

RJR Addresses Nicotine Addition Allegations

*The documents in R031A are **Bates #511928950 (19940308) and #512685098 (19940325)**. The first document is a letter written by RJR CEO James Johnston to his employees regarding media and government allegations that tobacco companies add nicotine to their products in order to addict smokers. The second document is congressional testimony by RJR on the same subject.*

Author: James Johnston, Chief Executive Officer for RJ Reynolds (letter) and RJ Reynolds (statement to congress). **Addressee:** Employees of RJR (letter) and members of the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Health and the Environment (statement).

On March 8, 1994 James W. Johnston (CEO of RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company) distributed a letter to employees asking for their support of both the company and the industry. This was in response to the unfounded attacks in “highly inaccurate media stories and allegations by FDA Commissioner Kessler contending that tobacco companies add nicotine to their products to addict smokers.” He mentions the “Day One” broadcast and tells employees to feel free to refute any claim that RJR adds nicotine to tobacco sheets. He details the actions RJR has taken to counter the claims made by Kessler and the media, including writing to Kessler and clarifying for him how reconstituted tobacco has reduced tar and nicotine levels. He suggests that efforts on the part of anti-smoking groups to “...force the FDA to ban cigarettes...” would lead to “...smuggling, black markets, crime and joblessness.” In addition, the company made ABC’s attorney aware of the errors in the Day One broadcast.

He closes the letter by assuring his employees that their industry has worked to develop lower tar and nicotine products to meet consumer demands, and claims that they could continue in these efforts if the public health community works with them.

On March 25 RJR testified at Congressional hearings about whether or not the FDA had or should have jurisdiction over the manufacture of cigarettes. They claimed that allegations that cigarettes are addictive, that RJR adds nicotine to its products, and that they manipulate nicotine in order to addict smokers are false. They declare that “...cigarettes do not meet the classic criteria for addiction.” According to the testimony, heroin and cocaine addicts can only overcome their addictions by completely changing behavior, lifestyle and attitudes, while smokers can simply quit. Further, they testify that RJR does not add nicotine to its products, or manipulate nicotine in order to “...create, maintain or satisfy addiction.” They suggest that, much like the makers of soft drinks and alcoholic beverages, their approach to the manufacture of cigarettes is one that simply gives the consumer the most variety and choice.