

UP IN SMOKE

9.5
by Alexander Baron



Chris R. Tame, Director of Forest.

In Britain, one in three of the adult population smokes; the percentage is slightly higher among regular travellers. Smoking is not in vogue and hasn't been for a long time, however one in three is still a very big minority. Although the trend is for smoking to be progressively outlawed in all public places, there are those who think the smoking traveller gets a raw deal. This applies particularly to flying. One organisation which certainly does think so is FOREST (Freedom Organisation for the Right to Enjoy Smoking Tobacco). We have recently interviewed their director, Chris Tame and asked him whether they publish material and lobby also on behalf of the travelling smoker.

Chris Tame confirmed that their policy as regards travelling is the same as on anything else. "We don't deny the right of any private entre-

preneur to lay down any particular rules on his property or his business as he sees fit. We don't deny the right of companies to have total smoking bans on their aeroplanes if they want to. We believe that, if you allow a free market to operate, the market generally tries to respond to the demands of all its consumers to find the best mix of a response to all those demands. If people want to run entirely non-smoking airlines, they should be allowed to do so. We stand for freedom of choice".

But, what about safety? According to Chris Tame the safety argument is totally fallacious since the only place on an aircraft where smoking may be unsafe is in the toilet. *But any attempt to impose a smoking ban results in people smoking covertly in toilets - said Chris Tame - This is why groups like the Air Transport Users Committee,*

British Midland, and the South African airline pilots organisation all oppose total smoking ban on aircraft".

When British Airways introduced a total smoking ban on internal UK flights, FOREST published a Good Smokers' Guide to domestic flights which informed passengers on how they could travel on more consumer-friendly flights. They also produced a similar international guide because there have been some airlines which had enforced total bans without informing their customers who found out they could not smoke only on board. This behaviour totally undermines the argument put forward by the anti-smoking lobby that it's good business to have a total smoking ban. Fortunately this malpractice was reversed.