



BLOW TO POOR — Tobacco Institute President Horace Kornegay who claims a new bid to tax cigarettes would "hit hardest at those least able to pay."

New Tax On Leaf Denounced

By TOM RAUM

WASHINGTON (AP) — Despite testimony by two cancer specialists, tobacco-state lawmakers and industry officials say cigarette smoking has never been firmly linked with cancer and are urging Congress to reject a new "health tax" on cigarettes.

The proposed tax would add levies on cigarettes ranging from two cents a pack to 80 cents, depending on their relative tar and nicotine content. It would be phased in over a four-year period.

The tax would "hit hardest at those least able to pay," according to Horace Kornegay, president of the Tobacco Institute.

In testimony Thursday before
a Senate panel on the tax,

a Senate panel considering the tax, two Nobel Prize-winning cancer researchers said there is indisputable evidence linking smoking with lung cancer. Both said the tax would pressure the tobacco industry into producing less hazardous cigarettes.

Renato Dulbecco of the Imperial Cancer Research Center of London and Howard Temin of the University of Wisconsin, who shared the 1975 prize for their cancer research, told the Senate health subcommittee that lung cancer is one of the most incurable and preventable cancers.

Temin said that after 20 years of study, he is convinced most human cancer is caused by cancer-causing substances, such as those found in cigarette smoke.

He said the link between cigarette smoking and lung cancer is "one of the most clearly established."

He said a tax based on the level of tar and nicotine in cigarettes might result in fewer high tar and nicotine cigarettes being purchased, thus "preventing some of the cancers which would otherwise be caused by smoking."

But Kornegay said many prominent scientists "remain unconvinced that smoking causes disease" and maintained the proposed tax would hit hardest at "blue collar workers, service industry workers, clerks, typists" and other low-and middle-income wage earners.

Sen. Wendell Ford, D-Ky., said the tax would nearly wipe out Kentucky's \$470-million-a-year tobacco industry, destroy small tobacco farmers and "place an economical hardship on millions."

Lawmakers from other tobacco-producing states echoed his complaints, agreeing that a link between smoking and lung cancer had not yet been conclusively established.

Subcommittee Chairman Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., said, "We are not interested in putting the tobacco farmers out of business. We're interested in having them grow safe tobacco."

Sen. Gary Hart, D-Colo., said the tax would generate \$9 billion a year, which would be used to fund a variety of health research programs.

Theodore Cooper, assistant secretary for health in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, said the Ford administration hasn't decided yet whether to support the tax proposal.