

I. FRAMING THE POLICY DEBATE

A. Anti-Tobacco or Pro-Health: What's In a Name?

In a 1968 memo from H. Wakeham addressed to C.H. Goldsmith. Wakeham comments about R.D. Passey's review of a scientific work, "Tobacco and Tobacco Smoke."² The book, written by Wynder, acknowledges carcinogens in tobacco smoke. Passey questions the "validity of the hypothesis of carcinogens in tobacco smoke." Wakeham adds that "Zealots like Wynder and Bock speak derisively of Professor Passey and his position, and yet he makes a great deal of sense." [zealots.4/p.1]

This is the first instance we uncovered where industry executives openly apply the term zealotry to researchers or pro-health activists. Industry documents show conclusively the tobacco industry worked feverishly to maintain a "right to smoke" for consumers, and future consumers, of their products. Revealed in the internal papers is a history of industry activity to discredit pro-health advocates and educators by stigmatizing them as fanatics, zealots, puritans or radicals.

Experts in policy formation acknowledge perceptions in general are more relevant to outcomes in the political arena than are realities. Policy process expert, John Kingdon, says:

"There are great political stakes in problem definition. Some are helped and others are hurt, depending on how problems get defined. If things are going basically your way, for instance, you want to convince others that there are no problems out there."³

"The first cut at analyzing anything is to place it in its proper category. People will see a problem quite differently if it is put into one category rather than another. Thus much of the struggle over problem definition centers on the categories that will be used and the ways they will be used. You may not be able to judge a problem by its category, but its category structures people's perceptions of the problem in many important aspects."⁴

E. E. Schattschneider, the dean of agenda-setting studies by virtue of his work *The Semi-Sovereign People*, writes that the most important decisions made in any polity are those that determine which issues become part of public discourse. Specifically, "some issues are organized into politics while others are organized out."⁵ Our review of the tobacco industry documents suggests tobacco industry executives understand well the theories of policy formation. In a 1994 Philip Morris memo, company strategists report to top executives that, "you win if the public and the press believe you are reasonable and the radicals are unreasonable."

² The 1968 document links Professor R. D. Passey with the Chester Beatty Cancer Research Institute.

³ John W. Kingdon, *Agenda, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, Harper Collins Publishers, 1984, p. 115.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁵ E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960, p.71.

B. Initiating a Public Relations Campaign

Another example of the implementation of this strategy comes from Joe Hefferman, President & C.E.O. of Rothmans, Benson & Hedges, Inc. Hefferman furthers the issue definition process in a 1994 address to the 39th Annual N.A.T.C.D. Convention. He provides the audience numerous historical examples of tobacco control efforts. Citing 17th century Sultan Murad IV of Turkey, Hefferman states:

“He [Sultan Murad] first decreed that all places smokers were known to habituate should be demolished. Later, he prohibited smoking on pain of death. Disguised as a commoner, Sultan Murad would patrol the streets of Constantinople, seeking out smokers. As an example to others, those he caught smoking he beheaded, hung or quartered. More than 100,000 of his subjects met their ends at his hands. Notwithstanding these valiant efforts, people continued to smoke...” [frame/zealots.2/p.2]

Using a 20th century example, Hefferman summarizes anti-smoking efforts in Nazi Germany, commenting directly on advertising restrictions.

“Nearly 300 years later, in Nazi Germany, Adolf Hitler gained dictatorial powers comparable to Murad’s. His views on tobacco were also similar to Murad’s. As a forerunner of today’s modern anti-tobacco campaign, strict controls on advertising were imposed. The state propaganda machine was used to harangue the public about the health risks of tobacco. Smoking was prohibited in public buildings and many individual workplaces. Hitler himself engaged in anti-tobacco diatribes. Perhaps not so surprisingly, consumption of tobacco products actually INCREASED during the time these oppressive measure were imposed.” [frame/zealots.2/p.2]

Hefferman then draws an analogy from alcohol prohibition in the United States during the early 1900s. Note the reference to a “strong Puritan minority.”

“Closer to home, the strong Puritan minority in the United States gained enormous political power in the last half of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century. Their most notable, or perhaps notorious, achievement was the 70 year campaign that led to the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the Prohibition of Alcohol, in 1919. America’s most disastrous attempt at social engineering came to an end in 1933, but not before 35,000 people had died from alcohol poisoning caused by home brewed products, more than 500,000 citizens had been arrested, and a new criminal class had become wealthy, powerful, and firmly established. American society suffers the consequences to this day.” [frame/zealots.2/p.2]

Hefferman insightfully emphasizes one of the major challenges facing pro-health advocates. We draw attention to his subliminal effort to stigmatize the opposition. He categorizes pro-health organizations as “anti-tobacco groups” and characterizes individuals who participate in these activities as “anti-tobacco zealots.”

“There is no question that public attitudes towards smoking, smokers, and tobacco smoke have changed significantly over the last thirty years, and for this the anti-tobacco group can claim some success. However, this very success creates the conditions for reversal of the cycle. By reinforcing one of the key psychological attributes of smoking – its rebellious, anti-establishment, anti-authority image – the disapproval of society at large adds value to smoking behavior. The recent reversal of smoking incidence trends in the U.S. and Canada among the young adult age groups, dramatically illustrate the nature of the dilemma faced by anti-tobacco zealots.” [zealots.2/p10]

C. Building a Coalition of Front Groups

The tobacco industry realized they were poor spokespeople to lead their propaganda campaign. In a February 1987 Philip Morris Inter-Office Correspondence, PM executives discuss a strategy to disseminate a “favorable” position from a reputable third party.

“For speech background, Andrew Falkiewics sent me a copy of a favorable article on smoking, cholesterol, coffee, and health in the February American Scholar by Dr. William Nolen called ‘Medical Zealots.’

I think it is very good. We should be dropping reprints of it from airplanes over the [sic] every national and state capitol where anyone is dictating restrictions on smoking or food products. Seriously, Nolen is a third party with an independent reputation (a self-confessed “disease of the month” columnist for McCall’s for 12 years). He writes well. He makes many of the arguments we make refuting the attacks on tobacco and health. He also refutes worries about cholesterol and coffee. Just as important, he encourages skepticism not only about medical announcements, but about the whole fitness trend of which the attacks on our products are often a part (‘At the moment there is no persuasive evidence that those of us leading lives of relative moderation can increase our well-being or prolong our lives by radically changing our style of living.’).” [frame/zealots.4/p.1]

By 1990, tobacco industry officials began working with the Roper Organization to conduct social research on public attitudes regarding tobacco. Roper provided excellent cover for the industry as it maintains national prominence. The studies conducted by Roper did not focus specifically on smoking or tobacco use. Instead, Roper applied sophisticated models about belief systems and public perception to elicit results linked to tobacco politics. Some of the belief systems used by Roper include:

free speech, regulation of (non-tobacco) industries, taxes on products other than luxury items and cigarettes, political conservatism (i.e., limitation of strong, central government power), acceptability of various activities, employer’s rights to terminate employees on the basis of private activities or personal characteristics, and the legitimacy of government control over various recreational activity. [frame/zealots.1/p.1]

Using summary information from a Roper 1990 Attitudinal Survey, Bill Bittner elaborates a tobacco industry archetype for a subgroup of the pro-health community – zealots. As defined in the referenced document, “Zealots embrace an atypical set of values” from other non-smokers.

The document illustrates “Zealots” differ significantly from other “non-smokers” on the following dimensions:

I. Free Speech

“How do you feel about government controls when it comes to each item on this list?” Are you strongly in favor, mostly in favor, mostly opposed, or strongly opposed to government controls when it comes to...?” [Percent total in favor]

	Zealots	Non-Smokers
Advertising of potentially harmful products	54%	36%
Advertising which makes unsubstantiated health claims	57%	36%
Advertising directed to children	31%	23%
New reports which disclose matters of national security	40%	30%
Television programs that contain violence	32%	24%

II. Regulation of Industries Other Than Tobacco

"Would you please... tell me for each (industry) whether you feel that more regulation is needed, or less regulation, or if you feel the current amount of regulation is just about right?" [Percent total indicating a need for more regulation]

	Zealots	Non-Smokers
The tobacco industry	74%	38%
The auto industry	33%	26%
The cosmetics industry	28%	15%
The television broadcast industry	38%	28%
Biomedical industries that use animals for testing	45%	34%
The oil industry	56%	39%
The fur industry	36%	26%
The liquor industry	46%	32%
The food manufacturing industry	52%	34%
The banking industry	44%	30%
The prescription drug industry	37%	28%

III. Taxes Other Than Those on Luxury Items and Cigarettes

"When local and state taxes need to be increases, which one of these taxes do you think should be raised?" [Percent total in favor]

	Zealots	Non-Smokers
General sales tax	10%	17%
Cigarette taxes	55%	25%
Beer & wine taxes	16%	11%
Taxes on luxury items such as furs, expensive cars, etc.	23%	32%

IV. Political Conservatism

"Now, thinking politically and socially, how would you describe your own general outlook – as being very conservative, moderately conservative, middle-of-the-road, moderately liberal, or very liberal?" [Only statistically significant results listed here]

	Zealots	Non-Smokers
Total Conservative	54%	40%
Very Conservative	17%	8%
Middle-of-the-road	23%	32%

V. The Acceptability of Various Activities

"For each (of the following) would you tell me whether you find it acceptable for anyone, acceptable for others but not yourself, or not acceptable for anyone?" [Only statistically significant highlights listed here]

	Zealots	Non-Smokers
Smoking cigarettes		
Not acceptable	61%	28%
Smoking marijuana		
Not acceptable	77%	65%
Drinking alcohol		
Not acceptable	27%	20%
People living together outside of marriage		
Acceptable for anyone	29%	37%

VI. Employers' Rights to Terminate Employees on the Basis of Private Activities or Personal Characteristics

"Generally speaking, do you think an employers [sic] should or should not have the right to refuse to give a job to someone who..." [Only statistically significant highlights listed here]

	Zealots	Non-Smokers
Smokes cigarettes?	31%	14%
Is overweight?	13%	8%
Smokes marijuana?	79%	68%
Drinks alcoholic beverages socially?	20%	13%
Uses cocaine, crack or other illegal drugs?	92%	86%
Has AIDS?	35%	26%

VII. The Legitimacy of Government Control Over Various Personal Activities

"...I'd like to know whether or not you think the government has the right to control various things a person might do in order to hold down health care costs. Does the government have the right to control..." [Only statistically significant highlights listed here]

	Zealots	Non-Smokers
Whether or not a person smokes?	31%	13%
How fast a person drives?	92%	86%
The amount a person drinks?	60%	47%
The number and types of sexual partners a person has?	15%	11%
The kinds of prescription drugs a person takes?	23%	15%

[frame/zealots.1/p.1]

D. Targeting Adversaries

The tobacco industry engaged in a campaign to identify the most active individuals and groups within the pro-health lobby. Once identified, they initiated a strategy to "target and defeat" the most prominent players. In a 1994 Philip Morris document, strategists contemplate how to deal with the emerging new anti-tobacco forces. Two groups in particular, INFACT and STAT, frightened the industry greatly. The document reveals PM executives met on June 2nd to overview INFACT and STAT, discuss the threat these two organizational campaigns presented PM's individual operating companies and brainstorm strategies to deal with company critics. [frame/zealots.5/p.2]

PM points out INFACT (Infant Formula Action Coalition) was founded in 1977 to oppose what INFACT claimed to be the unsafe use of infant formulas in poverty-stricken regions of the world. PM emphasizes INFACT's strategy is to select one issue and focus "all of its efforts on that campaign (e.g., alleged tobacco marketing to children)." [frame/zealots.5/p.18]

Regarding STAT, PM notes the Massachusetts-based advocacy group, Stop Teenage Addiction to Tobacco, originated in California in 1985. STAT seeks to:

"reduce adolescent use of tobacco by targeting tobacco companies through public education, community projects, policy research, advocacy and communication efforts."

[frame/zealots.5/p.18]

PM executives emphasize that STAT's most recent efforts include:

"attacking tobacco companies for placing, and the media for accepting, tobacco advertisements; launching and leading the campaign against RJR's Nabisco's Joe Camel cartoon character; promoting state and national tax increases on cigarettes; outlawing cigarette vending machines; and publicizing illegal sales of tobacco products to minors." [frame/zealots.5/p.18]

The documents reveal PM executives characterize organizations such as INFAC and STAT as "radical groups." [frame/zealots.5/p.14]

Characteristics of Radical Groups

- Strength in local chapters/members
- Aggressive, dramatic, media-conscious zealots
- Totally unpredictable, creative strategists
- Always positioned as underdog against giant
- Include more women, minorities and youth than other categories of interest groups

PM executives summarize their perception of the ideology driving such "radical groups." [frame/zealots.5/p.15]

Motivations of Radical Groups

- Corporations are exploiters that are directly and personally responsible and accountable
- **THERE CAN BE NO COMPROMISES OR DEALS WITH CORPORATIONS** [emphasis in original]
- Government is a corporate collaborator not to be trusted

PM executives enlist the "radicals" mode of operation. [frame/zealots.5/p.16]

Radicals: Mode of Operation

- Take direct action
 - Civil disobedience
 - Sit-ins, marches, demonstrations, vigils
 - Daredevil acts
 - Undercover spying/pre-emptive actions
- Exert economic pressure
- Litigation
 - Filer
 - Amicus Curiae
- Networking

Lastly, PM executives formulate a strategy for “dealing with radical groups.” [frame/zealots.5/p.17]

General Rules for Dealing with Radical Groups

- Never let your guard down and never believe that anything you say is off-the-record
- Closely monitor/have early warning systems in place
- Be pre-emptive and proactive
 - When necessary work closely with law enforcement officials
 - Educate and prepare employees
 - Communicate positive stories to the media and community leaders
 - Be constructive – not confrontational; you win if the public and the press believe you are reasonable and the radicals are unreasonable

The tobacco industry places great importance on “defining tobacco’s adversarie”s as well as documenting the “objectives, strategies, methods and means” of both the organizations and individuals who oppose the industry. In a comprehensive analysis, industry researchers illuminate the “dynamics of the anti-smoking movement.” The writers state note that their work should “serve as useful background for several years as the tobacco industry prepares strategic plans to manage the many issues it faces” [frame/zealots.6/p.6].

E. Impact on the Public Arena

Documents we uncovered within industry archives demonstrate the tobacco industry’s campaign succeeded in labeling pro-health forces as radical zealots – not only in the U.S., but worldwide. A 1993 Swedish news wire article, titled “Puritanical Zealots Diminish the Quality of Life,” reports: [frame/zealots.3/p.2]

“Puritanical health workers who dictate whether people should smoke or drink alcohol or coffee are trying to diminish the quality of life, according to a group of scientists and experts who have formed an association called ARISE (Associate Research Into Substance Enjoyment).”

ARISE and similar groups worked to negate the public’s perception of adverse health effects related to tobacco use by categorizing tobacco in a group of substances “used by people to relax or dissipate stress.” The substances generally listed are coffee, tea, alcohol, tobacco and chocolate. In this example, ARISE claims 74% of the participants in their referenced study drink coffee, 59% drink alcohol, 56% eat chocolate, 54% drink tea and 33% smoke. The spokesperson adds that, “This means that all five pleasurable substances play a significant role in people’s lives.”