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Stopping the Slow Burn

The Federal Trade Commission, in recommending to Congress that cigaret advertising on radio and TV be stopped, has made a strong proposal — but one no stronger than the situation demands.

The FTC itself is not in a position to enforce the ban. Already it is living under the restriction imposed by Congress three years ago barring it from making cigaret advertisers include health warnings in all ads. The restriction has another year before it expires. But the FTC's sister agency, the Federal Communications Commission, could rule on the matter, or Congress itself could empower the FCC to ban cigaret ads.

BANNING THE ads would help dampen the appeal of smoking as a socially "in" thing to do, particularly among the young. It would also help adults find relief from the suggestions that smoking can give them peace of mind or make them more acceptable socially.

The fight against smoking has been a tough one. It was in 1964 that what should have been a strong blow to smoking was registered. Then the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service reported a casual link between smoking and respiratory diseases. But both cigaret smoking and the advertising that promotes it continued their slow malevolent burn.

The evidence of smoking's relationship with health hazards has continued to mount. Only this week the Wall Street Journal carried a feature story on the addictive nature of the smoking habit.

THE JOURNAL rightly told how the argument of the Tobacco Institute, Inc. — that no cause-effect relationship between smoking and health has been proved — has given smokers an out in justifying their habit. That the institute's head is thrust in the sand was shown by a

Public Health Service report citing further cause-effect evidence.

A series of articles earlier this year on the cigaret advertising issue pointed out that the tobacco and broadcasting industries stand to lose great sums should the FTC recommendation be enacted.

It should be clear that smoking is a habit that takes root in a climate of approval. With half of American youngsters taking up smoking by the age of 18, the need to alter the climate is urgent. — **Christian Science Monitor.**

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