

## **"How the Tobacco Lobby Influences Federal Authorities"**

Concealed Funding of Congresses / Agreement with Bonn  
Justin Westhoff

"A causal relationship between passive smoking and lung cancer has not been proven". This is one of the most central results of a meeting which has been organised this week by the Robert-Koch-Institute in Berlin, an official agency of the Federal Health Ministry in Bonn. Some of the hand-picked experts from all over the world took this opinion for sure out of their thorough conviction at that for state authorities unusually luxurious meeting at the Potsdam Cecilienhof. They brought about scientifically interesting arguments. What not all of them knew: the symposium was sponsored by the cigarette industry - obviously with the knowledge of both the agency's board and the Ministry. The trick carries the name of "Verum", however, has few to do with truth. The "Verum Foundation for Behaviour and Environment" was founded due to the charter deed on Dec. 16, 1992 by the German "Verband der Cigarettenindustrie e.V." (German Association of the Cigarette Industry). The starting capital amounts to DEM 3,000.000'-. Smoking does not show up anywhere in the Foundation's targets, they rather deal with "support of science and research in the fields of environment and behaviour as well as their influence on human health".

Following the assessment made by the "Medical Working Group Smoking and Health" (Ärztlicher Arbeitskreis Rauchen und Gesundheit), an association to promote nonsmoking, "Verum" is nevertheless the successor organisation of the "Research Council Smoking and Health" (Forschungsrat Rauchen und Gesundheit). Nearly everything points into this direction, especially the fact that the preponderant part of the functionaries of "Verum" had the same functions in the "Research Council", and that at least one member was directly working for the Cigarette Association. The "Research Council", as well funded by the cigarette industry, has distinguished itself over the years by playing down the risks of smoking. The credibility of that organisation, which had been dissolved before "Verum" had been installed, has gradually sunk after its sponsors had become known everywhere. The tobacco lobby has repetitively organised and sponsored - under concealed form - meetings where the health effects of smoking had been downplayed.

The conference in Berlin dealt with the neutral and methodological question - indeed essential for consumers' protection - how far epidemiology, the science of disease prevalence and its causes, was able to record small increases in risk in a reliable manner. According to the official announcement of the Robert-Koch-Institute (RKI) and following the program, the meeting was financed by the Founders' Association of German Science (Stifterverband für die Deutsche

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