

Editorial

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RULES OF INQUIRY

Dr. M. A. Lipton, Chairman of the APA Task Force Report on Megavitamins and Orthomolecular Psychiatry, recently wrote a letter to the Center for Science in the Public Interest. In it he said, "As you know, the value of Orthomolecular psychiatry and the role of food additives in hyperactivity are matters of serious controversy, and a well-balanced hearing would have had representatives of both positions who were critical of each other."

Before that he wrote, "First, I think the hearings themselves were highly biased. I have yet to find out why all of the witnesses were clearly proponents of Orthomolecular psychiatry and opponents of food additives."

It seems that Dr. Lipton follows one set of rules when he is conducting an inquiry as Chairman of an APA committee, but becomes highly critical of Senator G. McGovern's committee (which included Senators Kennedy,

Humphry, Leahy, Zorin-sky, Percy, Dole, and Schweiker). When its findings differ from his he has issued a blanket denunciation of the Committee as being "highly biased."

This suggests that Dr. Lipton has not compared the methods used by his own committee with those followed by the Senate Committee, or perhaps he has had a change of heart and now realizes that a committee conducting a serious public inquiry must be free of bias. There is nothing to suggest that he has changed his mind. Since Dr. Lipton has recently become so vociferous about biased committees, we felt it might be interesting to compare his own efforts as seen in his Task Force Report with those used by Senator George McGovern. It may be that the American Psychiatric Association need only take a trip up Capitol Hill to learn something about how to conduct committees.

Senator G. McGovern

Composition

Distinguished senators, both Republican and Democratic.

Bias

It is highly unlikely the Senators were biased in favor of orthomolecular medicine. None are physicians. None had previously taken a powerful position for or against. Their bias appears to have been toward the gathering of information relating nutrition and health.

Source of Information

1. Direct evidence from scientists involved in orthomolecular therapy, not only hearsay.
2. Reprints of scientific material from the scientific literature written by orthomolecular physicians.

Quality of Information

This can be judged by the reader since all the material presented to the Senate Committee was published. The basic scientific papers can be read so that each reader can evaluate for himself their evidential value. Witnesses were available for questioning by Senators.

Dr. M. A. Lipton

Psychiatrists, one a junior professor in his own department, two representing the NIMH, noted for its sustained opposition to orthomolecular psychiatry, and one who has stated that his salary came from drug companies and who has been on a speaking campaign to discredit orthomolecular therapy.

The majority of members had openly declared their bias against orthomolecular psychiatry publicly and in no uncertain terms. Dr. M.A. Lipton had written a polemic against orthomolecular psychiatry several years before, which was rewritten to become the final report. His polemic came out before his committee began its deliberations.

1. No direct evidence, not a single orthomolecular therapist was invited to appear; only hearsay.
2. Brief abstracts and discussion of the literature. Only hearsay.

Since only references to the literature were given (and many were incorrect) the reader would have to obtain each paper in order to determine whether M. A. Lipton's conclusions were based upon the papers he listed. Hoffer and Osmond (1976) have shown that Lipton's evaluation of orthomolecular papers was faulty to the extreme.

After studying the approach of these two committees, it is evident that Senator McGovern's committee was hardly biased very much one way or the other, while more than half of the APA committee had freely shown their bias, none more forcefully and vocally than Dr. M. A. Lipton himself. The Senate Committee examined both direct and hearsay evidence, and was in a position to question the witnesses. Dr. Lipton's committee examined only hearsay evidence in a selectively biased manner. He provided no opportunity whatever for questions to Orthomolecular witnesses, nor for witnesses to reason or argue with the members of the committee. They were ignored. Finally the Senate Committee published what they heard in toto, while Dr. M. A. Lipton published his own impressions of the literature.

Which committee was more biased?

It is just possible that Dr. M. A. Lipton was as aware then as he is now as to how one ought to conduct an unbiased investigation. Perhaps he was ordered by the Committee on Science, of which his was a subcommittee, to conduct his investigation in this biased fashion. It should be noted that the then President of the APA had given his personal assurances that the Task Force would be fair and unbiased. Dr. Lipton has never said that he was ordered to produce a biased report, so we must assume he was acting on his own initiative and judgment until he tells us otherwise.

It is difficult to believe that Dr. Lipton considers that his own committee was anything but grossly biased. He has, wisely perhaps, never defended or even commented upon the principles of selection which he used. Yet he has the affrontery to accuse Senator McGovern's committee of bias. We can only suppose that Dr. Lipton believes that only establishment psychiatry has a right to a fair hearing, while Orthomolecular psychiatry is of so little consequence that it must accept and silently acquiesce to misrepresentations by his committee. Luckily patients, their families, the public, and now legislators are beginning to think otherwise.

The APA is, at this moment, dunning its members for tens of thousands of dollars to hire a public relations firm to improve its image. For much less money it might present a much

better public image by disavowing Dr. Lipton's strangely conducted Task Force, which is becoming a focus of public distrust, and setting up a properly run inquiry into megavitamins and Orthomolecular psychiatry. Although we have not asked Senator McGovern, we do not doubt from what we know of that genial man that he would permit his aides to instruct the APA staff in the art of running unbiased committees for public inquiries.

It is now 15 months since we published our 120-page critique of the APA Task Force Report, and so far there has been no reply. It may be that a dignified establishment organization has no need to worry about such matters, but there are reasons to suppose that this is not so.

Only two months ago we were being dunned to subscribe to a special fund to employ public relations consultants to improve the APA's battered image. If that is so, then few things will do that image more harm than our remarks about the composition of the APA Task Force.

Perhaps it was this that was at the back of Dr. Lipton's mind when he railed about the biased nature of the Senate Committee's inquiry. Biased committees must pop up in Dr. Lipton's consciousness from time to time. It may even be that he will come to occupy a small niche in psychiatric history, even medical history perhaps, as being the man who rigged one of the most flagrantly biased committees known.

As a **Science** article noted earlier in the year, there is general agreement that biased committees are abhorrent. No one doubts that they occur, but when this happens there is, quite properly, much consternation. The rules of the American Academy of Sciences are quite explicit; bias must be expected and prevented, and committee chairmen must remain always alert to its occurrence and be on guard against it. As a comparison with Task Force #7 shows, every rule of the American Academy of Sciences was broken, in spite of the assurances by Dr. Busse, President of the APA, that Dr. Lipton's committee would be impartial.

We made many technical criticisms of Task Force #7 and as Professor Harold Kelm pointed out, we still did not correct all the errors of omission, commission, and false ascription made by Dr. Lipton and his associates. Since our HOD work was only peripheral to the megavitamin-ortho-molecular debate, we did not want to make our critique unduly long, but we have urged Dr. H. Kelm (see Kelm et al., 1975), to expose some of the shortcomings of Dr. Lipton's critique of the HOD. Dr. Kelm was partly angry and partly astonished by the inaccuracy and ineptitude of the Task Force's report on the HOD.

The main issue is not one of technicalities, but is far more serious and does not require any elaborate scholarship, careful comparison of sources, or delving into libraries to reach an answer, for the question is whether the APA's Task Force #7 committee was or was not biased.

We made the accusation that all members of the Task Force committee were suspect, and three, including the chairman, were undoubtedly grossly biased. It does not take 15 months for a professional association to decide whether it should reply to such an accusation, if the accusation was false. Failure to reply indicates an unwillingness or inability to do so. It is noteworthy that neither Dr. Lipton, nor any other Task Force member singly or collectively, has sought to deny bias and to urge any retraction upon us. It is difficult to believe that any reputable professional association, especially one with scientific pretensions and publicly acknowledged problems with its public image, would tolerate such accusations if it could avoid doing so. The obvious move would be to obtain an injunction against our "In Reply" for if our statements are demonstrably false, there should be no great difficulty in demonstrating their falsity. The APA frequently pushes itself forward to become an "Amicus Curae" on a variety of issues so that there seems no reason to suppose that it would not defend itself if falsely attacked. If our criticism is not false, the impropriety of allowing Dr. Lipton, whose fairness and lack of bias was already suspect and

had come to the APA's attention, to pick a committee composed of members as biased as he, is self-evident. In rigging any judicial or quasi-judicial matter, there is only one rule which pertains universally: "Thou shalt not be found out." It is deplorable to rig committees, but only a simpleton believes that it never occurs. It is folly to allow oneself or one's organization to be found out even before any report was published.

It is difficult to see how such folly and ignorance can be explained. We think it is a combination of carelessness and arrogance. Most of those involved possessed Aesculapian authority, one of the most potent and least understood of all authorities. In addition Washington in the early 1970's was, as we now know, the scene of a series of power struggles which set the climate for that troubled city. Then no doubt the **hidden agenda** was well understood by all those involved. This was to sink megavitamins once and for all. The appointment of Dr. Lipton to chair this committee made very clear just what the APA's intentions were, even though its President and his successors would undoubtedly deny that this could possibly occur. The APA wanted an "unbiased" report which would remove the nuisance of Orthomolecular psychiatry. Task Force #7 failed on both counts and slowly but inevitably a reckoning must be made. It cannot help but be painful.

REFERENCES

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