

States need shock therapy to recall the stakes

19A Who ever accused the Canadians of being stodgy? The government north of the border is getting positively lurid.

On "Weedless Wednesday," Canada's national smoke-out day, the health minister revealed a proposal to redecorate his country's cigarette packages with full-color photos of diseased body parts. Talk about lively — or should I say deadly?

— graphics.

In the states, we are still running drab black-and-white surgeon general's warnings that no one reads, but our neighbors are ready to (dress) up the ante with attention-grabbing photos of everything from a bad heart to a cancerous lung to a lupul of lesions. They even have a photo to



ELLEN GOODMAN
Washington Post Writers Group, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, DC 20071.

emphasize the link between smoking and impotence, although, in this case, Canadian reserve prevails: It's a picture of a limp cigarette.

Of course, it's possible that nothing will keep an addict from a fix. Remember the cigarettes with the skull and crossbones on the pack? Seen the Camel ad with a guy approaching, grasping nothing but his cigarette carton? But I still have to applaud this counterattack against

tobacco's glamour. At least they're trying to raise the nicotine-dulled consciousness.

Just imagine what we could do with this idea. My favorite tobacco ad of the moment features the Virginia Slims gal, oozing romance. "I made a promise to bring romance back into my life, to kiss negativity goodbye, and love the dawning of each new day," she says. Then comes the kicker: "Virginia Slims. Find Your Voice."

Find your voice? Instead of a small warning about fetal injury in the corner, we could have a sweet little photo of a destroyed larynx.

The Canadian blast comes at a good moment for Americans who want to think about our own anti-smoking messages. These days, the tobacco people are supposedly on the defensive. Cigarette taxes are rising; the number of new smokers is declining. And, most importantly, the first installments of the \$249-billion tobacco settlement are

arriving in state capitals.

But it's not just that settlement money that has me wondering about big tobacco's endless ability to make lemonade out of our lemons. This year, the states are due to get \$1.4 billion. But the National Conference of State Legislatures recently figured that only some 8 percent of the money is earmarked for anti-smoking programs.

For anti-smoking programs, however, the portion is slated for what is loosely described as "health care," but much is also going into totally unrelated

programs like roads, schools, hurricane damage, sidewalks, balancing the budget, and teen-age boot camps.

No one expected all the money to go into anti-smoking campaigns. The Centers for Disease Control suggested 20 percent to 25 percent for prevention. But few states are meeting that goal.

To the dismay of anti-smoking advocates who pushed for the deal, most legislators seem to regard this settlement like any other pot of funds. It's found money, no strings attached. In Michigan, for example, one of the top five smoking states in the country, three-quarters of the settlement will go to college scholarships.

This is fine with the tobacco companies. Having raised the settlement money by upping the cost of cigarettes, they still get new smokers. As Matthew Myers, executive vice president of the National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids told a reporter, "They're laughing all the way to the bank."

An anti-bidly clause in the settlement says that if the rate of smoking decreases, so does the payment. At what point does a state have a motive for keeping the smoking rolls up?

The point of the settlement was not just to get damages for smoking-related health problems, but to prevent new ones. We already know what works. Programs in Oregon, California, Florida and Massachusetts have had fairly dramatic effects in reducing smoking.

But there are still a whole lot of legislators who need shock therapy to remember what's at stake. Maybe some Canadian will send them a photo of a lung or a heart, a lip or a limp you-know-what.

Did you hear what the school kids up there said when they saw the mock-ups for the new packages? "Gross!" Sounds like a great name for a new cigarette.

Write to Ellen Goodman at the Washington Post Writers Group, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, DC 20071.

32/34

2083514423