

LIMITS ON TOBACCO ADS MAY HAVE LITTLE EFFECT [06/13]**Settlement Proposal Relies Heavily on Them to Save Lives**

Those who support the proposed tobacco settlement note the many restriction on cigarette advertising and promotion it contains, and argue that these will help reduce smoking and save lives.

But as a recent article in the Wall Stree Journal demonstrates, even countries which have totally banned all cigarette advertising have found that the tobacco industry has still found a way to pedal death; that smoking rates haven't falled; and that in many cases their smoking rates are higher than in the U.S.

In short, the remedies in the proposed settlement may be largely illusory.

Below is a copy of a letter Action on Smoking and Health has written to the Wall Streel Journal in response to the article.

Excerpts from the article itself follow.

TO THE EDITOR:

The fact that smoking rates in countries like Norway and Finland remain high, despite much stricter limits on cigarette advertising and promotion than the American tobacco industry is now willing to bargain for, suggests that entering into their proposed settlement may do far less to reduce smoking than its proponents claim.

Their experience indicates that what is really needed is a well- thought-out and comprehensive smoking policy of the type now being developed by the newly-created Advisory Committee on Tobacco Policy and Public Health, not a hodge-podge of concessions made by the industry to achieve partial immunity from liability.

One major reason that smoking rates in the U.S. are much lower than in countries like Norway and Finland, despite their much stricter advertising restrictions, are the many smoking bans we have adopted in workplaces and public places. "No Smoking" signs are a constant reminder that smoking no longer makes one popular or sexually attractive, and the bans provide an incentive to quit smoking which can be more powerful than health warnings.

WALL STREET JOURNAL 6/12**Tobacco: Ad Bans Abroad Haven't Snuffed Out Smoking**

More than two decades after Norway banned all tobacco advertising, cigarette smoking hasn't been snuffed out.

While smoking has declined overall -- to 34% of all Norwegians from 41% in 1975, the year of the ban -- the biggest drop came in the early years after the ban was imposed. Since then, the decline in smoking has leveled off.

As U.S. officials and tobacco companies struggle to reach an agreement to settle liability cases and

impose tighter ad restrictions, Norway's experience shows that simply banishing Joe Camel and the Marlboro man won't make smoking disappear. An array of factors, from spotty enforcement to alternative marketing ploys like selling branded clothing or placing cigarette packs in films, can soften a ban's effect.

Norway's limited success in curbing tobacco consumption parallels that of other countries that have outlawed or curbed advertising. In nearby Finland, where a partial ban came into effect in 1978, the prevalence of male smokers decreased to 27% in 1996 from 35% in 1979. But the percent of women who smoked remained level at 18%, and the rate for Finnish teens edged up to 24% from just under 22%.

In New Zealand, 27% of adults smoke, a figure that hasn't changed at all since 1990, when a ban was enacted. And Canada's 1989 advertising ban has also had little effect: Thirty-one percent of Canadians smoked regularly in 1994, the last year for which figures are available, compared with 30% in 1990.

All this leads European tobacco companies to argue that ad bans have little effect. They note that smoking has declined in many countries, even those that haven't curbed advertising. Indeed, the percentage of Americans who smoke about 25%, down from 42% in the mid-1960s -- is lower than in Norway, despite lax advertising restrictions in the U.S. I B B

Indirect advertising isn't banned, though it is regulated. That means a Marlboro Classics clothing shop can operate -- and one does, not far from Mr. Johansen's skateboarding route -- but cigarettes can't be promoted there. Sporadic enforcement of the ad ban sometimes allows cigarette companies to hand out free samples at bars and clubs, which is illegal.

Karl Lund, a sociologist at the University of Oslo who has studied tobacco advertising issues for the council, describes these tactics as "sneak advertising . . . that allows kids to remember and decode messages about cigarettes." Those messages are powerful: In a recent survey of a Norwegian movie audience, 50% said they had just seen a cigarette ad, although what they really watched was an ad for Marlboro-branded clothing, in which cigarettes weren't seen or mentioned.

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