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Smoking And Cancer

Ever since the controversy started over whether cigarette smoking caused lung cancer The NEWS has received an average of two letters a week from lay leaders, all of whom supported the theory.

One of them not only seconded the contention but offered as proof positive sections of the Bible to support it. This despite the fact that smoking was an unknown vice at the time the Bible was compiled.

Inasmuch as the subject is a matter for medical research to contend with and not one of lay opinion, one layman's currently having no more scientific backing than the next, no useful purpose could have been effected in publishing them.

The tobacco men themselves, however, are looking for the answer and have engaged the highest talent obtainable to provide it.

The selection of Dr. Clarence Cook Little, affectionately known as "Pete," for the job is a guarantee that the research will not be a mere cover-up and whitewash, but an honest attempt to uproot the truth no matter whom it hurts. Dr. Little is director of the Jackson Memorial Laboratory at Bar Harbor and former president of the University of Maine and the University of Michigan.

Research is Dr. Little's life and research is interested in but one thing—facts gained by trial and error, and their inevitable conclusion after all other hypo-

theses have been found wanting. Dr. Little is a true scientist and no one for a moment could suspect that a man of his calibre would lend himself to anything but a thorough and impartial development of scientific facts. The industry research organization has been given a half million dollars to spend and Dr. Little has been given full scientific freedom in the conduct of his investigation and permission to let the chips fall where they may.

Some might call the manufacturers' interest a self-serving interest, with millions of dollars at stake. It is, of course, just that—but certainly a legitimate self-serving interest.

Thus far the statements made by authorities, while conflicting, have been sufficient to raise a question about whether smoking causes cancer but no conclusive evidence has been offered and the opinions of one expert has been counterbalanced by the contrary opinion of another.

If—and this is not prejudicial—there is some element in cigarette smoking which causes or contributes to lung cancer, then it may be possible to find and remove this element. It would also be a source of great reassurance to the smokers who have neither the hardihood to quit nor the indifference to keep them from worrying.

Meanwhile, until science supplies the answer, lay theories can serve no useful purpose. One of them may be right, but as of the moment it cannot be backed up by scientific facts.