

# USA WORKERS GET SMOKE-IN BOOTHS

SIDS was at its height in 1986-88, smoking had further fallen to around 30% of adults. If two-thirds of SIDS were due to smoking during pregnancy or exposure of the baby to ETS, SIDS should have existed long before 1948 and the rate of SIDS should have begun its decline well before 1988.

In 1992 a study by KC Schoendorf and JL Kiely reported that approximately 85% of all SIDS deaths occur in normal birthweight babies. However, babies born to smokers are supposed to have low birthweight. This suggests that if smoking is a cause of SIDS it must work through pathways other than an effect on birthweight and the problems associated with low birthweight. Meanwhile, studies by M H Malloy et al in 1988 and G N Schrauzer et al in 1975 suggest that even if smoking in pregnancy does retard the growth of the baby, these babies are more mature than those born to non-smokers. This point is reflected in the finding that low birthweight babies born to smokers have a lower neonatal mortality rate than those babies who have not been exposed to tobacco smoke.

If smoking in pregnancy is associated with babies being born prematurely and smoking is considered a cause of SIDS, one would expect to find a higher proportion of premature babies among SIDS victims. In the various studies that have considered this factor it has not always been the case, and the latest report provides no information on the number of premature babies who either suffered SIDS or were in the control group.

## Making an Arrest

Smoking, and the epidemiological studies which have sought to incriminate it, is really the red herring in the story of SIDS and the search for the culprit. Circumstantial evidence is insufficient to secure a conviction, and anyway the facts would be discovered during cross-examination. Smoking is further exonerated, and cot mattresses implicated, by evidence from Japan. The Japanese have one of the highest smoking rates in the world, but SIDS is an unrecognised phenomenon. This could be explained by the fact that the Japanese do not use British-style mattresses, nor the fire retardants identified by Richardson.

Cot mattresses, with the aid of sleeping position, temperature, and poorly ventilated homes are the strongest candidates for arrest and charge. They might get off on a technicality, but the evidence is surely sufficient for them to be brought to trial.

- Further readings on Barry Richardson's work: Richardson, B.A. (1994), 'Sudden Infant Death Syndrome: a possible primary cause', in the *Journal of the Forensic Science Society*, 34(3). Richardson, B.A. (1991), 'Mattresses and cot death', in the *Lancet*, 337, 1285

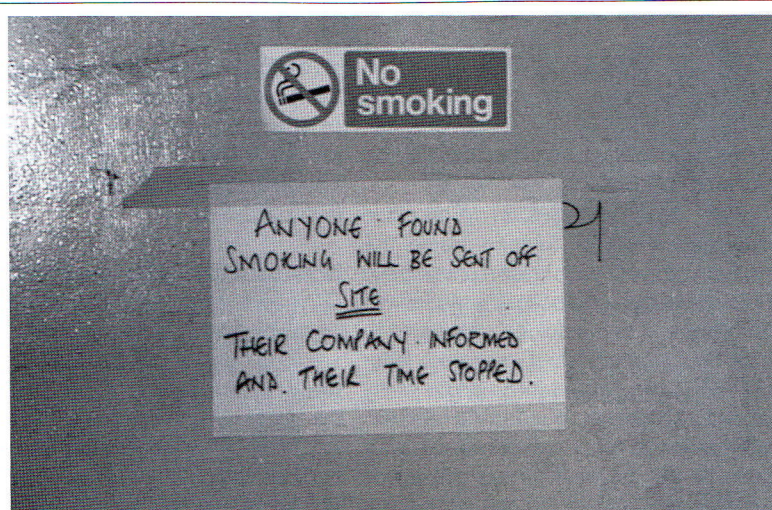
Some USA employers are installing outdoor booths for their besieged smoking workers in recognition of the ineffectiveness of hard-line anti-smoking policies in the workplace.

Measures designed to humiliate and subject smokers to all weathers, are now seen as being counter-productive and many companies are refraining from battering morale unduly. This is backed up with evidence that hassling smokers doesn't drive them to quit. A University of Maryland study concluded that draconian bans are marginal in smoking cessation.

The smoking booths are made by B.I.G. Enterprises, with the best models being motion activated. When a smoker enters, lights and an exhaust fan turn on, as does a heater or air conditioner. So far over 200 have been sold to companies including Xerox, Mobil, and Hewlett-Packard.

The example of Formosa Plastics is illustrative of the points which FOREST continually raises regarding the introduction of bans, and the consequences of anti-smoking policies. The company completely banned smoking at its Texas Plant when it opened four years ago. This appeared logical enough when volatile chemicals could cause an explosion. However, with a quarter of the 2,000 workforce being smokers, many were often caught sneaking smokes. Rather than undertake a mass programme of firing and disciplining staff, they installed booths in safe areas, so that workers are never more than a 100-yard walk from a booth. Violations have ceased and the company believes the money spent is a bargain considering the consequences of an explosion, rather than trying to enforce an unworkable policy.

- At this year's Trades Union Congress Annual Conference FOREST will once again be hosting a drinks and buffet reception for delegates. The reception is at the Ruskin Hotel, Albert Road, from 1.00-2.00pm on Wednesday 11th September.



FOREST requires news of smoking bans being introduced at your workplace, or anywhere else for that matter. Details could appear in *free choice* and be referred to in FOREST's media work as examples of the discrimination that smokers face. Photographic examples are particularly welcome.