

From the horses mouth: the tobacco industry speaks

■
“I do not believe that nicotine addictive.”

Thomas Sandefur, Chief Executive of Brown & Williamson

“I believe that nicotine is not addictive.”

William Campbell, Philip Morris

“And I too believe that nicotine is not addictive.”

James Johnston, R.J. Reynolds

CEOs testifying under oath before
Congressional Health and Environment Subcommittee, 1994

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“Nicotine is addictive. We are, then, in the business
of selling nicotine, an addictive drug.”

Addison Yeaman, Brown & Williamson, 1963

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“Smoking a cigarette for the beginner is a symbolic act.
I am no longer my mother’s child, I’m tough, I am an
adventurer, I’m not a square... As the force from the
psychological symbolism subsides, the pharmacological
effect takes over to sustain the habit...”

Philip Morris, Vice President for Research and Development,
“Why One Smokes,” first draft, 1969

The Tobacco Free Initiative is a WHO
cabinet project created with the express
aim of focusing international attention
and resources on the global tobacco
epidemic which is an entirely avoidable
burden of disease.



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Bob, I've got cancer.

Tobacco kills – don't be duped. It should not
be advertized, glamorized or subsidized.

WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY  31 MAY



The tobacco industry's war on public health

The tobacco industry has declared war on public health. A cigarette is the only consumer product which, when consumed as indicated, kills. Tobacco is a powerfully addictive substance and the tobacco industry has subverted science, public health and political processes to sell a product that addicts its consumers before killing them. Available data shows that two thirds of today's smokers started in their teen years. Far from being a bunch of tobacco leaves rolled into paper tubes, a cigarette is a highly engineered product designed to addict and kill.

“Manufacturers are concentrating on the low TPM [total particulate matter] tar and nicotine segment in order to create brands ...which aim, in some way or another, to reassure the consumer that these brands are relatively more ‘healthy’ than orthodox blended cigarettes.”

P.L. Short, British American Tobacco Company, “A new Product,” 1971

Lies and more lies

One of the primary objectives of the tobacco industry is to frame tobacco use as an individual and behavioural decision. The deception in this casting is that it leaves the tobacco industry's activities and practices completely out of the equation. It assumes that people make decisions in a state of vacuum, completely uninfluenced by their environment including industry advertising and marketing.

“The tobacco companies spend US\$ 6 billion a year enticing youth to smoke. They make you believe that if you smoke, you're going to be sexy, attractive, successful, accepted by your peers, rocking, and macho, cool and sassy. They project this image in every media – from day-time movies to night-time movies, magazines and even cartoon characters,” says former “Winston” man turned tobacco control activist Allan Landers.

Research indicates that the decision to smoke is affected by tobacco industry promotion. Tobacco advertising featuring prominent sports and entertainment figures project an image of tobacco use as glamorous, fun, healthy, sophisticated and wealthy. In countries where advertising bans are beginning to emerge more subtle product placement in movies and music videos continue to send these messages to young people. By the time people find out, it is often too late

The threat concerns us all

The tobacco industry acts as a global force sparing no nations and peoples. There are no true economic or public health arguments in favour of tobacco as it kills human beings and saps national treasuries. Tobacco has killed four million people this year. By the 2020s or the early 2030s, that preventable death toll will rise to 10 million deaths per year. The tobacco industry and their marketing henchmen need 3000 new smokers everyday to replace those they kill. So they target our children and sell addiction and death as an act of freedom, rebellion, free choice, sophistication and success.

“To ensure increased and longer term growth for the Camel Filter, the brand must increase its share penetration among the 14-24 age group which have a set of more liberal values and which represent tomorrow's cigarette business.”

1975 Memo to C.A. Tucker, Vice-President For Marketing, R.J. Reynolds

Countering the deception

Every eight seconds a person dies of a tobacco-related disease and almost as quickly another victim is recruited. Big tobacco trades in death and deception. This assault on world health has got to stop. The WHO has risen to this global challenge. At the core of this response is the creation of the world's first legally binding international treaty dedicated to human health. The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) will address such issues as advertising bans, smuggling, taxes and agricultural diversification with a view to crafting a global response to a global menace.

As tobacco control action begins to reduce markets in the west, transnational tobacco companies are aggressively extending their global reach. The FCTC will provide a powerful political platform upon which all the Nations of the world can unite and strengthen their capacities to counter the deadly and deceitful cross border tactics of the transnational tobacco companies.

“If you still believe the industry is simply stuffing tobacco into paper tubes, not fine-tuning nicotine delivery, consider this quote from a senior scientist working for a tobacco company, uncovered recently from a long-hidden document. In 1972, he said: ‘The cigarette should not be construed as a product but a package. The product is nicotine. Think of the cigarette as a dispenser of a dose unit of nicotine. Think of a puff of smoke the vehicle of nicotine.’”

WHO Director General Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland to the Ninth International Conference of Drug Regulatory Authorities, Berlin, 27 April 1999

Igniting the tobacco curtain

Key to big tobacco extending its global reach has been aggressive marketing and advertising and the creation of a new “tobacco iron curtain”. What is going on in the west (European Union legislation, huge tobacco company settlements in the United States, advertising bans, etc) is not known in Sri Lanka or Mexico. On the other hand unregulated marketing to youth and women in developing and developed countries in transition (cigarette discos, golden cigarette contests, etc) which are systematically denied in the west have not been sufficiently exposed. To ignite this tobacco curtain and build global support for the FCTC, the WHO has developed the “Tobacco Kills – Don't be Duped” media initiative.

This new media initiative will systematically attempt to reframe public perception of the tobacco problem by giving the health and political community the tools needed to begin to expose and combat the enormous resources and deceitful tactics of the transnational tobacco companies.

“Obviously there is enormous potential in all these countries. I would say that the demand for Western cigarettes is insatiable. It's a fantastic opportunity for everybody, and we're talking in any number of countries.”

Stuart Watterton, BAT Director of New Business Development speaking of new opportunities in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, 1995

“They've got a good buffer. No matter how badly things go in the United States, international sales will carry them along.”

Allan Kaplan, tobacco analyst at Merrill Lynch & Co. commenting on Philip Morris, 1997