

= Tobacco ( Last Week Tonight ) =

" Tobacco " is a segment about the tobacco industry , which aired on February 15 , 2015 as part of the second episode of the second season of the HBO series Last Week Tonight with John Oliver . During the eighteen @-@ minute segment , comedian John Oliver discusses tobacco industry trends and practices . He also introduces Jeff the Diseased Lung , a mascot he created for the American global cigarette and tobacco company Philip Morris International , the makers of Marlboro cigarettes . The anthropomorphic diseased lung , who smokes and coughs , has been compared to Joe Camel and the Marlboro Man . Oliver and his team promoted the cartoon character by sending shirts with Jeff 's image to Togo and displaying billboards in Uruguay , and by encouraging use of the hashtag ' # JeffWeCan ' , which trended on Twitter following the broadcast .

Philip Morris issued a response to the segment , which received some criticism . The " Tobacco " segment received widespread media coverage , with several outlets praising Oliver 's ability to launch successful marketing campaigns and change perceptions about smoking through the creation of the mascot . Jeff later appeared at a protest organized by the Campaign for Tobacco @-@ Free Kids in New York City in May 2015 .

= = Description = =

" Tobacco " is an eighteen @-@ minute segment about the tobacco industry , delivered by John Oliver during the February 15 , 2015 episode of Last Week Tonight with John Oliver . In the segment , Oliver describes industry trends and practices , such as the decline of smoking in the United States and marketing tactics by tobacco companies to introduce cigarettes to young people in emerging markets . He incorporates clips featuring the Marlboro Man , a figure used in advertising campaigns for Marlboro cigarettes , and notes that four of the actors who portrayed the character died from lung cancer or smoking @-@ related illnesses .

Furthermore , Oliver outlines the legal actions taken by tobacco companies against the governments of Australia , Namibia , the Solomon Islands , Togo , and Uruguay , some of which have displayed " grotesque " images of blackened teeth and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease on cigarette packaging to illustrate the harmful effects of smoking . He asserts that companies are able to avoid stricter regulations by threatening to sue entire countries , many of which do not have resources to combat these lawsuits in court . By the morning of February 16 , the segment had been viewed more than two million times .

= = = Jeff the Diseased Lung = = =

During the segment , Oliver offers the mascot Jeff the Diseased Lung ( fully named Jeff the Diseased Lung in a Cowboy Hat ) to Philip Morris International to use free of charge . Jeff , a fictional anthropomorphic cartoon character who smokes and coughs , has been called Oliver 's version of Joe Camel and compared to the Marlboro Man .

Jeff has been described as a " cartoon @-@ like , diseased lung cowboy created by crossing the diseased lung pictured on cigarette packs in Australia with the Marlboro Man " . Similarly , Rolling Stone 's Daniel Kreps said Jeff helps to " bridge the gap between the Marlboro Man ... and a ' lung that looks like you 're breathing through baked ziti ' " . Alicia Lu of Bustle wrote :

Sure , he may be an anthropomorphic lung that 's decaying from being exposed to years of cigarette smoke , which might not be Big Tobacco 's first choice for branding , but he 's a cowboy . Look at his regal cowboy hat , his spiffy red cowboy boots , and the way that cigarette nonchalantly dangles from his lips ? doesn 't Jeff remind you of a figure from days of yore ? If you squint , I swear you 'll see the Marlboro Man .

Oliver and his team promoted the character by sending shirts with his image to Togo and displaying billboards in Uruguay . During the segment , Oliver encouraged viewers to use the hashtag ' # JeffWeCan ' , which trended on Twitter . He also called on viewers to upload images of the mascot to Google + accounts so Jeff would be displayed following Google Images searches for " Marlboro "

. A live version of Jeff appears at the end of the " Tobacco " segment . Sarene Leeds of The Wall Street Journal called Jeff 's appearance " a full @-@ on Disneyland @-@ ish nightmare " and wrote : " there is nothing more disturbing ? or awesome ? that you will see today than the sight of John Oliver dancing around a guy dressed up as a smoking , infected lung surrounded by more than a dozen children " . The HBO Shop sells T @-@ shirts depicting the mascot .

Jeff appeared at Kick Butts Day , a protest organized by the Campaign for Tobacco @-@ Free Kids and youth advocates , which was held outside Philip Morris ' annual shareholders ' meeting in New York City on May 6 , 2015 . The protests featured a flash mob with fifty dancers performing a choreographed dance to a song with the lyrics , " We don 't want your cigarettes . Jeff we can ! " The performance ended with the mascot : " rolling around on the floor in a coughing fit and loss of breath " . Shana Narula , the campaign 's coordinator , said :

The whole concept is to use Jeff and the hashtag # JeffWeCan and # StopMarlboro to show that these marketing tactics are not allowed and tobacco is still the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the world . And the fact is it 's the only consumer product that when used as intended , it kills its user . This is very , very unique ? no other consumer product does this . Most people think that tobacco is not really an issue in this country anymore and that 's completely not true . That 's what we want to shed light on today , in a fashion where people will take notice .

= = Reception = =

The " Tobacco " segment received widespread media coverage , with several outlets praising Oliver 's ability to launch successful marketing campaigns and " alter perceptions about smoking " through the creation of the mascot Jeff . Her Campus ' Kelly Tierney noted the enthusiasm displayed by Oliver 's fans during the segment and wrote :

While John Oliver simply considers himself a comedian , it is apparent that he is doing much more than comedy . He informs us of real issues we otherwise wouldn 't hear or think deeply about , which in and of itself is brilliant , but what really sets him apart is his way of calling his audience to action about these issues . He shows us that there really is something we can do and helps us to see how we can enact change .

MediaPost Communications ' Marketing Daily published an article called " What Marketers Can Learn from John Oliver " , in which James G. Brooks , Jr. complimented Oliver 's ability to encourage audience participation . He wrote , " Jeff trended worldwide . This kind of reaction is ideal for any marketing campaign . " Alex Frail of The Massachusetts Daily Collegian said , " One of his funnier bits , Jeff the Diseased Lung , took aim at the tobacco industry ; landed on cigarette packs throughout Australia and on billboards throughout Uruguay ; and delivered t @-@ shirts to Togo . The power to spark a movement like Jeff the Diseased Lung isn 't shared by Oliver 's contemporaries . " Jeffrey Wasserman , vice president and director of RAND Health , opined : " John Oliver 's ' Jeff ' character is of course a mockery of an iconic figure , the Marlboro Man , whose legacy turned out to be cruelly ironic . As Oliver noted in his show , four former Marlboro men died of smoking @-@ related causes . Let 's hope that ' Jeff ' going viral causes current and prospective smokers ? mainly teens and preteens ? to recognize cigarette smoking for what it is : the most deadly habit . "

In July 2015 , Slant Magazine 's Julia Pressman describes the " Tobacco " segment in her article " The British Dude Who Is Winning America 's War on Bullshit " , in which she features five ways Oliver " has owned 2015 thus far " . The website Inverse included the February 15 segment , the second most effective from the show 's second season , saying it " may be the most lasting of the entire year " . Furthermore , the website 's Matthew Strauss wrote , " Jeff shows up when you Google Image @-@ search ' Marlboro ' ; he 's on bus stops in Uruguay ; and he 's on t @-@ shirts in Togo . Jeff is an icon . Oliver hasn 't taken down Big Tobacco , but he sure didn 't make them look too good . " In August , the Los Angeles Times named Oliver , and costume designer Mikaela Wohl , winners in the " Costume designer 's quietest cry for help " category for the paper 's 2015 Envy Awards , a parody of the annual Emmy Awards . Randee Dawn complimented both for their hard work and humor , but said Wohl 's work on " amazing " costumes like Jeff and Russian Space Sex

Gecko distracted her from using her " creative energies " for dressing Oliver .

= = = Response by Philip Morris International = = =

Philip Morris issued a statement which read in part :

On February 15 , 2015 , the ' Last Week Tonight with John Oliver ' show dedicated a significant portion of its program to our company ... ' Last Week Tonight with John Oliver ' is a parody show , known for getting a laugh through exaggeration and presenting partial views in the name of humor . The segment includes many mischaracterizations of our company , including our approach to marketing and regulation , which have been embellished in the spirit of comedic license ... While we recognize the tobacco industry is an easy target for comedians , we take seriously the responsibility that comes with selling a product that is an adult choice and is harmful to health ... We support and comply with thousands of regulations worldwide ? including advertising restrictions , penalties for selling tobacco products to minors , and substantial health warnings on packaging . We 're investing billions into developing and scientifically assessing a portfolio of products that have the potential to be less harmful and that are satisfying so smokers will switch to them . And , like any other company with a responsibility to its business partners , shareholders and employees , we ask only that laws protecting investments , including trademarks , be equally applied to us .

The statement also provided readers with a " balanced view " , and facts about the issues raised by Oliver , including the company 's marketing practices and " approach to regulation " . Philip Morris included links to its " Be Marlboro " campaign , which is " aimed at competing for existing adult smoker market share " , reasons why the company is challenging Australia and Uruguay 's censorship of their trademarks , and " facts about smoking prevalence in Australia after the introduction of plain packaging " .

Chris Morran of Consumerist said Philip Morris did a " really poor job of trying to defend its actions " . He wrote , " ... this should be where the very serious folks at Philip Morris go point by point and explain where Oliver exaggerated and embellished , but they don 't . It 's a classic non @-@ response in which the accused tried to undercut the accuser 's argument by claiming he can 't possibly be providing the truth . " He noted that Philip Morris does not deny making legal threats to suppress regulations on cigarette packaging and questions how the company : " [ expects ] to be taken seriously when it readily admits that the products it sells are ' harmful to health ' " . Furthermore , Morran takes aim at the company 's claim that it " [ supports ] and [ complies ] with thousands of regulations worldwide " , writing :

... the tobacco industry doesn 't support these regulations . It only supports the ones it can 't fight in a courtroom . Once it loses a battle ? or realizes a battle can 't be won ? then suddenly Big Tobacco , just like every other heavily regulated industry , claims to support and abide by the rules .

Finally , he said of the statement 's final sentence : " That 's honestly the best Philip Morris and Big Tobacco can come up with ? We 've spent a lot of money and have a lot of investors so please don 't mess with our packaging because it might cause us to earn smaller profits ... It 's an argument that might be tenable if cigarettes did anything other than poison the people who buy them ? or live in the same house with them . "