

A sampling of additional noteworthy editorial attention to the issues follows.

CHRONICLE

Marion, Indiana

September 14, 1954

(Reprinted from the Wall Street Journal of
September 13, 1954)

Guest Editorial

The Unhappy Statistics

Not so long ago there was brought to public notice a study by some doctors which linked a rise in lung cancer to a like rise in cigarette smoking.

The statistics disturbed many people and we cut down to a pack a day until some other doctors said they thought the rise in the disease rate was attributable to city smog. Still others said it might be the sulfur from the match or the fumes from lighter fluid.

Just the other day in Washington a famous Paris surgeon linked cancer in women to the well-known fact that women have children. Dr. Pierre Denoix said that his studies indicate that women who have children early in life develop cancer earlier than women who never have any children.

And the same day in Chicago Dr. Starry, professor of surgery at the University of Oklahoma, told some other surgeons that an increase of ulcers in women should be blamed on cigarettes, coffee, cocktails, the mid-morning coffee break and the Internal Revenue Department.

Dr. Starry concluded that because of

the coffee break people drink more coffee than they would if there were no coffee break, which would seem to be a logical conclusion. Also they smoke cigarettes. And after work some people drink cocktails. All of these habits, he said, can form acids which can lead to ulcers. His conclusions were based on 437 serious ulcer cases, of which 27 per cent were women.

There was one bright spot in Dr. Starry's remarks. He also said flareups in severe ulcer cases come in March and he blamed this on income tax payment deadlines. Clearly, here is an area in which the government can do something for the health of the people. We daresay elimination of the income tax would clear up more ulcer cases than anything the doctors can do with statistics.

Somebody ought to remind the doctors that all their woeful figures only add up to the big statistic anyway—the widely accepted theory that something's going to prove fatal to everybody sooner or later. And meanwhile, we could do with fewer unhappy conclusions that everything people like to do is usually bad for them.—Wall Street Journal.