

clinging to that industry. The answer is that, whereas at least some of the actions of big Pharma, for example, in developing new medications, are wholly beneficial, this description can be applied to exactly none of the tobacco industry's doings. So, we consider it reasonable to at least start from a position of giving a new Pharma study the benefit of the doubt and subject it to rigorous peer review. Another response was a self-righteous effusion from the chief scientific officer of BAT,<sup>3</sup> praising the role that the 'regulated tobacco industry' can play. Since this 'well-regulated industry' makes the combined killing machines of all the 20th century dictators seem positively Heath Robinson, we can only respond in the words of Ira Gershwin in *Porgy and Bess*: 'Friends with you, Low-Life? I fear I must decline!' Were there any doubts as to the rightness of the *BMJ*'s policy, Proctor's intervention<sup>3</sup> would expunge them forthwith.

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## A tale of two letters

We recently co-published an editorial stating that we and our sister journals would not publish tobacco-funded research.<sup>1</sup> There have been a number of responses.<sup>2-3</sup> Richard Smith<sup>2</sup> challenged us to explain why the same ban was not applied to Pharma-funded studies, given the degree of turpitude frequently

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