they would see how far their personal views on the future organisation of T.R.C. and the future level of research coincided. In order to set the exercise in motion, Dr. Green kindly undertook to produce a paper giving his own views, which has now been seen by other members present at the meeting. As a result Dr. Green's draft has been slightly amended in order to meet the comments of others and a copy of the final version is now attached.

The views expressed in it are supported, on a purely personal basis, by Dr. Green, Mr. Wendell Moore, Mr. Mulholland and Dr. Williams.

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Tobacco Research Council has gone through several distinct phases in its history. The first phase was a defensive public relations exercise which developed from merely providing research grants into producing laboratory evidence it was hoped would rebut other evidence. However this work, based in the Harrogate laboratory established both good experimental procedures and results which broadly supported the case against cigarettes. From an agnostic position TRC then moved towards that of aiming at research solutions to industry problems. Requests for research grants were examined for relevance to our problems and internally a start was made in laying the scientific foundation for product improvement. The Harrogate staff clearly saw that to do this properly they would have to move into product development but on the other hand the companies quickly realised that in a free competitive market co-operation could not go so far. The companies therefore set up their own biological facilities to relate to their own product development. This and the formation of the Hunter Committee changed the situation significantly. Although there is much that is not satisfactory with the Hunter Committee nevertheless it does herald a new stage: enlightened intervention by government in the specification of cigarettes. And the discovery of a new major threat - the increasingly social unacceptability of cigarette smoking - completes the transformation. To react to the new structure the companies first had to disengage from the heavy commitment of Harrogate and then to establish a new role, or at least a position in new areas of study. We are still in the process of moving TRC research from the animal model towards human studies.

Unfortunately at this critical time the future of TRC itself is seen by some to be in doubt and the developing plans for the new approach to joint research may be lost. There is a danger that for very short term expediency the long term interests of the industry may be damaged possibly beyond repair.

TRC has established a reputation for scientific integrity and scientific achievement and must take a great deal of the credit for the current image of the British tobacco industry - which even now is still largely one of a responsible industry prepared to act in the best interests of smokers. The mouse-skin assay was taken to new level by the work of TRC and statisticians identified with TRC achieved a position of good acceptability in the scientific world. In the fractionation of

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smoke condensate, the cardiovascular effects of carbon monoxide, in epidemiological studies, in the pharmacology of nicotine the TRC has made substantial scientific advances and the work on motivation by McKennell, Eysenck and Thompson has also added to this substantial bankable credit to the account of TRC. It has been possible through TRC to have access to medical records, etc., for industry sponsored projects which would be unlikely in the absence of some body seen at least, partially independent of the immediate commercial concern of the industry. If TRC ceased to be an identifiable, scientifically respectable body then there would be a considerable but non-quantifiable loss.

For the future it would be difficult to make any claim to be a responsible industry without some overt industry research contribution or at least some financial contribution to independent research. Without TRC it would still therefore be essential to have an identifiable respected and probably independent scientific director or comparable person. TAC could not provide such a person at present and one would have to be recruited. While an independent TRC might, as it has on occasions in the past, "get away" with an industry chairman, a TRC dependent on TAC for reasons I have given would cost rather more, not less, to administer properly. Money can only be saved if less work is done. The TRC budget has, in real terms, been cut severely in the last few years and we are spending now a great deal less than in the past. Nevertheless the budget could be cut further without great loss providing projects are even more carefully planned, expertly selected and objectively reported. It is possible that research will be required to be carried out on behalf of, and funded by, "international industry interests". TRC rather than TAC would appear to be the more appropriate body to manage any such scientific research programmes on a contract basis and this could ease any problems arising from a restricted or reduced TRC budget based on U.K. members contributions.

Finally, there have been times in TRC as in other national bodies when agreement has been difficult to sustain. The replacement of an established national research body by an untried international one would appear to have virtually no chance of success.

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