

most novel organisms permit, but some run riot and become pests. The Inspection Service should know; its prime purpose is to prevent such pests from entering the country. Genetically engi-

senative Don Ruck of Florida to assure uniform regulation by different agencies, should help overcome the protracted confusion in Washington about the engineering of life and the environment.

Anything for a Butt

The tough antismoking laws proposed by Mayor Koch have left some New Yorkers looking for reasons to object. But nobody's straining further than the people at Philip Morris. In an essay prepared for readers of the city's black newspapers, Guy Smith, a vice president, says the antismoking bill "has serious implications for the metropolitan minority community."

How so? "A law that would segregate smokers and non-smokers in the workplace would also provide a perfect backdrop for employers who wish to discriminate against minority employees."

And how is that? Because "more blacks smoke than whites, it is not very difficult to imagine a situation where an employer would overlook a black worker in line for a promotion on the basis that the new job would require him or her to supervise employees in the non-smoking area."

A black employee missing out on a job because he's more apt than a white to be a smoker turns out to be only one of Philip Morris's disaster scenarios. In further explanation of his views, Mr. Smith conjures up a vision of white masters enjoying the

fruits of discrimination — that is, a cigarette — while their wage slaves are left starving for a butt.

"Under the proposed legislation," he says, "smoking is generally prohibited in open areas but not in private offices. Most of the people who sit in private offices are white males — and those in open areas are black and Hispanic." That most people of any race are nonsmokers and likely to be grateful for no-smoking areas seems of no interest to Mr. Smith. Philip Morris isn't calling on logic to defeat an antismoking bill. It is calling on racial fear and resentments.

Black smokers are indeed a valuable part of the cigarette market, and black men have the lung cancer rate to prove it. It is rising just as the rate for white men has dropped significantly. Still, the Mayor's proposed rules don't prohibit smoking. They simply spell out where nonsmokers can find clean air, and where smokers can puff in peace.

Mr. Smith's two scare scenarios are, as he says, not difficult to imagine; nothing is unimaginable. Even so, who would have imagined that Philip Morris would go to such lengths?

Good Start in the Philippines

Cries of "dictator" have greeted President Corazon Aquino's proclamation of an interim Philippine regime in which she will exercise legislative as well as executive powers. But the outcry comes from a discredited National Assembly whose majority only recently anointed Ferdinand Marcos after a fraudulent vote. That Assembly found nothing to protest in Mr. Marcos's usurpation of legislative powers in 1972. These born-again democrats are lamenting loss of office, not freedom.

Mrs. Aquino's extraordinary path to power does raise risks. She, too, is vulnerable to delusions of infallibility, fed by favor-seekers in a narrow elite. But she promises legislative elections within a year under a constitution to be submitted to the voters. Meanwhile, her powers are hedged by a bill of rights, a reinvigorated judiciary and a voluble free press. Of the available choices, her one-year interim rule seems best.

She now has the power to modify or repeal decrees, revoke contracts and control local government. Retaining the Marcos constitution, as urged

by the Assembly's majority, would have perpetuated the ways of a corrupt regime, and left in place the Marcos warlords and bagmen who retained their seats in a rigged 1984 election. Calling an immediate election would have obliterated the old dictator's party before a credible democratic alternative could arise.

Mrs. Aquino's harder task will be to retain the public's confidence as the exhilaration of a nonviolent uprising ebbs. Her difficulties are illustrated by disclosures that her Finance Minister and adviser, Jaime Ongpin, may have had compromising business ties with Marcos cronies. Her proclamation sets an ambitious interim agenda: wiping out "iniquitous vestiges" of the Marcos regime, reviving a stalled economy, assuring respect for human rights and ending a Communist insurgency.

As she tackles this agenda, President Aquino needs American support without too much second-guessing. She wants to put persuasion before force in coping with the New People's Army and has earned the chance to try it her way.

Topics

In the Driver's Seat

Two Stars

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