I do like smokers, but hate the smoke

Jack Mabley

THE TOBACCO Institute says, "Most nonsmokers think smokers are okay and they like to be around us — when the choice is left up to them."

May I amplify? I like to be around smokers . . . when they're not smoking. I like smokers. I hate their smoke.

The Tobacco Institute has begun a national advertising campaign to isolate nonsmokers from what they call anti-smokers. They appeal to us nons to be the good fellows we really are.

Their arguments are flimsy. They complain that smokers are "banished" to the back of planes, where they are "last to be served." On my latest two flights, on 727s, I sat in the front part of the no-smoking section and was last to be served. The smokers were eating their desserts and lighting up before I got a morsel.

THE TOBACCO Institute allows that nonsmokers "are honestly annoyed by the occasional sniff of tobacco smoke that's a little too pervasive." Okay, that's annoying. But the cloud of smoke in a room full of smokers, or from the cigar at the next table, or the smoker in the adjoining seat, is maddening. That makes nonsmokers ill.

Smoking is a small ritual that welcomes strangers, provides companionship in solitude, fills empty time, marks the significance of certain occasions, and expresses personal style, says the institute.

Others may prefer carrot juice or bottled water, beach buggies or foreign cars, or chewing gum, they say. What they don't say is that carrot juice and beach buggies don't intrude on others, and smoking does.

Maybe if the Tobacco Institute scientists could come up with some way in which smokers, when they inhale, would just keep all that smoke inside them instead of blowing it at others, we could coexist nicely.

Those Tobacco Institute ads

In a lavish series of two-page ads in the nation's major newspapers and magazines, the Tobacco Institute gratuitously disparages promoters of laws segregating nonsmokers from smokers. It brands such people "antismokers" (as distinguished from passive nonsmokers), claims they're bent on denying Americans freedom of choice, and scolds them for spoiling efforts by smokers and nonsmokers to co-exist.

The truth is, of course, that just as smokers have a right to their habit, nonsmokers have a right to clean air. Both rights cannot be exercised at the same time in the same place, so a logical compromise is to separate smokers and abstainers wherever feasible.

Sure, there may be a fanatic or two who sprays smokers in the face with aerosols, as the institute ad claims. But to imply this behavior characterizes backers of smoking-restriction laws is a smear tactic. And aren't there zealots on the other side, smokers who react violently when asked to put cigarettes out where smoking is inappropriate?

The truth is, also, that smoking is the nation's No. 1 threat to public health and the largest preventable cause of death. It leads or contributes to coronary-artery disease, peripheral vascular disease, bronchitis, emphysema, and cancer of the lung, larynx, mouth, esophagus, bladder, kidney, and pancreas. Smoking indoors can push carbon monoxide levels so high that nonsmokers can suffer psychomotor and cognitive function impairment and heart patients can have angina attacks. In light of these facts, the Tobacco Institute should count itself lucky smoking isn't outlawed in all places at all times.

Dorsey W. Woodson

A word to smokers and nonsmokers

(about freedom of choice)

You've seen the ads. The tobacco industry is spending millions saying freedom of choice means no limits on smoking.

But smoke drifts. So smokers often impose *their* choice on others around them.

And smoke is not just offensive. For many it is physically irritating or even harmful. That's why most nonsmokers find it annoying to be near a person smoking.*

But let's be clear—it's not the *smoker* we mind: it's the *smoke*. Smokers are welcome anywhere; their smoke is not.

Tobacco smoke can cause serious illness for millions with asthma, allergies or other conditions. Some have even had to be hospitalized.

So they can't eat in most restaurants, or work in many offices, or even go to the post office. Where is *their* freedom of choice?

To ensure true freedom of choice for everyone—not just for the 1/3 of adults who smoke—there should be no-smoking areas in all enclosed public places. Like hospitals, meeting rooms and restaurants.

Most nonsmokers *and smokers* favor no-smoking areas.** And where they've been tried, they've generally worked well.

Given a choice (as on airlines) most people choose air unpolluted by tobacco smoke.

No-smoking sections give us *all* a choice. Without them, smokers impose their choice on everyone else.

Which do you prefer?

*In a U.S. Public Health Service survey, 77% of the nonsmokers and 35% of the smokers agreed, "It is annoying to be near a person smoking cigarettes."—Adult Use of Tobacco, 1975.

**In the survey cited above, 82% of the nonsmokers and *51% of the smokers* agreed, "Smoking should be allowed in fewer places than it is now." And in a 1977 Gallup Poll, 68% of all adults (including *70% of the smokers*) favored special areas for smokers in public places, while an additional 16% would ban all smoking in public places.

Warning: Other People's Smoking Can Be Harmful to Your Health

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