

The Newsday Magazine

June 25, 1989



The Tobacco Industry Fights Back

BY MITCH KELLER



DENNIS DUGGAN'S NEW YORK

My Little Book of Letters From the Mayor

SEE by the papers that Mayor Edward Irving Koch is writing a new book based on the letters he has sent in the years since he was elected mayor. Judging by just the letters Hizzoner has sent me, he will have no problem filling a volume the size of the Book of Kells.

I covered the mayor and his opponents during the 1977 mayoral race. Koch, then a congressman, started far back in the pack, but he did well enough to get into a runoff with now-Gov. Mario Cuomo, and to win that and then go on to become mayor.

That was a long time ago. I then became City Hall bureau chief, and for the next few years shuttled between Room 9, where Koch often held press conferences, and the mayor's office at the back of City Hall. In Room 9, the Blue Room, the press is piled into the equivalent of a crowded subway car.

We got along splendidly. In his first book, Koch quoted an entire article I had written about him, a story that was appreciative but carried a small storm signal. After describing his style as "part Woody Allen . . . part wise guy," I wrote: "If you're a fan you love it: If you're not, you think how long four years can be."

Little did I know. Twelve years and counting!

My first letter from Hizzoner came in the spring of 1979. It read, "Your article was terrific." The next came in the spring of 1980 and it concluded, "You are a good guy."

In the fall of 1982, after he had lost to Cuomo in the Democratic primary for governor, he wrote to thank me "for your nice letter. It's never easy to lose, but if you have done your best, as I have, then there can't be lingering questions as to why it hap-

pened." Then Koch ended it with a handwritten line: "You are a friend."

But the tone of his letters to me began to take on a darker tone starting around 1984. That year I got a letter chiding me for a column I had written. "I don't think you have the facts," he said. But he added, "You are a fair person."

There was one last "nice" letter. It came in March, 1984, after his book, "Mayor," was published. It was then his only published book, and I kidded him about its being made into a movie. "I appreciate your interest in the movie and will certainly pass your suggestions on to the producers, whoever they may be," he wrote. And, in another handwritten postscript, he said: "Jack Nicholson could play either you or me."

I had by now become a columnist, and I turned my attention to other city matters — cop shootings, firehouse closings, heroes and bums. I wrote about baseball in the House that Steinbrenner Rebuilt and Shea Stadium. I also began writing columns critical of Koch.

He was still one of the most interesting members of the political species, but now he was a questionable leader. I firmly believe that politicians, like ballplayers, have their day in the sun and then they must move on. The dynamics of the city were shifting, and I didn't see Koch keeping up. There were the scandals, then the perception that the "Old Guard" was just that.

So now when letters from Hizzoner arrive, I run for cover. Last August the mayor wrote me a three-page, single-spaced letter that began, "It is not my intention to quarrel with your repeated attacks upon my administration. Most, I believe, have been unwarranted and unfair. That is your right. But you should use facts and not simply spew out pejorative material intended to raise emotions."

He ended: "It is not my intention to try to change your point of view on this administration, although I believe it is no longer simply a political view or an ideological objection. I think there is a personally malicious content to it."

In November, 1988, Koch wrote me: "I would like to point out an erroneous statement" (in a story I had written that Robin Fischer, badly injured in a building collapse, had said she did not want the mayor to visit her bedside).

"You can obviously push anyone you want for mayor," Koch wrote,

perhaps anticipating my backing David Dinkins this year, "but in reference to me, please try to be fair and accurate. I have plenty of pluses and minuses to choose from."

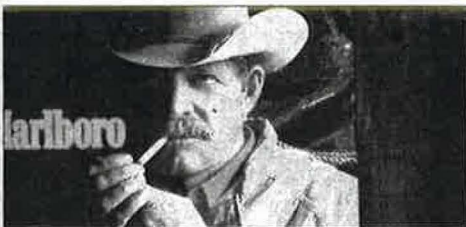
And like every politician I have met, if you write about the minuses, you can expect to get the kind of letters I began getting. As tough as some of them were, I am going to miss opening my mail from City Hall. Ed, write me a postcard now and then and let me know how you're doing.



KOCHLINES: "It is not my intention to try to change your point of view."

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The Cover: Photograph by Ken Spencer.

The Tobacco Industry Fights Back

American cigarette makers have been hurt financially in the "tobacco wars" waged by antismoking forces. But now, through worldwide expansion, diversification into food products and promotional appeals to the youth market, they're richer than ever before.

BY MITCH KELLER

Photographs by Ken Spencer

THE SMOKER was standing at a crowded bar in Manhattan, having a beer and a cigarette, watching the Mets on TV. Feeling a tap on his shoulder, he turned to see a young couple whose faces evinced grave doubts about his right to exist.

"Excuse me," said the man, "but we don't smoke. Would you mind moving down?"

Gawd, the smoker thought. It was, after all, a saloon. The establishment was in the business of administering to one vice and tolerating others. There were ashtrays on the bar, other tobacco wretches here and there. If one is in Newcastle, the smoker almost said, one does not properly object to the nearness of coal.

Furthermore, there was no convenient spot down the bar; to move down meant to move out. The smoker, who in a different setting would gladly have yielded to the young couple, politely held his ground, a bit peeved that he'd been challenged to do so. Even just a year or two past, he thought, smokers never encountered that sort of brass.

The American smoker lives in an ever more hostile land. Each year, more and more of his fellow smokers abandon him, and he detects a corresponding increase in the number of people who deem his habit simply too vile to bear; moreover, they are delighted at the opportunity to tell him so. The smoker finds that he is welcome in certain company, and often at work, only if he is willing to transform his behavior to please the majority. This can be even harder on his principles than it is on his desire for tobacco, but he has no valid argument and knows it; one does not reasonably defend an activity now believed to kill 390,000 Americans a year and to endanger, through "second-hand" smoke, the health of innocent others. For many cigarette haters, even love itself, once believed to conquer all, cannot overcome the smoker's odious fumes; the personal ads abound with the caveat that the otherwise ideal lonely heart can, if he or she smokes, forget it.

In the so-called tobacco wars, nonsmokers and their more combative allies, the organized antismokers, are clearly having their way in the trenches. They've won meaningful restrictions on smoking at work and in restaurants, airplanes and other communal places; public smoking is now regulated by laws in 42 states and more than 400 cities and counties. The antismoking campaign has helped to reduce the portion of American adults who smoke from 40.4 percent in 1965 to 29.1 percent now; almost half the living Americans who ever smoked have quit. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop estimates that were it not for the changes in attitudes toward smoking over the past 25 years, about 40 million people who do not smoke, would.

Impressive as their achievements have been, though, the forces of "Smoke Free America" have yet to know the pleasure of seeing the enemy bleed. The real enemy, they are fast to say, is not the smoker of cigarettes, who may be surprised to learn it; the real enemy, the arch-enemy, is the maker of cigarettes, the American tobacco industry. The unreconstructed smoker may be getting roughed up, but the Ameri-

can tobacco industry most certainly is not. Defiant, vigorous, and richer with each new year, the industry is fighting back with all its daunting brawn and shrewd, capitalistic brain, and is continuing to thrive, much as it did back in the days when, according to the ads, a nice pack of L&Ms was "just what the doctor ordered."

Attacking proposals for advertising bans and further smoking restrictions, crusading for smokers' rights, adapting its marketing strategies to the changing times — the tobacco industry rushes to meet and repel every challenge. As its domestic market shrinks, it makes sure that its foreign market expands. As the stigma of profiting from cigarettes grows, it assumes the role of impresario to the masses, bringing them sports, music, the fine arts. As the health advocates rail, it represents smoking as a matter less of health than of personal rights and liberties, to some extent succeeding in making antagonists look like the bad guys.

And although the industry's economic clout has always been great, the purchases by R. J. Reynolds of Nabisco and by Philip Morris of General Foods and Kraft have made it greater still, as the innumerable media dependent on food and beverage advertising will attest. Some analysts see such diversification as protection against the steady decline of the domestic cigarette market, as well as just good, aggressive business. But antismokers are apt to see it as an attempt by the two companies to cleanse their image by flying the pennants of Marlboro and Winston on the same towering staff as those of Jell-O, Velveeta and Oreo, right under the Stars and Stripes.

"THE TOBACCO industry is extremely dynamic," says Dr. Alan Blum, a family physician at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston and one of the industry's severest accusers. "I mean that in the most complimentary as well as the most nefarious sense of the word. It doesn't sit around doing nothing."

There are those in the antismoking movement who believe that unless they start fomenting indignation at the industry itself, unless they stop bothering so much with the users of tobacco and commit themselves instead to destroying the providers, the cigarette companies will be able to harvest all the customers they need for many years to come.

"What we've failed to tap into is outrage against the companies," says Blum, who grew up in Cedarhurst. "They're not about to acknowledge that smoking will even make you cough."

Public outrage would have closed the companies long ago, he thinks, if instead of making a product that is associated with cancer, heart disease, emphysema, bronchitis, stroke and stomach ulcers, they slaughtered baby seals.

Right now, the fall of the American tobacco industry seems about as imminent as the fall of the republic. More than 50 million Americans still smoke cigarettes, and though consumption is dropping by about two percent a year, profits continue to rise, owing primarily to annual price increases. According to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, the retail value of the 562.5 billion cigarettes bought in the United States in 1988 was \$36 billion, a jump of \$2.4 billion over 1987.

Tobacco profits were one of the main reasons that Kohlberg, Kravis, Roberts & Co., a New York investment firm specializing in company takeovers, was



Mitch Keller is a freelance writer who lives in New York.

willing to pay almost \$25 billion in February for RJR Nabisco, the largest takeover in U. S. corporate history.

"It's business as usual," says John C. Maxwell Jr., a Virginia stockbroker and analyst who writes a yearly report on the industry. "The tobacco companies are doing what General Motors and others are doing: just moving ahead."

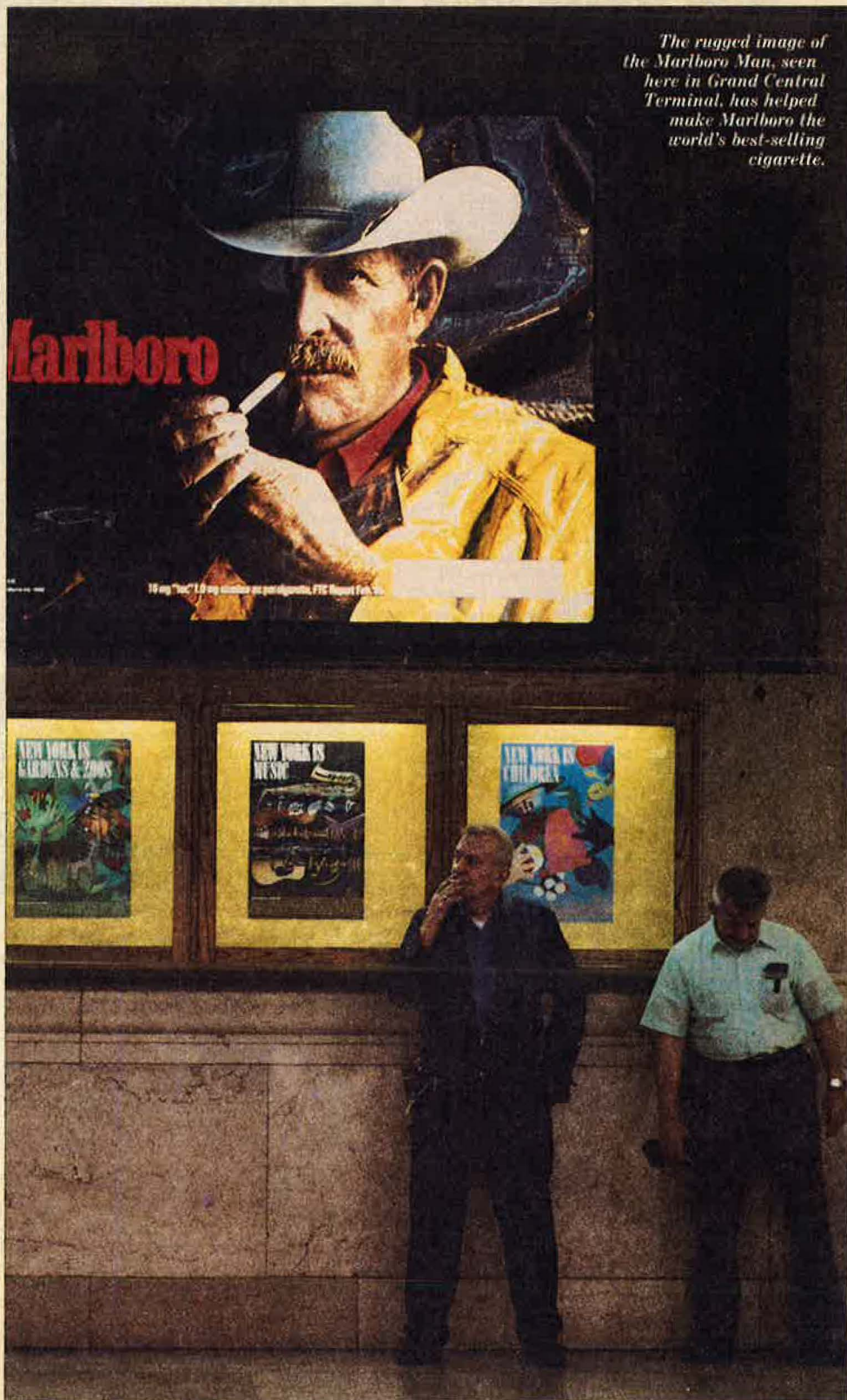
The Agriculture Department says that over the past five years, cigarette prices, exclusive of taxes, have risen about six to nine percent a year; last year's rise was nine percent, or twice the rate of the Consumer Price Index. The cigarette companies are expected to maintain these price increases as long as the market keeps declining and as long as they can get away with them. No one knows how many smokers there are whose attachment to their cigarettes is such that they will not quit them for any reason at all and will pay almost any price to get them. Industry insiders are confident, though, that man's 400-year-old love of tobacco is indomitable — worldwide, he will smoke 5 trillion cigarettes in 1989 — and that even in fitness-mad America there will always be enough smokers to keep the profits coming.

"I really don't think the cigarette business is going out of business ever," says Sara R. Ridgway, vice president of public relations for Lorillard, the makers of Newport, Kent and True. Ridgway believes that some of the annual two percent drop in consumption is the result not of smokers' quitting but of their being unable, because of the spread of restrictions at work and in public places, to smoke as many cigarettes as they once did.

The tobacco companies are also making money overseas, where tremendous sales increases, especially in the Far East — the industry's vast new frontier — have more than made up for waning sales at home. From 1986 to 1988, the number of American cigarettes sold abroad rose from 64.3 billion to 118.5 billion, representing an increase in retail value from \$1.3 billion to \$2.65 billion, the Agriculture Department says.

This sudden boon to the industry has been the result mainly of the decisions in 1987 by Japan and Taiwan, under pressure from the Reagan administration, which was acting in behalf of Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) and other tobacco-state legislators, to repeal their restrictions on the selling of imported cigarettes. Prominent antismokers think it bizarre and contemptible that the U. S. government was working to help the cigarette companies abroad while its own surgeon general was trying to put them out of business at home. "Everything we may have accomplished in this country," says Alan Blum, "is being made a mockery of."

Japan has replaced Belgium-Luxembourg as the biggest foreign market for American cigarettes. South Korea is expected to be an enormous market in the near future, and in China, whose smoking population has been estimated to be as high as 350 million and climbing, R. J. Reynolds and two Chinese partners have opened a plant that's producing Camels and Winstons. In Taiwan, in just the first year after the trade restrictions were lifted, sales of American cigarettes went from \$4.4 million to \$119 million. The Taiwanese have harassed the American companies with a charge commonly made by their enemies at home: that they deliberately encourage young people, through advertising and free handouts, to become smokers. The accusation has



The rugged image of the Marlboro Man, seen here in Grand Central Terminal, has helped make Marlboro the world's best-selling cigarette.

U.S. Butts Into the Korean Cigarette Market

BY PETER LEYDEN AND DAVID BANK

HAN BUM KY sat chain-smoking Virginia Slims Lights in the western-style J. J. Mahoney's bar in Seoul. He began smoking 20 years ago as a freshman at Yonsei University, and he now smokes only American cigarettes.

"The reason is very simple: The quality is better than Korean-made," said Han, 40, an assistant vice president of the American Express Bank in Seoul. He can remember when he used to buy three or four packs of American cigarettes each month on the black market for two to three times their regular price. Now he has no problem buying his favorite American brands, but he says it is more difficult to find places to smoke them. "Even in Korea, smoking people are becoming the minority," he said between sips of his martini. At his office, only five of 60 employees smoke. "All the smokers are senior people," he said.

Kim Seong Yup wouldn't be caught dead smoking American cigarettes. He'd rather fight than switch. Kim, a 23-year-old college student, smokes only Korean brands. Like other Korean students, he resents American attempts to invade South Korea's lucrative cigarette market. "The Americans have no consideration for our health," he said on the crowded Yonsei University campus in Seoul, puffing the popular 88's, the Korean cigarettes that were introduced for last year's Olympics. "American cigarette companies just want to sell more."

From a U. S. business point of view, that's little wonder. Almost 75 percent of Korean men smoke — one of the highest percentages of any country in the world. Nearly \$3 billion worth of cigarettes were sold last year in a country of 42 million people. For foreign companies, the mar-

ket was completely untapped. As recently as 1986, smoking foreign cigarettes was a crime that could land a Korean citizen in jail. A Korean government monopoly offered consumers a limited choice of mediocre brands. Even after 1986, Korean government restrictions crippled foreign companies, holding them to held less than .05 percent of the market.

Early last year, a consortium of the major American tobacco companies complained that the Korean restrictions amounted to an unfair trade practice, and the U. S. government began hard negotiating to open up the market.

A new agreement went into effect last July, and by December, foreign cigarette companies — the vast majority American — had cornered 4.5 percent of the market. Still, the success of the foreign companies was much less than in a comparable Asian country such as Taiwan, where foreign companies control a 20 percent share of the market.

For their meager business, American cigarette makers took a public-relations beating and set themselves up as a target for Korea's heightened anti-American sentiment. Critics were quick to jump on the high-profile controversy and accuse the United States of exporting cancer.

"They're campaigning for health in the U. S. and at the same time they're shipping cigarettes over here," said Cho Hyung, 29, a Yonsei University student who admitted, nevertheless, that he has sampled many foreign cigarettes. But, said an American trade official who asked not to be identified, "How do you deal with a situation in which you don't want to encourage smoking and you want to open the market to competition?"

The companies won the right to advertise in adult men's magazines and in shops that sell cigarettes. They can hand out free packs and

sponsor certain events — as long as they don't involve youths. The American tobacco companies, however, are not the only ones who have a stake in expanding — or at least maintaining — the size of the cigarette market. According to a small but growing antismoking lobby here, the Korean government has, too.

"The Ministry of Finance, they have to encourage smoking," said Kim Myung Cheol, assistant director of health education in the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. "There is a fierce struggle within the government right now."

Health officials want to strengthen the obscure health warning on the sides of cigarette packages that now reads: "Avoid excessive smoking for health." The finance ministry has strongly resisted any revision.

Kim Myung Cheol operates from a one-room office of 12 people who have to deal with all government health campaigns. He said the antismoking activities this year have a budget of only about \$30,000, plus \$15,000 for materials.

The office also tries to encourage activities of private antismoking groups, but these groups are small, Kim said, and barely up to the task of educating the public and combatting the problem. Meanwhile, the number of smokers continues to climb. In 1982, 67.7 percent of Korean males smoked. By 1987, that figure had increased to 74.2 percent, according to Korean Gallup Poll surveys.

An estimated 23,000 Koreans over age 30 died of causes linked to smoking in 1988, according to a study released in December. Nevertheless, Kim Myung Cheol thinks the tide will turn and Koreans will snuff out their smoking habits and switch to good health.

American cigarettes, he said, are not the only ones that kill.

Peter Leyden and David Bank are journalists based in South Korea.

been answered with the equally common denial.

In the states, only two full-priced brands continue to grow in sales year after year, Philip Morris' Marlboro and Lorillard's Newport. Marlboro, the most popular cigarette in the world, is an industry all by itself: It now has almost 25 percent of the domestic market, well more than twice the share of its closest rival, R. J. Reynolds' Winston (10.7 percent).

Claims for the quality of Marlboro and Newport aside, spokesmen for Philip Morris and Lorillard use the same phrase to explain the success of the two brands in the shrinking market: consistency of advertising message. In the case of Marlboro, of course, that's an understatement; even nonsmokers know all about the Marlboro man, whose props for decades have been little more than a good horse and a big sky. They're probably less familiar with the people who dwell inside the Newport ads, who for the most part are frisky yuppies who are either at play, frolicking and madcapping, or taking a breather for a joke, a smoke and a smile.

The Marlboro man would laugh them out of Billings, but no matter; in a style truer to the values and aspirations of the times, they've been selling

cigarettes so well that their brand now ranks fifth.

* * *

The industry's right to continue such advertising is perhaps the most sensitive issue on which it must now defend itself.

Laura Hitchcock and Sabine Vogel, both 18 and members of the graduating class at West Islip High School, say they started smoking — Laura at 11, Sabine at 13 — because they were curious to see what it was like. "Then it became a habit," says Laura. Both are quick to say that they believe the cigarette companies wanted them and their peers to start smoking and used advertising to lure them.

"Of course they did," Sabine says bluntly. "That's another reason I want to quit. I feel like a pawn."

"I think they're pretty catchy," says Laura of cigarette ads, but they don't fool her. Offering as an example the ads for Virginia Slims, she says she perceives them as an attempt to dupe young women into thinking that if they smoke that brand, they'll look as willowy and winsome as the models in the pictures. Says Sabine: "They glamorize it, of course."

Edward Fisher, 26, an electrician who lives in Bellport, says advertising imagery was an important

factor in his initiation to smoking. "There was the Marlboro guy that interested me. You know, 'Be a man, smoke a Marlboro.' It's the same thing with Budweiser. 'Be a man, drink a Bud.' After that," says Fisher, who now smokes another brand, "it just went on. I just smoked. I felt I was on the prairie."

But Freddie Eldik, 18, of Manhattan, doesn't believe he was influenced by advertising when he started smoking earlier this year. "Probably it was seeing other people do it," he says. "I wanted to try it." Eldik, who says he's never smoked more than three or four cigarettes a day, wants to quit, but it may not be easy: he's working in a smoke shop.

Weldon Malone, 22, a Seaford auto mechanic, also says that advertising had nothing to do with his starting to smoke at 15. "Peer pressure," he says. "My friends all smoked. It was the cool thing to do."

Convinced that the relentless outpouring of cigarette ads does contribute to the decision by young people to start smoking, the antismokers hope ultimately to get Congress to impose a complete ban on all such advertising, promotions and sponsorships. Studies show that 60 percent of all smokers start by age 14, 90 percent by 19, and the antismokers there-



Left, a street promotion for Winston in Tokyo; Japan is now the largest foreign market for American cigarettes. Below, the ubiquitous Marlboro Man looms over a street scene in Shenzhen, China.



fore believe that if they do all they can to prevent teenagers from ever starting, in time there just won't be any smokers — or domestic tobacco industry.

As a first step toward an ad ban, Rep. Mike Synar (D-Okla.) is sponsoring a bill that would restrict the industry to "tombstone" advertising — ads stripped of all the pretty people and scenery and colors, leaving nothing but words. The enemies of the tobacco industry are confident that the copywriters can't sell cigarettes by themselves.

"My guess," says Dr. Paul Fischer, who has studied the effects of cigarette advertising on young people at the Medical College of Georgia, "is that what happens in our society is that because of the overwhelming number of tobacco images we see day in and day out, from a very early age we start associating cigarettes with pleasurable things."

Says Michelle Kling of the American Lung Association, "Smoking is sexy, smoking is vigorous, smoking is glamorous, athletic, beautiful and, above all, smoking is healthy. No matter what the advertisement is, that's the basic message: 'Use our product and you'll be these things.'"

In defending their right to advertise, the cigarette

companies are well-drilled and not lacking for arguments. Over the years, the extent to which advertising induces people to take up smoking has proved about as answerable as the debate on the chicken and the egg. The companies contend that advertising's only purpose is to maintain and increase a company's share of the existing market of smokers, and that their right to such "commercial speech" is protected by the First Amendment.

When they're accused of aiming their ads at blacks, who have a higher incidence of smoking than whites (34 percent to 28.8 percent), and at women, who've been quitting smoking at a slower rate than men, the companies charge their critics with implying that blacks and women aren't intelligent enough to make their own decisions. When they're accused of aiming their ads at teenagers, they cite the literally unanimous agreement among their adversaries that a young person's decision to start smoking is primarily the fault of parents, older siblings and friends who already smoke. According to the American Lung Association, parents who smoke double the chance their children will, and Charlotte Brown Tausz, a consultant to Smokenders, says almost all the people who

join that program blame smoking among peers as the reason they first lit up.

Industry partisans also note that, despite the \$2.5 billion the companies spend each year to market their products, young people, like everyone else, are smoking less now than they did in the past; the implication being that perhaps cigarette ads are less beguiling than their opponents think.

The latest report of the surgeon general says that among high school seniors, the percentage of girls who smoke has dropped from a peak of 30 percent in 1977 to 20 percent now, the percentage of boys from a peak of 28 percent in 1976 to 16 percent now. (Among adults, the figures are 32 percent in 1966 to 27 percent for women, 51 percent in 1966 to 32 percent for men.) Girls have been smoking more than boys each year since 1977, possibly a consequence, some authorities say, of their liberation from traditional behavioral constraints.

Given its economic and political influence, not to mention the reluctance of many congressmen to tinker with the First Amendment, the tobacco industry may be able to thwart a comprehensive ad ban indefinitely. But what may finally prove to be its greatest

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'In Doctors Ought to Care, the cigarette companies have
a foe that's trying to turn children off to smoking by
making the industry a laughingstock.'

menace is a force it simply can't fight. The education of the very young in the hazards and aesthetic ugliness of cigarette smoking is the long-range weapon of the antismoking movement, whose ultimate goal is to breed, in effect, a generation of young adults consisting entirely of nonsmokers.

Last September, an educational program devised by the Tobacco-Free Young America Project, a joint venture of the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society and the American Lung Association, started in 27,000 first-grade classes nationwide, including all 1,500 in Nassau and Suffolk counties and a small number in New York City. The idea of the program, called Smoke-free Class 2000, is to begin teaching children about the pestilence of smoking in the first grade and to continue teaching them through the 12th grade, adapting the instructional materials as they grow older.

"Hopefully, the kids' thoughts and opinions on this will carry through to the home, too," says Gary Byrd of the cancer society. Antismoking education in the public schools is of course conducted in many other ways as well, and that's just fine with the people behind Smoke-free Class 2000. "As long as it gets in the school, we don't care whose program you use," says Kling of the lung association. "The message has to be repeated so many times until the children get it."

In Doctors Ought to Care, a national organization of 5,000 physicians and health professionals founded and chaired by Alan Blum, the cigarette companies have a foe that's trying to turn children off to smoking by making the industry a laughingstock. By using counter-advertising and counterpromotions to ridicule tobacco products, DOC tries to make children see the black humor in the industry's glamorization of products that can kill them.

DOC has sponsored an "Emphysema Slims Tennis Tournament" (contestants included Martina No-Smokanova and the Barfboro Man) in Texas and Georgia, a "Smoke-Free Is Cool Jazz Festival" in Ohio, and a "Dead Man Chew Softball Tournament" in Nebraska. "We've got to laugh the pushers out of town," says Blum. DOC members also sponsor contests for children with antismoking themes and speak in the schools. "We really are in a society that eats its young," Blum says, "and looks the other way on the cigarette issue."

Many antismokers were indignant when, in 1984, the tobacco industry itself stepped rather obliquely into "antismoking education." The industry gave the National Association of State Boards of Education an undisclosed grant to create a program to foster communication between children and parents and sound decision-making on such matters as jobs, drugs and smoking. NASBE spokesman Tim Callahan said that although the program was "highly

praised" by its participants, the NASBE board of directors ended it in December; he said criticism of NASBE's relationship with the tobacco industry "probably did" bear upon the decision. Antismokers had condemned the project as an instance of the wolf trying to show the lambs that deep down, he was really a swell guy.

Like a country surrounded by hostile enemies, the American tobacco industry long ago accepted permanent conflict as its lot. It is primed not only to thrive but to fight. In the clamor now being made by its increasingly aggressive opponents, it's easy to forget that the industry has been defending itself since at least the early '50s; its public-relations problems did not begin with the first surgeon general's report in 1964.

A now-famous Tobacco Institute memo of 1972, made public during the trial last year in which the widower of Rose Cipollone, a New Jersey woman who died of lung cancer, was awarded the first damages ever in a smoking-related death, shows how long the industry has been prepared for war. The memo describes a "brilliantly conceived and executed" plan according to which, "For nearly twenty years, this industry has employed a single strategy to defend itself on three major fronts — litigation, politics and public opinion . . . It has always been a holding strategy, consisting of creating doubt about the health charge without actually denying it; advocating the public's right to smoke, without actually urging them to take up the practice; encouraging objective scientific research as the only way to resolve the question of health hazard."

The Tobacco Institute is the trade association for five of the "Big Six" tobacco companies, Philip Morris, R. J. Reynolds, American Brands, Lorillard, and Liggett. Antismoking activists are amused by the name "Tobacco Institute," saying it sounds like a think tank. The mind's eye sees a handsome modern edifice surrounded by acres of lawn and shade trees, down in the tobacco country of Virginia or North Carolina; but the institute's headquarters are in an ordinary suite of offices in Washington, D.C. The institute has about 75 employees in Washington and two or three each in nine regional offices, as well as a registered lobbyist in most state capitals. Its annual budget, which it won't divulge, is widely believed to exceed \$20 million.

As the companies go about the business of making and selling cigarettes, the institute's job is to speak in their behalf and to lobby against such hurtful things as advertising bans, smoking restrictions and higher excise taxes. It monitors virtually every development affecting cigarettes at the federal, state and local levels and offers assistance, including on-site "briefings" to businesses, restaurateurs and hospital-ity organizations that are trying to cope with new smoking restrictions. "Our briefings are

from our perspective, which is the reasonable accommodation of smokers and nonsmokers," says Brennan Dawson, an assistant to the president of the institute.

With cigarette hatred at an all-time peak, doing public-relations work for the Tobacco Institute, for those whom a recent book called the "merchants of death," is considered one of the more trying jobs in the field. "It's a very high-paced, very frenetic environment where people are expected to work very hard and very well," says Dawson, who's accustomed to seeing herself hanged now and then in the press. She says, though, that relatively few people in the main office smoke. She smokes Marlboros.

As millions of American smokers experience discrimination and hostility for the first time in their lives, the Tobacco Institute and the companies themselves are working hard to boost smokers' egos and to prevent their capitulation to the forces of "Smoke Free America." In newspaper advertisements and direct mailings, they denounce the utopians as a rude and selfish minority who are trying to deny them their rights and liberties. Their campaign exhorts smokers to stand up and fight back. Its slogan: "Enough is enough."

Perhaps the most prominent voice for the smoker is Philip Morris Magazine, a glossy bi-monthly started in 1985 and mailed to about 12 million households by the biggest of the tobacco companies. (Together, Philip Morris and R. J. Reynolds have about 70 percent of the market.) The magazine, which is free, is an upbeat blend of human-interest stories, articles about accomplished Americans, and pro-smoking news and information.

A recent issue, with its profiles of strong-willed and ruggedly independent people, is a treasure trove for the paranoid antismoker in search of subliminal propaganda. A man who created his own wildlife refuge is described in terms of "confidence" and "stamina, sinew, and dedication" and "stubbornness." He says, "When I'm confronted, I won't back off. I will not." An "attractive, blond, athletic" woman who is an avalanche meteorologist says, "I suppose there is a slight aspect of danger to it, but I don't really think about it. . . I try to constantly reevaluate the information." The issue contains a lengthy section on the curse of excise taxes; a cartoon spread goofing on government regulation called "Silly Statutes. . . Hard-to-believe laws and bonehead legislation that are actually on the books"; information about the American Smokers Alliance, "a national organization dedicated to restoring and defending smokers' rights and eliminating discrimination against smokers"; and anti-antismoker letters from readers, one of which concludes, "These fanatic, righteous, holier-than-thou nonsmokers make me sick. . . Keep the issues coming. It's great to know you have a friend."

"A lot of smokers are so frustrated," says Steve Handman of New York, a member of the board of directors of the American Smokers Alliance. "They know they're being ripped off" — in the sense, he says, of their being denied the right to smoke in many public places — "and they've had no way of expressing themselves." Handman, 63, a partner in a printing business, is a cigar smoker. Noting that the

medical evidence that "second-hand" smoke hurts nonsmokers is still inconclusive, and describing most smokers as "well-mannered, polite people," Handman says that fair and civilized smoking laws would allot some space to smokers in all public settings. "I believe in compromise. My personal feeling is that I have my rights and so do the antismokers, and there's plenty of room in between."

The ASA was formed last year when Philip Morris, at its own expense, organized a meeting of representatives of smokers-rights groups. In the struggle to achieve or avert a smokeless society, smokers themselves have shown little inclination toward activism, and such groups are very few: Estimates range from 10 to 20. The ASA hopes to speak for smokers on a national level, but it's still very much in its infancy, trying to get contributions and a mailing list, and Handman says it doesn't yet have enough members to justify a count. Both he and Jim Ramsay, manager of communications for Philip Morris USA, say Philip Morris has helped the group with neither funding nor a mailing list. "We don't even want it to because people will think we're a pawn," Handman says. Adds Ramsay, "Philip Morris and the industry in general are constantly under fire and scrutiny. We don't want to have to confront the charge that we're pulling strings."

CURRENT sentiments on smoking and smokers have required adjustments in the industry's marketing strategies, the most direct example of which can be seen in any well-stocked smoke shop. Special promotions abound. There are many new "generic" brands that sell in New York for as little as 99 cents a pack — about 60 cents off the usual price — and numerous cigarettes now come with coupons good for discounts at the counter. A new cigarette called Malibu, for example, by American Brands, has a \$3 coupon on the carton. In the Manhattan shop where Freddie Eldik works, two packs of Kool Milds can be bought for the price of one. Edward Fisher, the Bellport electrician who once smoked Marlboros, had in his pocket a compact disc that he'd just obtained in exchange for Parliament proofs of purchase.

Offers similar to these are being made to smokers through direct mail. It's all part of a shift away from traditional advertising media to marketing techniques that enable the companies to reach only their targeted consumers; or, as one marketing consultant said, to appeal "in private" to people who "don't give a damn if smoking is good for them or bad for them." Such marketing, because it is discreet compared with conventional cigarette advertising, has the benefit of keeping down the bothersome carping by antismokers that the companies are trying to lure young people to tobacco.

The opposite is true of the companies' widespread sponsorship of such special events as concerts, fashion shows, art exhibits and, most conspicuously, all kinds of major and minor sports events. When Congress banned cigarette advertising on television and radio in 1971, the companies turned more and more to sponsorships as a way to keep their brand names high in public view. The tobacco indus-

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The Tobacco Industry Fights Back

Continued from page 13

try was one of the forerunners of a marketing practice now used by many industries to enhance image and promote sales, but according to Jim Andrews, senior editor of the newsletter Special Events Reports, cigarette companies still head the field in spending: In 1988, Philip Morris spent \$78 million on special-events sponsorships, more than any other of 3,700 companies, and RJR Nabisco, the parent company of R. J. Reynolds, was second at \$58 million.

Given the love that young people have for sports, the antismokers hate the common association of cigarette brand names with auto and boat races, tennis and golf tournaments, soccer matches, even the national pastime — youngsters at Shea and Yankee Stadiums see a giant Marlboro sign every time they look toward centerfield. "They know exactly where the kids are," says Alan Blum. The "tombstone" bill now in Congress would ban the use of cigarette brand names in sports sponsorships, though the companies would be allowed to use their own names. It also would ban cigarette advertising in sports stadiums.

Dave Fishel, vice president of public relations for R. J. Reynolds USA, says the rule his company follows on sponsorships and promotions is that there must be a "primarily adult" audience. In a sports promotion now under way, Reynolds, in magazine advertisements, is inviting people to join the "Winston Sports Connection." Members get a free Super Bowl XXIII sports bag and a quarterly newsletter, and become eligible for "Pro-team merchandise, special contests, action videos and more." The coupon they must fill out requests signed certification that they are smokers and at least 21 years old; it also asks them to list their usual brand of cigarette and any other brand they smoke. There is, of course, nothing to prevent children and nonsmokers from lying their way into membership, but if they do, their names will go into the "Sports Connection" data base, which means they can expect all manner of cigarette-related mailings for some time to come.

Their extensive sponsorship of sports and other popular events allows the cigarette companies to display their brand names to countless consumers in positive, happy, all-American settings. "How bad can we be," they seem to be saying, "if we give you so much healthy fun?" Even those revolted by cigarettes eagerly attend the Virginia Slims Tennis Tournament or

the Marlboro Country Music Show. Yet this is but one example of the enduring relationship that countless nonsmokers and even antismokers have with the tobacco industry. At home, their cupboards and refrigerators are chock-full of food and drink that, as a result of corporate diversification, they now buy from the same people who make cigarettes. The ironies are limitless: One can imagine the fanatical cigarette-hater gobbling down his Post Grape Nuts (Philip Morris) at breakfast, or enjoying his Ritz crackers (RJR Nabisco) at lunch, or, as he rails against the tobacco companies at a smoke-free cocktail party, sipping his Jim Beam (American Brands). The hand is enriching the "merchants of death" even as the tongue is lashing them. Cigarettes still come first, though, and the companies, adapting to the new attitudes toward smoking, are now experimenting with the nature of the product itself. The most radical experiment so far, the Premier, was dropped last year by R. J. Reynolds because smokers hated it. The Premier burned not tobacco but a piece of highly refined carbon at the cigarette's tip. The smoker's inhalations heated the tobacco, providing smoke that Reynolds said was chemically simpler and "cleaner" than that of other cigarettes.

Last month, Philip Morris announced it had developed a new, low-nicotine cigarette being tested under the Merit Free and Nice labels. Advertising for the new cigarette is expected to stress its low nicotine content, although industry experts say it has roughly the same nicotine content, 0.1 mg., as two existing brands, American Brands' Carlton and R. J. Reynolds' Now.

Reynolds has also introduced the Vantage XL, a "reduced smoke" cigarette, and the Chelsea, which is supposed to have a pleasant, vanilla-like aroma. Lorillard has introduced the Spring Lemon Light, which it describes as having "a citrus flavor, a lemon overtaste."

The persecuted modern smoker can only imagine the consequences of such new cigarettes. Perhaps they will restore some measure of amity between him and those who now loathe his presence. Perhaps the time will come when, instead of glaring at him, instead of asking him to go away, the nonsmoker at the bar will smile sweetly and say, "Excuse me, but would you mind blowing your lemon aerosol in the other direction? It smells great, but it's falling into my drink."

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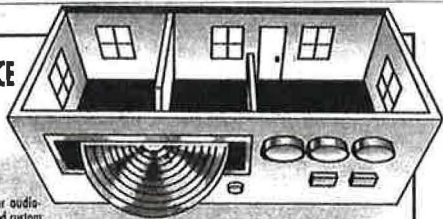
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