

private prosecution. Like legal cases everywhere, this could take a long time; meanwhile, if the government does not act fast, it will doubtless find its new law to be the laughing stock of the tobacco companies' boardrooms.

## California EPA report

In January 1971, then US Surgeon General Jesse Steinfeld, citing the existing epidemiological evidence demonstrating a clear dose-response relationship between the level of smoke exposure received and disease risks in smokers, with no evidence for a threshold, stated that it was his personal belief that ambient tobacco smoke probably posed a health risk to non-smokers. Steinfeld called for a national Non-smokers Bill of Rights and directed that the 1972 Surgeon General's report\* include a complete examination of the available scientific evidence on the topic.

Since 1972, the issue of environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) has received considerable scientific scrutiny, not only in the United States but elsewhere. It has been covered in detail in no less than six reports of the Surgeon General, including the entire 1986 report, a report by the National Research Council, also issued in 1986, and more recently, in 1992, by the US Environmental Protection Agency. In 1991 the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health issued an assessment of ETS on lung cancer in the workplace and reports issued by the Royal College of Physicians of London, the World Health Organization, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, and the British Council have periodically assessed the health effects of ETS. These reviews\* have been remarkably consistent in their findings: ETS is a major cause of lung cancer in adults and respiratory problems in both children and adults.

The California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal-EPA) has now waded into the debate with the most comprehensive report to date on the topic. Issued as a draft document intended for public comment, the report is entitled *Health Effects of Exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke*. This 500+ page state-of-the-science document confirms and significantly extends our scientific knowledge about the health risks to non-smokers from ETS. It is "must" reading for anyone in public health interested in protecting the health of non-smokers from ETS.

Previous authoritative reviews\* had already established a causal relationship for ETS and lung cancer, respiratory tract infections, respiratory symptoms, and middle ear infections (in children). The Cal-EPA report now finds the evidence sufficient to establish a causal relationship for ETS and nasal sinus cancer, heart disease, childhood asthma, low-birth-weight infants, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). The report also found the evidence suggestive of a causal association between ETS and spontaneous abortions, exacerbation of asthma in adults, exacerbation of cystic fibrosis, and cervical cancer.

A unique aspect of the California report is its attempt to estimate the annual morbidity and mortality burden in non-smokers associated with ETS exposures. By far the single largest contributor to ETS-related excess mortality is from coronary heart disease, where the report estimates that between 35 000 and 62 000 deaths occur annually in the United States. The California report also estimates ETS is responsible for between 1900 and 2700 SIDS deaths nationally, and about 200 deaths due to chronic bronchitis and pneumonia among infants under the age of 18 months. Like the 1992 EPA report, the California EPA estimates that the 3000 annual deaths from lung cancer of non-smokers are due to ETS. Even if one only accepts the low end for each of these estimates, this translates into a total of 40 000 ETS-related deaths each year and likely places ETS into the top five of the leading causes of death in our society, only being surpassed by the total deaths attributed to active smoking, diet, alcohol consumption, and motor-vehicle injuries.

Individuals interested in reading the entire report can obtain a copy by writing to the California Environmental Protection Agency, or they can download the complete report from the World Wide Web at <<http://www.calepa.cahwnet.gov/oehha/docs/ets/ets-main.htm>>.

The asterisked citations are available from the author.

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## USA: Virginia Slam

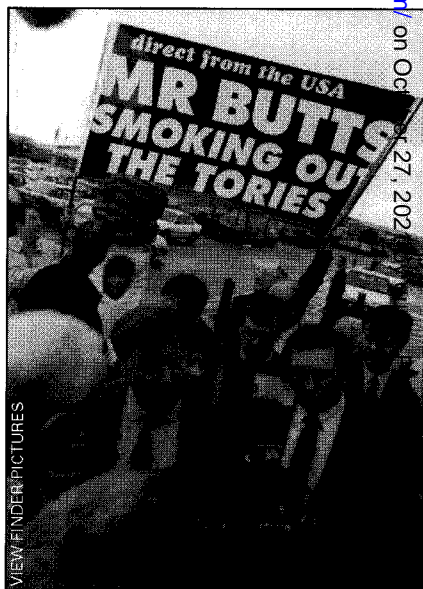
*Tobacco Control* salutes New York singer and songwriter Leslie Nuchow, who is organizing "Virginia Slam" in protest at Philip Morris's Virginia Slims "Woman Thing" music cam-

paign. Ms Nuchow discovered the "cancer thing" campaign when she was approached by a PM talent scout. She says she was told that the audiences would be of all ages. PM denies this, saying its concerts are for audiences aged 21 and older. Nevertheless, a quick look at the typical profiles of audiences for the sort of live music shows it will be presenting will be enough to convince most people that PM is not exactly after the really elderly, say 25 or older.

## Butt Man sighted in Britain

A figure uncannily resembling Butt Man, the larger-than-lifesize cigarette person who dogged Senator Bob Dole during his campaign for the American presidency (see *Tobacco Control* 1996;5:186), has been spotted in the United Kingdom. Experts following a closely fought parliamentary by-election in February said that the figure was actually Butt Woman, played by the wife of Mr Anthony Samuelson, one of the contestants, though on occasion the couple's daughter also took on the role.

Eccentrics are nothing new in British politics, particularly in elections to parliament. A ubiquitous figure in the past was a candidate called Screaming Lord Sutch of the Monster Raving Loony Party. His appearances have become less frequent since a sharp rise in the financial deposit which all candidates must pay, which is forfeited if insufficient votes are won. Another victim of this amendment has



Butt Man (Mr Samuelson's wife, Carol) shadows the Chancellor of the Exchequer on a walkabout during the by-election.

been a gentleman who, like Mr Sutch, completed legal formalities to change his name, this time to the absurd and inordinately long one that was the core of a sketch by the veteran British television comedy team responsible for *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. The name, far too long to quote in full here, ended "Bus Stop Ftang Ftang Olé Biscuit Barrel", has usually been shortened to "Mr Biscuit Barrel" in press reports of contests where this stalwart of the Silly Party (another *Python* invention) was standing for election. The main pleasure of such eccentrics, of course, is in hearing the returning officer, the official responsible for monitoring and reporting elections, solemnly read out the full names of all candidates when announcing their votes, usually late in the night in a tense and politically charged atmosphere.

Mr Samuelson, a 63-year-old retired barrister (a lawyer with privileged right to practice in higher English courts) may be eccentric, but his motivation for entering the election was very different: a profound disgust at the repeated blocking by the Conservative govern-

ment of proposed European Union legislation to ban tobacco promotion. Mr Samuelson founded the Stop the Conservatives Poncing [*ponce (v): to live off a prostitute's earnings*] on Tobacco Companies Party, changed his name to Samuelson Anthony, so that his new surname put him at the top of ballot papers, and set about creating as much publicity as possible for his chosen cause during a hard-fought by-election in the Wirral South area of Liverpool. As the seat was a vital test for Prime Minister John Major's embattled government, election meetings were visited by senior political figures from all major parties.

Thus Mr Samuelson, or Anthony, got access of a sort to cabinet ministers, no less. He was able to heckle the Secretary of State for Defence, having sneaked in the back entrance of the golf club where he was speaking; to attempt to argue with the Deputy Prime Minister at a press conference in a hotel; and to take on the Chancellor of the Exchequer during a supermarket walkabout. These encounters may have ended in, respectively, being thrown out of the

golf club, the press conference being moved to a different room, and a scuffle at the supermarket, but Mr Samuelson made his point loud and clear and on the record.

Towards the end of his campaign, Mr Samuelson took to a tree house outside a hospital in the constituency, with help from experienced environmental campaigners. His wife Carol was dressed as a Mr Butts-style life-size cigarette, bearing a placard. Insistently remaining in the tree overlooking the hospital until the announcement of the result of the by-election (a disaster for the Conservatives, or "Tories"), Mr Samuelson said: "It is quite a suitable place for a tree house because you have the Tory Party saying how magnificent they have made the National Health Service, but a lot of their friends are filling beds with people suffering from lung cancer." However unconventional his means, and despite winning comparatively few votes, at least Mr Samuelson had the satisfaction of putting tobacco control firmly on the agenda throughout the election campaign.