

OPINION PACKAGES

Our VIEW

Smoke clears

Tobacco firm making an ash of itself?

Tobacco is addictive. Sure, we all know that, but for the first time, the tobacco industry is admitting it.

At least one company is anyway. The Liggett Group's recent acknowledgement of tobacco's addictive and cancer-causing agents is a ground- and rank-breaking event.

In addition, Liggett plans to make public internal documents that confirmed tobacco companies' long-standing knowledge that tobacco causes health problems.

Liggett's decision to relinquish the documents is part of a 22-state settlement. The suit — a first — is an attempt by states to recover Medicare costs for treating smoking-related illnesses.

In addition, Liggett has promised a quarter of its net profits over the next 25 years to pay for treatment of smoking-related illnesses.

Whatever its motivation — altruistic or financial — we commend Liggett's decision. This compromise is one of the first socially responsible moves made by the tobacco industry ever and it's about time.

But triumph is not yet ours. Liggett's acknowledgment is only a small step.

Look at the situation carefully and you'll see that it resembles a child fessing up to a cookie heist while his or her hand is still in the cookie jar.

A truly responsible company would take its hand out of the jar, replace the lid and walk away.

The tobacco industry must be responsible and face up to the realities of its products.

First: As an industry, it must admit that nicotine is addictive and that it's a leading cause of lung disease.

Second: It should prepare to deal with the consequences of its business.

Third: The industry must stop targeting our nation's youth. Smoking is not healthy and it is not cool. The First Amendment's guarantee for free speech must always be supported — tobacco advertising included — but it would be to the mutual benefit of all if those in the industry would collectively agree to not advertise near schools or to produce ads that target the illegal market of minors.

Finally, smokers need to face up to the responsibilities of their choices. The legality of smoking doesn't make it without risks. Smokers need to accept that, whether the industry does or not.

Government regulation should be a last resort and can be avoided by individual and tobacco-industry responsibility.

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Mehsling's VIEW

AND THE GREAT AMERICAN "POET SKELETON" SAYS...TIME TO REST MY BONES.



DN LETTERS

And The Band Played On...

Have we as a society become so proud that we cannot humble ourselves in front of our peers in order to offer a simple apology and an admission of guilt?

In response to the article about Eric Marintzer, the former ASUN president, I understand that we all do make mistakes. I do not look down on Eric for using poor judgment.

However, I feel that Eric owes the university population he represents a formal apology. I feel that although Eric's image may have been tarnished, by admitting guilt and offering an apology Eric would not only save face, but also be able to use his position to show how students should properly conduct themselves when they make a mistake.

Face up to the consequences, offer an apology and give an assurance that a similar action will never occur again. My question for Eric and the rest of the university population would be: When we make a mistake do we fess up to our mistake and change in order to avoid making the same mistake, or do we try and hide the mistake, go on with our lives and take extra measures to assure that we are not "caught in the act" again?

Reed Nyffeler
junior
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compete with megastores like Best Buy, Barnes and Noble and Target. Not only do the mom and pop stores offer personable assistance, they are unique places that are indigenous to Lincoln, unlike the megastores which look the same in every city. Locally owned establishments also put money back into Lincoln, whereas megastores' profits go to store headquarters in some other city.

I hope other students realize the importance of these mom and pop stores, especially for the vitality of Lincoln's downtown and Haymarket area. I am just as guilty as the next person when it comes to shopping at megastores to save a buck.

But what we should all do is think twice. Do you really save that much money? Isn't it stressful to drive out to 27th and Superior streets or 48th and O streets? Have you ever tried riding your bike to these places? And aren't the ... people in their cars in the vast parking lots boring compared to the variety of people you meet walking down O Street?

So the next time you need to make a purchase or go out to eat, think about where your money is going. Do you know who you are doing business with? And do they care about Our Town?

Kristen Atchity
graduate student
architecture and community and regional planning

Right On!

Thank you once again, J.J. Your column "A broken bond" (DN, Friday) is much appreciated by those of us who agree. The words you use are harsh and seemingly unfeeling. However, you do what must be done to make your point.

It has been argued that homosexuality is genetic. There is no factual evidence to support this, only doctors' speculations. It has been said that gay marriages will NOT affect the American family value system. How can this be when adopted children of gay marriages are directly influenced by what they see?

It sounds clichéd, but children are very impressionable, and if they are given the impression that gay is OK, they may choose to be that way in the future. Not every child will choose, but more so than children of heterosexual couples.

The American family broke down after we allowed rampant divorce. The American family broke down after we passed out condoms in school. The American family broke down when adultery was seen as normal. The American family is dying, and we are finally doing something about it by banning same-sex marriages to prevent the family from breaking in that direction.

I have nothing against gay people. I do not condemn them for what they are. I condemn what they are. It is their sexual preference I despise, not them. Banning gay marriages is not a slap in the face to gays, but to the gay lifestyle. As a Christian, I cannot condemn a gay person — that's God's job. I can only tell them that I believe they are in the wrong and why.

Is that a sin?

Josh Dieckmann
freshman
business administration

A Series To Remember

What you did this past week with the series on grieving is really great. As a regular reader (but nonreader of the beer series), I thank you for your thoughtfulness in reminding us of the pain many people endure every day as they miss and yearn for loved ones.

It makes us look at our own loved ones in a new light and reflect on what it would mean if we lost them. Good luck and keep up the good work.

Sean Courtney
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Buy The Big 'L'

I would like to thank Sonia Hollimon-Stovall for her column "Our Town" (DN, Wednesday) on mom and pop stores in Lincoln. She brought to our attention that many of these locally owned businesses are rapidly disappearing even though commercial activity on the edges of Lincoln is thriving.

All you have to do is walk down O Street to see the store fronts that have been vacated because they can't