

# Edwina huffs to stop smokers puff

■ Edwina Currie confided the news to me in her car last week: that her department is about to publish a report showing that those who don't smoke, but live and work among smokers, are appreciably more likely to contract lung cancer than those who live smoke-free. And she went on: 'We've been cautious about publishing the figures until we were sure.'

Now that the Government apparently is sure, this is startling news. It means that with National No-Smoking Day just 72 hours away, the gloves are off in the battle for the hearts and lungs of Britain. In one corner, Edwina and the anti-cigarette lobby; in the other, not only the international tobacco companies but Nicholas Ridley, Mrs Thatcher's Environment Minister who boasts that he not only smokes but smokes *hard*.

No longer, when the report is published, will smokers be able to drone on about it all being a matter of personal choice, individual liberties and so

forth: there will be damning evidence that when they puff smoke around others they may be not just helping to kill themselves but some of the rest of us too. And don't non-smokers have an inviolable right not to be given cancer by other people's smoke?

Certainly Ms Currie, 40, thinks so. According to her figures non-smokers have a roughly 30 per cent greater chance of getting lung cancer if they are subjected to cigarette smoke — and she wants the world to know. 'I don't like people smoking anywhere near

me and I never have done. I tell them to go away and do it somewhere else.' She never intended to be a campaigner, but was shocked when she came to the DHSS and saw the facts — especially the rising lung cancer fatalities in young, smoking women.

Besides, she went on during our conversation in her car, smoking 'is a dirty and smelly activity, and unattractive.' What the Government now had to do was 'to make sure that the information is available and to ensure that the image of smoking as put across in advertising is kept under some kind of control.' She helps the struggle, one of her civil servants says, by scurrying around hiding ashtrays.

But does she represent the Government's views? I decided to go to the sixteenth floor of the Department of Environment to see if Mr Ridley, 58 and a member of the Cabinet, agreed. He runs an entirely different regime: civil servants in his private office are used to seeing Silk Cut after

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