

COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC & INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION  
DIVISION OF MATHEMATICAL STATISTICS  
University of Adelaide  
Adelaide, S.A. -

9th October 1959

Mr. Bethuel M. Webster,  
Webster Sheffield & Chrystie,  
40, Wall Street,  
NEW YORK 5, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Webster,

I have just received your letter of 2nd October. I think it was inevitable, with the large expenditure of public money now going on to persuade the public that cigarette smoking is especially dangerous, that some fanatic or fanatical association should try to use the law as a weapon; for indeed if such an action as you mention were to succeed, even partially, the position of those manufacturing or distributing cigarettes would be seriously threatened.

As you have seen the pamphlet "Smoking - the cancer controversy", you have all my opinions so far expressed publicly. I am impressed, in view of the ability of modern chemistry in the separation and identification even of complex substances, by the failure to demonstrate carcinogenic activity particularly in cigarette smoke. I am impressed too with the absurdity of claiming that cigarette smoke in the lungs can cause cancer and that the habit of inhaling cigarette smoke in bulk into the lung can diminish the incidence of cancer. In fact I should like to do what I can, merely in the interests of sound scientific reasoning, to prevent statistical methods from being discredited as a means of medical research, as they surely will be if this rather slight finding of Hill and Doll and its various mimics in other countries were taken as providing an important advance in preventive medicine.

My own qualifications are statistical and not medical. I have been now for 30 years a Fellow of the Royal Society of London, being elected in 1929 on account of my statistical work which had become known in the previous ten years. I have served a term as President of the Royal Statistical Society, as indeed has Bradford Hill. Three of my books deal in detail with the logical methodology of the interpretation of statistical data and I give overleaf information about their publication. You could also get information about me from the British "Who's Who". I say all this to show that so far as objective evidence goes I have qualifications which should perhaps be acceptable in a court of law.

At the moment I am living as a retired professor here in Adelaide. I have therefore time, though at a great distance, to attend to the affair and to draft answers to any questions on which you would like a written opinion. As regards attendance in your offices in New York or in court, you must consider whether it is worth your client's while to meet the return air fare, which will come to about \$1830, besides expenses in the United States. I should be free so far as I know yet during the whole of next November. If you want me to come over please cable so as to give me time to make arrangements.

"Statistical Methods for Research Workers", published 1925,  
13th edition 1958.

"Design of Experiments", published 1935, 7th edition in preparation.

"Statistical Methods in Scientific Inference", published 1956  
2nd edition 1959.