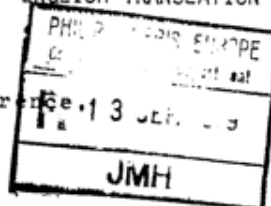


H. Schievelbein, Münch. med. Wschr. 121 (1979), no. 34, pp. 1058-59.

# IS SCIENCE NO LONGER IN DEMAND?

Some thoughts on an anti-smoker conference

ENGLISH TRANSLATION



The "Fourth World Conference on Smoking and Health" took place in Stockholm from June 18 to June 21, 1979 with more than 500 participants from 70 countries in attendance. I was present, as a member of the WHO Expert Committee on Smoking and Health, and was astonished to find a distinct change in the tenor of this conference when compared with the preceding ones.

The most striking difference was that the previous conferences had, for the most part, been divided into Sections and Subsections. For instance, there had been a Section on Health Consequences of Smoking, with Subsections on Smoking and Cancer, Smoking and Pulmonary Diseases, etc. There were of course also Sections on Education on Smoking and Smoking Cessation. At these workshops specialists could agree or disagree, but in any case they ended with a final recommendation to the conference directors, which is what one would expect at a scientific gathering on this subject.

This was not the case at Stockholm. At the opening session the Director General of WHO jocularly called the participants the "anti-smoking Mafia". While this epithet was taken with good humour, and was certainly meant in fun, it became deadly earnest for me as the conference proceeded. The conference chairman -- and in the 20 years during which I have been concerned with this subject I have not read a single article written by him on it, nor could I find any such publications by him when I went looking for them -- opened the first session by saying: "The time for discussion is over; the time for battle has arrived". His words sent shivers down my spine. With 500 doctors, psychologists and government representatives present there would be no discussion? That any discussion took place at all was thanks to a few critical participants and, above all, to the delegates from developing countries. My hat goes off to the representative of one developing country for explaining to a western delegate, who had called for a prohibition on the cultivation of tobacco, that 5% of her

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