

LETTERS

BUSINESS AND PUBLIC HEALTH

We must reclaim public health from private corporate interests

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Hastings calls for a broadening of public health's focus beyond concerns about marketing, tobacco, and individual behavior.¹ Others in public health—for example, in food and nutrition and non-communicable chronic disease have also taken this perspective. Some have raised the problem of widespread and multifaceted corporate influence on public health and the need for a framework for a public health policy that focuses on corporations.^{2 3}

Hastings' suggestion that public health move away from a narrow technocratic focus to a broader macroeconomic participation that emphasizes that the direction of capitalism and the implications of business is crucially important.⁴ His "ambitious pitch" that public health revitalize its upstream political functions is welcome support for concerns in the US about the political power of corporations.⁵ The influence and power of corporations transcends geopolitical borders (for example, through trade agreements) to the extent that corporations have become global governing agencies. Thus, it is important that public health professionals in all countries network around our shared interests in tackling the influence and power of corporations. We must build coalitions and join

forces with others inside and outside the public health profession. In this way, we can work together to build a strong, sustainable, and effective global movement that will reclaim public health and democracy from the vested singular interest of private corporate profits.

Competing interests: WW is editor of a book published by Oxford University Press.

A full list of references is available in the rapid response www.bmj.com/content/345/bmj.e5124/rr/599775.

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- 4 Brezis M, Wiist WH. Vulnerability of health to market forces. *Med Care* 2011;49:232-9.
- 5 Wiist WH. Citizens United, public health and democracy: the Supreme Court ruling, its implications, and proposed action. *Am J Public Health* 2011;101:1172-97.

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