

Rylander Affair

Professor Ragnar Rylander was a member of the faculty at the University of Geneva who did extensive research funded by the tobacco industry. After litigation Rylander lost against two tobacco control advocates (for defamation), the University conducted the equivalent of a UC Privilege and Tenure Hearing. The report was made public. In contrast to the unwillingness of UCORP and others at UC, the Committee viewed the issues in the broader context. As a result of this recommendation, the President of the University of Geneva announced that the university would no longer accept money from the tobacco industry.

Here is an announcement of the decision and some associated links:

Geneva, Friday October 29, 2004 16h00 local time

The University of Geneva just made public a few hours ago its report on the "Affaire Rylander". Here are two excerpts of the summary (translation by PAD), which set the tone of the whole report.

"The scientific community and the public must know that Ragnar Rylander's studies on the effects of environmental tobacco smoke on health are marred with serious suspicion, because the author has not revealed his conflicts of interest which were susceptible of influencing the significance of these studies and because he cannot be considered as an independent scientist, considering his role as secret employee of the tobacco industry. The Fact Finding Commission proposes that the following journals be notified of this situation:

- European Journal of Public Health;
- Archives of Environmental Health;
- International Journal of Epidemiology"

"Prof. Rylander's multiple breaches of scientific integrity take their full significance only when placed in the framework of the strategy conceived and carried out by the tobacco industry to throw doubt on the toxicity of tobacco smoke, particularly for the non-smokers. The case of one individual must not make us forget that the most unforgivable guilt is that of an institutional and commercial entity, the tobacco industry, whose objectives and interests are in contradiction with both public health and medical science. The huge mass of tobacco industry documents that has been made public as the result of judgments pronounced by American tribunals against this industry shows that these companies have attempted to manipulate public opinion for decades, and that the targeted recruitment of a large number of scientists has been a privileged instrument of this disinformation plot. **The tobacco industry cannot be considered as a credible partner for independent scientific research. The Commission proposes that it shall be forbidden for the members of the University to solicit funding for their research activities or seek**

consultancies, either directly or indirectly, from the tobacco industry. This measure aims at protecting the integrity of its scientists."

The full report, which is in French, is available at the following address:
http://www.unige.ch/rectorat/pdf/Rapport_Rylander.pdf

An English translation of the report and related scientific and legal publications is available at
<http://www.prevention.ch/rylanderpm.htm>

For the press release issued by the University (in French too), see:
<http://www.unige.ch/presse/communique/?04-05/1029Rylander.html>

We should like to congratulate the University for the excellence of its report. These congratulations are in particular extended to the members of the Fact-Finding Commission for the rigor, clear-sightedness and thoroughness of their investigation work. We also wish to express our full support to the conclusions and recommendations made in the report, which are completely in line with those we had expressed in our press conference of March 2001, in which we had publicly revealed Rylander's connection with the tobacco industry and had produced the first pieces of evidence of a vast deception plot by the tobacco industry, which we labeled a "scientific fraud without precedent". The report released today by the University of Geneva not only confirms our revelations, but considerably strengthens the case against the Swedish professor and puts it in the right perspective of a conspiracy by the tobacco industry. We applaud!

"Pascal A. Diethelm" <diethelm@libertysurf.fr>

See, for a brief description of the issues and University of Geneva's response:

Diethelm, P.A. , Rielle, J., McKee, M., (2004) The whole truth and nothing but the truth? The research that Philip Morris did not want you to see. *Lancet* (Published online November 11, 2004, <http://image.thelancet.com/extras/03art7306web.pdf>)

Ferber, D. (2004) Research on secondhand smoke questioned. *Science* 306:1274 (19 November 2004)