

# Nic fit

## Tobacco is more addictive than Twinkies after all



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Last year, 420,000 people died from the consumption of Twinkies. Twinkies, the silent killer.

Of course, 420,000 people didn't die from Twinkies last year, they died from smoking cigarettes. The connection between cigarettes and Twinkies might not be an obvious one, but I will attempt to explain.

Four years ago, the chairmen of the five largest tobacco makers declared, under oath, that "nicotine is no more addictive than Twinkies or a cup of tea." These are the same people whose successors are now bargaining for immunity from further class-action lawsuits in exchange for a \$368.5 billion settlement over the next 25 years.

The question is simple enough—do these gentlemen believe that nicotine is addictive? In four years of debates and congressional testimony, the tobacco executives have gone from the above mentioned Twinkie statement to, "Yes, under certain definitions of the word, addictive." That quote by RJR's Steven Goldstone is hardly a declaration of truth and wrongdoing, but it was a big step. I wonder if in another four years nicotine might be, say, "habit forming."

As a smoker of five years, I was appalled to find out that nicotine was addictive. I was in the dark. I decided I would have to do some research on this topic to get to the bottom of this hidden data. I found a wealth of information over the Internet concerning nicotine and its addictive

properties. I read of health studies done by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health that equated nicotine to heroin in terms of addictive properties. While I was reading all this material I began to experience a nicotine craving—what we smokers affectionately call a "nic fit."

Well, I'll be damned; I'm addicted to nicotine.

This led me to believe that these tobacco executives have either never smoked a cigarette in their lives or they are afraid of further sanctions and fines. Are they scared that they will have to pay more than \$368.5 billion? Removal of cartoons in advertising? Wait, that already happened. God forbid, lower profits?

These gentlemen are businessmen. The goal of their work is to create as large a profit as possible through advertising and product enhancement. They have accomplished that in the past and will continue to do so in the future. I'm really sorry if they will make less of a profit than last year, but please just admit what everyone in the free world knows: Nicotine is addictive.

Not only was it apparent to tobacco makers that nicotine is addictive, but they've been studying these addictive properties for the last 20 years attempting to make a more addictive cigarette. Dr. Richard Hurt, a Mayo Clinic expert said, "(Cigarette makers) experimented with the addition of ammonia to cigarettes to create an enhanced 'free nicotine,' which the body absorbs more quickly than ordinary nicotine." If nicotine is not addictive, why try to get more of it at a faster rate to the consumer? Flavor-enhancing properties?

Let's examine this situation in a little different setting. Let's say I invented the first handgun. Before I made it available for purchase, I did testing for 20 years on the effects of bullets on the human body. Soon after the purchase of the first handgun, it was used in a murder. When asked if I thought that bullets would

kill, how would I respond?

"Yes, under certain definitions of the word, kill."

I don't believe these tobacco executives are the devil's foot soldiers. As I said earlier, they are just humans out to make a dollar. I would like to extend an invitation to them that all other humans know exists: the invitation to admit a mistake.

I don't hold anyone responsible for the fact that I smoke. I'm sure 99.9 percent of the smokers out there knew that nicotine was addictive and that cigarette smoking can kill when they started. The 0.1 percent of smokers who didn't know that probably have a Chevy Citation with a lift kit and

flames on the side, and thus, deserve to die from smoking.

There will always be idiots like myself out there who feel that smoking has a benefit in their lives despite the health risk. As long as these idiots walk the earth and have money, cigarette companies will make money. So I ask these tobacco executives to

admit that they are just as stupid as the people who buy their products. To err is human; to admit it is just plain right.



AMY MARTIN/DN

# Porn panic

## State should protect children, not go on a witch hunt



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Has Barnes & Noble been pandering kiddy porn? Some of our residents expressed their concern over the presence of books of photographs by Jock Sturges on the shelves of our intrepid booksellers. It seems some of Sturges' photographs were of (gasp) nude children!

While some learned individuals might contend that Sturges is a highly skilled artist whose photographs are among the most profoundly insightful and captivating of their genre (and less erotic than a Georgia O'Keefe watercolor), other vigilant citizens have declared Sturges' work to be nothing more than masturbation fodder for pedophiles.

Is Sturges' work merely some

nice photographs of a few naked people, or is it pornography? Is it art, or is it obscene? Our legislators are working to deem it obscene.

The Nebraska Legislature is presently working to revise LB1349, known as the Child Pornography Prevention Act, so that it would more rigorously define the bounds of child pornography. Under the revised law, any compilations of visual depictions of nude children could be defined as pornographic and censurable. Violators would be guilty of a Class IV felony, punishable by up to five years in prison and a \$50,000 fine for each offense.

One can fully appreciate efforts to protect children and teen-agers. We must be committed to providing for them a safe and healthy environment. There is no doubt that sexual abuse of young people is a serious problem. For some children, the effects of such abuse are devastating.

But is there no other way of approaching the problems of child sexual abuse and its prevention? Is the only solution to the problem of child abuse to raise the age of consent and increase the penalties for the manufacture and distribution of child pornography? The laws regarding the sexual exploitation of chil-

dren and teen-agers are already clearly outlined and severely punishable. Have we managed to stem the tide of violence of young people? Are our children and teen-agers safe yet?

This has become a classic instance of censorship and infringement of our First Amendment rights. The poor judgment of a minority of individuals with a hyperactive sense of decency has left the rest of us impoverished. Jesse Helms could not have done so well.

If the books in question were obviously obscene in any manner, if it were apparent that persons depicted in Sturges' photographs were actually exploited, this uproar might be remotely justifiable. But we have nothing more here than some pictures of kids who, in a few instances, happen to be naked. Under whose definition does that constitute kiddy porn?

It is easy to pin blame on the evil specter of kiddy porn, make a law and believe that you've done something good for young citizens. Unfortunately, this sort of legislation does very little, if anything, to address the real dangers present to the young people of our society.

Child pornography is a panic-

button issue that incites hysterics rather than rational, critical thought. In our flurry of panic and public outrage over the amoral dangers of child molesters, we've overlooked the very real dangers. The sexual victimization of children by strangers is a scary thought; however, the simple fact is that far more children are affected by the consequences of domestic violence and abuse than are exploited by strangers. Domestic violence, battering, mental and verbal abuse and neglect constitute very real and pervasive problems for the young people of our society.

According to the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse, more than 1 million children are confirmed each year as victims of abuse or neglect. And while the overall national incidence rate of child sexual abuse remains unknown, less than 5 percent of those child sexual abuse cases reported to Child Protective Service agencies occurred outside the home.

Focusing on kiddy porn does little to diminish the brutal treatment of young people. Children and teen-agers are still being sexually abused, beaten and sometimes put to death by their adult custodians.

Everyone is appalled at the

thought of children or teen-agers being sexually exploited or forced to perform sexual acts in front of a camera. However, could our elected representatives' time not be better spent addressing these issues in a more adequate and cogent manner than going on a witch hunt?

If we are sincere about wanting to tackle child abuse, then we need to be more resourceful and willing to more closely examine what issues our children face. We should work to create a more comprehensive plan for dealing with these issues. Abuse takes many forms, and it is difficult to imagine a single act of legislation that could adequately encompass every real problem children and teen-agers face.

It would help if we could better educate parents and young people. As it is, we're afraid to give children and teen-agers the information, power and support they need to be safe and to control their own bodies. Our fear degenerates into attitudes of sexual repression, leaving our young people ignorant of the dangers they may face. A child has the right to be safe from fear of violence and sexual abuse, and we need to be alert to the real dangers our young people may face.