

Sullivan Would End Tie Of Sports and Tobacco

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WASHINGTON, April 10. — Health and Human Services Secretary Louis W. Sullivan today asked sports fans to boycott sports events backed by tobacco companies and called on sports promoters to shun tobacco sponsorship.

He said Americans should send a message to those "who would encourage our children to use addictive substances which will ruin their health and send them to an early grave."

Dr. Sullivan did not use the word "boycott," but staff members said that was only because he feared it would sound "coercive." He specifically asked that owners of all public and private arenas and parks stop letting their complexes be used for sporting events sponsored by tobacco companies and he asked sports promoters to stop accepting tobacco companies as sponsors.

A spokesman for the department, Campbell Gardett, said Dr. Sullivan believed that fans should "recognize that when a sporting event is sponsored by a tobacco company that it is being used to promote tobacco use and decide whether they want to support that kind of promotion."

It was one of the strongest attacks a Cabinet member has ever made on an American product, although Dr. Sullivan, an ardent foe of smoking, has condemned cigarette marketing efforts directed specifically at women and blacks.

A Call to Use Money

It was not immediately clear what effect his remarks would have or how much tobacco companies spend on sports events, but the amount has been steadily increasing since 1971, when cigarette advertising was banned from radio and television.

Dr. Sullivan asserted, "If the tobacco companies will not adhere to this country's strong philosophy of voluntary corporate responsibility, then it is up to our citizens to provide the incentive in the only language they appear to understand — the language of money."

Walker Merryman, vice president of the Tobacco Institute, a trade group, said the remarks were "nothing new from the Secretary, although this time he may have ratcheted up the rhetoric a notch or two."

"Apparently he has overlooked the fact that tobacco products remain legal in this country, Mr. Merryman said. "Those who manufacture them have a right to promote them, and they do so at events designed for adult audiences."

An Estimated \$500 Million

Mr. Merryman said tobacco companies spent tens of millions of dollars each year on sporting events.

And Dr. Alan Blum of Baylor College of Medicine, who is the head of an anti-smoking group in Houston called Doctors Ought to Care, estimated that the industry spends \$500 million a year on sports promotion.

The RJR Nabisco company, makers of Winston cigarettes, said it

sponsors 2,500 sports events a year, though the company would not say how much that cost. Among the more famous of the events are tennis tournaments sponsored by Virginia Slims and the Winston Cup automobile racing circuit.

Dr. Sullivan, who issued the call in a speech tonight in Columbus, Ohio, said he took the action because tobacco companies had not responded to his request, made last year, that they stop sponsoring sporting events.

In his speech, to the First International Conference on Smokeless Tobacco, Dr. Sullivan said: "The disgraceful trade-off in America between profits and good health must stop! But it will stop only when our citizens rise up and say, 'Enough — no more!' I urge you and other individuals and organizations to join me in the expression of anger and resolve. Let this be the beginning of an all-out effort."

The conference is looking into the health risks of smokeless tobacco like snuff, which can cause oral cancer.

Aides to Dr. Sullivan said his remarks referred only to events sponsored directly by tobacco companies and not food manufacturers or other concerns their parent companies may own.

Those who campaign against the use of tobacco were jubilant about the announcement. Dr. Blum said: "It's

Health chief calls on fans to boycott tobacco-sponsored sports events.

terrific. He is moving away from just rhetoric and is calling for action."

Athena Mueller, general counsel with a group called Action on Smoking and Health, said the statement reinforced the point that there is something specially sinister in the way the tobacco companies link the "healthy, sporting life with tobacco use and its diseases."

A Defense of Sponsorship

But Nathaniel Walker, director of public relations for RJR Sports Marketing, said: "I think our activities are accepted by people who attend these events. These sports are better today because of some of our money that has gone into them. Tobacco companies have raised the level of these sports. Also, we have a right to sell our products and a right to call attention to them."

Chip Williams, spokesman for National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing, said: "Winston cigarettes are a quality, legal product that can be purchased by people 18 years or older. Our main concern is that people are trying to keep legal products from being advertised."