

From the Office of United States Senator Robert C. Byrd  
Room 342, Old Senate Office Building, Washington, D. C. 20510

Volume V -- Number 6

February 5, 1965

Byrd's Eye View  
A Public Service Column by  
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#### SMOKING AMONG TEEN-AGERS

Public health authorities have launched a two-pronged attack against teen-age smoking; first, appealing to basic parental concern; and, secondly, attempting to educate teen-agers to the dangers of smoking.

To parents, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare states: "If you don't want your child to smoke, don't smoke yourself!"

To teen-agers, the Bureau says: "There is one way to decide this question--shall I smoke--the only way to reach any decision--look at both sides of the question. First, consider what cigarettes may offer--what pleasures, what benefits. Next, consider scientifically proven, medical facts condemning cigarettes--what is harmful about smoking, and the effects on the body."

Public Health Service statistics show that youths smoking before 20 years of age go on to smoke more and more cigarettes and to inhale more deeply. Early, steady, heavy smokers are the ones who face greatest health risks. Statistics tend to show, also, that among men who began smoking when they were teen-agers, the death rate is one hundred percent higher than for non-smokers, that teen-age cigarette smokers face the risks of becoming invalids while still quite young, and that various illnesses linked with cigarettes are not just older people's diseases, but are sicknesses that may disable young people in their twenties or thirties. Lung and heart diseases make smokers invalids--unable to work or live normal lives.

More immediately, cigarettes can make teen-agers short of breath, irritate throats, cause chronic coughs, interfere with

appetites, undercut stamina for swimming, tennis, football--all athletics.

Some teen-agers feel that smoking makes them more sophisticated, that they don't want to be different from other members of "the crowd", and that it helps them to be less tense. But is there anything "more sophisticated" about stale tobacco odor on the breath and clothes and yellow stains on teeth and fingers? As to feeling that smoking makes one "in", or "belong to", an elite group, some of the smartest, most attractive people in the country do not smoke, or are giving it up after getting the facts on the detrimental health effects. Doctors in great numbers have stopped smoking. Many non-smokers are scientists, famous athletes, teachers, engineers, military men, opera stars, and actors, so that one can belong to an elite non-smoking group in almost any category. As for feeling less tense when one smokes, the nicotine in a cigarette may temporarily calm the smoker but continued smoking adds to nervousness and will damage health, if practiced long enough.

The teen-ager may ask exactly what is in cigarettes that is harmful. The smoke itself is harmful, being composed of a complex mixture of gases and particles and containing tars which irritate tissues in nose, throat, and lungs. It contains nicotine which affects the nervous system--the heart and the blood vessels--and carbon monoxide which blocks the flow of oxygen in the blood stream. Smoke particles contain chemical compounds capable of producing cancer.

Fortunately, no one can make teen-agers smoke. Given access to the facts and support from adults in their environment to avoid the habit, intelligent teen-agers would be expected to find little or no appeal in becoming tobacco users.