

## Fearing Tax Rise Will Cost Jobs, Tobacco Workers Plan a Protest

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RICHMOND, March 7 — The colossal Philip Morris U.S.A. plant here, which turns out half a billion cigarettes a day, will go silent on Wednesday as the employees get the day off and a free ride to Washington for a march against a proposed increase in Federal tobacco taxes.

Organizers of the demonstration, billed as a "Save Our Jobs" rally, predicted that 17,000 cigarette workers and tobacco growers would gather at the White House, then march to the Capitol and distribute petitions opposing the tax increase.

The proposal, which the Clinton Administration is seeking to finance its plan to overhaul the health care system, would raise the tax on a pack of cigarettes to 99 cents from 24 cents.

About 7,200 of the 9,000 Philip Morris workers here plan to march, said Jay S. Poole, the company's director of government and community relations. Mr. Poole said about 1,800 tobacco growers, suppliers and other supporters would be in the company's 162-bus caravan to Washington.

"They're concerned about their jobs," he said. "It's not fair to single out one industry, in one region, for the cost of health care reform."

### Another Company Joining In

The march is being organized by the Tobacco Action Coalition, which describes itself as a grass-roots group formed in June to fight restrictions on tobacco. Members are employees and friends of the industry, said Maura T. Ellis, director of public relations for the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, which is also sending workers to the demonstration.

Ms. Ellis said that the marchers would come from 17 states and that the petitions, distributed by retailers and others, had 800,000 signatures so far.

A spokeswoman for the American

Cancer Society, Sharon Jenkins-Brown, said she wondered what Philip Morris stockholders would think of the workers' demonstrating while the plant was idle.

### Some Rides Aren't Free

"In our mind, it shows the desperation of the industry," said Ms. Jenkins-Brown, who is manager of media relations for the cancer society's Tobacco Tax Policy Project.

She said she knew of no planned counterdemonstration.

The Philip Morris caravan will be joined by 145 busloads of tobacco workers and supporters from the R. J. Reynolds cigarette plant in Winston-Salem, N.C., Ms. Ellis said. Those workers are also getting the day off, but they are being asked to pay \$30 for bus fare. Officials at both companies said participation was voluntary.

Ms. Ellis defended giving workers the day off for a political purpose. "Our employees are lobbying on behalf of the industry," she said. "They're working in Washington."

### Inquiry on Nicotine Additives

WASHINGTON, March 7 (Reuters) — Senator Edward M. Kennedy today asked for a Congressional investigation into accusations that tobacco companies add nicotine to cigarettes to make them addictive.

Mr. Kennedy asked the General Accounting Office, the investigating arm of Congress, to determine the truth of the accusations, first reported on the ABC-TV program "Day One."