

Press release

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Issued by:

The Tobacco Manufacturers' Standing Committee and
The Tobacco Advisory Committee.

6-10 Brunton Street, W.1. (MAYfair 3804)

SMOKING AND HEALTH

Note to Editors: The following consists of two separate statements on the report published today by a Committee of the Royal College of Physicians.

Statement I is concerned with the scientific aspects of the report and is issued by the Tobacco Manufacturers' Standing Committee, which was set up by the industry in 1956 to promote research into the effects of smoking on health.

Statement II is concerned with the commercial aspects of the report and is issued by the Tobacco Advisory Committee, which represents the industry on general trade matters.

All British home and export tobacco manufacturers are represented on each of these bodies.

I. Statement by the Tobacco Manufacturers' Standing Committee.

The Tobacco Manufacturers' Standing Committee (T.M.S.C.), which exists to promote research into the effects of smoking on health, has the following comments to make on the scientific aspects of the report published by a Committee of the Royal College of Physicians:

1. The tobacco manufacturers have approached the problems of smoking and health, since these first became a matter of concern, with a full recognition of their responsibility to the public. Through T.M.S.C. they have cooperated with medical and scientific authorities in supporting research into these problems. There has been no financial limitation on the manufacturers' support of research projects; the only requirement has been that the projects should have the approval of recognised authorities in the

fields of research concerned.

2. The evidence summarised by the R.C.P. Committee is well known and adds little to that quoted by the Medical Research Council in 1957.

3. The R.C.P. Committee was set up to consider the effects on health of both smoking and air pollution. By deferring to a separate report its consideration of air pollution the R.C.P. Committee has recognised the importance and complexity of this factor; but in so doing the Committee has, in T.M.S.C.'s view, produced an incomplete assessment of the problems involved.

4. There is a growing body of evidence that smoking has pharmacological and psychological effects that are of real value to smokers.

5. The main unspoken lesson of the report is the need for far more intensive research. T.M.S.C. believes that the following three approaches in particular are both practical and essential:

(a) Only a minority of even heavy smokers contract lung cancer or chronic bronchitis, and there may well be predisposing factors in both smokers and non-smokers who contract these diseases. A study of environment and personal characteristics, as well as past medical histories, may throw important new light on the incidence of these diseases.

(b) There is much evidence to suggest that the striking differences in the incidence of lung cancer and bronchitis between urban and rural areas, and between one country and another, reflect in varying degree the effects of air pollution. To take only one example, research has shown a 7 to 1 variation in male lung cancer mortality rates between certain localities in Northern England and North Wales. Much more research is undoubtedly needed into the constituents and effects of air pollution.

(c) Further investigation is needed into the chemistry and biological effects of tobacco smoke. The R.C.P. Committee states that "we cannot identify the substances in tobacco

smoke that may be injurious to health." If such substances do exist in significant quantities, it should eventually be possible to identify and then to eliminate or minimise them. In this country, research of this kind has so far been carried out through the Medical Research Council and by independent workers, in many cases with the financial support of the tobacco manufacturers. T.M.S.C. is now building its own chemical and bio-assay laboratories at Harrogate, which will come into operation in the autumn of this year, to enable such investigation to be pursued on a much wider scale.

6. T.M.S.C. therefore feels that a general condemnation of cigarette smoking is not a constructive approach to these problems. The R.C.P. Committee has acknowledged that "most smokers suffer no serious impairment of health or shortening of life as the result of their habit."

II. Statement by the Tobacco Advisory Committee.

The Tobacco Advisory Committee, which represents the tobacco industry on general trade matters, makes the following comments on the commercial aspects of the recommendations by a Committee of the Royal College of Physicians.

1. The R.C.P. Committee recommends "more effective restrictions on the sale of tobacco to children."

It is illegal to sell tobacco to children under 16 whether for their own or another's consumption. It is possible that this is not generally appreciated and the manufacturers would be glad to assist in any measures to make the law more widely known.

2. The R.C.P. Committee recommends restriction on the advertising of tobacco goods.

Tobacco manufacturers' expenditure in the press and television is devoted entirely to competitive brand advertising, and is only about half the national average spent in these media in relation to retail sales. In 1960 this expenditure by the tobacco manufacturers represented about 1½d. in the £ of retail sales, compared with 3d. in the £ for all consumer goods and services.

3. The R.C.P. Committee recommends increased tax on cigarettes.

The tax on cigarettes in this country - 3/4d. on a packet sold at 4/6d. or the equivalent of about 400% purchase tax - is already the highest in the world. Any further increase would be most inequitable. The R.C.P. Committee is doubtful whether it would have any lasting deterrent effect. It would penalise the many millions of smokers who derive pleasure and solace from smoking and who, as the report shows, do not develop the diseases in question.

4. The R.C.P. Committee recommends that there should be printed on the packets of cigarettes figures showing the amounts of smoke condensate, nicotine and volatile irritants found in the smoke per gram of cigarette of the particular brand.

The harmful constituents of smoke, if any, are not known. The R.C.P. Committee states that "no claim should be made that any particular brand of cigarette was safer than any other." The public would nevertheless interpret these figures as indicating substances that should be minimised and would be misled into thinking that the brands with less of these substances were somehow "safer" than others. In the present state of scientific knowledge the manufacturers would be strongly opposed to the adoption of this proposal.

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