

March 7, 1994

Letters to the Editor
The New York Times
229 West 43rd Street
New York, N. Y. 10036

To the Editor:

Your recent editorial on the tobacco industry, ("Addiction by Design?" 3/6/94), discusses the implications of a letter written by FDA Commissioner David Kessler to the Coalition on Smoking or Health, on the handling of nicotine during the cigarette production process. At several points, Dr. Kessler's letter, and hence your editorial, misrepresents the facts.

Let me set the record straight. Nicotine naturally occurs in tobacco. There is nothing in the processing of tobacco or the manufacture of cigarettes that increases the nicotine in our products above what is naturally found in the tobacco. In fact, our manufacturing process results in less nicotine in every cigarette we make than exists in the raw, unprocessed tobacco. Moreover, consumer taste preferences have led to products with lower levels of both tar and nicotine, and as a result, the overall nicotine content in cigarettes has declined by more than 50 percent over the last 40 years.

Regarding the issue of addiction, according to a report by the Surgeon General, more than 40 million Americans have quit smoking, and more than 90 percent of those who quit did so with no professional help. These findings are not consistent with the behavior of individuals addicted to drugs like heroin or cocaine.

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Finally, I would like to clarify the process used in making reconstituted tobacco. This is a process designed to make efficient use of all parts of the tobacco plant. The first patent on the tobacco reconstitution process was issued almost 150 years ago and it is a well-known process that has been repeatedly described in public literature. The fact is that the level of nicotine in the finished, reconstituted tobacco is significantly lower than the nicotine level in unprocessed tobacco.

In closing, I would note that cigarettes are a legal product, and that more than 50 million American adults choose to smoke. We are proud to be associated with the tobacco industry and are proud of the quality standards with which we manufacture our product.

Sincerely,

William I. Campbell

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