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End the Use of Tobacco

The best thing to do with cigars is give them to your enemy.

— Fidel Castro

In Shangri-La it is illegal to smoke in public or sell tobacco. The tiny Himalayan country of Bhutan, also known as the Last Shangri-La, made headlines in December 2004 when it became the first nation to force its citizens to butt out. Any Bhutan citizen caught smoking in public will be fined.

Tobacco is the world's most famous and preventable cause of cancer. This has put it in the forefront of cancer prevention programs and made it a global concern.

More than 190 countries signed the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, an international agreement coordinated by the World Health Organization that came into force in February 2005. The countries that have ratified it have agreed to ban advertising of tobacco products, post clear and visible health warnings on cigarette packages, protect people from exposure

to tobacco smoke in workplaces and indoor public places, and curb cigarette smuggling.

Worldwide the pressure to phase out tobacco has been steadily growing. Organizations such as the American Society of Clinical Oncology have called for its total elimination, but most countries are slow to go as far as Bhutan or France, Scotland and Ireland, which have all now banned public smoking. Still, they are moving at varying paces towards benchmarks that once were unimaginable. According to the US Centers for Disease Control, the most effective way for governments to control tobacco is through the synergistic effect of different programs.

Increase Tobacco Taxes

Higher taxes are the key to cutting cigarette consumption, especially for the young, the poor and the less educated.¹ The British medical journal,

The Lancet, has recommended that governments increase cigarette prices by 50% every year to stem the global rise in lung cancer. In Canada cigarette consumption fell by 50% when prices were increased significantly starting in the late 1980s. At 20%, Canada now has one of the lowest smoking rates in the world.²

California has also used taxes effectively. In 1988 California voters approved a 25-cent tax on every package of cigarettes, with 5 cents earmarked for prevention programs, and by 2004, California's adult smoking rate had dropped to a historic low of 15%.³ At the same time, lung and bronchial cancer rates for men and women



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in California declined significantly compared to other US states.

Advertise Against Tobacco

Studies show that well-funded mass-media campaigns against tobacco, along with control programs, bring down smoking rates, but it is a David and Goliath battle between the government and the tobacco industry.

In the US, tobacco companies spend more than \$30 million on advertising every day, 23 times as much as state governments spend to prevent smoking. A survey by the US Centers for Disease Control found that the increase in tobacco marketing, discounted cigarette prices and scaled-back prevention programs had stalled the reduction in youth smoking between 2002 and 2004.⁴

This is why it is essential for governments to counter the industry's messages. Many countries run media campaigns encouraging smokers to quit and warning people about second-hand smoke. Sweden, Lithuania and Thailand have instituted outright bans on tobacco advertising and sponsorships. Canada and Brazil require explicit health warnings on cigarette packages. In Canada half of every package carries a graphic illustration of the damage, with 16 different messages such as Cigarettes Leave You Breathless, or Children See, Children Do. For those who disregard the warnings, the Canadian and Thai governments have another caution, Tobacco Use Can Make You Impotent.

In addition to issuing warnings, governments can use Tobacco Industry Denormalization campaigns that expose the

- Americans for Non-Smokers Rights: www.no-smoke.org
- Non-Smokers' Rights Association: www.nusra-adnf.ca
- Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco: www.ocat.org
- Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada: www.smoke-free.ca
- Tobacco Free Kids: www.tobaccofreekids.org
- WHO Tobacco Free Initiative: www.who.int/tobacco/en

industry's manipulative marketing and unethical behavior. Both California and Massachusetts have run successful denormalization campaigns, countering the industry's attempts to make smoking acceptable.

Ban Smoking in Workplaces and Public Places

Smoke-free laws not only protect people from the deadly effects of second-hand smoke — they also lead many people to quit. The World Bank found that total bans on smoking in the workplace and public places led to an 8% decline in smoking.

Norway was one of the first countries to ban smoking in restaurants and bars. Many governments are going further, making it illegal to smoke in workplaces and many public places. In 2004 Ireland made it illegal to smoke in any enclosed workplace, including pubs and restaurants. Italy has banned smoking in all indoor spaces unless there is a separate ventilated smoking area.

Help Farmers Exit Tobacco Farming

As governments phase out tobacco, they must help the farmers who will lose their livelihoods. Ontario has set up a \$50 million tobacco transition fund for farmers, while the US has legislated a tobacco quota buyout. Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, however, say that tobacco companies, not governments, should pay farmers to quit tobacco farming.