

International Tobacco Accountability Bulletin

News, Updates and Analyses of Issues Related to International Tobacco

February 2002

Tobacco Industry “Youth Smoking Prevention” Programs – II

Internal industry documents illuminate the real purpose of Philip Morris’s “youth smoking prevention” programs: to shift blame away from the industry by creating the impression that it is “socially responsible,” to prevent effective tobacco control legislation, and ultimately, to protect the industry’s profits.

Opposition to Effective Measures

In a Philip Morris document entitled “Youth Campaign for Latin America,” (23 September, 1994) Cathy L. Leiber, Director, Corporate Affairs, Latin American Region states:

“Increasing pressure from anti-tobacco forces in Latin America has created the need to explore various options to counter negative publicity ... Taking into consideration the emerging adverse legislative climate in the region, we have an opportunity to create good will for the tobacco industry by going public with a campaign to discourage juvenile smoking.” (PM Doc, Bates: 2503016523/6524)

Similarly, a Philip Morris memo from Colin Goddard, “Pakistan – Meeting in London,” 9 July 1994. (meeting between PM, BAT, and Rothmans) reads:

“Since the industry in Pakistan is facing unprecedented opposition, not only on the advertising front but on most other issues too (particularly ETS), the time had come for the companies to be considerably more proactive. This reflects the attitude that is currently prevailing in almost every country in the region to one degree or another. ... An industry code will be written... so that it can be used as both a lobbying lever and an argument against not introducing formal legislation... it was proposed that we look at developing a minor’s programme that would show that industry to be willing to work cooperatively with the authorities in at least one area in which we have a mutual objective.” (Philip Morris, Bates: 2504024765/4767)

Needed: Laws to Protect Youth from Tobacco Industry

Most smokers start smoking in their teens. The tobacco industry knows all too well that if it does not recruit new smokers, it will die.

Its “youth smoking prevention” programs are a smokescreen for its real agenda: to make a killing off the health and lives of millions of youth alive today. Its programs have the cleverly designed dual goal of winning the respect of citizens, politicians and government officials, while proving ineffective with youth.

If the tobacco industry was serious about reducing youth smoking, it would stop resisting and undermining tobacco control measures that work, such as tobacco tax increases, comprehensive advertising bans, and restrictions on smoking in public places.

For more information, see:

Danger! PR in the Playground: tobacco industry initiatives on youth smoking (Action on Smoking and Health – UK, The Cancer Research Campaign)

<http://www.ash.org.uk/?international>

British American Tobacco’s Youth Smoking Prevention Campaign: What are its actual objectives? (Work for a Better Bangladesh, Bangladesh Anti-Tobacco Alliance, PATH Canada, August 2001) <http://wbb.globalink.org>

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