

Editorial note

Addiction received the editorial by McCreanor *et al.* (2000) which follows, and we publish it after refereeing. We see it as usefully expressing the opinion of the authors. The informed statement of a personal opinion is indeed what an *Addiction* editorial is often productively about, especially so if the piece carries an inherent challenge to its readership and sets up some temperate controversy. In the January issue of this journal an invited editorial by Thomas Babor (Babor, 2000) challenged us all better to “understand the forces that control the destiny of addiction science”, and the McCreanor *et al.* editorial constitutes an apt follow-through on Babor’s theme. Around the McCreanor *et al.* contribution we then go on to publish a set of invited commentaries, which between them take some steps to further the debate between addiction scientists

on one aspect of those potential controlling forces. We would be delighted to publish in a subsequent letter column any further comments that readers may want to make on the issues which are raised. Within that general process ICAP and other drinks industry organizations are, of course, welcome to give their own replies from the trade perspective, if they so wish.

GRIFFITH EDWARDS
Editor

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- BABOR, T. F. (2000) Past as prologue: the future of addiction studies, *Addiction*, 95, 7–10.
MCCREANOR T., CASSWELL, C. & HILL, L. (2000) ICAP and the perils of partnership, *Addiction*, 95, 179–185.

EDITORIAL

ICAP and the perils of partnership

Alcohol producers are engaged in a campaign to capture the hearts and minds of alcohol researchers and public health people, as part of a major effort to win the war of ideas that shapes alcohol policy at national and international level. They are driven by the imperative for sales and profits, which is often in fundamental conflict with the public health goal of reducing hazardous drinking and alcohol-related harm. This essential tension cannot be argued away.

Numerous articles and editorials in this and other publications have drawn attention to the activities of the alcohol industry, especially its representative organizations and foundations operating at the margins of alcohol science. The

industry has long sought to detract attention from or discredit alcohol policies which support effective environmental strategies of prevention (Cahalan, 1979). They have funded research and have at times worked to undermine independent alcohol science (Edwards *et al.*, 1994; Casswell, 1995; Babor, Edwards & Stockwell, 1996; Edwards, 1998). They have manipulated everyday knowledge and debate about alcohol (Hawks, 1992; Wodak, 1995; Babor *et al.*, 1996) through pro-industry public relations and media activity.

The industry is thus seeking internationally, and by every legitimate means possible, to influence the ideological climate in which it plies its trade. There are parallels between the strate-

gies adopted in the alcohol industry at the international level and those highlighted by Susan George (1997) in her account of how privately funded conservative foundations set about promoting 'free market' economics and related policies on a global scale. Broadly similar approaches have been taken up by national organizations representing big business and by other globalized industries such as tobacco and oil.

Our purpose here is to review the use of these strategies by the alcohol industry's International Center for Alcohol Policy (ICAP). We want to sound a strong note of warning about ICAP's efforts to establish 'partnership' between the alcohol industry and public health—a relationship that David Hawks has suggested is like the lamb 'lying down with the lion' (Hawks, 1992). We are not attacking the integrity of anyone working for or with ICAP, but merely raising questions for informed debate.

'Ideas have consequences'

Susan George (1997) argues that the current hegemony of 'free market' economic ideology and associated New Right policies, which facilitate the flow of international capital in globalized markets, is neither natural nor inevitable. Rather, it is the result of 50 years of intellectual and political work by a relatively small group of neo-liberal activists. At the heart of their endeavours is the credo that 'ideas have consequences' (Weaver, 1948/1984); they help determine the form and workings of political and economic life.

George stresses the linkages between corporate trusts, conservative think-tanks, national and global government, certain academics and the media in actively establishing and maintaining New Right ideology. Conservative foundations poured money into the production and dissemination of ideas by funding think-tanks, university chairs and study grants, by financing national and international gatherings and by publications, reviews and the stimulation of media 'debate'. She quotes the president of one foundation as exhorting business associates to support 'scholars, social scientists, writers and journalists' and to give 'grants, grants and more grants in exchange for books, books and more books'. The vast investments made by conservative foundations in these strategies were repaid with spectacular success in the advancement of New Right policy agendas on a global scale (George, 1997).

The alcohol industry has moved to adopt similar strategies in its particular sphere of influence. Advertising and lobbying are, of course, not new in this area as corporate strategies (see Morgan, 1988; Stewart & Casswell, 1988). What appears to have been learned from the New Right is the importance of participating in scientific agendas (Amsterdam Group, 1993; Babor *et al.*, 1996) and of raising media debates that influence public opinion which, in turn, shapes policy outcomes (Mosher & Jernigan 1989; Casswell 1997). Also emulated is the structural strategy: the ideological work is distanced from obvious corporate interests by funding 'not-for-profit' organizations with innocuous names.

The alcohol and hospitality industries are not monolithic but, as in other industries and business communities, individual firms form collective organizations at local and national levels. These are what political scientists term 'corporatist structures of representation and control' (Lehmbruch & Schmitter 1979; Schmitter & Lehmbruch 1982). In addition to these, the large alcohol producers have funded advocacy organizations to represent their 'non-competitive interests', as one national level organization describes its function (Beer, Wine & Spirits Council, 1998), and present their perspectives on policy and research. Examples include the Portman Group (UK); Amsterdam Group (Europe) and the Distilled Spirits Council of Australia.

International Center for Alcohol Policy: playing for 'partnership'

The International Center for Alcohol Policies is a relatively new organization that promotes the non-competitive interests of alcohol producers at the global level. From a study of its publications and its funding we argue that ICAP has taken on a specialized (and legitimate) task—the promotion of an industry-favourable alcohol ideology.

ICAP was established in 1995 as a not-for-profit organization with ongoing funding from 10 major transnational alcohol corporates. It is located in Washington, which is home to a number of international organizations and to embassies representing most of the world's nations. Most of ICAP's activities fit the strategies that George notes, including participation in scientific and policy agendas and support for publications and conferences. An additional feature is the pro-

motion of working 'partnerships' with alcohol research and public health.

Partnership is a part of the theory and practice of those with an interest in public health and the public good in general. Intersectoral partnerships are theorized as one of the prerequisites for sustainable community development (Room, 1990; Gillies, 1998; Bush & Mutch, 1998) and community action projects on alcohol and other drug issues (Casswell, 1998).

ICAP has taken partnership as one of its watchwords and is building upon the partnership orientation in public health. However, according to regulatory theorists, what makes partnership work at the community level is the community pressures and personal motivations which, in the alcohol arena, will influence licensees in local hospitality and alcohol retailing, backed by regulatory enforcement (Ayres & Braithwaite, 1992; Hauritz *et al.*, 1998). Those representing the interests of corporate producers at the national and international level, however, are insulated from such local pressures. Executives of national and international advocacy organizations, like those in the alcohol corporates themselves, operate in a privileged environment where they have few direct encounters with the adverse 'externalities' of the trade in alcohol from which profits are gained (Castells, 1996).

At this level, we argue, ICAP's espousal of a 'partnership' with public health is part of its ideological agenda to influence how alcohol is perceived and the climate in which alcohol policy decisions are made, particularly in developing markets.

As the alcohol industry globalizes (Gual & Colom, 1995; Saxena, 1995; Jernigan, 1997), much of ICAP's operation is directed not at US policy but at influencing alcohol policies in developing countries being targeted by the industry. Under a 'framework for responsibility' ICAP argues that the alcohol industry has 'a legitimate and positive role to play in developing alcohol policies... in emerging markets' (International Center for Alcohol Policies, 1998a). In the view of one analyst (Jernigan, personal communication), partnership with alcohol and public health researchers would strongly support the legitimacy of ICAP's policy advice to developing countries. Any criticism of ICAP or its industry funders from those partners may well not reach such distant ears.

To demonstrate the partnership approach

ICAP has taken to its ideological strategies, we present below a brief examination of its activities over recent years.

Careers and co-options

A long-term strategy detailed by George is to offer forms of work-force development support for those operating within the desired ideological framework, through salaries, study grants and funding for projects, publications and expenses. ICAP scored a major coup when it recruited as president a person who had for many years been a key alcohol policy adviser with the World Health Organization (Marin Institute, 1998). This appointment in 1995 provided access to many public health contacts in Europe and around the world. Some have contributed to ICAP publications and thereby to the credibility of its 'partnership' claims.

ICAP publications

As George stresses, publication is a vital strategy in establishing a particular ideology. 'Books, books and more books' ensure that key ideas are presented strongly in literature read by academics, policy makers and the general public.

ICAP has made publication a central activity and between 1995 and 1998 it produced five reports. These are a vehicle that allows ICAP to promote its own ideas on alcohol policy issues while downplaying research-based public health strategies.

In the first report, British (Robins, 1995) and US (US Department of Agriculture, 1995) consumption guidelines are reviewed under the title *Safe Alcohol Consumption* (International Center for Alcohol Policies, 1997a) with attention drawn to their acknowledgement of some 'health benefits' of moderate drinking. In *Health Warning Labels* (International Center for Alcohol Policies, 1997b) there is mention of the 'equivocal nature of contemporary health warning label debates'. *The Limits of Binge Drinking* (International Center for Alcohol Policies, 1997c) in our view underplays the consequences of binge drinking and focuses the reader on the definition of bingeing. It concludes: 'clearly a binge is not always a binge'. *Drinking Age Limits* (International Center for Alcohol Policies, 1998c) covers international variation in age restrictions on alcohol purchase and consumption and presents

evidence and arguments that question moves to raise or maintain age limits higher than the most common legal drinking age of 18.

In all these topics the ICAP documents raise valid issues, but in a way which, in our opinion, undermines consideration of them as effective public health strategies to reduce alcohol-related harm. Together these publications associate the ICAP name with the established scientific base of alcohol policy.

National per capita alcohol consumption is regarded by researchers as an important public health indicator, as are patterns of drinking and alcohol-related harm among different groups in the population. ICAP picks up on these indicators in *Patterns of Drinking and Their Consequences*, a book edited by Grant & Litvac (1998). Its central contention is that drinking patterns are a better predictor of consequences than are measures of per capita consumption. Policy makers should shift their focus to eliminating negative drinking patterns by targeted strategies and promoting beneficial patterns of drinking. ICAP's stance simplifies public health analyses to focus policy on the behaviour of the individual drinker, and away from environmental factors shaping that behaviour and effective population based interventions. Such policies might impact adversely on markets and profitability.

Collaborations and conferences

A further strategy noted by George was the funding of national and international gatherings of potentially influential people around themes within the new ideological framework. ICAP has promoted its perspectives and its partnership approach through a series of collaborations and conferences.

A key partnership, globally publicized by ICAP, has been with a US government agency, the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP). The establishment of this working partnership occurred around the time of a vigorous attack on CSAP before Congress by Doug Bandow, a Fellow of the Cato Institute (also author of *Politics of Science: the federal bureaucracy's war on social drinking*). CSAP's mission was to 'provide national leadership in the Federal effort to prevent alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug problems'. In Bandow's view, congressional intentions were 'perverted' by CSAP using 'public funds to promote media and political

campaigns for higher excise taxes, restrictions on advertising and destruction of private billboards' (Bandow, 1995).

CSAP and ICAP published *Working Papers* of the Joint Working Group on Terminology in 1998. ICAP's account of the process of this initiative highlights the importance for ICAP that the process itself took place. The first paper, a consideration of 'problematic' terminology in the alcohol field includes phrases such as 'Advertising Targeted to Youth': 'Alkie'; 'Beer Gut' and 'Industry Contributions to Prevention'. In the opinion of some of the limited number of reviewers who responded to the draft of the Working Papers (p. 10) 'major sectors of thinking and concern in the alcohol issue arena' were left out and the effort was seen as addressing the 'concerns of the industry not the concerns of the scientific or prevention community.'

Partnership 'principles'

A second ICAP engagement in partnership was a gathering in Dublin of 24 experts in May 1997 to consider and endorse a set of 'principles of co-operation' between the industry and alcohol science. These 'Dublin Principles', presented on ICAP's website (International Center for Alcohol Policies, 1997d) and widely distributed, consist of a preamble, a principle each for 'Alcohol and Society' and 'Alcohol Research', and it lists the participants.

The 'Preamble' asserts a 'common responsibility to work together' on the part of industry, governments and science/public health, echoing ICAP's Mission. The fundamental contradiction between the goals of these two sectors is not considered. 'Principle 1: Alcohol and Society', emphasizes 'balanced' scientific evidence and encourages an individualist orientation by focusing on 'irresponsible drinking'. The measures mentioned are 'research, education and support of programmes addressing alcohol-related problems'. Nowhere does it address population-based, environmental measures. In 'Principle 2: Alcohol Research', the emphasis is upon free association of researchers and funders, funding ethics and intellectual integrity and freedom with some limitations upon dissemination and publication, where the information is commercially sensitive and of no public health importance.

However, the focus should be not on the outcome but on what was achieved by the process—an apparent partnership with public health.

The 'Dublin Principles' represent an important escalation beyond the Joint Working Group. The list of participants includes industry and ICAP representatives and participants from academic or public health institutions, including universities, prevention-orientated non-governmental organizations and the World Health Organization. Although the Principles were adopted by the participants 'in their individual capacities', the organization of origin was included after each name 'For information purposes only' (International Center for Alcohol Policies, 1997d).

In fact, not many key figures from the alcohol field were present. Despite ICAP's hope that the Principles will be widely adopted in the relevant sectors, as of November 1998, endorsements of the 'Dublin Principles' were limited to alcohol corporates funding ICAP and organizations which had people present at the Dublin meeting. The only new endorsements were those of the Asia and Pacific Alcohol Policy Forum and the Distilled Spirits Industry Council of Australia.

The most recent move on 'principles' is ICAP's newly released 'Global Charter on Alcohol' which has already been criticized as a vehicle for industry perspectives (Varley, 1999).

'Permission for pleasure'

In June 1998 ICAP embarked upon an openly ideological move, hosting a 3-day international conference entitled 'Permission for pleasure' in New York. Around 200 participants and speakers from many different countries and perspectives attended. The mission of the conference was 'to examine the relationship between alcohol and pleasure in a public health context' and 'Alcohol and Pleasure from a Health Perspective' became its subtitle. The ICAP website (International Center for Alcohol Policies, 1998d) disseminated an account of the conference, comprising the pre-conference notice, a summary of each day's proceedings and an overview. The summaries, covering contributions from 40 speakers, give prominence to their professional or institutional affiliations as well as a sentence or two of what they said. Whatever the content or quality of the proceedings, in his closing message the ICAP chairman delighted in the success of 'bringing people together' on the topic. In the overview, the President of ICAP reinforces this message, exhorting the reader to

'take forward the spirit of partnership that has emerged here' (International Center for Alcohol Policies, 1998d). 'Permission for pleasure' was again also about establishing ICAP's 'brand', credibility and policy influence.

ICAP in 'emerging markets'

The most recent book has an additional audience: policy-makers in developing countries. In *Alcohol and Emerging Markets: pattern, problems and responses*, edited by Grant (1998), 13 authors in Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa highlight the importance of culture in alcohol consumption, but place strong emphasis on alcohol-related harm and the need for policy to address this. A literature review by a US anthropologist concludes that increased consumption in the absence of traditional constraints 'often results in a range of mental, physical and social morbidity' (p. 298). However, the book packages these chapters in an introduction, final chapter and conclusion that recommend industry involvement in the development of alcohol policy in 'emerging markets'. Only two policy approaches are specified in the chapter on the appropriate role for the industry: responsible promotional and advertising practices, and alcohol education and initiatives which promote sensible drinking. Once again effective environmental strategies such as controls on availability, or pricing, are not adequately addressed.

Collaboration in the 'war of ideas'

We have outlined above what we understand to be ICAP's strategies to shape the way alcohol, and alcohol research, is perceived by policy makers and others. The undermining of public health perspectives is, we believe, intended to benefit the major producers of alcohol in the 'war of ideas' that inform regulatory decisions in both western countries and in the 'emerging markets'. The benefits to ICAP of partnerships with public health have been made clear—respectability, credibility and the legitimization of ICAP's representation of industry interests in policy arenas.

Alcohol researchers and public health advocates are people of goodwill, who believe in concepts of community and co-operative partnership, and devote a great deal of time and energy to them. But we need to exercise caution

when we hear our favoured concepts adopted by the multi-national alcohol producers and those funded by them.

We are concerned that working partnerships with ICAP could lead alcohol research steadily away from prevention measures and effective environmental strategies, and towards an increasing focus on the 'choices' of the individual drinker, ineffective or marginal interventions and 'beneficial' consumption of alcohol. Continuing collaboration may result in industry goals and perspectives becoming embedded in the research agendas, findings and recommendations of alcohol science, and feed into alcohol policy which favours industry rather than public health goals.

What are the benefits to the public health partner? Perhaps there would be a grant or two for individuals and an opportunity to publish, but with the risk of being used for industry interests or cited in contexts that were not always understood. In reality, what is being offered is not fair and equal partnership, but a process of re-orientation aimed at guaranteeing that the industry's perspectives prevail. For public health as a field of endeavour or as a collective goal in all nations, there are no benefits at all.

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