

March 17, 1977

The Honorable Robert Bergland  
Secretary of Agriculture  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Your forthright and forthcoming interview on Face the Nation this week was most impressive. Your recognition of the tobacco question as an important one to health and to the agro-economy, was courageous and refreshing. I am sure that you will keep the health professions and the public informed of needed developments in long-term government policy on this paradoxical issue. It would seem first that the only rational policy would be that tobacco smoking be discouraged as a national habit, and second that we should implement this policy in, as you point out, an evolutionary and not revolutionary manner. But implementation should begin.

Similarly, if the recent recommendations of the Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Need for the habitual U.S. diet were implemented, there would be a tremendous impact on agriculture and the national economy. Their recent broad dietary recommendations are very similar to those which have long been recommended from this School of Public Health and which also make up the diet recommendations of the American Heart Association and 15 other expert scientific and public health bodies.

There is a natural and understandable reluctance of institutions concerned with the agro-economy to accept or act on these recommendations, or to collaborate with public health persons in rational planning to implement them. Therefore, it would be most useful if a government agency could evaluate the potential impact of implementing these recommendations and make suggestions as to how the changes might best come about. We would be happy to participate from here, and to recommend others to participate, in such estimates and plans which we believe need to be made.

Sincerely yours,

Henry Blackburn, M.D.  
Professor and Director, and  
Professor of Medicine

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cc: Senators McGovern, Humphrey and V.P. Mondale  
Lee Stauffer, W. Hueg