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Mr A Baron
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Dear Al,

Thanks for the copy of the Doll interview and for the Epstein and Eysenck letters. Obviously, Eysenck thinks Doll is intellectually dishonest and Epstein thinks that Doll is just a puppet, if you pardon the pun.

My own view is that Doll has done some simple and limited work which has provided a partial answer capable of satisfying the less curious. He clearly has been rewarded for providing this "right" answer (things like the General Motors Prize must be self-explanatory) and has been a calm and authoritative voice of reason when it came generally to squashing occupational and environmental cancer concerns. He is a skilled diplomat, always on automatic pilot, with an instinct for knowing how to dissimilate and reassure. He has also been the tutor and referee, directly or indirectly, for almost every epidemiological cancer researcher in the UK.

His influence is immense and we have to hope that it has been consistently benign; but one now has the feeling that the cancer research establishment in this country has the function of saying that cancer is caused by smoking, or is associated only with the vaguest risk factors which we can study, but hardly hope to modify very much. We can "change our diet"; "insulate our homes against radon"; "avoid viruses by immunizing ourselves and our kids"; "practice safe sex" etc etc. Serious cancer risks such as exposure to carcinogens in the workplace; benzene in petrol; man-made carcinogens in water, food and air are played down (they require industrial compliance and Government action) although they might cause a truly vast number of cancers.

My directly personal beef with Doll is that he refuses to incorporate the study of environmental benzene exposure in the Childhood Leukaemia Study (of which he is chair) on the grounds that he would not know how to do it. Yet benzene is the only leukaemia-causing agent to which we are all exposed on a daily basis, albeit to different extents. Benzene causes leukaemia in adults (for sure) and is believed to be much more active in children. Yet Doll says, when challenged by me and others, that these small levels of benzene cause no harm (the levels we are discussing are similar to the proposed new US occupational exposure limits

for adults) but is happy to look at another small exposure, passive smoking, and says that this kills people. The man is dangerous in his inconsistency. What I ask is: "Professor Doll, could you use the immense resources at your disposal to find out whether exposing infants to occupational levels of benzene at the petrol station kills them?" "Sorry, Simon, wouldn't know where to start. But I'll do you a little side-study on their huge risk through their parents' irresponsible smoking".

Richard Doll is over 80 and it is thus hard to know what is a grasp of present day viewpoints and what are memories of people, events and attitudes 40 years ago. But it is a little surprising that he does not remember my recent contributions to the air pollution debate, given, for example, the fact that we have corresponded, appeared on the same programmes and so on. My experience of Doll, in this respect, makes me feel almost as strongly as Epstein. I do feel that Doll has played down vehicular air pollution in particular. His stuff about very heavy air pollution possibly contributing a 10% excess risk in smokers is nonsense of the first order. The studies he quotes do not exist. His work has helped make sure they were never carried out.

Best of luck with the rest of it,

Yours sincerely,

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