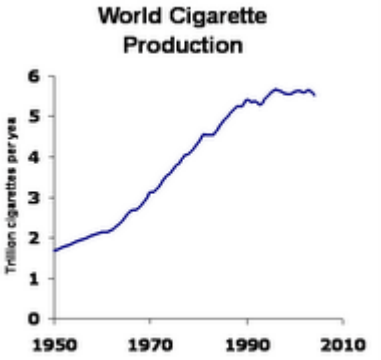
Killing by the million – and that's just the health campaigners…

written by Clive Bates | 6 June 2006



World cigarette production is about 5.53 *trillion* sticks per year. (about 2.4 per day for every single person in the world). This is stabilising as people in developed countries quit and growing populations in the developing world start puffing. According to WHO's tobacco group, death-toll from this is now about 5 million per year, heading for 10 million. With perhaps 1 billion potential premature deaths at stake in 21st Century on current trends. In other words **it's huge**.

What is absolutely amazing though is that there are forms of tobacco use about 10- 100+ times less hazardous than smoking (ie. chewing, sucking – anything non-combustible) – it's the smoke that really kills. Widespread use of these is why, for example, Sweden has the lowest rates of cancer and heart disease in the world. If the world tobacco market shifted to selling more of this and less cigarettes, millions of premature deaths could be avoided over the 21st Century. But true to form, the well paid and comfortably smug public health community refuses to accept this concept and adopts a counter-productive prohibitionist stance – hoping naively that if people have a choice between quitting and dying, they'll choose to quit.

Inconveniently, tobacco is highly addictive, so many wont or can't choose to quit and *will die*. So instead of telling the truth about low risk options, there is a conspiracy to lie and mislead (for example, the US Surgeon General told a barefaced lie about it to Congress). In Europe, we even have a directive (2001/37/EC see article 8 and 2.4) that *bans* the much lower risk products than cigarettes. If there is a reason to be a Euro-sceptic, then this is one of the strongest – deliberate denial of access to products that are much lower risk to people that are addicted to nicotine.

I feel very strongly about this, so last night I met with US Smokeless Tobacco to encourage its new chief executive to make his target market the erosion of the 5.5

trillion unit cigarette category. If he achieved that, I think they'd save more lives than most of their opponents in the public health community. he didn't need much convincing.