

badvertising

Smoking out the climate

Lessons from the advertising ban on tobacco for tackling the climate emergency



say "LUCKIES are
less irritating"

"It's toasted"
Your Throat Protection
against irritation against coughs



Finding pathways for rapid transition to a fair economy that thrives within planetary ecological boundaries.

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The mission of KR Foundation is to address the root causes of climate change and environmental degradation.

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Introduction



“The problem is how do you sell death? How do you sell a poison that kills 350,000 people per year, and 1,000 people a day? You do it with the great open spaces ... the mountains, the open places, the lakes coming up to the shore. They do it with healthy young people. They do it with athletes. How could a whiff of a cigarette be of any harm in a situation like that? It couldn’t be – there’s too much fresh air, too much health – too much absolute exuding of youth and vitality – that’s the way they do it.”

Fritz Gahagan, former marketing consultant for big tobacco, *World in Action*, 1988.¹

This report looks at lessons from the successful campaign against advertising by tobacco companies to help bring an end to the promotion of high-fossil fuel lifestyles in the face of the climate emergency. The campaign to outlaw tobacco adverts and sponsorship took four decades from when the recommendation was first made by the Royal College of Physicians in their 1962 report *Smoking and Health*.²

This report looks back at a long campaign, focusing mainly on the UK market where the campaign was fought out with particular intensity – but at other early adopters too – and

¹ C. Tremayne (1988), *World in Action*, ‘The Secret of the Safer Cigarette’, Season 24 Episode 37, aired July 4.

² Richard Doll and Austin Bradford-Hill (1962), *Smoking and Health*, London: Royal College of Physicians
<https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/smoking-and-health-1962>

draws some conclusions about the new undertaking to end advertising that clearly makes climate change worse.

The parallels between smoking and advertising climate-damaging activities like driving gas-guzzlers are, if not exact, oddly close.³ Tobacco causes damage to the consumers, and tobacco companies benefit from the way that they hook their most loyal customers, and while, for example, SUVs are marketed as providing protection for drivers, their physical size, weight and pollution levels create a more dangerous and toxic urban environment for both drivers and pedestrians. Both too represent products seeking to create their own marketplace. Similarities don't end there, where cigarette smoke contains ingredients like benzene, nitrosamines, formaldehyde, hydrogen cyanide, polycyclic hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide, car exhaust has benzene, particulates, nitrogen oxide, polycyclic hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide.

Whilst everyone is affected by vehicle pollution, as with smoking there is also a highly unequal impact in that the pollution and road threat of SUV use is felt first on people who are far poorer. The desire of the vast majority for clean air holds the two campaigns together.

The parallels are strong enough to remind us that – even against the bottomless pockets of the hugely wealthy and powerful tobacco companies – campaigns do manage to achieve their objectives. Starting in Scandinavia in the mid-1970s, and then the UK in 2003, one by one, the places where it was permissible to advertise a product that could kill you began to fall into line. The fact that they did at all was also about the bitter campaigns waged, using innovative tactics, in Canada and Australia.

In fact, the first nail in the coffin for cigarette advertising was hammered in as long ago as 1965, when television advertising was banned in the UK. This happened at a moment of opportunity, following the Smoking and Health report three years before – a new reforming government and a Television Act that had to be passed.

After that success, this was a difficult campaign to win. The tobacco companies hit back with a covert campaign, mainly in the USA, to spread doubt about the scientific research (see box on page 10). They also took a series of legal actions,

³A. Simms (2004) *Would you buy a car that looked like this?* *New Statesman*
<https://www.newstatesman.com/node/161029>

bogging down the cross-European ban for some years in disputes about the powers of the European Commission to act on health grounds.

One of the key turning points was when the doctors' union, the British Medical Association, decided to get heavily involved. This also gave permission to individual doctors to campaign locally, even providing them with black-edged postcards to send to MPs every time a constituent died of a smoking-related disease.

We draw some conclusions at the end about how the climate advertising campaign might be won.

How cigarettes once were endorsed by doctors

Figure 1: Up until the 1950s cigarette companies often used doctors to promote their products.

"I'm going to grow a hundred years old!"

...and possibly she may—for the amazing strides of medical science have added years to life expectancy

It's a fact—a warm, wonderful fact—that this five-year-old child, or your own child, has a life expectancy almost a whole decade longer than was her mother's, and a good 15 to 20 years longer than that of her grandmother. Not only

the expectation of a longer life, but of a life by far healthier.

Thank medical science for that. Thank your doctor and thousands like him... smiling gratefully... that you and yours may enjoy a longer, better life.



According to a recent Nationwide survey

More Doctors smoke Camels

than any other cigarette!

NOT ONE but three remarkable independent research organizations conducted this survey. And they asked not just a few thousand, but 111,217, doctors from coast to coast to name the cigarette they themselves preferred to smoke.

Answers came in by the thousands... from general physicians, diagnosticians, surgeons, men and women specialists too. The name named brand was Camel.

If you are not now smoking Camels, try them. Let your "T-2000" tell you (see right).

© 1954 Camel Cigarettes, R. J. REYNOLDS TOBACCO CO., R. D. 1, DURHAM, N. C.



THE "T-2000" TEST WILL TELL YOU

The "T-2000"—T for taste and T for throat—is your own guiding brand for any cigarette. Only your nose and throat can decide which cigarette means best to you... how it affects your throat.

CAMELS *Quality Tobacco*

1. Beginnings



The real start of the smoking and advertising campaign can be dated back to when the advertising ban was first proposed, in 1962.

A group of doctors led by the epidemiologist Richard Doll, who was then director of the statistical research unit of the Medical Research Council, published a report via the Royal College of Physicians, called Smoking and Health.⁴

What was in Smoking and Health was powerfully persuasive, and it sold 83,000 copies, but it was hardly new. Doll had known about links between smoking and cancer since 1950, when his research into lung cancer patients in London hospitals found – not that it had been caused by motor fumes or tarmac, as he had expected – but that heavy smoking was the only common factor. In fact, the British Medical Journal, which broke the news of these findings, said that, of the 1,357 men with lung cancer interviewed, as many as 99.5 per cent of them were smokers.⁵

“What an outcry there would be if a whisky distiller was invited to come on television to say he was not in the least bit disturbed about drunkenness and road accidents.”

Sir Robert Platt, president of the Royal College of Physicians, 1964.⁶

⁴ See <https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/smoking-and-health-1962>

⁵ *British Medical Journal* (1950), Sept 30.
www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2038856/pdf/brmedj03566-0003.pdf

⁶ *The Times* (1964), Jan 24.

It was all a long time since 1493, when Christopher Columbus had been offered “certain dried leaves” during his first voyage to the New World and which, he recorded in his journal, “gave off a distinct fragrance”. The Spanish conquistadores Rodrigo de Jerez and Luis de Torres are credited with first observing smoking. Jerez became a smoker and took the habit back to Spain.

A century later, virtually the only anti-smoking campaigner was King James I of England. His 1604 diatribe, *Counterblaste to Tobacco*, claimed that smoking was a “custom lothesome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, dangerous to the lungs, and in the black and stinking fume thereof, nearest resembling the horrible stygian smoke of the pit that is bottomless”.⁷ The following year, the Royal College of Physicians held a debate on smoking, which pompously ridiculed the King's views.

The damage becomes clear

And so it continued, until the 1930s, when tobacco brand Chesterfield was allowed to run adverts in the *New York State Journal of Medicine*, describing their product as: “just as pure as the water you drink ... and practically untouched by human hands.”⁸

By then, the first statistical connections were being made between cigarettes and cancer. Unfortunately, these were happening in Nazi Germany, where Hitler was a known anti-smoker, and just when Nazi-era research had a low reputation in the rest of the world. Tobacco misuse and lung carcinoma, by Franz Hermann Muller of the University of Cologne, was the first major report to find a strong link between smoking and lung cancer.⁹

That was 1939. The truth had to wait another decade before British researchers like Doll and Austin Bradford Hill – and American researchers like Dr Ernst Wynder – began to make these connections again. Yet for some reason, in the UK in particular, it was the 1962 report *Smoking and Health* which

⁷ Stephen Maisto et al (2007) *Drug Use and Abuse* 5th edition, New York: Wadsworth, 144.

⁸

www.thenational.ae/business/advertising-falls-short-of-earning-its-place-online-1.604476

⁹ Robert n. Proctor (2012), ‘The history of the discovery of the cigarette–lung cancer link: evidentiary traditions, corporate denial, global toll’, in *Tobacco Control*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 20th Anniversary Issue (March 2012), 87–91.

really gripped the public. For the first time since the conquistadors, there was a noticeable dip in the sales of cigarettes. The report was also a big step forward for the Royal College of Physicians, partly because they were such a respectable body. Partly also, because most people knew doctors who also smoked, though that was changing too. Their doctors' study has carried on every ten years ever since, tracking a group of young doctors, which found unequivocal evidence that smokers died before non-smokers, sometimes decades before.

Main events in understanding the effects of tobacco

1930

Researchers in Cologne, Germany, make a statistical correlation between cancer and smoking.

1939

Tobacco misuse and lung carcinoma, by Franz Hermann Muller of the University of Cologne, is the first major report to find a strong link between smoking and lung cancer.

1950

Doctors Wynder and Graham, of Washington University, publish a study showing that of 650 men with lung cancer, 95% had been smoking for 25 years or more.

1951

The first large-scale epidemiological study of the relationship between smoking and lung cancer was carried out by Dr Richard Doll and Professor Austin Bradford Hill and published in the British Medical Journal.

1953

Dr Ernst Wynder's landmark report finds that painting cigarette tar on the backs of mice creates tumours, the first biological link between smoking and cancer.

1954

Reader's Digest publish article entitled 'The cigarette controversy' documenting evidence on the association between smoking and lung cancer.

1958

The first health authority smoking withdrawal clinic opens in Salford.

1962

The Royal College of Physicians report is published, recommending the restriction of tobacco advertising.

The role of Michael Foot

A future Labour leader, Foot was involved in a driving accident in Herefordshire in 1963 which led to an end to his lifelong asthma and his 70-a-day smoking habit. He gave up after he left hospital and remained interested in the tobacco issue.¹⁰

It was Foot who identified the moral dilemma for any government who relies too much on taxing bad things. It was all very well for ministers to accept a cosy deal by increasing tax levels on cigarettes because, by doing so, they were impaling themselves on the horns of a dilemma – which put them firmly under control of the tobacco companies. This is what he told the House of Commons:

“Once the Treasury had revealed that it was no longer dependent on such a source of revenue we might get from the government action in other respects such as they ought to have taken already for dealing with this menace. We might then get a government which had the guts to stop all smoking advertisements on television. That would not be interfering with the free choice of anyone. It would interfere with people encouraging others to smoke themselves to death. We might then get a Ministry of Health which, instead of spending a miserable sum—about £25,000 a year on this subject, to counteract the tens of thousands of millions of pounds spent by commercial companies—on persuading people to stop smoking, might do its duty in this respect.”

Michael Foot, Finance Bill debate, 1964.¹¹

¹⁰ Kenneth O. Morgan ((2007), *Michael Foot: A life*, London: Harper Collins, 239f.

¹¹ Hansard (1964), June 2

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1964-06-02/debates/32c4c46a-ebaa-4d55-ad4c-932e57e47dc0/Clause4%E2%80%9494\(Tobacco\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1964-06-02/debates/32c4c46a-ebaa-4d55-ad4c-932e57e47dc0/Clause4%E2%80%9494(Tobacco))

“I think we must realise ... that one of the prime activities of this industry is in effect to act as a tax collector for the government concerned... I therefore think that they will move very cautiously before they kill the goose which lays such a big golden egg.”

Sir David Nicholson MEP, chairman of Rothmans, 1980, announcing that the total amount of tax collected across Europe was almost as much as the entire budget of the European Community.¹²

¹² Peter Taylor (1984), *Smoke Ring: The politics of tobacco*, London: Bodley Head, 64.

2. Television advertising

.....

The government's response, under Sir Alec Douglas-Home, was to immediately negotiate a pact between the tobacco companies and ITV television companies not to advertise cigarettes before the 9pm watershed. It was not what the 1962 report had recommended – the authors had wanted a complete ban on tobacco advertising.

Swindon Labour MP Francis Noel-Baker opened the battle in Parliament, asking whether – given that the company was spending £5 million pounds a year on television adverts persuading people to smoke – was there really any point in the government's spending what was a tiny fraction of that persuading people to give up?¹³

One champion of tobacco advertising bans in Parliament was Harold Wilson's health spokesman Ken Robinson, Labour MP for St Pancras North. He became Health Secretary in Wilson's cabinet later in 1964. In fact, it was the postmaster-general's responsibility to worry about television advertising – because, since its inception in 1922, broadcasting came under the Post Office. So when Wilson unexpectedly took the reins of a minority government later that year, with Robinson as Health Secretary and Tony Benn (then in an earlier incarnation as Mr Anthony Wedgwood-Benn) as postmaster-general, it so happened that one of the first items on the new government's agenda was a new television act.

¹³ Hansard (1961), Oct 18.

“If one is satisfied that this habit is a serious danger to health, then surely there is an obligation on the government to prevent a deliberate attempt to seriously inculcate the habit.”

Ken Robinson MP, Shadow Health Secretary, 1964.¹⁴

The new act made it clear that ITV bosses had a duty to negotiate on advertising with ministers. Some months later, Robinson announced a complete ban on cigarette advertising on television on 8 February 1965 under the previous year’s Television Act. Still under consideration were bans on cigar and pipe tobacco.

There were complaints by the television companies that the government was singling out ‘arbitrarily’ one form of advertising only. “If this principle was established,” said the Advertising Association, “no-one could say where it would stop.”¹⁵

Either way, the first nail in the coffin of tobacco advertising in the UK had been well and truly banged in.

“The cigarette industry is peddling a deadly weapon. It is dealing in people’s lives for financial gain...”

Senator Bobby Kennedy, 1967.¹⁶

¹⁴ The Times (1964), Jan 24.

¹⁵ The Times (1965), Feb 9.

¹⁶ Rob Cunningham, Jake Epp and Judith Mackay (1996), *Smoke and Mirrors: The Canadian tobacco war*, Ottawa : International Development Research Centre.

Dirty tricks

The tobacco industry reacted with disturbing entitlement to the news that their products were not as health-giving as they had always claimed. They began to:

- Set up a fellowship programme for trainee doctors and send representatives along to cancer conferences.
- Manipulate the idea of media balance to cast enough doubt on the research to keep debate open.
- Build links with researchers who would be prepared to help them spread the doubt.

Ironically, in the USA, their own researchers knew as early as the 1960s that the claims about cancer were true, while they were still denying any problem in public.

When the US Congress held hearings on the issue in 1965, the industry was ready with their parade of dissenting doctors, many of them funded by their new Council for Tobacco Research.

Finally in 2006, a US district judge ruled that tobacco companies had “devised and executed a scheme to defraud consumers ... about the hazards of cigarettes, hazards that their own internal company documents proved that they had known about since the 1950s.”¹⁷ They were found guilty under the Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organisations Act.

But these tactics had, in the meantime, led directly to four decades of delay, while the industry spread doubt about epidemiological research which showed the dangers of secondhand smoke.

Through the 1990s, the tobacco industry had redoubled efforts to recruit scientists who were prepared to help them spread doubt. They also spread the idea of ‘sick building syndrome’ to provide themselves with an alternative explanation for health findings, helped along by the Science Environment Policy Project, set up by the PR company ACPO – also planning a secondhand smoke campaign for tobacco giant Philip Morris – to back ‘sound science’ versus what they called junk science (anything they didn’t like).

In the UK, a campaign group FOREST – led by former RAF pilot Sir Christopher Foxley-Norris – was designed to take on

¹⁷ Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway (2011), *Merchants of Doubt*, London: Bloomsbury, 33.

anti-smokers ASH (see page 22) and anyone else the Institute for Economic Affairs leader Lord Harris of High Cross called 'puritan paternalists'.¹⁸ That was the phrase he used in the introduction to a 1994 FOREST report, called Through the Smokescreen of Science.

"Smoking is only the first ... Beware!" he wrote. And when it comes to advertising SUVs, this is of course true. So it makes sense for climate campaigners to be clear about our ambitions and our limits too...

¹⁸ Oreskes and Conway (2011), 163.

3. The air war



In 1967, Ken Robinson announced in Parliament the government's intention to "introduce legislation in due course to take powers to ban cigarette coupon schemes, to control or ban other promotional schemes and to limit other forms of advertising".¹⁹

As so often happens, they failed to do this. Instead, they launched the Health Education Council, later to be reorganised as the Health Education Authority (HEA). Their first anti-smoking campaign was launched, with posters asking: 'Why learn about lung cancer the hard way?'

The chance to legislate seemed to be slipping slowly away. Worse, so many of the abuses remained in place, from Chesterfield-branded chocolate cigarettes – deliberately aimed at implanting the idea of smoking in children – to sports sponsorship, aimed at avoiding a ban on TV adverts.

There was also a great deal of campaigning energy emerging abroad, like the BUGA-UP up campaign in Australia (see box on page 29). In Times Square, in New York City, campaigners climbed the lighted advertising hoardings and chained themselves to the Marlboro' advert.

Wilson left office for the first time in 1970, and Edward Heath appointed Sir Keith Joseph as Health Secretary, who affirmed the government's intention to control tobacco use through voluntary agreement with the tobacco industry. When the first voluntary agreement between the tobacco industry and the government was drawn up in April 1971, its provisions included making all cigarette packs for sale in the UK carry the words "Warning by HM Government: Smoking can damage your health".

Their press and poster adverts were to carry the reference: "Every pack carries a government health warning". The tobacco companies also agreed to set up a scientific liaison committee including industry and government-nominated

¹⁹ Peter Froggatt (1989), 'Determinants of Policy on Smoking and Health' in *International Journal of Epidemiology*, Vol. 18, No. 1.

scientists to explore less dangerous forms of smoking and to devise a way of measuring tar and nicotine levels.

When the tar and nicotine tables emerged a year later, the lowest was 4mg and the highest 38mg. The average tar yield of cigarettes then on sale was 20.6mg. In response, ASH campaigners (see box) introduced a 'Butt of the Month' award for specific cigarette advertisements with citations for "outstanding services to national ill-health". The first award went to Consulate, a menthol cigarette advertised with the slogan 'gives you a taste of the country'.²⁰

Labour in government again

The three-day week followed at the end of 1973 as the nation was hit by the Energy Crisis and then, rather unexpectedly, there was a change in government. The new Health Secretary was a doctor himself, so campaign hopes began to rise.

In summer 1975, Dr David Owen told Parliament that he had asked the industry to agree to allocate some of its advertising budget to health education, to abolish cigarette advertising in the cinema, to print tar group descriptions on packs and advertisements - with a stronger and more prominent health warning. They were also asked to abolish coupon schemes and consider curbing tobacco sponsorship of sport. The industry later rejected most of these requests.

Owen's plan was to use the Medicines Act 1968 to ban most tobacco advertising, but he was moved to be Foreign Secretary before he could carry it out.²¹

Research turns bitter

The first advertising bans were beginning to emerge in Scandinavia, starting with Norway in 1975. The tobacco side were quick to latch onto figures which seemed to suggest no effect on consumption in Norway. In Finland, they suggested that consumption was coming down before the ban, and that it began to rise again afterwards. In fact, Finland - once with the highest number of smokers in Europe - halved the rate of 14-year-old boys smoking within two years of the ban.²²

²⁰ ASH (2020), *Key dates in tobacco regulation: 1962-2020*, London: ASH. <https://ash.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Key-Dates.pdf>

²¹ Taylor (1984), 93-4.

²² Taylor (1984), 278.

This was why ASH invested so much time in their own research, revealing, for example, that 85 per cent of UK tobacconists were selling cigarettes to children, worth about £60 million a year,²³ and that the industry was spending about £150 million a year sponsoring sports.

At the same time, the tobacco side was beginning to muster a coherent response. The Canadian economist Hugh High, from Capetown University, wrote a short book on smoking for the conservative free market think tank, the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), which had been funded by British American Tobacco since 1963.²⁴ He said that any advertising ban would have to fulfil two conditions:

1. The products must be damaging enough to justify over-riding the protection of free speech.
2. Any measures have to be reasonable and justified by the evidence.

It is worth noting that these questions did in fact justify the measures that were eventually taken against promoting smoking, just as they also justify banning advertising of climate changing products. Even so, as High pointed out, bans are not risk free. The effects of the prohibition of alcohol are, he said, “well-known to even the most ignorant parliamentarian.”²⁵

The pro-tobacco case argued that advertising cigarettes was about brand-building and encouraging people to switch brands, rather than expanding the market. It would have to be if they were going to win, given the consensus that smoking killed people. But, in fact, even where tobacco has been effectively a monopoly – places like Japan, Austria or Cameroon, where brand competition was non-existent – tobacco advertising nevertheless continued, undermining their own argument.

These arguments have disappeared temporarily from public debate but they will probably emerge again in different forms over climate change. The US Surgeon-General’s report of 1989 stated that there was “no scientifically rigorous study available to the public that provides a definitive answer to the basic question of whether advertising and promotion

²³ ASH (2020). <https://ash.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Key-Dates.pdf>

²⁴ Hugh High (1998), *Advertising and Smoking*. London: IEA.

²⁵ High (1998).

increase the level of tobacco consumption"²⁶. Yet research dating at least back to the 1970s had identified an increase in tobacco sales in response to advertising.²⁷

Commentators like High leapt on the apparent assertion in the US Surgeon General's report that there was insufficient evidence that advertising had a statistically significant effect on tobacco consumption, using this quote selectively to bolster his own mendacious argument for the IEA. However, the full paragraph in the Surgeon General's report continues, "The most comprehensive review of both the direct and indirect mechanisms concluded that the collective empirical, experiential, and logical evidence makes it more likely than not that advertising and promotional activities do stimulate cigarette consumption."²⁸ This is of course the opposite conclusion to the one High sought to project for the IEA.

In 1992, Clive Smee, chief economic adviser to the Department of Health, published his own comprehensive study of the link between advertising and tobacco consumption. He reviewed 19 studies, mainly from the UK and the United States, correlating advertising spending and total tobacco consumption and he concluded: "The balance of evidence thus supports the conclusion that advertising does have a positive effect on consumption".²⁹

Smee also reviewed the impact of advertising bans that had been introduced at the time. The most significant of those were Norway and Finland where bans had been in place for over a decade at the time of the report. "In each case, the banning of advertising was followed by a fall in smoking on a scale which cannot reasonably be attributed to other factors," he wrote.

²⁶ US Surgeon General (1989), *Reducing the health consequences of smoking*, p.517

²⁷ [European Economic Review \(1975\) Advertising and the aggregate demand for cigarettes](#)

²⁸ US Surgeon General (1989), *Reducing the health consequences of smoking*, p.517

²⁹ Anderson R, Duckworth S and Smee C (1992), *Effect of tobacco advertising on tobacco consumption: A discussion document reviewing the evidence* (The Smee Report), London: Economics & Operational Research Division, Department of Health. https://archive.org/stream/op1279296-1001/op1279296-1001_djvu.txt

"Awareness of certain brands of cigarette was linked to an increased risk of onset of smoking in 11–13 year olds, especially girls. Awareness of the most advertised brands was a strong predictor of smoking, while awareness of other brands, probably known from other sources, was a less likely predictor. Children appear to take in the messages of cigarette advertising and interpret them as generic to smoking rather than brand specific."

University of Manchester researchers in the mid-1990s.³⁰

The danger was that researchers were vulnerable both to any admission of balance or doubt – and to deliberate overstating of the case. Either would be leapt upon by the other side, where their main purpose was the spreading of doubt (see page 15). This dilemma was also to become familiar to climate change researchers in the 1990s and 2000s.

Of course, even without this confirmation, it would have been hard to prove beyond doubt – especially when the tobacco industry put so much energy into spreading this – the extent to which sports sponsorship by cigarette companies effectively started young people smoking. Following High's pamphlet in 1998, the Financial Times claimed that an advertising ban would actually increase smoking.³¹

The 1990s saw the endless repetition of these arguments, as the focus of the campaign on both sides began to shift to the courts, and especially those of Europe.

³⁰ Quoted in Hansard (2001) Nov 2.

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200102/ldhansrd/vo011102/text/11102-05.htm>

³¹ Roger Bate (1998), 'A myth stubbed out', *Financial Times*, Apr 20.

The emergence of ASH

ASH or Action for Smoking and Health was set up in 1971, under the wings of the Royal College of Physicians, to make non-smoking the norm in society and to inform and educate the public about the death and disease caused by smoking. Its first president was Lord Rosenheim, the Royal College president in 1962. It was chaired by the Smoking and Health report co-author, Professor Charles Fletcher.

ASH was to be a critical factor in the campaign: it had the advantage of being able to say and do things that the royal colleges felt they could not, and yet it was able to coordinate across so many different interests and competing messages. This may have been a deciding factor in the campaign success.

Over a generation, ASH was to attract some of the most effective campaigners – just as the climate movement has been doing more recently. One of these was David Simpson, who joined ASH as director in 1979, having won a Nobel Prize for his previous employer Amnesty International.

The government's vast Department of Health and Social Security decided at that time that they were going to fund ASH's ongoing anti-smoking work with £130,000 a year. This was nearly ten times ASH's annual budget at the time, and it meant some years of financial security.

But by the 1990s, Kenneth Clarke MP, who was to be deputy chair of British American Tobacco from 1998, had risen to become Chancellor of the Exchequer. At this point, the Department of Health withdrew their annual grant that was keeping ASH afloat. ASH rapidly ran out of money and came close to collapse.

It was the British Heart Foundation which saved the situation by providing money to keep going. They have been ASH supporters ever since.

**“You get lung cancer. You get heart disease.
You get emphysema.”**

The response of the ASH ‘Butt of the Summer’ award in 1974, when it was given to Kensitas, with its slogan: ‘You get more out of life with Kensitas’. The manufacturers eventually withdrew the advert.³²

The threat of ‘safer’ cigarettes

In 1977, the Social Services Secretary David Ennals said that his advisory committee had given a limited go-ahead for the marketing of two tobacco substitutes, NSM and Cytrel. These products were incorporated into cigarettes which were still mostly made up of tobacco. They were marketed as ‘safer’ and both were eventually withdrawn after prolonged and vigorous protests from ASH and other groups on the grounds that the advertising was utterly misleading.

Tobacco chiefs made a second attempt to change the boundaries of the argument by coming up with a new product called Skoal Bandits. They looked like teabags and were designed to be chewed. The government stepped in to make sure they were not bought by children. The BMA said they were staggered they had been allowed in shops at all.

³² ASH (2020). <https://ash.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Key-Dates.pdf>

Early adopters: the first places to act on tobacco

1969

Radio Times ban tobacco ads

1970

Finnair designates first non-smoking seats

1971

Iceland bans outdoor tobacco ads

1971

London Transport increases the proportion of carriages in underground trains reserved for non-smokers from half to three quarters (they also banned smoking on single-deck buses)

1971

Rank Leisure was the first major UK cinema chain to provide smoke-free seating in most of its cinemas

1971

US congress bans broadcast tobacco ads

1973

British Overseas Airways Corporation (later to become British Airways) designates some non-smoking seats

1975

Norway passes comprehensive tobacco ad ban

1976

Australia bans broadcast tobacco ads

1978

Finland passes comprehensive tobacco ad ban

1979

Toronto Transit Commission bans tobacco ads

1983

Smoking and tobacco adverts banned in public in Sudan

1988

British Airways bans smoking on domestic flights

1988

Canadian parliament passes an advertising and sponsorship ban (overturned by the Supreme Court in 1995)

1992

Australia bans all tobacco ads

1992

Midland Bank (soon to be HSBC) bans smoking on their premises

1993

The NHS does the same

The Thatcher government and the tobacco ban

At the end of 1980, the new Thatcher government finally announced its new voluntary agreement with the tobacco industry. Four new health warnings were introduced and more space was allocated to them on posters. The industry agreed to cut its spending on poster advertising by 30 per cent, and also promised to try not to put posters within view of schools, although the clause was vaguely worded. ASH, the BMA and a number of MPs described the agreement as weak and ineffective.

In 1982, they announced two new voluntary agreements on advertising and sponsorship. The sponsorship agreement permitted the industry to raise the prize money offered in sporting events to £6 million. All advertisements for these events would have to carry a health warning. The industry announced its intention to spend £3 million a year on health promotion activities. The agreements were denounced as ineffective by ASH and the BMA.

Margaret Thatcher had, in fact, gone to some trouble to avoid putting a tobacco campaigner in charge of health. In 1982, Sir George Young, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, was moved to the Department of the Environment after it became clear that he would actively campaign for a ban on tobacco advertising and other legislation to control tobacco use. Patrick Jenkin, the Health Secretary at the time, was also moved away from the Department of Health.

4. Involving the doctors



The involvement of the doctors' trade union, the British Medical Association (BMA), in the anti-tobacco campaign was a crucial milestone. ASH director David Simpson said it was "like the Americans intervening in the Second World War".³³

The partnership began in October 1984 when, behind a big slide of children picking up cigarettes in shop windows, BMA Secretary John Havard launched the campaign at a press conference at the BMA headquarters. BMA professional division head John Dawson also spoke to explain the key reason they were acting: that the voluntary agreements between the government and big tobacco were "a sick joke".

This was a global phenomenon: at the same time, the lobby group Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada was being formed, following controversy over tobacco sponsorship of the Canadian Winter Olympics team.

As the BMA officials explained, the idea was that they were not campaigning against smokers, but against the industry that held them captive. It was an important distinction, but it was more difficult in practice. "What should have been a simple subject, because we were right, was in fact the most complex subject I have ever encountered," said Pamela Taylor, the BMA's lobbyist and one of those responsible for making car seat-belts compulsory.³⁴

The way to maintain the distinction, she felt, was to stay positive. The October 1984 edition of BMA News Review explained what they were doing with a big picture of the sky, and the headline, 'Breathe!'

What was even more powerful was that the BMA was and remains today a membership organisation. It meant that local doctors were then encouraged to take up the issue with

³³ BMA (1986), *Smoking out the Barons: The campaign against the tobacco industry. A Report of the British Medical Association, Public Affairs Division, Chichester, Wiley*, 192.

³⁴ BMA (1986).

local newspapers. Campaigners collected thousands of blank black edged postcards, to be sent by doctors to MPs to tell them every time a constituent died of smoking related diseases. If they only managed a few of the 270 deaths a day caused by tobacco, they would certainly have an impact.

Labour's Laurie Pavitt and Conservative MP Roger Sims had linked up to put down a motion of support in Parliament in 1976. Sims was MP for Chislehurst and was a convert to the cause. He and Pavitt separately tried, via private members bills, to end the scourge of tobacco advertising.

The first lobby of health ministers was less effective because the new Health Secretary was Kenneth Clarke, who was not just a smoker himself, but had a John Player factory in his Rushcliffe constituency.

In Canada, the first advertising ban went through Parliament in 1988, in the teeth of opposition from the cabinet – and despite a well-funded campaign by the PR conglomerate Burson-Marsteller. They created the Coalition 51 group of organisations worried about the impact on jobs.

In the event, although the tobacco ad ban was passed, it was overturned by a single vote in the Supreme Court in 1995. The Tobacco Act 1997 in Canada was finally upheld by judges ten years later.

Divestment: The UK Social Audit report

In 1984, the Health Education Council commissioned research into which anti-smoking organisations owned tobacco shares. As they were a government organisation, they asked the BMA if they could publish the report. Since it named about 250 cancer research and other health groups with tobacco shares, this was potentially a hot potato.

David Gilbert, the report's author, was already battling with the BMA who regarded previous work by him as a threat to doctors' choice over what drugs they could prescribe. Worse, the BMA turned out to own shares in Grand Metropolitan, a UK-based conglomerate that included some tobacco interests.

Still, BMA leaders managed to keep their heads and they agreed a wording that so that "those who may have unwittingly invested in the tobacco industry can be so informed" – as a basis for explaining their involvement in the report. They also sold their Grand Metropolitan shares.

“I think it is absolutely disgraceful that we should be profiting from a practice which is known to cause several thousands of deaths a year.”

Dr Olive Froggatt told Gloucestershire councillors in Cheltenham, persuading them to ban cigarette adverts on council-owned property, 1985.³⁵

Now known as the Red Book, the report was launched on a Sunday, so that Gilbert could go on holiday the following day. The response was furious, including from potential allies like the Royal College of Surgeons for putting them in the firing line for their investments. “It’s not a perfect world,” said their spokesperson.

Acting and the arts

Actors were also getting involved in the campaign. In 1984, ‘Til Death Do Us Part star Warren Mitchell withdrew from a production at the Bristol Old Vic in protest against tobacco sponsorship. He was followed by Derek Jacobi, Paul Eddington, Miriam Margolyes and Spike Milligan.

Sir Roy Shaw, a former chairman of the Arts Council, backed them in the ensuing argument. “The idea that the arts will take money from just anyone is nonsense. It would not take money from the IRA or heroin pushers, but tobacco kills more than the two put together.”³⁶

Hours of TV tobacco sponsorship coverage in 1983:

327

³⁵ BMA (1986).

³⁶ ASH (2020), <https://ash.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Key-Dates.pdf>

BUGA-UP

Bill Snow was one of Australia's early clean air campaigners. When a fellow anti-smoking campaigner, Brian McBride, sued a bus driver for assaulting him with tobacco smoke on a non-smoking bus, Bill and Gayle Russell came forward in his support. This action led to the formation of the Non-Smokers Rights Movement in 1978, later to become the Non Smokers Movement of Australia.

Frustrated at the lack of official action on tobacco, Snow began to write graffiti on tobacco billboards in 1977, which constituted more than half of outdoor advertising at that time. In 1978, the Australian campaigner Simon Chapman, and others involved in public health who concerned about tobacco advertising, formed a group called MOP UP (Movement Opposed to the Promotion of Unhealthy Products) but after their inaugural meeting Bill, Geoff Coleman and Ric Bolzan decided that direct action would be more effective using satire on billboards, linked by the simple words BUGA UP (Billboard Utilising Graffitists Against Unhealthy Promotions).³⁷

The idea was that anyone could understand the concept, pick up a spray can and contribute to the war against tobacco promotion and disease. A blank billboard was found, the acronym was painted and publicised with a catalogue illustrated with photographed billboards and leaflets. The most powerful messages were sprayed by ordinary members of the public across many billboards.

An advert for Benson & Hedges 'pure gold', after treatment from BUGA-UP, read 'Their gold – your lungs!'

Adbusters

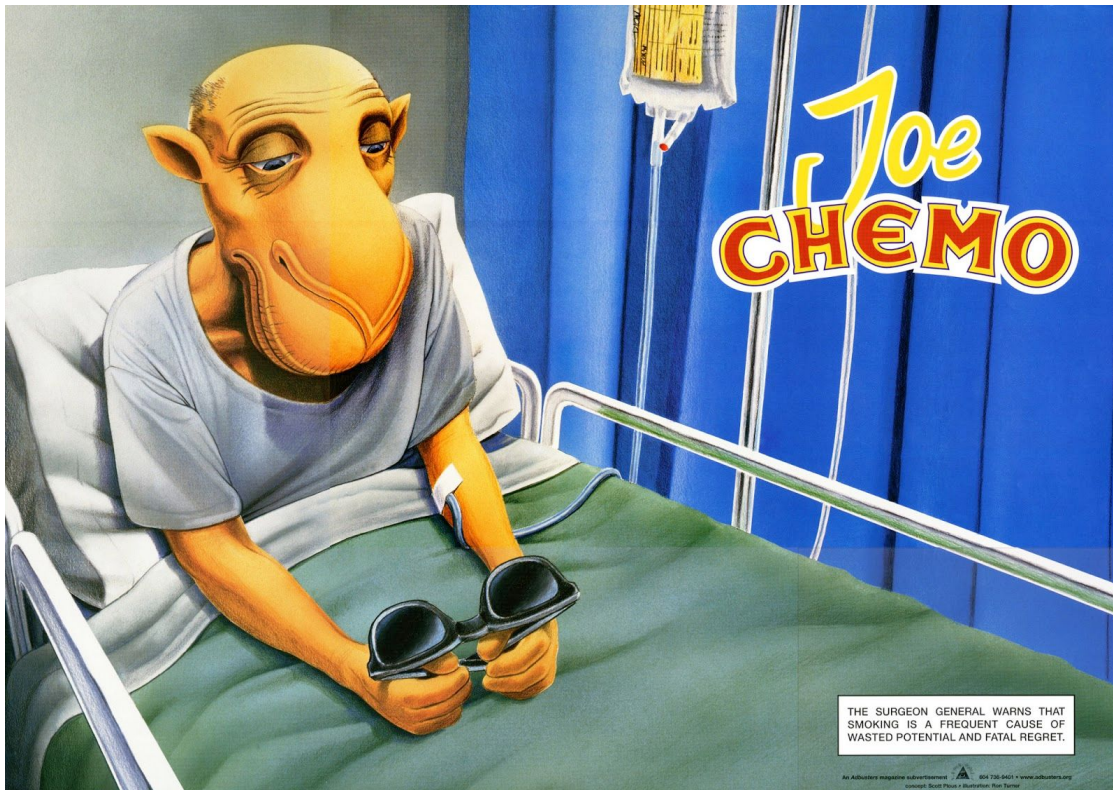
Adbusters was founded in 1989 by Kalle Lasn and Bill Schmalz, a duo of award-winning documentary filmmakers living in Vancouver, Canada. Since the early 1980s, Lasn had been making films that explored the spiritual and cultural lessons the West could learn from the Japanese experience with capitalism.

In 1988, the British Columbia Council of Forest Industries, the "voice" of the logging industry, was facing tremendous public pressure from a growing environmentalist movement. The

³⁷ <https://www.bugaup.org/gallery.htm>

logging industry fought back with a TV ad campaign called "Forests Forever". It was an early example of greenwashing: shots of happy children, workers and animals with a kindly, trustworthy sounding narrator who assured the public that the logging industry was protecting the forest.

Figure 2: Adbusters' Joe Chemo subvertising from 1996. Credit: adbusters.org



Lasn and Schmalz, outraged by the use of the public airwaves to deliver what they felt was deceptive anti-environmentalist propaganda, responded by producing the "Talking Rainforest" anti-ad in which an old-growth tree explains to a sapling that "a tree farm is not a forest." But they were not allowed to buy airtime on the same stations that had aired the forest-industry ad.

Adbusters' treatment of the Joe Camel adverts³⁸ – as 'Joe Chemo' – is a brilliant example of 'subvertising' – a portmanteau meaning to subvert advertising. Subvertising is popular today around the world for empowering people to respond to corporate advertising messages in public space.

³⁹

³⁸ <https://www.adbusters.org/>

³⁹ <https://subvertisers-international.net/>

5. Lawyers and legislation



In 1988, an American court made history by awarding damages against a tobacco firm to the family of Rose Cipollone, a smoker for 40 years, who died of lung cancer in 1984. Her husband, and then her family, brought the case against the tobacco industry. The tobacco company launched an appeal against the award and the case carried on for another four years.

The Cipollone product liability case in the USA was finally settled in 1992, eight years after Rose's death. The decision on the case also countered the tobacco industry's claim that such lawsuits could be barred by US federal law.

Then in April 1992, the European Commission announced that it would introduce legislation throughout Europe restricting tobacco advertising and promotion – first to ban advertising aimed at under-18s, and then – later – to ban all advertising and sports sponsorship.

By December 1992, tobacco lobbyists had persuaded the legal service of the European Council of Ministers that this would be illegal. Five years later, a new directive had been published and was being circulated among the health ministries of the member states. European directive 98/43/EC was debated by the European Parliament in July 1998; it was designed to ban smoking advertising by 2006.

The legal question was whether public health was one of the subjects where the European Union was allowed to legislate under the Maastricht Treaty. In the end it was Austria that sued the Commission on the grounds that, if they were to implement it, they would be vulnerable in the European Court of Human Rights.

The Blair government

By 1997, there was a new Labour government in the UK under Tony Blair. To the delight of the tobacco campaigners, the new government announced its commitment to ban tobacco advertising and tackle smoking among the young. Tessa

Jowell was appointed as minister with responsibility for public health – the first time that public health has been recognised at ministerial level. The Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, announced that the government would also be banning tobacco sponsorship of sport, but that sporting bodies would be given time to find alternative sponsors.

It was an exciting moment, but – as climate campaigners know very well – often it is in these final moments of success when things can go terribly wrong. And something increasingly seemed amiss. For one thing, where was Keith Barron in the government's plans? The former shadow minister for public health in opposition had been overlooked for a ministerial post – something he believes was down to his campaigning for a ban on cigarette advertising.

What was going on became clear some months into the new government. It emerged that Formula One chief Bernie Ecclestone had donated £1m to Labour's general election campaign; and it was announced in November that same year that the sport would be exempt from a planned tobacco sponsorship ban. The resulting scandal saw the donated money returned to Ecclestone.

The tobacco companies were also mounting a legal challenge in the high court, on the grounds that the new UK law was based on European legislation then under consideration by the European Court of Justice.

The problem was that the occupants of Downing Street had become nervous of the effects of their sports sponsorship ban. They were aware of just how much store that Formula One was putting on the advertising of tobacco. At the end of 1997, BAT confirmed that it had bought the Tyrell motor racing team – former sponsors: Elf – which would be known as British American Racing. BAT was planning to spend up to £300 million over five years on the new team.

But BAT was also in trouble on the other side of the Atlantic. The month after their Formula One announcement, tobacco executives admitted at a US Congressional hearing that nicotine was addictive and that smoking was harmful. The statements were in contrast to their testimony before the same committee in 1994, only four years earlier. Internal tobacco industry documents released to another American court showed that BAT had known for at least twenty years that nicotine was addictive. It has since emerged that the same pattern of systematic corporate denial and obfuscation has also been employed by major fossil fuel

companies such as Exxon Mobil and Shell to undermine the scientific consensus that use of their products is the principal cause of global warming – something their own scientists had confirmed, but kept secret, for decades.⁴⁰

Partly as a result of all this controversy, Formula One's ruling body, the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) announced in March 1998 that it would consider bringing forward the end to all tobacco sponsorship if presented with evidence that tobacco sponsorship encourages children to take up smoking.

This remained the elusive problem for the tobacco campaigners. All the way through the battle, they needed – but never quite found – the completely unanswerable evidence of cause and effect. They could still say, of course, that children were getting hold of cigarettes and beginning a lifetime of tobacco addiction that would eventually kill them.

By the end of the century, the government seemed entirely to have lost their nerve, and had agreed to give the tobacco industry at least three more years to pause their shift out of sponsorship and promotions.

By then, the Blair government's first term only had a year to run and no prime minister was going to introduce a ban which might be so controversial so near a general election – except in such a way that they could be seen to worry about it but actually to change nothing. And so it was that the legislation was debated and passed to the House of Lords, carefully timed to fall just as Parliament was dissolved for the 2001 general election.

In the end, the 2001 election came and went without any sign that tobacco advertising would ever face a ban.

The Clement-Jones Bill

Salvation for the campaigners came in the shape of Celia Thomas, now Baroness Thomas of Winchester, but then an effective political mind in charge of the Liberal Democrat's whips' office in the Lords. After the general election was over, she took Lord Clement-Jones aside and suggested that he introduce the same legislation himself. It would embarrass the Labour government and it might even get passed.

⁴⁰<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2018/sep/19/shell-and-exxons-secret-1980s-climate-change-warnings>

“I am the frail instrument by which we hope to reintroduce the Bill and ensure that the government stick to their electoral promises. Clearly, there is strong approval for this action....”

Lord Clement-Jones, House of Lords, 2001.⁴¹

Tim Clement-Jones was a long-standing Liberal and was then the party's health spokesperson in the Lords. By some coincidence, as well as being a political advisor and lobbyist as his day job, he was also a consultant for the Advertising Association. Once it became clear that he had got onto the ballot for private members bills in a high enough position to have a bill debated in the commons, and that he was preparing to press ahead with passing legislation to ban tobacco advertising, the Advertising Association quickly found that they no longer required his services.

He rose to speak to his Bill in the House of Lords immediately before midday on a wintry Thursday evening, and again to sum up when it was dark nearly four hours later. This is what he said about his critics:

“As a long time civil libertarian, I have examined my conscience over the Bill. If I were not so mild-mannered I might resent the raising of this issue. No advertiser has unfettered freedom of speech. The existence of the British codes of advertising and sales promotion, administered by the [Advertising Standards Authority], recognise that. Furthermore, it is clear that Article 10 of the convention permits restrictions and limitations on the right of freedom of expression which pursue a legitimate aim and are proportionate. The protection of health is one such aim.”⁴²

⁴¹ Hansard (2001), Nov 2.

<https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/2001/nov/02/tobacco-advertising-and-promotion-bill-hl>

⁴² Hansard (2001), Nov 2.

<https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/2001/nov/02/tobacco-advertising-and-promotion-bill-hl>

The bill passed the Lords and the government then promised to adopt the legislation in the Commons. The new law came into effect in February 2003.

In 2003, just prior to the UK tobacco ad ban being introduced:

People who saw tobacco billboards every day in the UK:

1.6m

Number of British children who started smoking each day:

450.⁴³

“There were over 125,000 premature deaths from smoking in the country at the time. If that was happening because we were at war or we had the wrong rules on the roads, the country would be up in arms. There was this idea that starting smoking was an adult decision, but most people start when they are very young so it isn’t an adult decision.”

Sir Kevin Barron then MP for Rother Valley, on his private members bill in 1993 to ban tobacco advertising.⁴⁴

⁴³ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/2753447.stm>

⁴⁴ *Yorkshire Post* (2019), Nov 22.

<https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/politics/how-bruising-miners-strike-changed-kevin-barron-scargillite-labour-moderniser-1747020>

6. Not the end of the story



The advertising and sponsorship ban in the UK came into effect at midnight on February 13 2003. Gangs of workmen were on hand in the big cities to tear down the billboards.

Most Western and European countries have followed suit since then, though not quite everywhere (not Germany for example). In fact, from a global perspective, the battle remains to be won. The big tobacco companies are as profitable as ever – and have managed to use loopholes in existing legal frameworks around the world. By the time the UK sponsorship ban was in place, the Benson & Hedges bistro had already opened in Kuala Lumpur.

This final section will look back and explain why it took so long to achieve a ban that was so obviously in people's interests. And to draw out the lessons for the next stage – how we stop advertising products or activities that effectively undermine humanity's response to climate change.

One way of looking at it is that the campaign was so slow because of a lack of conclusive evidence that advertising actually increased smoking, rather than just – as the tobacco companies claimed – increasing brand share. For the purposes of getting a ban agreed, Health Secretary Hazel Blears used to claim that 3,000 lives a year would be saved – but the figure was disputed and it only had authority because it came from the government.

How the oil and car industries use tobacco's play book

Like the tobacco industry, the oil companies on which the car industry currently depends also knew more about the damage their products caused than they publicly admitted.

This is revealed in a report, "Review of Environmental Protection Activities for 1978-1979," produced by Imperial Oil, Exxon's Canadian subsidiary in 1980, more than a decade before the signing of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.⁴⁵ This spelt out the level of understanding and awareness in the industry:

"It is assumed that the major contributors of CO₂ are the burning of fossil fuels... There is no doubt that increases in fossil fuel usage and decreases of forest cover are aggravating the potential problem of increased CO₂ in the atmosphere."

One reason for subsequent inaction might have been the added observation that:

"Technology exists to remove CO₂ from stack gases but removal of only 50% of the CO₂ would double the cost of power generation."

Like the tobacco industry, oil companies acted to confuse the science, lobbied to prevent regulation and sometimes denied outright that there was a problem. Take this example from Imperial Oil chairman and CEO Robert Peterson who wrote in "A Cleaner Canada" in 1998 that, "Carbon dioxide is not a pollutant but an essential ingredient of life on this planet."

Of course, greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants from oil don't just magically enter the atmosphere, they do so when the oil and its derivatives like diesel, kerosene, petrol and gasoline are burned as fuel – and transport is one of the biggest sources of that pollution.

⁴⁵ Brendan DeMelle and Kevin Grandia, (2016) "There is no doubt": Exxon Knew CO₂ Pollution Was A Global Threat By Late 1970s
<https://www.desmogblog.com/2016/04/26/there-no-doubt-exxon-knew-co2-pollution-was-global-threat-late-1970s>

Transport is now the UK's largest sectoral source of carbon emissions, accounting for a full third of our total carbon dioxide output.⁴⁶ But sometimes it's hard to tell because the car industry, like the tobacco and oil industries, have concealed the impacts of their products – sometimes by providing misleading figures for the fuel efficiency of their vehicles – and sometimes by outright cheating.

In 2017 it was reported that the actual fuel efficiency of an average new car when driven on the road was 42% worse than its advertised efficiency, burning far more fuel.⁴⁷

One of the world's leading car makers – VW – was first accused, and then admitted to, illegally fitting devices to a huge number of its vehicles designed to 'cheat' emissions tests. An astonishing 11 million cars were fitted with these 'cheat' devices.⁴⁸

That may be the case, but equally, what was arguably the biggest step forward, the television advertising ban, was made within three years of the 1962 Smoking and Health report which started the whole campaign – so it may be that the main lesson is a political one. The TV advertising ban went through, flawed though it was, within the first few months of a reforming government, before the exhaustion that tends to set in for new governments of all kinds. Even in 1997, an outright ban on tobacco advertising and sponsorship might have been possible – but having failed to get the ban through during Tony Blair's first term – it may well not have been passed at all if it had not been for the intervention by Lord Clement-Jones and the Liberal Democrat peers.

The lesson is that there are moments – and clearly rather few of them – when governments can act, as they see it, ahead of the public mood. Otherwise they feel powerless. We should

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875485/2019_UK_greenhouse_gas_emissions_provisional_figures_statistical_release.pdf

⁴⁷

<https://www.transportenvironment.org/news/no-improvement-average-efficiency-new-cars-four-years>

⁴⁸ [How VW tried to cover up the emissions scandal](#); [The scandal over VW cheating](#)

remember, in those circumstances, the advice of Ebenezer Howard, the creator of garden cities, that – if you simply wait for governments to act – you will be as “old as Methuselah”. There has to be a parallel path.

One parallel between tobacco and climate-related ‘badvertising’ initiatives is that, in both cases, people can feel like the victim of circumstances – they feel unsafe in a smaller car, or they are subject to peer or family pressure to jet around the world or to smoke. They don’t feel it is entirely their fault or their choice, which needs to be respected. An understanding of socio-economic class factors underpinning both purchase decisions and health outcomes is crucial. It is also the reason why removing the pressures of commercial advertising to buy products that harm the user and those around them is a common sense policy instrument.

Other lessons include:

1. **The clarity of message and messenger matters.** For most of the 40-year campaign, messaging came either from radicalised doctors or – in the UK at least – from ASH, the highly effective heart of the anti-smoking campaign. A parallel for the climate emergency might be great engagement of scientists who have understood the urgency of the crisis in public debates about the scale of necessary change.
2. **Get on top of the facts but don’t assume that they alone will win the argument.** The failure to pin down the other side’s research lengthened the campaign. But it may have been the dirty tricks of the tobacco lobby that ultimately made them unsupportable politically. Anti-smoking campaigners also had to win public arguments around what would happen if the ban was passed. There will always be side-effects to consider, such as what might happen if the option to advertise high carbon lifestyles is curtailed.
3. **Building useful alliances with respected professionals.** There is no doubt that the involvement of grassroots doctors as campaigners, who could not simply be dismissed as against the system, was important. Following in their footsteps means allying with a similarly respected professional group. Major social issues from air pollution to climate change already wash up at the doors of health and medical professionals. They are well placed to speak out on these impacts.

4. **Yet also respecting other people who want to take part.** Confronting people with uncomfortable truths and seeking consensual approaches are almost always both parts of successful campaigns. But they can lead to tensions. It's important to accept that multiple strategies with different tactics are often needed. The anti-smoking campaign managed to accommodate not just peers of the realm, but also the BUGA-UP creative direct action campaigners in Australia and their amazingly imaginative spray-cans.
5. **Use humour.** Nor was it just what the BUGA-UP campaigners achieved (see page 29), or the Adbusters network in Canada (see page 30). It was the sheer power of the 'Butt of the Month' awards announced by ASH (see page 22). These were able to force tobacco companies to withdraw new advertising campaigns, or even occasionally new products, because they had been made to look ridiculous. Some car adverts are begging to be made to look stupid.
6. **Campaigning against the sin and not the sinner – and staying positive.** The BMA's campaign always emphasised that individual smokers were victims and not their target. Their first newspaper had a huge picture of the sky and the headline 'BREATHE!' Some words lift your spirits and some seem to close you down. Campaigners need the right language to help them achieve this.
7. **Understand when politicians can act – and how they might.** We need to remember that, most of the time, politicians generally only move after or in tandem with the public mood; you have to be able to help them take the right decisions.
8. **Give local politicians something to do. Both Bristol and Liverpool had their own smoke-free charters, and eventually so did eight other cities.** In Canada, the first public authority to ban adverts was the Toronto Transit Authority. Councillors want to improve their cities and they are powerful potential allies.
9. **Think ahead.** This seems to be one of the lessons that some of the most effective anti-smoking campaigners learned – to frame the situation positively, ready for the next appalling scandal, storm or forest fire.
10. **Keep it simple.** The confusion over evidence emphasises this point: it doesn't matter how complex aspects of the argument become, make sure the basic message is simple and that it speaks to people's best instincts.

Appendix



Key milestones

- [First UK study](#) published in 1954 highlighting links between smoking and cancer
- 1962 and 1963, publications of the [US Surgeon General Report of the Public Health](#) and [UK Royal College of Physicians](#) contribute to Governments taking impacts of smoking seriously. Both report show link between smoking and lung cancer, as well as heart attack, stroke and the severe lung disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease ([50 years of life saving tobacco control - Cancer Research UK, 2014](#))
- 1965: banning of TV advertising of cigarettes in the UK ([50 years of life saving tobacco control - Cancer Research UK, 2014](#))
- 1998: WHO establishes the [Tobacco Free Initiative \(TFI\)](#) to focus international attention, resources and action on the global tobacco epidemic.
- 1990's: discussions to set up an international legal approach to tobacco control within WHO to regulate the industry ([History of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control - WHO 2009](#))
- Formal negotiations endorsed at the Annual World Health Assembly in 1999 ([History of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control - WHO 2009](#))
- 2002: The UK introduces a wider ban on advertising, promotion and sponsorship following the [Tobacco Advertising and Promotion Act](#)
- 2003: Adoption of the WHO FCTC treaty at the World Health Assembly ([WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control - 2020](#))
- 27 February 2005: WHO FCTC enters into force in accordance with Article 36 of the Convention, 90 days after the 40th State (among which the UK) had acceded

to, ratified, accepted, or approved it ([Parties to the WHO framework convention on tobacco control - WHO, 2020](#))

- 2008: Guidelines on implementing a comprehensive advertising ban were adopted at the Third Conference of the Parties. [Article 13](#) of the [Framework Convention on Tobacco Control](#) requires nations that have ratified the treaty to introduce comprehensive bans on tobacco advertising and promotion within five years ([Advertising Promotion and Sponsorship, ASH 2019](#)).
- In 2016, 15% of world population covered by WHO best practice policy of banning tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship. 47% of world population (in 78 countries) covered by tobacco health warning that met best practice ([Tobacco Atlas, 2018](#)).
- Between 2007-2014 focus among WHO FCTC parties upon Implementation of key tobacco control demand-reduction measures eg. taxation, smoke-free policies, packaging, labelling provisions, marketing bans and cessation programmes ([Tobacco Atlas, 2018](#)).
- Integration of WHO FCTC in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ([Tobacco Atlas, 2018](#)).
- As of 2020, there are 168 signatories and 181 parties - including the European Community - to the WHO FCTC ([Parties to the WHO framework convention on tobacco control - WHO, 2020](#))