

Sir Colin Campbell  
The office of the Vice-Chancellor  
The University of Nottingham  
University Park  
Nottingham  
NG7 2RD

8<sup>th</sup> December 2000

Dear Sir Colin,

***Re: University of Nottingham's decision to accept British American Tobacco sponsorship***

I am writing to express our dismay at the [University of Nottingham's](#) decision to accept £3.8 million pounds from British American Tobacco for an International Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility. BAT is one of the world's most irresponsible and anti-social companies, and it is hardly surprising that your decision provoked widespread condemnation and incredulity.

I was particularly disturbed to hear you repeating tobacco industry rationalisations and apologia in media interviews earlier this week as you attempted to defend this decision. It is amazing just how subtle and rapid the influence of tainted money, especially in such large sums, can be.

Allow me to explain why many people regard BAT as an unsuitable sponsor for a Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility.

- BAT is under investigation by the [Department of Trade and Industry](#) over its role in tobacco smuggling. [Evidence from the company's documents](#) show that the company has acted in a flagrant and lawless manner in black markets around the world. This implicates many of the most senior people in BAT including your old friend Sir Patrick Sheehy, former Chairman of BAT Industries, with whom you served on the review of police pay and conditions in 1992-4. Did you ever examine this evidence?
- BAT faces charges of racketeering and alleged involvement in money laundering, and that BAT: "...committed, and continue to commit, acts that constitute negligence, fraud, unjust enrichment, public nuisance, negligent misrepresentation, and conspiracy to commit such torts." Racketeering actions have been brought by [State Governors of Colombia](#) and the [Government of Ecuador](#).
- The [European Commission](#) has launched racketeering actions against a number of major tobacco multi-national companies (Philip Morris, RJ Reynolds and Japan Tobacco) and you should not be surprised if this is extended to BAT in due course.
- BAT faces over 500 product liability cases (537 at December 1999, according to the 2000 annual report). The case brought by the [U.S. Justice Department](#) is especially serious, and only the election of George W. Bush will protect BAT from some very intense scrutiny of its activities.
- BAT has been among the most aggressive in perpetrating the tobacco industry's 30 year campaign of denial, obfuscation and outright deceit over the harmful impacts of tobacco. [ASH's detailed analysis of BAT's internal documents \(Tobacco Explained\)](#) shows a repeated pattern of saying one thing in public while saying quite different things in private. BAT faced fierce condemnation from the Commons Health Select Committee over their record of truthfulness and the evasive language used by BAT.

- The [Health Select Committee 2<sup>nd</sup> report \(1999-2000\)](#) stated:

**past records of denial and obfuscation militate against any claims they may make towards scientific objectivity.**

**[BAT and others have] sought to undermine the scientific consensus until such time as that position appears ridiculous**

- BAT's attitude to the World Health Organisation is belligerent and hectoring. The [Commons Health Select Committee](#) found:

**However, any success will be dependent on a responsible approach being taken by the tobacco companies. Depressingly, there is little sign of that in the cheap jibes made at the WHO's expense by BAT. To call an organisation committed to improving global health 'zealots' and a 'super-nanny' because of its concern about the 10 million deaths which will be caused by tobacco each year by the late 2020s seems to us bizarre. We hope that the other companies - and, belatedly, BAT - will work constructively with the WHO**

- BAT's marketing practices in developing countries are excessive and dangerous. As soon as anyone looks closely they find BAT's own internal marketing code is widely flouted. For example, in Gambia a [BBC News investigation](#) revealed that the tobacco firm was marketing aggressively to young teenagers. There are many other examples of BAT advertising in ways that it would not dream of in this country. In Sri Lanka, British American Tobacco (BAT) - one of the world's biggest firms - sponsored a "[Golden Tones Disco](#)". In China - viewed as a key future market by major tobacco firms - BAT also sponsored a regular disco in Beijing. The Washington Post reported that "slender Chinese women" in miniskirts were handing out cigarettes to dancers.
- BAT's internal marketing code and purported opposition to smoking among teenagers would be virtually worthless even if there was 100% compliance - I invite you to view our assessment of BAT's youth smoking initiatives, [Danger! PR in the Playground](#). All the evidence suggests these initiatives are empty and self-serving PR.
- BAT acts aggressively to undermine the legitimate scientific process. To name just two examples of many:
  - BAT was party to a major covert PR campaign to undermine the science of passive smoking by 'buying' scientists who then tried to manufacture controversy. In the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, BAT still argues that passive smoking is at best an annoyance and that, *'statistics do not demonstrate that environmental tobacco smoke is even a risk factor for any long-term health effects or disease.'*
  - BAT was party to unnecessary and vexatious legal action against the 1998 report of the government's [Scientific Committee on Tobacco and Health](#). This was roundly [dismissed](#) by the High Court, but drew no apology or remorse from BAT.
- In terms of its own product development and health of smokers, [documents and patents on reduced-risk tobacco products](#) reveal that BAT has put its own PR front before everything. Sir Patrick Sheehy, former Chief Executive of British American Tobacco made the following revealing statement in 1986 in a confidential internal document, recently released through litigation in the United States:

**I cannot support your contention that we should give a higher priority to projects aimed at developing a 'safe' cigarette (as perceived by those who claim our current product is 'unsafe')**

**In attempting to develop a 'safe' cigarette you are, by implication, in danger of being interpreted as accepting that the current product is 'unsafe' and this is not a position I think we should take**

- The eminent epidemiologist Professor Sir Richard Peto of Oxford University uses a rule of thumb of one premature death caused by each one million cigarettes smoked. Applying that rule of thumb to BAT's annual production of 753 billion cigarettes (Annual Report 2000) suggests a premature death toll of around three quarters of a million ultimately arising from last year's cigarette production.
- No ethical investment fund in the City will hold BAT stock - it is *always* screened out.
- BAT's primary motive in offering such funding is to establish a defensive public relations shield to deflect the endless bad publicity that it faces on account of the points above and much more.

Our view is that you have weighed the value of BAT's cash against the expected negative publicity and concluded that in return for riding a short-term storm, you would be happy to take their money. You have acted with cynicism and short-sightedness in uncritically taking money from such a tainted source, and, as a result, jeopardised the university's reputation and made it a laughing stock. As one journalist has put it "you couldn't make it up".

In the light of this, and very much more, we would like to ask you to reconsider the decision to accept BAT's money. We believe that this will tarnish the University's good name. I hope you will reconsider and think more carefully about the position of a university as a place of learning and open inquiry in society.

I would like to ask you if there are any sources of funds that you would find unacceptable? Is the balance of greed versus bad publicity the final arbiter, as appears to be the case here, or are there some minimum standards somewhere? Would you take money from repressive regimes to establish a chair in human rights? Would you take money from the extreme religious right to establish a chair in evolutionary biology? Does the university have any guidance or constraints?

We have copied this letter to a number of prominent figures in Nottingham University to establish their views and to understand better how this decision was reached. We believe that there is widespread disquiet within the University and that if it emerges that you have ignored the wise counsel of colleagues and others with Nottingham University's wider interests at heart, then in our view you should step down.

We will be asking cancer and other charities to reconsider providing funding for any part of Nottingham University.

We will suggest that students avoid any option that involves this Centre and if necessary boycott any mandatory teaching within the Centre. We will be especially concerned about the teaching offered to scholars from developing countries where BAT is at its most aggressive and irresponsible.

Should you wish to delve more deeply into BAT's record, a version of this letter, with links to source material, has been posted on our Internet site at [www.ash.org.uk/?conduct](http://www.ash.org.uk/?conduct)

I hope that you will respond to the points herein, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Clive Bates

Director