

NEWS ANALYSIS

Young Rebels tobacco advertising campaign

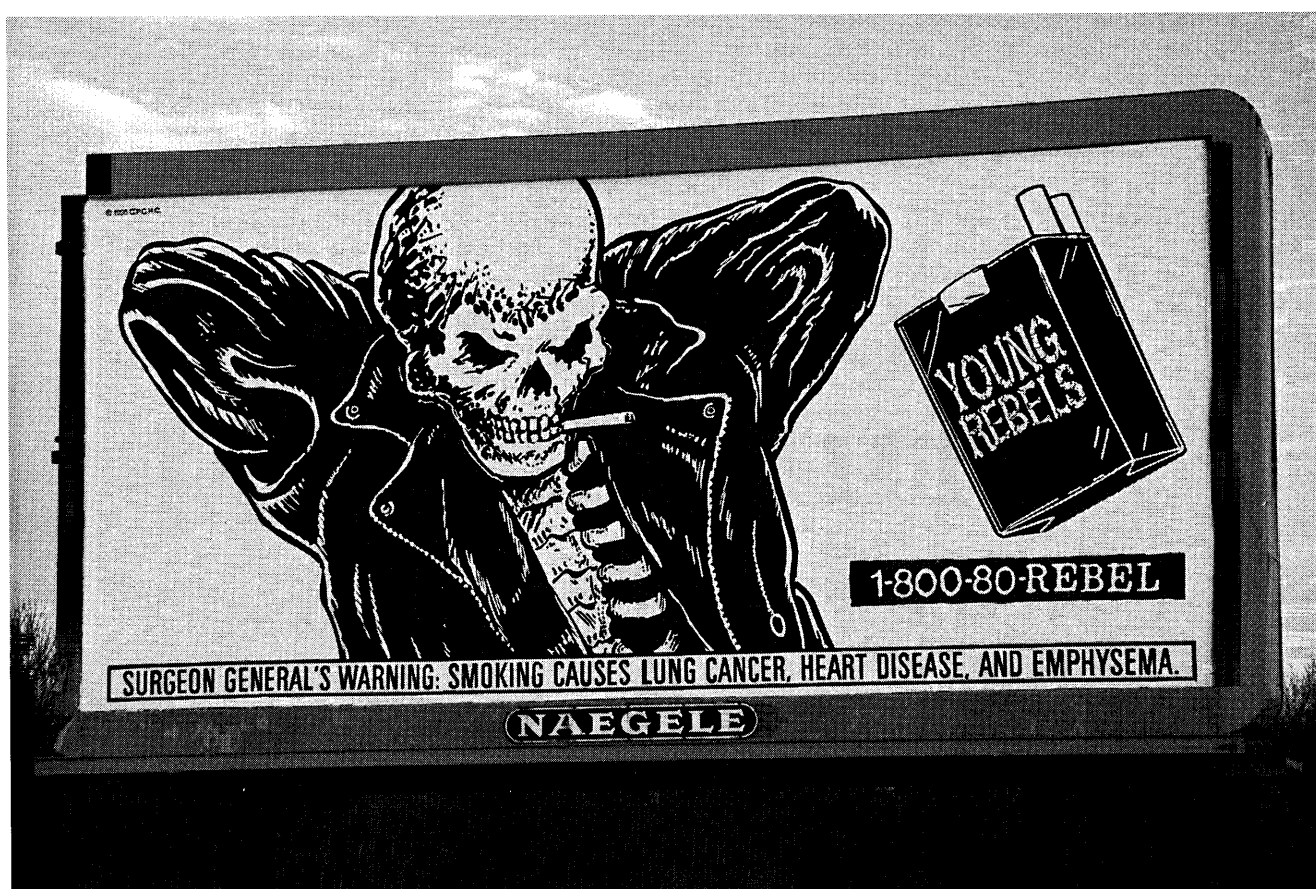
In January, many people in the US state of Minnesota thought they were finding out about a new brand of cigarettes called Young Rebels, but instead they received an education about tobacco advertising. Young Rebels is a fictitious brand of cigarettes created by the Community Prevention Coalition of Hennepin County, Minnesota. This fictitious brand was used in a campaign designed to increase public awareness about tobacco advertising strategies that target youth, and to encourage concerned community members to take action to reduce tobacco advertising. The target audience for the campaign consisted of parents and

community members concerned about advertising issues.

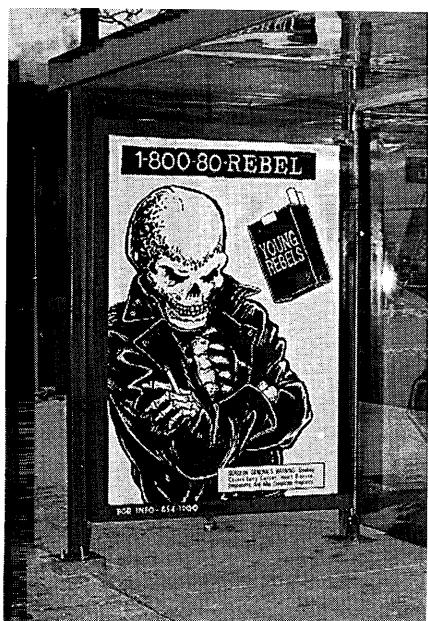
The need for such a campaign was identified in a countywide needs assessment, which revealed that many young people, parents, and community leaders believe that tobacco advertising glamourises smoking, and encourages young people to start. Although parents felt angry about tobacco advertising tactics, they were sceptical about their ability to bring about change because of the power and influence of the tobacco industry. In response to these concerns, the Community Prevention Coalition recruited volunteers from several local advertising agencies. They were asked to design a public awareness campaign to gain the attention of community members, and to suggest actions to reduce the impact of tobacco advertising on young people. The result

was Young Rebels, a campaign designed to imitate a tobacco advertising strategy that has worked for years – selling a brand by using images that appeal to young people.

The campaign was conducted in two phases. During the first, “pre-reveal” stage, the Coalition conducted an outdoor advertising campaign using billboards and advertisements on buses and bus shelters (figures). The advertisements carried the image of a skeleton, wearing a leather jacket and holding a cigarette, accompanied by the toll-free telephone number 1-800-80-REBEL. The advertisements also included the Surgeon General’s warning about tobacco use. Callers received the prerecorded message: “Thank you for calling the Young Rebels hotline. If you want to know more about Young Rebels please leave your name and address.”



A billboard advertisement for the fictitious cigarette Young Rebels, part of an innovative educational campaign carried out by health groups in Hennepin County, Minnesota, USA.



An advertisement for Young Rebels on a bus stop shelter.

After three weeks, Coalition members launched the second, "post-reveal" phase of the campaign. Multiple public relations and media advocacy activities were conducted to increase its impact. A local television news programme was offered exclusive coverage and ran a story the night before Coalition members held a press conference to reveal the sponsors and the purpose of Young Rebels. The Coalition also placed advertisements explaining the campaign in several local newspapers. Young Rebels received local, state, and national media coverage including all local network news stations, local radio, and the main local newspaper.

Once the nature of the campaign was revealed, the outdoor advertising continued, but the hotline message was changed to explain the purpose of the campaign and to encourage callers to join Coalition efforts to reduce tobacco advertising that targets youth. All hotline callers were sent information that explained the campaign, and about the link between cigarette advertising and young people's smoking.

This information included suggestions for action which community members could take to reduce the impact of tobacco advertising on youth. These included talking with children to help them understand the messages that tobacco advertisers are trying to send; asking merchants to remove tobacco advertising and promotional materials from their stores; contacting local billboard companies to raise objections about tobacco billboards; and joining Coalition efforts to change tobacco advertising policies.

By March, approximately 1200

people had called the hotline number. Of these, over 500 left their names and addresses; others left comments with no name, or frivolous messages, or simply hung up. Throughout both phases, most callers were adults. During the pre-reveal stage, many of callers requested Young Rebels cigarettes or any promotional products associated with the brand, whereas others simply wanted information. The most striking finding was that very few people actually complained about the campaign. During the post-reveal phase, the nature of the calls generally shifted to people in support of the campaign and interested in the issue of tobacco advertising.

The Community Prevention Coalition has created a database consisting of Young Rebels callers from both phases of the campaign. The Coalition will conduct a follow-up survey to gather more information about the callers, to identify community members willing to take action to reduce tobacco advertising that targets youth, and to help determine feasible next steps in Hennepin County.

The next steps in the project are critical for evaluating the overall effectiveness of the campaign, but already some preliminary conclusions can be drawn. Community members are concerned about the influence of tobacco advertising on young people, and can be identified by a local coalition using creative strategies, which will also increase public awareness about tobacco advertising. Both local and national media will cover creative approaches to this topic and a relatively low-cost public awareness campaign is possible through collaborative effort. Potential partners include volunteers from local advertising agencies, voluntary health organisations, state and local health departments, parent organisations, schools, and youth-serving agencies. Community members will inform themselves about tobacco advertising issues and when an opportunity is provided, they will express their concerns.

The Community Prevention Coalition comprises more than 100 organisations in Hennepin County, Minnesota, working towards reducing alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use among young people in the county. The Young Rebels campaign is a project of the Coalition's "Send The Camel Packing" committee, which also works with youth groups and classroom students, who conduct store surveys of tobacco advertising and who survey local communities to document the extent and placement of

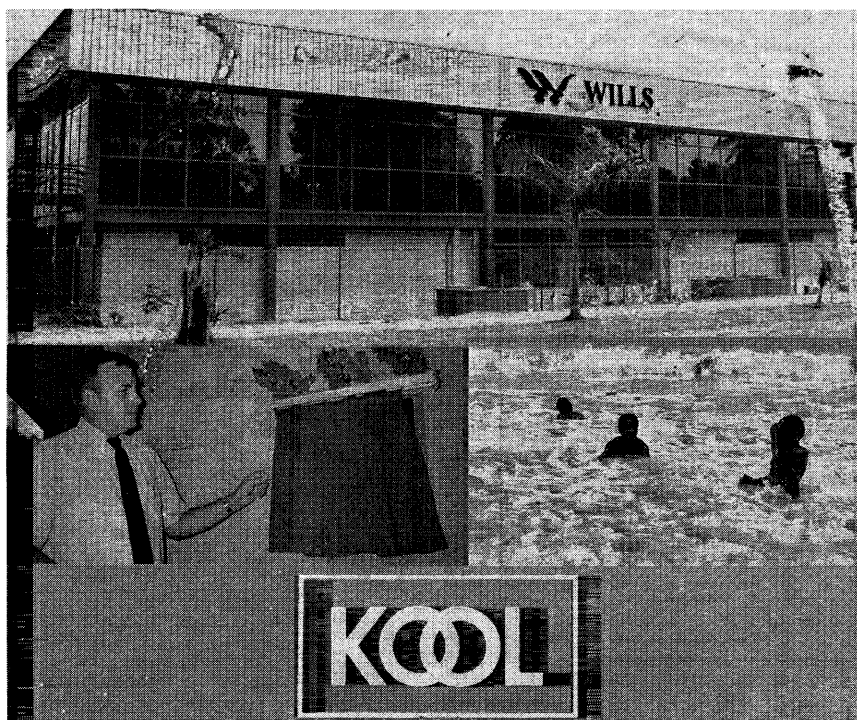
tobacco billboards. Funding for the Young Rebels campaign was provided by grants from the Minnesota Department of Health and a Community Partnership grant from the federal Center for Substance Abuse Prevention.

GRETCHEN GRIFFIN
RANDI BERNSTEIN
Community Prevention Coalition of
Hennepin County
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Papua New Guinea: Health Minister stars in cigarette advertisement

Imagine you are trying to run BAT's operations in Papua New Guinea. Things are tough. There are all the major economic problems of a small, poor, geographically isolated, developing country. Admittedly, your company's world tobacco sales are some six times greater than the country's gross domestic product, but still, there are some difficult political problems. The Health Minister, Peter Barter, seems alarmingly modern in his approach to public health policy: his department views good health as a major resource for social, economic, and personal development, and he has promised that "in 1995 and the years beyond, health promotion action aims at making these conditions favourable through advocacy for health". The writing is on the wall for the cigarette business, you would think.

But wait! Could this by any chance be the same Peter Barter who is the Madang Provincial member of PNG's parliament? (In Papua New Guinea, as in the UK, government ministers may also serve as members of parliament.) In February, that particular Mr Barter opened the new Wills's corporate office, built next to the company's big new cigarette factory in Madang. BAT and the local *Post Courier* newspaper obviously think it is the same Peter Barter, because before the end of the month, the paper carried a colour supplement on the investment opportunities in Madang and East Sepik provinces, sporting what is in effect a large Kool brand advertisement on the front. As the figure shows, it was adorned by a picture of the new building, a healthy shot of swimmers in the surf and – yes – Peter Barter himself about to pull



Peter Barter, health minister in Papua New Guinea, at the February 1995 opening of the new corporate office of the Wills Tobacco Company.

back the curtain over the plaque commemorating the opening.

It takes one back to those heady days when early US cigarette advertisements used endorsement from doctors (*Tobacco Control* 1993;2:45). How much more effective, in this day and age, to use the Health Minister to endorse your brand. Perhaps things aren't so bad for BAT after all.

DAVID SIMPSON
News Editor

Hong Kong: financial backing

Whatever effect health ministers might be able to have on their country's economic prospects, there is a lot to be said for assistance in the other direction. In most countries, the finance minister can probably do more for the future health of the people than can the entire medical, health, and scientific communities together – by regularly raising tobacco taxes by more than the rate of inflation. Furthermore, finance ministers can add to the public's perception of tobacco as the major avoidable cause of disease.

An early example was in the UK in 1984, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer referred to “the representations I have received on health grounds” when announcing a tax rise in his annual budget speech. This helpful habit has spread. In March in South Africa, Finance Minister Chris

Liebenberg, announcing the second tax rise within nine months, made reference to the higher duty having been requested by the health community.

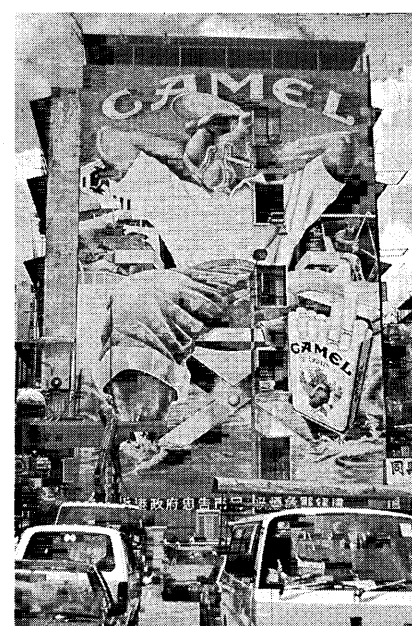
In Hong Kong, also in March, Financial Secretary Sir Hamish Macleod went one better. Having reported that the boom in smuggling encouraged by a previous, massive tobacco tax rise had now been staunch, he announced a further rise to adjust for inflation. Then he added that the Government could do more to prevent disease through health promotion. “Tobacco is the single most preventable cause of death”, he said. “It is not just the smoker who suffers; those living or working with smokers are also affected.” He went on to promise further anti-smoking legislation, and more intense health education and publicity, with a new Health Care and Promotion Fund spending HK\$80 million (just over US\$10 million) of government money. With finance ministers like that, who needs health ministers? – DS

China: Marlboro man evades ban

Tobacco advertising is supposed to be banned in China. Nevertheless, when the Gallup Organisation published an in-depth survey of Chinese people's



A Marlboro billboard in Beijing, China, where tobacco advertising is banned.



A giant Joe Camel looks down at the streets of Hong Kong.

spending habits in February, Marlboro was among the top 10 best-known brands. This is stark evidence that China's legislation is incomplete and that the Government cannot continue letting cigarette companies sponsor sport and other activities in the belief that these activities are not really advertising.

Apart from aggressive promotion via sports, Marlboro is notorious for being featured in ready-to-broadcast packages of TV programmes given by Western companies to cash-strapped Chinese broadcasting stations; and Marlboro promotional items are ubiquitous in areas catering for foreign tourists. In Hong Kong, some of whose skyscrapers sport the biggest Marlboro cowboys in the world (and huge cartoon camels; figure), cigarette

advertising is expressly forbidden on television. Yet Marlboro ranked 10th in a recall list of *television* advertisements, according to a survey carried out in Hong Kong, also released in February.

In 1997, Hong Kong will be re-integrated into China. In the same year, China will host the 10th World Conference on Tobacco and Health. China still has a long way to go in this most important area of public health policy and one lesson it will have to learn is that anything less than a comprehensive ban on all tobacco promotion is simply taken as a challenge by Western cigarette companies, which must be dealt with forcefully. The world's tobacco control advocates will be looking to their hosts for reassurance that they are equal to the task. — DS

USA: lovers prefer flirts to smokers

Could anything be a worse killer of romance than your partner flirting with other members of the opposite sex when you are out on a date? Apparently it could, at least according to a small survey of brides and grooms carried out by a US breath freshener firm, BreathAsure Inc, before St Valentine's Day (14 February).

To mark the day of the patron saint of lovers, the firm wanted to find out how sweethearts rated bad breath, which indeed topped the list of sure-fire romance killers; but so low has the social acceptability of smoking sunk in American society that it came a close second for both men and women, worse even than flirting and heavy drinking. It is heartening to remember the Philip Morris memorandum of 1979 which declared that the social acceptability issue was "the central battleground on which our case in the longrun [*sic*] will be lost or won"; and it is good to learn that Cupid and his bow are already lined up on the right side of the battlefield.

— DS

North Carolina: Trojan horse defends health

To describe North Carolina as a tobacco state is rather like saying the Sahara desert is a place with quite a lot of sand. Apart from growing the stuff, North Carolina's politicians have always been among the most

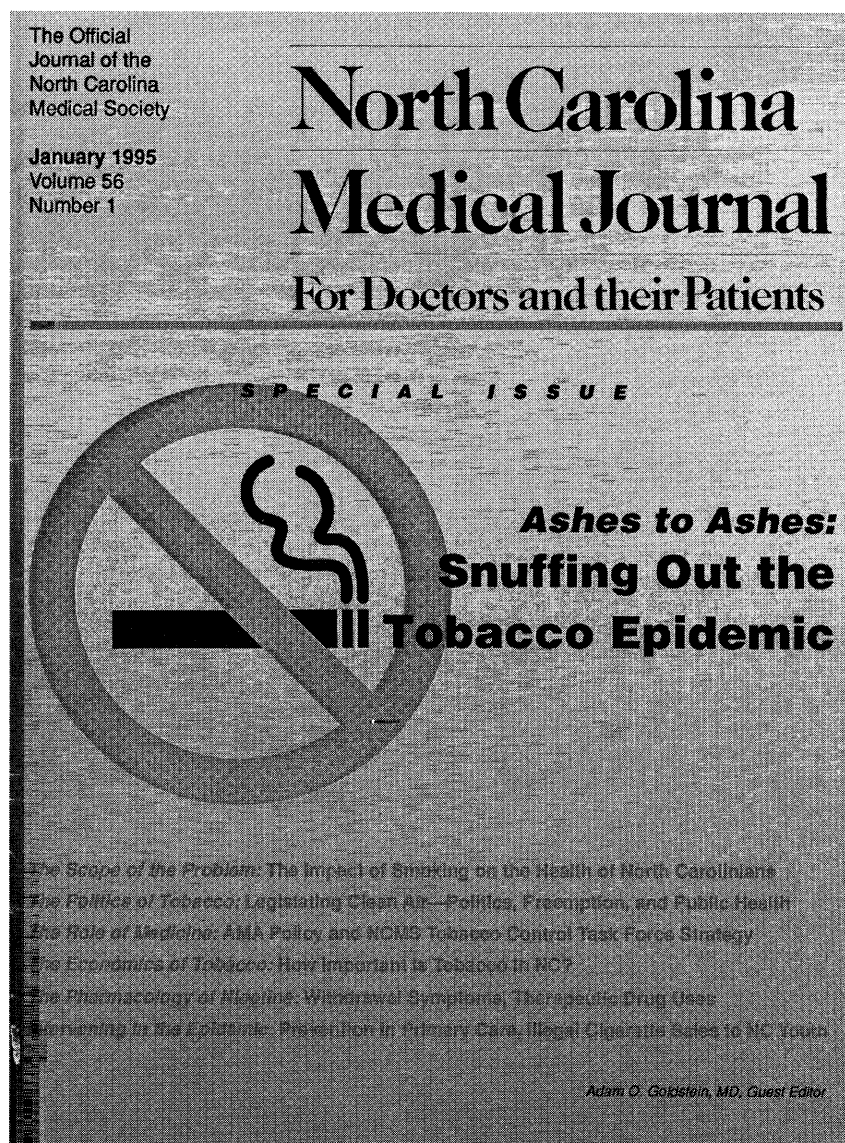
vocal and obstructive in protecting tobacco from health-oriented legislation; and the state is home to tobacco factories in towns such as Winston-Salem, whose very name promotes two leading US cigarette brands. So even mentioning tobacco-and-health issues in a local publication requires quite a bit of pluck: it is like a guest showing his police identification card at a Mafia wedding.

So how does one begin to describe an entire special edition on tobacco of the *North Carolina Medical Journal*? "For Doctors and their Patients", says the journal's strapline in the January 1995 issue – and surely those patients must include a fair share of the state's tobacco workers and factory employees? *Tobacco Control* congratulates the Editor, Dr Francis A Neelon, and his editorial board, and Guest Editor of the special issue, Dr Adam O Goldstein, for such a stunningly bold move.

Dr Goldstein identifies four themes

that "unite this special edition": the fact that the scope and magnitude of the tobacco problem is still not well understood, despite the fact it has been known to be the leading preventable cause of ill health for over 30 years; that the principal targets of tobacco addiction continue to be adolescents and children; that tobacco farmers have legitimate concerns and interests, largely different from those of tobacco companies; and that physicians, especially those in North Carolina, must become more involved in educational and advocacy efforts about tobacco with their patients, in their offices, in the community, and at the state level.

Right from its unequivocal title, "Ashes to Ashes: Snuffing out the Tobacco Epidemic", the journal unflinchingly examines the major tobacco control issues, from the local scale of the health problem to political and economic issues, including a review of tobacco agriculture (figure).



The cover of the January 1995 issue of the North Carolina Medical Journal, which was devoted entirely to tobacco and health.

The industry must give respect to this Trojan Horse rearing up in the middle of tobacco country. Its usual defensive strategy is to hurl accusations of bias, but this will have even less credibility than usual – for one thing, the edition's papers bear the hallmarks of the highest scientific standards and thorough research. But in addition, a section on the pharmacology of nicotine includes an unusual review of nicotine as a therapeutic drug (by Eric C Westman *et al*), summarising evidence for the drug's potential in treating ulcerative colitis, and arguing the case for further research on its apparently beneficial effects in treating Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases.

Overall, the edition must rank as a notable milestone in the history of tobacco and disease. We hope it may encourage some of North Carolina's many patients, policy makers, and professional organisations – who, as the journal puts it, remain physically or institutionally addicted – to become less dependent on tobacco.

– DS

Sweden: "Prince" campaign

"A Non-Smoking Generation", a Swedish youth organisation, has run a bold new nationwide billboard advertising campaign to try to persuade girls and young women not to be lured into smoking. The advertisements played on the word "Prince", which is the name of a popular local cigarette brand, especially among

young people, with probably the most provocative slogans ever used in a smoking education programme: "Seduced by a PRINCE", "Abused by a PRINCE", "Raped by a PRINCE", and "Killed by a PRINCE".

The pictures showed teenage girls along with shocking images such as a radiograph of a chest with one lung missing, and a microscope image of cancer cells attacking lung tissues. The advertisements were aimed at creating public debate about the tobacco industry's activities in Sweden, and the organisers reported "tremendous media attention".

Less than tremendous, predictably, was the reaction of Svenska Tobaks AB, which makes the Prince brand under licence from the Danish owner Skandinavisk Tobakscopagnie. A Svenska Tobaks spokesman described the campaign as "disgusting" but, despite initial threats, the company decided not to take legal action. Opposition also came from Denmark, where the Copenhagen tabloid *Ekstra Bladet* editorialised, "Why not print posters with Raped by Volvo or Abused by Saab?"

A Non-Smoking Generation is not a stranger to provocative health promotion. Last year's campaign used billboards showing graveyards with the slogan "Welcome to Marlboro Country". – DS

Anyone for tennis?

It's strange what it takes to embarrass some people. You might think that most professional sports people, for

example – at the peak of physical fitness, acknowledged role models for the young – would find it a tiny bit shameful to be seen taking money from a tobacco company, and giving massive publicity and ultra-misleading, healthy associations to a cigarette brand. And you would expect them to be less shy about helping to promote essential health products.

For most of the past 22 years, the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), which represents women's professional tennis, apparently seemed happy to take sponsorship from Virginia Slims, a leading cigarette brand aimed at women. During this time cancer registries in the US and Britain began to see breast cancer overtaken by lung cancer as the number form of female cancer mortality. At last, after increasing pressure from health groups, the WTA pulled out of the contract at the end of 1994.

But the WTA's worries about image problems, so absent in the past, now seem to figure large in its search for new sponsorship. In February, it turned down a US\$10 million global sponsorship offer by Tampax tampons, the female hygiene product, because of a stigma associated with the product. Martina Navratilova, president of WTA, voiced women players' fears of being known "just as part of the Tampax Tour. It would never get tennis beyond women's tennis." At least with cigarettes, men get the diseases too, not just women.

Ms Navratilova is not inexperienced in stigma. For several years she was sponsored by Kim, a BAT women's brand. But in response to public pressure during the Wimbledon championship in 1983, she gave up her Kim attire, and won the tournament – in a plain outfit.

– DS

Public funeral of cigarettes sold to minors

In the state of Michigan, as in most places, teenagers have easy access to tobacco products, despite a state Youth Tobacco Act that bans the sale of tobacco to persons under age 18. This is especially true in the city of Detroit, where the Police Department believes it has "more serious" offences to deal with than the illegal sale of tobacco to minors.

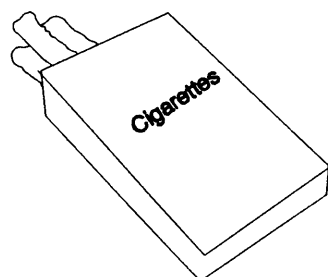
In a bold move to combat youth access to cigarettes, the Detroit Urban League, a community-based social service organisation, formed the



Våldtagen av en **PRINCE**

Raped by a "PRINCE", a bold message about smoking from "A Non-Smoking Generation", a Swedish youth organisation.

A SERVICE OF MEMORY CELEBRATING THE PASSING OF



AUGUST 9, 1994
10:00 a.m.
DETROIT URBAN LEAGUE
15770 JAMES COUZENS
DETROIT, MI 48238

Funeral service handout.

"Thumbs Down Coalition". The coalition's name comes from the main theme of the campaign: "Thumbs down on youth tobacco use". Comprised of more than 50 community organisations, businesses, and government entities, the coalition seeks to stop teenage access to tobacco products through education, evaluation, and enforcement of the Youth Tobacco Act.

The Coalition is carrying out an educational campaign with other tobacco control allies to reduce tobacco sales to minors. To evaluate the impact of the educational campaign, the coalition conducted compliance checks to provide baseline data on youth access to tobacco products in Detroit. From a list of 1727 retail stores considered likely to sell tobacco products, 300 were randomly selected for the study. Included in the sample were grocery stores, convenience stores, gasoline stations, and pharmacy stores.

The Detroit Police Department recruited 25 junior police cadets, 14-17 years of age (mean = 15.2), to help with the compliance checks. Because Detroit is a predominantly African American city, the youths were instructed to ask for one of the three leading cigarette brands in the



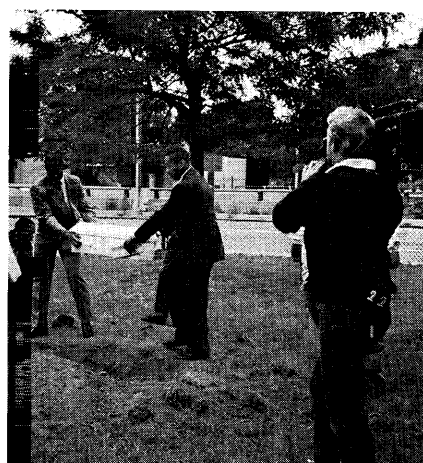
Reverend Carole Glenn alongside a baby casket filled with cigarettes sold illegally to youth, at a symbolic funeral service in Detroit.

African American community: Newport, Salem, and Kool. A total of 160 (54%) of the stores sold cigarettes in violation of the law.

The junior cadets succeeded in buying 3520 cigarette sticks. Confronted with the need to dispose of these cigarettes without polluting the environment, the coalition devised a novel strategy. After consultation with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the coalition decided to bury them. To attract media attention and to promote public awareness of the dangers of smoking, the cigarettes would be buried in a symbolic public funeral of tobacco sold to minors.

In preparation for this ceremony, a church minister was invited to make arrangements with a funeral home. A baby-size burial casket was bought and a grave site near the Urban League office was identified. The minister drafted the order of service, which included a musical prelude, processional, scripture, prayer, remarks, invitation to a drug-free life, a eulogy, closing remarks, a recessional, and a musical postscript.

A press release was issued to announce the cigarette burial and to release the findings of the retail compliance checks. Several local media outlets (television, radio, and print) were attracted to the event, and the community was curious to find out what it was all about. After very moving remarks about the role of smoking in causing death and disease, the minister invited those who would like to quit smoking to come forward to dump their cigarettes in the casket



The burial of cigarettes sold to youth.

along with the illegally purchased cigarettes (figures). Several people came forward.

Reverend Risarg Huff then delivered a compassionate eulogy on smoking and its long relationship with people. He pointed out that smoking among youth will not be missed as it was being buried in the community. After the service was over, two pallbearers closed the casket and led a procession of community participants to the grave site for interment (figure). Much fun was had by all at a reception afterwards. In the ensuing weeks, discussion and increased awareness of this issue continued in the Detroit community, and laid the groundwork for an educational campaign targeting youth, parents, and tobacco retailers.

AMOS O ADUROJA
Detroit Urban League,
Detroit, Michigan, USA