

I am writing with respect to your statements, including those made April 26 in your talk to the National Interagency Council on Smoking and Health, regarding tobacco smoking by young people and the role of cigarette brand advertising.

LAW DEPARTMENT

We believe that there are several basic facts which appear to have been overlooked or disregarded. Your statements have not taken into account the self-restraint that has characterized cigarette advertising for many years and the statistics which indicate a decline in cigarette smoking among teenagers.

It has long been the view of the tobacco industry that smoking is an adult custom. Let me list a few examples of steps cigarette manufacturers have taken voluntarily to ^{keep it that} ~~implement~~ ~~this policy.~~

Sixteen years ago, in 1963, all U.S. cigarette manufacturers voluntarily discontinued advertising in campus publications, along with other promotional activities on campuses.

Two years later the same companies adopted an advertising code prohibiting advertising, marketing and sampling directed toward young people; its principles are still observed.

A few years later, the industry volunteered to cancel all advertising in the television and radio media because of their unique appeal to children. In response to industry requests for legislation which would make this possible, Congress, in 1971, prohibited such advertising.

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In addition, the tobacco industry initiated other steps to provide consumer information in advertising, including "tar" and nicotine levels of brands and depiction of the warning notice.

Also, your statements appear to reflect the erroneous view that brand advertising has an effect on the decision to begin smoking. The new report of the Surgeon General, published last January, suggested that the primary motivating factors in smoking by young people were the influence of peers, smoking parents and older siblings. As to advertising, the report declared that "the influence of the mass media in the initiation of smoking is somewhat more difficult to establish."

We believe it is reasonable to assume that the Surgeon General was saying that the influence of advertising has not been established. Nonetheless, your foreword to the same document states that smoking is "a powerful habit often taken up by unsuspecting children, lured by seductive multimillion dollar cigarette advertising campaigns." This statement cannot

be reconciled with the report itself. *We are confident that US brand advertising is not the reason that many people believe in smoking.*

We are similarly puzzled by your pronouncement about the rates and numbers of teenage cigarette smokers and their trends.

For example, on June 26, 1978, Mary Grace Kovar of HEW's

National Center for Health Statistics read a paper to the Institute of Medicine at the National Academy of Science in

Washington, D.C. This paper included data which illustrated

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that increases in drinking and cigarette smoking among adolescents had ceased as long ago as 1974. (Unfortunately, that report also showed that marijuana and hashish use appeared to be increasing in the same age group.)

However, last January, in the foreword to the new Surgeon General's report, you wrote of an increase in teenage smoking, six months after the contrary data appeared from your Department.

On February 16, 1979, you stated that "the rate of teenage smoking is apparently on the rise." Yet in the March, 1979 edition of your Department's magazine, Public Health Reports, NIDA data appeared showing that adolescents of any age were less likely to be smokers in 1977 than in 1974. It was not until April 26, 1979, that you mentioned a decline in teenage smoking.

Mr. Secretary, I hope you will understand the confusion that exists regarding your failure to recognize the positive actions of the cigarette manufacturers and the apparent decline in the use of tobacco by young people. It was particularly distressing to see the statement in your April 26 talk that the failure of the cigarette manufacturers to accept your suggestions would permit the conclusion that their managements "care more about the health of their corporate treasuries than the health of this nation's children."

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I earnestly hope that this letter may lead you to a reassessment of your position and a possible improvement in our mutual understanding of these significant matters.

Very truly yours,