

SMOKING AND HEALTH

INTRODUCTION

1. Smoking is certainly bad for some people, (e.g. . people with bronchitis or certain heart conditions - "the susceptible minority"), but it is "a habit which most smokers enjoy without injury to their health", as was stated in the Royal College of Physicians' Report in 1962.
2. Many people still mistakenly think of nicotine as a dangerous element that stains the fingers, etc. There is also a growing awareness of tar, which is the term used generically to describe smoke condensate prepared in various ways.
3. Tar condensed from tobacco smoke is carcinogenic when painted on the skin of mice; but see 8. below.
4. Nicotine has no known carcinogenic effect; the U.S. Surgeon-General said "the chronic toxicity of nicotine in quantities absorbed from smoking and other methods of tobacco use is very low and probably does not represent a significant health problem". This however is not necessarily the last word on the subject.
5. It is believed that nicotine is an important constituent of cigarette smoke and is responsible for some of the beneficial effects of smoking. It is not harmful in cigarette smoke but like all physiologically active materials, under certain circumstances, nicotine can be toxic.
6. Tar can be measured with a fair degree of accuracy as between one brand and another provided the samples are big enough.
7. Mouse skin painting experiments indicate that the number of tumours produced is dependent upon the amount of tar painted on the skin of test animals, other things being equal.
8. Known carcinogens are present in cigarette smoke but in quantities too small to support a causal explanation of the association of smoking and lung cancer.

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9. However, in view of the epidemiological and biological evidence, the balance of probability is that it is better to inhale less tar rather than more.
10. Since this is not a proven fact, manufacturers cannot claim that it is so.
11. Where tar and nicotine figures have been published, the total market does not appear to have suffered materially.
12. So much for tar; about the vapour phase of smoke much is not yet known. There is evidence that some components could cause ciliastasis and that these might be removed in filters, though completely so only with unacceptable sacrifice of smoking quality.
13. Research on a considerable scale, though not conclusive in any one area, has thrown much light on the nature and composition of smoke.  
Other work in the psychological field has gone some way towards identifying people who should not smoke.
14. Research has enabled the industry to produce cigarettes modified to meet current assumptions, for example with reduced tar and nicotine (not necessarily in the same proportion) and with certain gases reduced by selective filtration. Carried beyond a certain point, however, these modifications have hitherto resulted in products acceptable only to a small minority of smokers.

I. Government attitudes to smoking

Government attitudes are inconsistent. Most health authorities sincerely believe that people should not smoke but governments are reluctant to forego revenue or to impose unpopular restrictions on people's liberty.

In view of the uncertainty governments will not positively recommend smokers to have recourse to lower tar and nicotine cigarettes, since by so doing they would endorse smoking in some form in some degree and they might be misleading the public if the harmful compounds, if any, are in the vapour phase and not the condensate.

In the hope of appearing to discourage smoking, without necessarily doing so very effectively governments are inclined:-

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1. to promote the publication of tar and nicotine figures;
2. to impose cautionary wording on labels;
3. to curtail advertising and sales promotion;
4. to suggest that, for those who must smoke, cigars and pipes are, on epidemiological evidence, less hazardous than cigarettes. (There are, however, grounds for doubt as to the validity of this suggestion. It could perhaps be erroneous, if the smoke from cigars or pipes were inhaled).

Under pressure, some governments facilitate anti-smoking propaganda by subordinate governmental or municipal agencies or private organisations.

## II. Industry attitude

The attitude of the industry is also, of necessity, somewhat inconsistent.

The industry

1. does not admit a proven cause/effect relationship between smoking and lung cancer;
2. argues that even the epidemiological studies indicate that only a small minority are in serious danger from smoking;
3. argues that smoking has certain positive virtues, in particular the relaxation it provides (which might otherwise be sought in more dangerous products, e.g. drugs or excess of alcohol);
4. argues that smoking should be a matter of adult choice; the industry therefore takes the line that it does not try to urge young people to take up smoking and indeed often denies itself advertising opportunities which might have this effect;
5. argues that advertising and coupons do not affect total cigarette consumption, but only choice as between brands;
6. nevertheless, in the hope of preventing adverse legislation, imposes voluntary restraints upon itself which are not always consistent with its beliefs;

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7. produces some cigarettes with relatively low tar and nicotine or other content to meet the requirements of smokers who may suppose that these are safer;
8. draws attention to the research effort of the industry, both in its own laboratories and through sponsored work outside;
9. argues that what is bad for mice and other animals in large doses is not necessarily bad for humans in small doses;
10. nevertheless has recourse to biological tests of its products. The logical defence for this apparent inconsistency is "There may be something to be learned from the relative carcinogenicity or toxicity to animals of various substances".

### III. Future industry policy

The industry's object is to gain time for research during which it is hoped that the dangerous compounds (if any) in smoke will be identified and removed. This is a political activity and the tactics must therefore be flexible to meet varying types and degrees of pressure in varying circumstances.

In some situations it is still possible to stand firmly on paragraph 1 of section II "-nothing is proved-" while attacking the methods of statisticians, epidemiological evidence, etc., and proclaiming the industry's great scientific effort.

The second line of defence is to say "we do not believe it but just in case it is true we will:-

- (a) not encourage children to smoke;
- (b) make available lower tar and nicotine or other "safer" products;
- (c) pursue our researches harder than ever."

The third line is reached when the political authorities say "we are under pressure; unless the industry makes a gesture we shall be compelled to legislate". In general it is felt that legislation is worse than voluntary action, because it is apt to be permanent and more severe.

On the other hand, voluntary action implies tacit admission by the industry. In some situations, particularly the U.S.A., relatively mild legislation has been found preferable to voluntary action beyond a certain point.

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Voluntary action by the industry, or legislation, which has no demonstrable effect, is likely to become ineffective for the industry's purpose in a relatively short period of time. Since time is of the essence, such action should therefore be resisted as long as possible and kept to the minimum.

For example, the industry might voluntarily agree to keep off television till 8 o'clock in the evening. When it becomes apparent that this has no effect on reducing the number of new young smokers, the next stage is to come off television till 10 o'clock and finally to come off it altogether. If mild cautionary labels have no apparent effect a sterner wording could be the next obligation.

At this point it should be said that any curtailment of promotional activity, any cautionary labelling or any adverse publicity about tobacco is ultimately bad for the industry, although the immediate effect may not be great. Most people in the U.S.A. may have got used to the cautionary label, but it must be a reinforcement of the doubts of people who are wondering whether they should smoke or not. The U.K. cigarette manufacturers (like the American whisky manufacturers) have stopped using television and so far there has been no measurable effect either on total consumption or on brand switching.

Nevertheless, there must be some long-term effect in decreasing total interest and awareness of smoking. In any case, each tactical withdrawal is inevitably followed by a further advance by the pursuing enemy.

#### IV. Conclusions

The following guidelines may be of assistance:-

- (a) An agreed industry approach, if attainable, is to be preferred to individual and differing company responses. Seeking short-term commercial advantages does not pay.
- (b) Research should be pursued and, in general terms, talked about. The B.A.T. Group alone spent some £800,000 on smoking and health research in 1968.
- (c) Specific health claims must be avoided until or unless they can be supported by known facts relating to human health.

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- (d) The publication of tar and nicotine tables seems relatively harmless. The industry should not take the initiative but, if tables are to be published, the industry should help to see that they are properly prepared. Publication of such figures may indeed be of real help to the industry since they give nervous smokers an opportunity to continue to smoke with what they see as relative safety.
- (e) The industry should aim wherever possible, if league tables must be published, to get tar and nicotine firmly separated in the public mind. The least objectionable solution, if both must be published, would be to have tar given in specific figures and nicotine merely in range, e.g. high, low, medium.
- (f) Each company should have available a brand which will appear at or very near the bottom of tar and nicotine tables. Obviously also it must ensure that the filter version of any one brand yields less tar than the corresponding plain version.

Experience shows that publication of tables damages the brand at the top and helps the brand at the bottom but does little else to affect consumer preference.

- (g) Any restriction on advertising, coupon trading or other promotions should be strongly resisted on the grounds:-
  - (i) that these activities do not increase total consumption but only influence brand preference, and
  - (ii) that this is an unwarrantable interference with the freedom of commerce.

(See Appendix A and Appendix B).

If restrictions must be accepted, the avoidance of peak juvenile viewing hours is the least obnoxious.

- (h) Cautionary labelling of packets should be strongly resisted; if resistance seems ineffective, settle for the least objectionable phrasing. (See Appendix C).
- (i) Cautionary labelling in advertising should be resisted to the last ditch.

MARCH 1969

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APPENDIX A

Abolition or Restriction of Cigarette Advertising:  
Some Arguments

1. All our cigarette advertising is brand advertising and there is little or no evidence that this has increased the consumption of individual smokers. Brand advertising is an integral part of competitive marketing in all democratic countries.
2. We have never urged non-smokers to smoke or encouraged smokers to smoke more. We believe that smoking to excess - like over indulgence in many other fields - is undesirable. What is excessive of course varies between individuals. The immediate effects of excessive smoking are less dramatic than those of excessive drinking, but are nevertheless perceptible. When smoking ceases to be a pleasure, but only a counter-irritant; when the mouth is sore and taste impaired; when one has a "smoker's cough" in the morning - common sense dictates that one should reduce one's smoking.
3. We do not ever direct cigarette advertising at the young or encourage children to smoke. We believe that whether to smoke or not is a decision for adults to make and that any restriction on advertising is an unwarrantable interference with the right of the public to have information on which to base individual selection of brand.
4. Unfavourable comparison is sometimes made between manufacturers' advertising budgets and governments' lesser expenditure in providing the public with information about the possible dangers of smoking. It should be pointed out, however, that this is not a fair comparison as it ignores the free space and time allotted by the press, T.V. and radio to coverage of the subject.
5. A complete ban on all tobacco product advertising in Italy and restrictions on cigarette advertising on T.V. in the U.K. and on T.V. and radio in New Zealand have not prevented further increases in consumption in those countries.

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Appendix A Continued

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6. The codes and voluntary restrictions entered into by the tobacco industries in certain countries do not imply that these industries accept a causal connection between smoking and lung cancer. The industries' primary objective in taking such voluntary action has been to give effect to their declared desire not to encourage the young to smoke.

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APPENDIX B

Cigarette Coupons: Some Arguments

1. In the U.K. coupon brands form a significant section of the market. There are, however, no indications that coupon trading has led to an increase in the total sales of cigarettes nor that smokers of coupon brands smoke more than equivalent smokers of non-coupon brands. Coupon trading has not caused any significant change in the proportion of adults who smoke in the U.K., which has remained around 50% for many years.
2. The coupon market in the U.K. is dominated by two brands. Neither of these offers more than its numerous competitors in terms of coupon value - indeed in some cases the two brands offer less - so their success must be because the products as a whole are more acceptable than those of the competition.
3. Where coupon schemes are directly costed into the product, the money involved in coupon trading is not spent by the manufacturer and should not, therefore, be included in any figures of industry promotion expenditure. The money is provided by the smoker and the total level of outlay on coupons depends on the extent to which the smoker chooses to buy coupon brands in preference to non-coupon brands. Every time a man buys a packet of coupon cigarettes he is in effect putting by as a saving the value of the coupon, which is available to him either in the form of cash or of goods, whenever he wants it.

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APPENDIX C

Cautionary Labelling on Cigarette Packs : Some Arguments

1. Under the law now in force in the U.S.A. all cigarette packs for sale or distribution there carry cautionary labelling. In 1964, however, the American Medical Association told the Federal Trade Commission:

"With respect to cigarettes, cautionary labelling cannot be expected to serve the public interest with any degree of success. The health hazards of excessive smoking have been well publicised for more than ten years and are common knowledge... We do not believe that the answer to the cigarette problem lies in cautionary labelling requirements ... it is our opinion that the answer which will do most to protect the public health lies not in labelling (which is likely to be ignored) but in research ....."

This opinion, coming from the most reputable medical body in the U.S.A. counters, on the grounds of ineffectiveness, the argument for cautionary labelling.

2. Counter-arguments on other grounds must depend on the actual wording of the cautionary statement, although general objections to cautionary labelling are:-
  - (a) It presupposes that the biological activity from all types of cigarettes is similar - which is not the case.
  - (b) It takes no account of the degree of risk to the individual smoker. This risk (if it exists) must depend on a number of factors including his physical and psychological make-up, his country of birth, his country of residence, the degree of urbanisation to which he has been exposed, the amount he smokes and the length of time he has smoked.
  - (c) It is discriminatory in that similar warnings could apply to a number of other consumer products, particularly if the cautionary text includes the word "excessive" or a phrase such as "may be hazardous".

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