



ROYAL COLLEGE OF
PHYSICIANS OF IRELAND



ASH
IRELAND

10 years of the Workplace Smoking Ban in Ireland

Monday 24 March 2014

Politicians, Scientists, the Tobacco Industry and WHO FCTC Article 5.3

Professor (Senator) John Crown

Every day in Ireland, five people get the news that they have incurable fatal lung cancer. In 95% of cases, their illness was caused by smoking. Smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death in Ireland and other western countries through numerous cancers, heart disease and stroke.

Tobacco kills approximately 100 times more Irish people annually than illegal drugs. If it was discovered tomorrow, it would surely be illegal. Everyone knows smoking is bad for you. Most smokers want to quit. But smoking is an addiction.

Tobacco companies must recruit 50 new tobacco addicts daily just to replace the deaths that are caused by their own products. In 80% of cases, these novice smokers are children. Big tobacco will deny the reality that its business plan can be summed up in four words: "addict children to carcinogens".

Big tobacco wants more people smoking, whereas public health policy is aimed at reducing and ultimately eliminating tobacco use. For these reasons, the goals of public health and those of big tobacco are fundamentally incompatible. Their relationship must be perpetually adversarial and unremittingly hostile.

This is why I recently published the Protection of the Public Interest from Tobacco Lobbying Bill, which aimed to restrict and make more transparent, any meetings between the tobacco industry and our Government.

Big tobacco is not and cannot be the Government's partner in any sort of enterprise.

Big tobacco has just one agenda: it wants to sell tobacco.

Big tobacco is incredibly rich and terrifyingly powerful.

Big tobacco uses the subtle weapons of lobbying, legal intimidation and bribery.

Big tobacco does everything in its power to thwart the tobacco control policies of democratic Governments.

Despite having a campaigning and committed anti-tobacco Minister for Health, the track record of the current Government in respect of tobacco control legislation is poor. I have published two Bills – one is making very slow progress and the other was opposed by the Government.

The Government has passed a Bill which has actually made it easier to sell cheap tobacco to kids. It was forced on us by the European authorities and the commercial authorities. Shame on them for making us do this.

I completely support the Minister's proposed Bill, which would introduce mandatory plain packaging with explicit health warnings.

Let us be blunt; the tobacco industry imposed the death penalty on our citizens. There is nothing disproportionate about us criminalising any part of its activities.