

# Tallahassee Democrat/Sat., Jan. 26, 1991 12A OPINION

## OUR VIEW

The editorials below represent the opinion of the editorial board.

Carol Dadiaman, publisher  
Bill Mansfield, editorial page editor  
Susannah Lyle, associate editor  
LaNedra Carroll, associate editor  
Bill Edmonds, associate editor

Fred Mott  
general manager

Bill Fuller  
managing editor

## Exhibit

### Bill of Rights as marketing tool

■ Philip Morris says its Bill of Rights promotion has only one agenda, the Bill of Rights. But the tobacco industry's smokers-rights campaign reveals an unsavory second agenda.

...the exhibit is commercial free and promotes a single agenda — the Bill of Rights and the liberties it provides the citizens of the United States. — Mary A. Taylor, director of special projects for Philip Morris, in a Jan. 19 letter to the editor about the Jan. 27-30 civic center exhibit of a copy of the Bill of Rights.

The nation's top peddler of tobacco products, Philip Morris, is sponsoring a nationwide tour of one of the original copies of the Bill of Rights. Already in soon-to-be-visited Tallahassee, as in previous host cities, controversy is swirling like second-hand smoke.

Philip Morris manufactures many products, but its name is most linked to the sale of highly addictive products that contribute to thousands of deaths yearly. Although the company denies it, some critics contend Philip Morris is trying to clean up its nicotine-stained image by associating its name with one of the finest endeavors of this country, the Bill of Rights; they say it is profane for such a death merchant to sponsor such a profound bundle of parchment.

Corporations would shirk their duties as "citizens" if they did not participate and sponsor projects outside their companies' confines. A corporate giant such as Philip Morris should participate in charitable, artistic and civic projects. And as far as the Tallahassee visit, it may lead to many vigorous discussions about the nature of freedom. And freedom surely includes the right to smoke.

But because there are, in this vast country, so many ways for a corporate citizen to be involved philanthropically, the fact that Philip Morris chose to sponsor a Bill of Rights tour becomes significant. And it becomes significant because of the smokers' rights campaign waged by Philip Morris, in its slick Philip Morris magazine, and in industry lobby, the Tobacco Institute, in full-page newspaper ads. For Philip Morris, the Bill of Rights is the ultimate marketing tool in a shrinking market.

Faced with growing awareness of the health risks and addictive qualities of tobacco products, millions of Americans have quit smoking. Nationwide, many states and cities have laws to protect non-smokers' from harmful secondary smoke. Even now in Florida, bills before the Legislature would further restrict public smoking areas.

Against a drop in customers and the restrictions on those remaining, the tobacco lobby has gone on the attack heralding smokers' rights. Here are excerpts from letters published in the winter 1991 issue of Philip Morris magazine:

"The airline smoking ban is intolerable, and I believe it infringes on my constitutional right to travel without restriction." And another: "We need more magazine articles about the erosion of our rights as American citizens." Even more telling is the editor's note: "Smokers who have been victims of job discrimination should write to: Philip Morris Magazine...."

Not to be forgotten are the full-page ads. In a January 1989 ad carried in the New York Times, the Tobacco Institute Legislation!... Enough Control!... Enough Censorship!... Enough Discrimination!"

Enough is right. However puffed up the Tobacco Institute and tobacco sellers get, their arguments lack credibility. The harmful effects of second-hand smoke are well known. Nobody has a right to inflict their self-chosen destruction on another human being. And because of the nature of ventilation systems in modern buildings and on airplanes, that's often what happens when smokers light up.

Using the Bill of Rights seems part of a sophisticated marketing attempt to portray smokers as victims of an intolerant society. Smokers are victims — of a highly addictive habit. Philip Morris should have the courtesy to acknowledge its motives.

TIFL 0044349