

Books

The Cigarette Underworld

A Front Line Report On The War Against Your Lungs

Edited by Alan Blum, M.D.

Lyle Stuart

128 pp., \$9.95

by Jonathan Z. Larsen

Imagine a blank page, with a cigarette drawn in the center. Any cigarette will do. Then imagine several lines radiating out from the cigarette to a circle of boxes, each of which would encapsulate one of the major effects of smoking. The first box would be labeled Heart/Lung Diseases. Inside the box, perhaps on an artist's tombstone, would be written "350,000 U.S. annual deaths." A second line would connect to a box labeled Smoking-Related Fires. Within would be the following statistics, perhaps overlaying a smoldering mattress: 2,300 deaths, 5,000 burn victims, leading cause of fire fatalities. A third line might connect to a box labeled Deforestation, and surprinted with a faint image of tree stumps. Because the world's tobacco crop is most often flue-cured, a staggering number of trees are cut down every year in the 100 nations that grow tobacco. A conservative estimate is that 6 million acres of trees are sacrificed each year for this purpose. According to the "Global 2000 Report," which labels deforestation the most serious environmental problem facing the third world, the true figure might be closer to 48 million acres.

Finally, imagine two more boxes containing large question marks. One, labeled Related Health Problems, would represent the still largely unknown effects on the general populace of "passive" side-stream smoke and poor indoor air

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quality. The other, which might be called Prenatal Disorders, would represent all the deleterious, but still largely unquantified effects of smoking on child birth: spontaneous abortions, stillbirths, low birth weights.

This grim picture of death and destruction is drawn in a newly released book called *The Cigarette Underworld*. A large format paperback that pulls together a series of speeches and papers by qualified medical practitioners, *The Cigarette Underworld* is as strong an indictment of the tobacco industry as has ever been published. Although much of the information within it will come as no surprise to anyone

who has been following the medical reports, the candor of the authors' language still comes as something of a shock. The following sentence, written by George E. Godber, the former chief medical officer of England, is typical of the book's frontal attack. "Smoking," writes Godber, "is the largest single avoidable threat to health in the industrialized world today, and the cigarette the most lethal instrument devised by man for peacetime use."

Yet, except for the occasional review in publications that accept no advertising, such as the magazine you are holding, books like *The Cigarette Underworld* get very lit-

tle attention. The reason, of course, is that there is something at work on behalf of the tobacco industry that resembles the omerta, or oath of silence, sworn to by Mafiosi. Silence in this case, of course, is not the correct word. Periodicals do report medical studies; Congress did mandate warning labels; tobacco companies themselves openly talk about the relative merits or demerits of this much tar versus that much tar. The conspiracy here is one of underplaying the true nature of the problem. It is not that the bad news goes unreported, but that it is so far outweighed by the promotional efforts of the tobacco industry itself. The same magazine that carries a column article on a new study linking cigarette smoking to lung cancer, for instance, will in the same issue publish several full page advertisements for various brands of cigarettes.

The real value of *The Cigarette Underworld* is that it goes far beyond the harm caused by smoking to plumb the geopolitical reasons why both the habit and the tobacco industry remain so entrenched more than twenty years after the first warning issued by the surgeon general of the United States. The book covers the globe to examine the efforts in India to educate the public on the dangers of smoking, the economics of tobacco growing and cigarette manufacturing in Malaysia, the attempt of a community in Finland to cut down on smoking. Throughout, the various authors attempt to address two central questions: 1) why so little headway has been made against smoking to date, and 2) what can be done in the future to improve on this sorry record. To understand the first question, one might draw a second chart, an overlay, if you will, to the chart posited above.

Once again, one starts with a cigarette, and a series of lines radiating to various headings. The first might be called Gross Profits. In the United States, cigarettes account for \$25 billion in sales all by themselves. When indirect expenditures are added in, the number grows to \$60 billion, or 2.5 percent of the annual

gross national product. To turn the matter around for a moment and consider what would happen if the cigarette industry were seriously threatened, consider this single fact: If each American were to smoke one cigarette less each day, the loss to the tobacco industry would be \$500 million a year.

This sort of economic leverage is repeated around the globe. In Brazil, for instance, the cigarette industry is the most important taxpayer, contributing as much as 40 percent of the revenue collected by the Industrialized Products Taxation, ahead of automobiles and alcohol.

The next box could be labeled

"GREEN LIGHT FOR THE MX MISSILE"

San Francisco Chronicle

by Charles Atkinson

I've seen owls here—Great Horned;
no owls today. Seen coyotes foraging;
no coyotes either. And small coast deer;
no deer. Just redwoods' dark verticals
staking the field's edge, a seawind
and a slight-green bush shivering knee-high,
sailing a spiderweb with no owner.
Somewhere, something burning.

The usual web: concentric prisms, thinner
radii, almost invisible—all puffed out
in the wind. Purple-gold runs out a strand.
Irregularities mar the web, and tears.
An Irishwoman studied their tensile strength
for five years and learned the guy-strands
are seven times as strong as the web.
Knowledge is power—or about to be.

The sun's crept its path across my hands
and they're cool again—first right, then left.
I'm sorry I haven't learned more birdcalls.
I could start again closer to earth,
where a ground squirrel severed a plantain stem,
took the seedhead in its forepaws
and gnawed it down to crumbs. When I stood up
it spun and disappeared, swishing the weeds.

And a whole field of plantain—
all the way to the crest, plantain bobbing!
I never noticed that tenacious weed . . .
O, it begins this way without fail,
pure passion to know the thing itself—
until the knowledge taken
will turn on us at last, rain down
passion at its purest—burning, burning.

Employment. In the United States alone, some 2 million citizens are employed in one manner or another in the cigarette industry. That amounts to 2.5 percent of the private-sector employment. Now imagine another box, entitled Political Influence. Within this rectangle one might list just two examples. 1) During the elections of 1981 and 1982, more than 200 members of Congress received money from tobacco industry PAC funds; subsidies passed by Congress in the form of government price supports have made tobacco one of the most lucrative crops one can plant. An acre of tobacco can yield \$4,000 gross income; an acre of corn, \$150. 2) To defeat a referendum in Florida's Dade County that limited the smoking of cigarettes in public places, the tobacco industry spent over \$1 million, and the proponents of the bill spent only \$5000. The referendum was defeated by 820 votes, the closest in the county's history.

If these imaginary charts, based on the information in the *The Cigarette Underworld*, do not explain how thoroughly entwined tobacco interests are with the national economy, the book itself is replete with its own illustrations, most of them drawn from periodicals, that make their own very telling points. There is, for instance, the cover of *The New York Times Sunday Magazine*, with coronary heart disease as its subject, displayed alongside the back cover, an advertisement for Marlboro cigarettes. Elsewhere, the magazine displays a cover of *Time*. The subject is medical costs. The visual image is a doctor with a face mask made out of a huge dollar bill. One back cover is an advertisement for Camels. Next to this splayed issue of *Time* is a letter from *Time* in the pages of *The United States Tobacco Journal*. The letter offers a "special word of thanks" to the tobacco industry for making *Time* #1 in tobacco advertising revenue.

These front and back covers perfectly illustrate the stand-off that now exists between the tobacco industry and those who want to wage a much more serious war against cigarette smoking. The only

way to break the stalemate, according to various World Health Organization task forces that have studied the problem, is to stop commercial promotion of tobacco products, to limit even more vigorously smoking in public places, to tax tobacco products even more heavily than they are now, and to improve educational efforts aimed at children. Surgeon General Everett Koop, in an interview with the editor of this book, suggested yet another idea, one which might finally bring the message home. Instead of writing on death certificates that someone died of "cancer of the lung," Koop suggests that both death certificates and newspaper obituaries should henceforth read, "died of smoking complicated by . . ." It would be a message that would be far more telling than the mandated warnings on cigarette packs, which only one in fifty smokers now even look at in their haste to light up. □

Harold Ickes of the New Deal

by Graham White and John Maze
Harvard University Press
263 pp., \$20.00

by Jonathan Z. Larsen

Harold J. Ickes, who held the post of interior secretary longer than any other appointee (1933-1946), was not just one of the preeminent conservationists of his time, but one of the most colorful character actors ever to stride the Washington proscenium. He titled the memoir he wrote while still in office *Autobiography of a Curmudgeon*, and in this, as in most judgments, he was accurate.

Ickes loved to speak his mind, both in private and public, and his mind was full of provocative thoughts and equally provocative words with which to express them. He was the first prominent American to publicly challenge the isolationism of Charles Lindbergh, and one of the very first to denounce the appeasement of Hitler's Ger-

many. He gave FDR's State Department the frights by referring to the fuhrer as "Esau, the Hairy Ape." And years before the nation finally gagged on Senator Joe McCarthy, Ickes, then retired to private life as a magazine columnist, wrote in the *New Republic* that McCarthy was a "putrescent and scabious object that is obnoxious to the senses of sight, smell, and hearing—a thing obscene and loathsome, and not to be touched, except with sterilized fire tongs." It was language like this that caused Ickes's friend, columnist Drew Pearson, to bestow upon the Chicago reformer his highest accolade: Ickes, Pearson declared, was a "rat killer."

Ickes's loyalties were every bit as strong as his animosities. A passionate civil libertarian his entire life, he was perhaps the best friend the American Indian and the American black had in FDR's administration. His concern for American Indians began long before he reached Washington, and was shared by his first wife, Anna, also a politician and writer, who in the early thirties wrote a book entitled *Mesa Land: The History and Romance of the American Southwest*. And his passion for racial equality informed his long tenure as a public official. One of his first acts at Interior was to ban discrimination in hiring. Two months into office, he drew a crowd of 75,000 to hear black singer Marian Anderson in front of the Lincoln Memorial. Anderson, who had been shunned by Washington society because of her color, would repay the compliment thirteen years later by singing at a memorial service for Ickes, also in front of the shrine of the Great Emancipator.

Ickes's compassion did not stop at the country's borders. It was his abhorrence of all oppression that put him at the forefront of the interventionists in FDR's cabinet. It was Ickes who cut off oil shipment to Japan, and it was Ickes who grounded the German zeppelin fleet by blocking the sale of helium. When the United States finally entered the war, Ickes argued, without success, that the Japanese-Americans who had been interred should be

Books

Cigarettes

The Cigarette Underworld, edited by Alan Blum, 128 pp, with illus, \$9.95, Secaucus, NJ, Lyle Stuart Inc, 1985.

The Cigarette Underworld is a republished book version of the December 1983 issue of the *New York State Journal of Medicine*. This is one of at least six issues of nonspecialty medical journals [as well as this issue of THE JOURNAL] that have focused on the problem of cigarette smoking. (The other five are *Med J Aust*, March 5, 1983; *JAMA*, Nov 23/30, 1984; *JAMA*, May 24/31, 1985; *NY State J Med*, July 1985; and *Del Med J*, July 1985.)

Individually and collectively, these issues represent a major contribution to the tobacco literature. They symbolize and reflect the enormous impact that cigarettes have on the public health. They also perform the unique service of reaching the general physician population with important information related to smoking. Alan Blum, MD, former editor of both the *Medical Journal of Australia* and of the *New York State Journal of Medicine*, has edited three of these issues. Dr Blum has shown how effective medical journals can be in disseminating valuable material on this topic.

"eliminating the world cigarette pandemic"

The Cigarette Underworld contains 53 separate contributions on smoking, including articles, editorials, interviews, and letters to the editor. They cover virtually every major aspect of cigarette smoking: cigarette advertising, fires caused by cigarettes, clean-indoor-air legislation, smoking trends in developing countries, smoking cessation, the economics of smoking, and many others. Interspersed between articles throughout the book are photographs of cigarette ads that provide a fascinating look at the variety of techniques used to promote the consumption of tobacco.

One particularly noteworthy section of the book contains articles by five former US Surgeons General who have served since 1957, as well as an interview with the current Surgeon General, C. Everett Koop, MD. An-

edited by Harriet S. Meyer, MD, Contributing Editor; adviser for software, Robert Hogan, MD, San ego.

other notable contribution is a provocative exchange of correspondence over an eight-year period between George Gitlitz, MD, a New York vascular surgeon, and the *New York Times* concerning the newspaper's policy of accepting cigarette advertising.

In an editorial, Dr Blum states that the issue attempts to place the subject of cigarette smoking in a variety of contexts that most physicians may not have considered in depth. *The Cigarette Underworld* meets that objective. It ignores the pathology of lung cancer, the interpretation of pulmonary function tests, and the treatment of Buerger's disease. Instead, it explores the social, economic, and political aspects of the problem and outlines the appropriate role of the medical profession in eliminating the world cigarette pandemic.

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Pathology

Tumors of the Esophagus and Stomach, by Si-Chun Ming (*Atlas of Tumor Pathology*, second series, fascicle 7, supplement), 82 pp, with illus, \$4.75, Washington, DC, Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, 1985.

It is over ten years since *Tumors of the Esophagus and Stomach* (fascicle 7, second series, of the *Atlas of Tumor Pathology*) was published by the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology. There have been a number of advances in the pathology of the esophagus and stomach since that time and, as the third series will only be available in the future, a supplement with an update of recent advances in this area is timely.

The author, Si-Chun Ming, who penned the second series fascicle, has once again given of his vast experience in the field. A third of the 62 pages are devoted to the esophagus, and the remaining pages to the stomach. Precancerous lesions of the esophagus are discussed with knowledge gained from high-risk regions in north China and Iran. Esophagitis is common in these areas (80% of the local populace); however, it is also common in the United States, a low-risk area for esophageal carcinoma. Accompanying dysplasia is more important as a precancerous lesion (7.6% in Iran, 8% in China, and 0.2% in the United States) than esophagitis. Recognition of the significance of dysplasia has led to early surgical resection with a 90.3% survival rate. Dysplasias are described in detail and are well illustrated.

A detailed description of Barrett's esophagus—including a classification into three major types, ie, those with gastric fundal mucosa or cardiac mucosa and a specialized type having a metaplastic intestinal appearance—is excellently illustrated, and the concept of dysplasia is discussed with attention focused on development of adenoma and carcinoma. Oat cell carcinoma, a new entity, and carcinosarcoma or pseudosarcoma are both mentioned. The section on the stomach includes a description of polyps. This rather confusing subject is simplified and classified with the use of an excellent text, good line drawings of histogenesis, and a practical and useful new histological classification. Polyps are divided into neoplastic polyps (adenomas) and nonneoplastic polyps. The former are more likely to undergo malignant transformation. Diffuse polyposis is also classified, with information on the nature and type of the gastric polyp present. The importance of a biopsy in conjunction with clinical manifestations in making a correct diagnosis is emphasized.

There have been a number of advances in the understanding of gastric cancer stemming from observations in Japan, a country with a high incidence of that condition. Early gastric cancer—not frequently seen in this country—is classified. Gastric adenocarcinomas may be grossly classified either histologically or by behavior pattern. A recent newer classification includes a diffuse infiltrative type and an intestinal expanding type with differing behavior and prognosis. The intestinal type, which is decreasing in incidence, is found in high-risk regions and has a better prognosis. Knowledge of precursor lesions of gastric carcinoma has accumulated through the use of endoscopic biopsies. Chronic atrophic gastritis is the most important precursor of gastric carcinoma, with 80% of tumors arising in such mucosa. However, development of carcinoma is dependent on the presence of dysplasia. Intestinal metaplasia is an associated lesion and has been divided into complete and incomplete types based on type of mucin and presence of Paneth's cells. Metaplasia and dysplasia are seen in intestinal expanding carcinomas in surrounding noninvolved mucosa. In diffuse infiltrative tumors, globoid dysplasia with involvement of foveolar cells is implicated.

This is an informative supplement to the second series, an excellent

Western Journal of Medicine

Book Review

THE CIGARETTE UNDERWORLD—Edited by Alan Blum, MD, Editor, *New York State Journal of Medicine*. Lyle-Stuart Inc, 120 Enterprise Avenue, Secaucus, NJ 07094, 1985. 128 pages, \$9.95.

Cigarette smoking is generally acknowledged as the most important cause of preventable disease, disability and premature death in the industrialized world. The volume *The Cigarette Underworld* is an important source of information on this problem. It first appeared as a special issue (December 1983) of the *New York State Journal of Medicine*. Dr Alan Blum serves as the editor of the *NYSJM*.

Dr Blum assembled a group of contributors who discuss political, economic, legal, public policy and biomedical issues in an imaginative, hard-hitting fashion. The "business as usual" approach of the large, multinational tobacco companies is analyzed. In particular, the effect of tobacco company diversification and economic clout on media coverage is assessed, and one is left with the sad conclusion that the media's editorial independence has been compromised by these developments. Perhaps a more ominous threat to world health is the pernicious movement of the multinational companies into the relatively underdeveloped markets of the third world. The devastating consequences of increasing tobacco consumption in these areas are described.

This volume contains a wealth of practical information on such issues as physician involvement with smoking cessation and public advocacy programs. Those concerned with promoting clean air acts in local communities will read with interest about the experience in Minnesota, Florida and Illinois. Activities of medical associations and physician groups around the world are detailed as examples of how physicians can and should become involved in dealing with the tobacco problem. The efforts of DOC (Doctors Ought to Care) are cited as creative approaches to countering tobacco advertising campaigns. Dr Blum organized DOC while he was a resident in family practice at the University of Miami School of Medicine in the 1970s.

In summary, because of its unique perspective on the major public health problem of our time, this volume is highly recommended for both physicians and nonphysicians. Dr Blum has succeeded in conveying an air of urgency concerning this problem and has detailed how physicians and other interested parties can help combat the tobacco industry's greedy pursuit of profits.

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