

Smoke-filled bribery

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The media portray Latin-American mothers and children who frolic in cars and cash sent home from the United States by drug runners. My, my, my, you say. How can they live with themselves? And those dealers who sell crack to children on playgrounds? Animals.

Illegal drug overdoses kill an estimated 17,500 people a year in the United States. The FBI said 1,344 homicides occurred last year during drug felonies, as well as 252 other drug-related murders. This comes to 19,096 drug deaths.

For that, we vent spleen. We hyperventilate. We want to extradite Colombians and execute ghetto dealers. We huff until we exhaust our lungs. This leaves us with no wind to scream and run the biggest drug dealer of all out of town.

Cigarettes kill nearly half-a-million people a year in the US - 26 times more than illegal drugs. The

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total of fatal drug overdoses would kill off Hays, Kan. The total of drug murders would knock off Bull Shoals, Ark. Cigarettes would eliminate Miami and Miami Beach.

Philip Morris is a big cigarette dealer. In 1990, PM was seventh in the Fortune 500. It owns Miller beer, Kraft and General Foods. Its reported annual profits are more than \$3 billion. Two-thirds of the profits come from cigarettes.

If cigarettes were invented today, PM would be locked up for mass murder. It turns potential outrage into hero worship by showering

PM says it never markets cigarettes to children. Internal PM documents obtained by the antismoking group Doctors Ought to Care show that PM gave last year to groups such as Athletes for Youth, chapters of Big Brothers and Big Sisters, the Boy Scouts and the Boys and Girls Club, Junior Achievement, the YMCA, the Catholic Youth Organization, 4-H, the Caring Program for Children, a children's art carnival, the Children Diabetes Foundation, children's hospitals in Richmond and Wisconsin, the Children's Outing Association, Citykids Foundation, Futures for Children, the Brooklyn Children's Museum, Future Farmers of America, the Jesse White Tumbling Team, Barton Youth Services, Young Concert Audiences and Young Aspirations/Young Artists.

PM kills you through cancer and heart disease. Passive smoke kills your loved ones. PM then blows into town as savior of everybody else. It gives to the Pediatric AIDS Foundation, the National Theatre for the Deaf and national or local chapters of the Red Cross, the United Way, the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, the March of Dimes, Easter Seals, the Salk Institute, the Multiple Sclerosis Society, the Hemophilia Foundation, the New York Blood Center, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, United Cerebral Palsy, the Task Force for Battered Women and Gay Men's Health Crisis.

Cigarette makers know how to settle out of court with potential enemies. PM has given to the legal defense funds for Asian and Mexican Americans, the NAACP, NOW and national or local chapters of the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Bar Association and the Legal Aid Society.

Tobacco fields decimate forest. Cigarette butts last eons in the environment. But PM gives to zoos, the Nature Conservancy, the World Wildlife Fund, the National Audubon Society, the New York Botanical

from them ^{le} ~~it~~ funds the Salvation Army, the Partnership for the Homeless and the Queens Interfaith Hunger Network. Smoking triggers 200,000 of the 1 million cases in the United States of cataracts, the leading cause of blindness. This costs the nation \$600 million in extra Medicare services. But PM funds Helen Keller Services for the Blind and Entertainment for the Blind.

Who smokes while professionally dunking or dancing? But PM gave over 800 times to the arts and sports. PM fights lung cancer liability in court. Then it props up the press with ads in the Globe and funds to National Public Radio.

PM gives and gives until you cannot distinguish between a cigarette and mom's apple pie. How can you knock a company as wholesome as a Boy Scout, that cares about AIDS, volunteer fire councils, libraries, the down-and-out, public schools and church organizations, and gives its money away to all colors, classes and religions?

PM bribes you until you no longer ask the question. Last year, PM rolled up the street to toss a reported \$17 million in donations at the people. The people lunged off the curb to catch the cash and fund their cause. They had no remorse.

Colombian drug runner Pablo Escobar salivates for this much respect. His drugs kill 19,096 people and we call him uncivilized scum. Cigarettes kill half a million people. We welcome Philip Morris with glee. We call it civic pride.

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