

Your ref. AG/MAL

17th July, 1958.

The Editors of Nature,  
Messrs Macmillan and Co. Ltd.,  
St. Martin's Street, W.C.2.

Dear Sirs,

Thanks for sending me the proposed Letter from Major Hume, inviting my comments thereon.

As you know, it is the accepted policy of the Medical Research Council to press on the public the supposed danger of smoking cigarettes "by all the means of modern publicity", as their annotation in the British Medical Journal put it. I therefore expect difficulties to be raised to any light which I can throw on the problem, and perhaps later the kind of personal vilification as has been directed against Dr C. C. Little, formerly Director of the Cancer Institute at Bar Harbor, who is also critical of this propaganda.

Major Hume's objection is of a kind quite familiar to human geneticists who have used the twin method for locating genetic diversity. I should be prepared, if you care to give the space, to answer it at length on the following grounds. The <sup>assertions</sup> ~~assertions~~ (a) that twin children <sup>greatly</sup> influence each other's smoking habits, and (b) that this influence is strikingly greater in the case of monozygotic than of dizygotic twins, are unproved, and the first of these without the second would supply no criticism of the ordinary method of interpretation. It is characteristic of the merely

captious and propagandist approach to the problem that no suggestions are made to examine the truth of these assumptions. It is not indeed impossible to do so, and it might be as well, if the ascertainment of scientific truth is the object, first to determine that there really is something in the criticism before flinging it out merely to confuse the ideas of those who wish to make a genuine improvement in our understanding of the subject.

I have received, since writing my first Letter to Nature, data from Dr Eliot Slater of the Maudsley Hospital in which a large number of monozygotic twin girls were separated at, or shortly after, birth and have been brought up separately, and these can be contrasted with a number of monozygotic pairs of girl twins who have grown up together.

The Maudsley data in general strengthen and confirm for girls the findings of Verschuer's male smokers in Germany. Monozygotic twins are much more alike in their smoking habits than dizygotic twins.

The contrast between girls separated at birth and those brought up together shows not the faintest trace of mutual influence, even in the case of monozygotic twins, for which ex hypothesi it should be at its greatest.

I am writing all this out for your information as editors. I have no desire to handle this matter in a merely controversial spirit, as I am sure some of the M.R.C. agents would wish. I should, therefore, like to consult you, now that you know what material for discussion is available, and of course more may be expected to come in during the following year, as to how the facts may best be brought under the eyes of scientists capable of judging their significance. If you so advise me, I will draft a longish

letter setting forth these arguments and the new data from the Maudsley Hospital. My chief concern is to avoid merely a dog-fight carried out with fanatic zeal.

Sincerely yours,

Enc.