

Our Nation's Greatest Drug Menace?

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Much publicity has been given the illicit traffic in drugs that plagues America. LSD, heroin, marijuana, "uppers" and "downers" are now familiar to all where once they were known to only a few. Thousands of lives, young and old, have become enslaved and ruined. The rate of major crimes has soared as the addict robs and kills to obtain the money necessary to satisfy his expensive craving. Perhaps more are enslaved to alcohol than to illegal narcotics. As grave as these problems are, in our zeal to stamp them out we usually overlook the most sinister of all drugs at the present. I refer to **NICOTINE**.

Yes, it is a drug that creates a dependence akin to that created by heroin and alcohol. The stimulus inhaled by the smoker is a potent, poisonous alkaloid, technically categorized as an organic nerve drug. One drop in the blood stream would cause instant death! Yet, due to an alleged political swap, in 1906 tobacco was removed from the official listing of drugs controlled by the Food and Drug Administration, rendering it exempt from FDA control.

If you think I am overstating the case, consider the evidence. The direct drug effect of nicotine causes 1000 known deaths per day, almost seven times the annual highway death toll. More people in our nation die every two months than died in the whole twelve years of the Vietnam war. (How many protest marches have you ever heard of against smoking?) Cigarette smoke contains seven known and many other suspected cancer producing elements. Additionally, it contains fifteen to twenty irritants or poisons to various parts of the body at levels ruled unsafe both by industrial and environmental officials.

The mortality figures quoted do not include deaths from heart disease, emphysema, and vascular diseases, a large percentage of which are nicotine related. Smoking is now causing more deaths each year in America than the terrible epidemics of past centuries did over several years in many nations. Yet 565 billion "doses" of nicotine are sold over the counter legally each year! I urge you to read "Nicotine: "Profile of Peril," by S. S. Field in *Reader's Digest*, September (1973) issue. Those who smoke should reflect on these sad facts before too harshly condemning the "hard drug" user, and especially before they light up again.

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