

opinion/editorial

Passive smoker criticizes fellow workers' habits

BOSTON—I am, according to the New England Journal of Medicine, a passive smoker. I did not mean to be one. My parents did not raise me to be one. But there you are. The New England Journal of Medicine says I am one, and it ought to know.

What I meant to be was a plain old non-smoker. It fits my self-image better. It fits my habits better.

ellen goodman

I am, you see, one of the lucky people who choked on the first green-tipped, personally labelled, sweet sixteen cigarette that ever touched my lips in 1957. I count this as a piece of biological luck, not unlike my inability to get drunk.

Years ago, I discovered that I fell asleep before I ever found the right lampshade for my head. So, I end up dozing instead of drunk, the way I end up coughing instead of cancerous.

It is not my virtue but my body chemistry which keeps me from falling down the path of assorted evils. If my jaw would only lock at the sight of assorted chocolates, I would be perfect.

But this morning I am in no position to gloat.

Two men from the University of California, San Diego, studied men and women at work. Some of the 2,000 worked in smoky places and some in smoke-free places. Now, the researchers have published the first study that proves what we knew all along, deep down in our lungs: Non-smokers are getting zonked by the smokers at work.

Professor James White and Dr. Herman Froeb put it more carefully in their paper. The way they figured it, non-smokers have about the same amount of small airways impairment as people who smoke up to about 11 cigarettes a day. Sounding like the Surgeon General's warning, they wrote that "chronic exposure to tobacco smoke in the work environment is deleterious to the non-smoker."

Informally, Professor White said simply, "We know that if a person works around another smoker for a period of time, he will experience lung damage. Now whether it will impair him or cause emphysema, we don't know. But who wants it?"

Not I, said the little red hen. But, at this very moment, I am sitting here at my desk passively smoking.

The man behind me, who is otherwise a charming neighbor, smokes cigars. They are not really offensive, he has explained to me patiently and in some detail, because they are GOOD cigars. It's the cheap cigars that smell, he says, pointing one stinking stogie at another. I fail to make this class distinction.

Three yards away, the environmental reporter sits attached to his pipe. The smoke that surrounds it would make the EPA inspector condemn a plant. "It is," he admits, puffing thoughtfully, "a contradiction."

All around me are cigarettes whose smoke is mysteriously attracted to my magnetic personality. I am convinced that whenever I change desks in this city room, the air currents in my office shift and I am once again drifting in the Smoke Stream.

My situation isn't the worst by far. I have a friend who goes home every night and washes that Marlboro man right out of her hair. I have another who actually goes into the garage for a breath of fresh air.

I sympathize with smokers, although I no longer buy them ashtrays. (I have a friend who uses my daughter's dollhouse bathtub for his butts, but I promised not to tell a soul.) I imagine that stopping smoking is like stopping eating.

So, I don't want to ban smoke just because I don't want to work with banned smokers. But I don't want to inhale the stuff, either.

What I would like is to find the national scene more in line with the Minnesota Clean Air Act. What I would like is to extend the airline policy to the ground, wherever possible, and divide the work place into zones.

As the New England Journal of Medicine editorialized: "...the feelings and psychological reactions of smokers are as vehement as those of non-smokers. But now, for the first time, we have a quantitative measurement of a physical change—a fact that may tip the scales in favor of non-smokers."

Well, it's tipped my scale. This morning, at least, one more passive smoker is feeling aggressive.

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Iranian immigration tide should be halted

As the hostage charade continues in Iran, ideas such as those proposed by Sen. S. I. Hayakawa, R-Calif., almost start sounding good.

He proposes that the World War II policy of interning all Japanese-Americans in camps be applied to the 55,000 or more Iranian nationals in this country.

While that idea is a little far-fetched, it seems that the 11,000 Iranians, reported in U.S. News and World Report, that have entered this country since American hostages were taken is a slap in the face.

President Carter's crackdown on Iranians in the United States is a real "barn burner" when Iranians continue to freely enter the country and 5,500 Iranians resisting deportation remain fighting court orders which could continue for years. Many of the cases have been discontinued from lack of money for the hearings.

Immigration agents have located only 104 of the 226 Iranian diplomats who were ordered to leave the country by the State Department. So we discover that

our actions at home aren't any stronger than the messages we send to Tehran.

Carter Administration officials insist there is nothing inconsistent between Carter's crackdown and continued entry of Iranians into the country. But it appears our president's flip-flopping leadership style shines through again.

Frustration has reached such proportions that a recent Wall Street Journal editorial suggested direct military action—dropping a force of paratroopers into the 27-acre U.S. Embassy as a rescue operation.

But as the Tehran militants continue to play musical hostages and humiliate our country, why shouldn't frustrated Americans start thinking about taking drastic measures?

It's been far too long for the 50 American hostages in Tehran and time to consider measures other than twiddling our thumbs and avoiding primary campaigns because of a "hostage crisis."

Harry Allen Strunk

letters to the editor

The letter written by Amy Mauh concerning the imposition of the death penalty provides us with two situations, one in which the death penalty should be employed, and the other in which such employment would constitute a "waste of another person who might become a useful, good member of our society." Thus, in her view, one can make the simple determination, based on personal feelings, as to when the death penalty is appropriate and when it is not. But such an argument, interesting as it is, lacks in substance and merit, for it negates the legal and moral issues involved.

On the legal side, it has been argued by members of the Supreme Court, particularly in *Furman vs. Georgia*, that the selective and capricious use of the death penalty is "cruel and unusual" in its application. However, Miss Mauh suggests that it is acceptable to arbitrarily impose the death penalty, ostensibly because her intended victim "seems to be a very violent man" who would prefer to die, while the "angry 17-year-old" gains a stay of execution. Yet both have murdered; both have taken the life of another human being.

From the moral point of view, one can argue as St. Augustine did that those who have committed crimes against man must be spared in order that they can repent for their misdeeds. Punishment must not suffer in leniency or severity, but must be appropriate for the crime. Again, the suggestion is made that we throw this philosophy out the window and substitute for it a system of administering a justice that calls for an inconsistent application of a punishment that is irrevocable.

So where do we draw the line? Under which circumstances can we say that this man deserves to live no longer while that man does deserve to live, when both have committed the same crime? Miss Mauh seems quite sure that Katherine Brooks' murderer would be happier "to just be dead," and that death would give him peace. But such a notion rejects the possibility of rehabilitation, the circumstances of the crime, and the character of the defendant. Miss Mauh admits that she knows very little about the defendant, and yet she somehow has the insight to determine that he would prefer death to life. I fail to see how she can justify her position.

And finally, Miss Mauh writes that keeping Kathy Brooks' murderer alive would be cruel and unusual punishment for her friends and family. But what of the friends and family of James Richardson? Do they feel any less worse because his murderer was a youth of 17? Would Miss Mauh's argument be the same had not her two friends been involved? Choosing one of the murderers to die while the other lives might indeed comfort those parties involved, but this cannot be the issue of importance. What matters is whether such arbitrariness is acceptable to society. Miss Mauh's proposal is not.

Dana London
Political Science

Support appreciated

Students for Responsible Energy Decisions would like to thank all the people who have signed the petition in

support of LB954—the Energy Conservation and Independence Act, also known as the Omnibus Energy Bill. As of March 25, there were over 300 signatures on the petition.

SRED will meet with Governor Thone to present the petition to him and to discuss his stand on energy issues on Thursday, March 27 at 11:15 a.m. SRED urges any of you who are interested in the efficient use of energy resources and the development of decentralized alternative energy production to show up at the Governor's office at that time. Everybody may not be able to fit in the office, but your presence will be felt.

Evan Stover
SRED

Different reason

Andre Everett omitted at least one factor I know of that helps international students choose UNL. I'd like to share it with anyone interested because it offers a different perspective.

In the summer of 1978, I roomed with a Vietnamese student. I was curious as to why he chose UNL. He had a simple answer.

"Other schools not accept my English scores," he said. "Nebraska do."

Whether this is good or bad is up to you, but to me, Harvard of the Plains seems a long way off.

Tom Prentiss
Junior, Journalism