

## Tobacco company found negligent in lung cancer case

**Washington.** In a landmark decision last week, a jury in Jacksonville, Florida, ordered Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corporation to pay \$750,000 to a 66-year-old man who sued the company after he got lung cancer. Jury members said they were swayed by documents purloined from the company in 1994 which admitted that nicotine is addictive. The jury found the cigarette maker negligent for withholding information about how dangerous its products were.

Stocks in the \$45-billion US tobacco industry fell immediately. Only once before has a jury ruled in favour of a complainant in a similar case; that 1988 New Jersey decision was reversed on appeal.

Brown & Williamson, which called the verdict a "product of error", plans to appeal. The complainant, Grady Carter, a retired air-traffic controller, smoked the Lucky Strikes brand of cigarettes from 1947 until his cancer was diagnosed in 1991. His cancer is in remission.

In interviews with *The Wall Street Journal*, jurors said that documents smuggled out from the company in 1994 were instrumental in their decision. Also important was a videotaped deposition by a former chief executive of Lucky Strikes' former manufacturer, American Tobacco, bought by Brown & Williamson last year. In it, Robert Heimann questioned the validity of all medical research linking smoking to disease. □

## Waste goes home

**Hong Kong.** A large shipment of plastics waste from the United States that has been stuck in Hong Kong for more than a month after Chinese authorities refused to accept it (see *Nature* 382, 484; 1996) will be sent back to the United States. The 200-tonne ship-

ment, including plastic bags from US supermarket chains, was to have been recycled in China. But China is clamping down on such trade and rejected the shipment because it contained rotting food.

The waste will be sent back to the United States in batches over the next few weeks. But environmentalists warn that there is nothing to stop it coming back again. Hong Kong trades in millions of tonnes of such waste each year, most of it destined for China. □

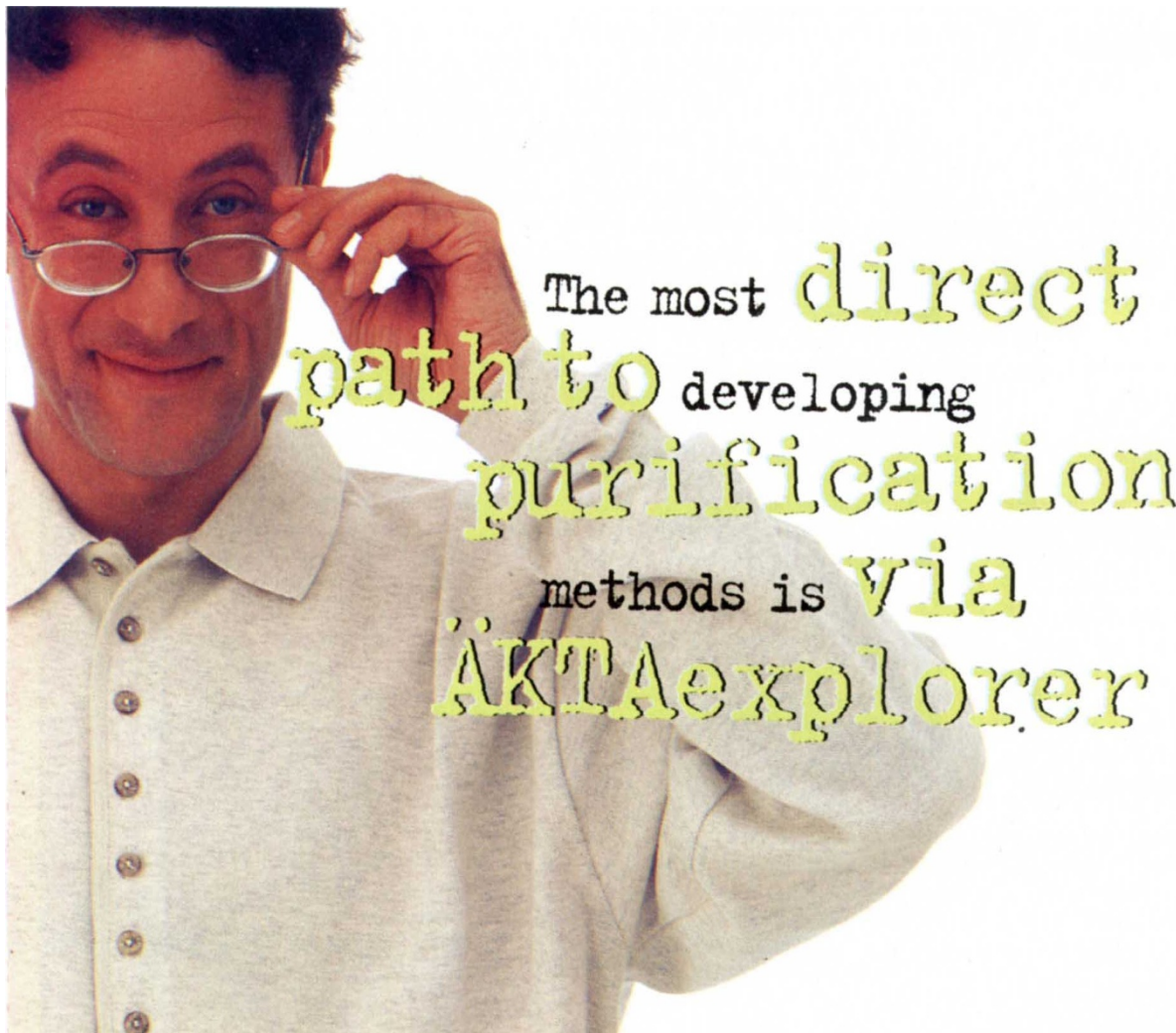
## French test sites study

**Paris.** The Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) announced last week that it has completed the first phase of a radiological study of French nuclear test sites in the South Pacific. The eleven scientists from five countries and officials from IAEA who are taking part in the study, collected terrestrial and marine samples from the Mururoa and Fangataufa atolls, where France has carried out 181 tests since 1975. The results will be made known later this year. The second phase of the investigation, a geological study of the area, will be completed by the end of next year. All operations are being overseen by an international advisory committee that includes representatives of the South Pacific Forum, the UN Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, the World Health Organization and the European Commission. France has paid US\$ 1.8 million towards the costs of the study. □

## World space funding

**Paris.** Space funding has levelled off everywhere, except in Japan, and even there spending increases are slowing down, according to a report, *Government Space Programs, Worldwide Prospects: 1996-2000*, from the Paris-based consultancy Euroconsult.

Space projects remain almost entirely government subsidized. Budget cuts in industrialized countries have hit military space projects the hardest. Once-fashionable microgravity research has been



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