

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Decide it on the merits...

...John M. Barry, Ph.D.

I want to share with you excerpts from an editorial that appeared in the *Boston Herald* on July 13, 1993. I think we can learn from it.

The Health Inspector: "Reopening your restaurant poses some troublesome Health Code issues. But if you can offer a modest gratuity, I think those issues can probably be worked out."

The Restaurateur: "I quite understand. Please accept this \$100 bill with my compliments."

The Inspector: "Well, everything seems to be in order. It's a pleasure to work with you."

The Restaurateur: "My sentiments exactly." (—Adapted from "How to Be a Regulator," a work in progress by Paul L. Barrett)

This same editorial concluded with the following: "But there is no more of a link between scholarships for Allston and a larger stadium than there is between a C-note and a health inspector's report."

Between the implications that health inspectors were, as a matter of day-to-day life, soliciting and accepting bribes is the meat of the editorial chastising Boston Redevelopment Authority Director Paul Barrett and his handling of Boston College's proposed stadium expansion.

The facts surrounding the necessity of the editorial itself are not an issue... What is an issue is this—to those who are involved in the profession of environmental health and environmental protection, damage has been done by this blatant implication that a "health inspector" would act in this manner. Such supposedly hypothetical conversation as printed in this editorial can do nothing but damage the reputation of environmental professionals, not only in the Boston area, but nationwide. In printing this, the *Boston Herald* has shown a complete disregard for the effects such

words can have on the lives of professionals and their families.

This incident serves to illustrate the magnitude of the job ahead of all of us in the environmental/regulatory arena. A new emphasis must be made on educating the public to what environmental health professionals do, the standards by which they live and work, and the importance of the service they are providing to the public. While public relations activities may be done by organizations and associations, the bulk of the responsibility still falls to the individual. Image and professionalism are everything, and professionals must eat, sleep and work *image*.

Professionals and professional associations are becoming more sensitive to incidents such as this and are fighting back—not by massive letter writing campaigns (history has shown that such campaigns have little effect on the media), but by positive public relations efforts and by individuals performing their responsibilities in a manner which commands respect. Your association is doing its part through stressing professionalism and the need for continuing education and credentialing. We as individuals must now continue the effort through our daily contacts with the public.

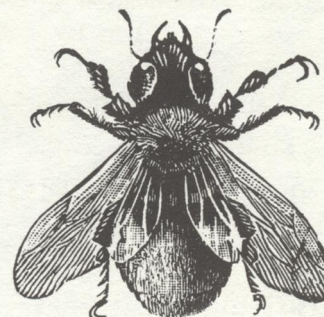
(By the way...

Yes, I was offended by the editorial, and yes, I did write a letter to Patrick J. Purcell, publisher of the *Boston Herald*.)

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