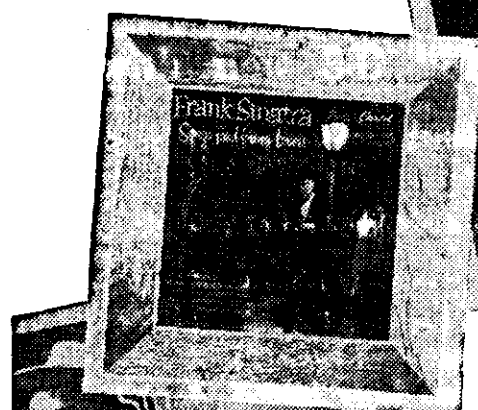


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Smoke Gets in Your Eyes

THE BBC feature described on page 3 will give listeners a further opportunity to study the case against smoking. Evidence for the defence will also be in the programme, and people will be left to reach their own conclusions. The opponents of smoking are at present in a strong position, but it is not easy to judge how far their warnings are being heeded. Cigarette smokers appear to be as numerous as before; they are either not perturbed, or are postponing the moment of decision. If they wish to convince themselves that no immediate action is necessary, they can use a choice variety of arguments. Older men, with thirty years of cigarettes behind them, are heard to say that the damage—if any—is done, and that now they must take their chance. Younger people comfort themselves, perhaps too easily, with the belief that lung cancer could not touch them until middle age; and since the young never really expect to be old, they feel able to prepare themselves gradually for a change of habit. But the majority may simply be waiting for a final verdict—or for the invention of "clean" cigarettes.

The argument seems likely to be protracted. If, however, the subject is to be given publicity on its present scale, something might be gained by glancing at its social aspect. People are theoretically free to please themselves whether they smoke or not, but in practice their freedom *not* to smoke is restricted. Cigarettes are used so much in public that it is now almost impossible to avoid some vicarious participation. One way to study the matter is to travel in a suburban train when traffic is near its peak. At the end of the journey the carriages are thick with smoke and noisy with coughing. To sit beside a smoker is to share most of his pains and none of his pleasures: the smoke curls up from a cigarette held nonchalantly and reaches for eyes and throat. The remedy, it may be said, is to travel in a non-smoker. But no-smoking notices are frail defences, and are widely ignored. These conditions can be troublesome even to smokers. There are times and occasions when the smell of a lighted cigarette is un-

welcome. In the early morning and in a stuffy carriage, it can be offensive.

At the end of a good dinner, with the last dishes taken away and coffee cups on the table, it is pleasant to light cigarette or pipe and relax in conversation. No other smoke can be as satisfying as the one that comes after a meal. But it is true also that tobacco fumes mix badly with food. No person with any claim to good manners will light a cigarette at his own table while other people are still eating. Yet in a restaurant, where people are beginning their meals while others are finishing, it is usual for the thin blue cloud to rise and spread. In London recently, an inquiry for reasons why Britons dislike Americans brought replies in two main classes, political and social. Among the criticisms of American behaviour were complaints that the visitors too often smoked in restaurants "without asking permission of other diners." The English themselves are not unknown to behave in the same way. But if smoking in restaurants is a cause of prejudice against "foreigners," it must be admitted that New Zealanders have some need to look to their manners.

One of the stock figures in English comedy is the hen-pecked husband who has to retire to his den or put his head up a chimney before he is allowed to smoke. He has long been as old-fashioned as the *Punch* jokes about curates and precocious children. When almost everybody smoked it became superfluous to ask permission before lighting a cigarette. A man who did so was rather too formal and a little quaint; he was bad-mannered only if he forgot to offer cigarettes to the ladies before taking one for himself. Good manners are based on consideration for other people. The public smoker is often inconsiderate today, and eventually may be a nuisance. Evidence for a connection between lung cancer and smoking is mainly statistical. If it became more than that, and habits changed, there would very quickly be a connection between cancer and manners — an interesting thought for the traveller who now sits glumly in a smoke-filled train.

—M.H.H.

N.Z. LISTENER, SEPTEMBER 6, 1957,