

BILLBORED

NUMBER 13, APRIL 1984

PRICE
20 cents

THE UN-OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF B.U.G.A. U.P.
Billboard-Utilising Graffitiists Against Unhealthy Promotions

ROYAL SHOW UNDER ATTACK

"Billbored" readers will recall the stir created at the time of last year's Royal Easter Show when the Australian Consumers' Association condemned the Show for the predominance of cigarette and beer ads at what is primarily a children's event. (see Billbored No 6, May 1983 for the amazing escapades of two Sydney BUGs whom the RAS refused permission to make home movies and tape recordings at the show).

BUGA UP's protest at last year's show has obviously rubbed off on various other public interest groups. This year's show sparked off protests by CARES (see story next page) and also Animal Liberation, who said they had been denied a stand to display their version of life down on the farm. They said the show with its contented cows and pampered pigs constituted false advertising. They held a "Real Easter Show" demonstration outside the main gates to highlight cruelty and exploitation of livestock.

The new director of the show Major-General Gordon Maitland brushed criticism of the RAS aside saying "The show does not try to depict farm life - it portrays the excellence of our rural industries and the huge contribution they have made to the national economy" (Australian 14/4). This contrasts with his friendly opening message in the show programme, "Sometimes those of us who live in the city need to be reminded that there is another world out there where our food and much of our clothing originates."

This 1984-style double talk was not lost on B.U.G.A. U.P. field officers who inspected the show on the opening day and found unhealthy promotions and junk food to be exactly as in 1983. Cigarette ads (779 in 1983) out numbered pigs (421) and goats (262) combined. Appalled by the slogan "the larger than life show", B.U.G.A. U.P. issued a press release complete with photos to describe "The Royal Pusher Show". Major General Maitland denied any responsibility for drug pushing at the show described in the RAS's own literature as "a fun show for the kids with subtle educational overtones". He resorted to the old tactic of blaming the government "And as far as cigarette advertising is concerned, if the Government wants to make it illegal we will get rid of it."



Matthew Martin
Sydney Morning
Herald, 10.4.84

In spite of such apparent indifference, protests by consumer bodies including the Australian Consumers' Association, Parents and Citizens' Association and BUGA UP over past years have caused a stir within the RAS hierarchy. This year, a sympathiser in the RAS office revealed to BUGA UP that the subject of unhealthy promotions at the Show has become a

contentious issue with RAS management. While some members of the RAS agree that beer and cigarette promotions have no place at their show, the threatened industries have applied pressure through the government. The RAS has been instructed to refrain from any action which may be seen as discriminating against certain industries, with the result that the offending ads will be discreetly phased out over a period of time. The first move to this end has been the rejection of an application for a further 20 cigarette billboards. It has also been noted that the Benson and Hedges clock tower is no longer illuminated at night and it is rumoured that the ad will be removed in due course.

This pathetic rate of progress is in stark contrast to the speed with which cigarette ads were removed from children's attractions at the Melbourne show last year.

BUGA UP activists have announced their intention to contact CARES officials with a view to radicalising next year's protest.

**R.A.S.
N.S.W.
NEWS**

THE ROYAL PUSHER SHOW

Yes, it's Showtime again. And what a roundup of treats we've got for the kids this year.

No expense has been spared to make this year's Royal the biggest, brightest, most incredible on earth!

Australia's wealthiest, friendliest corporations have banded together to make your child's day at the Show an unforgettable event.

Your children will never forgive you if they miss out on these, larger than life" attractions

* The Electric Chair.

Your kids can have a taste of "Death Row" without committing any crime as they are conveyed relentlessly towards a giant replica of a Sterling cigarette pack!

* The AMCAL Drug Store

The AMCAL drug pusher is the kid's best friend. You won't believe your eyes when you see this amazing chemist shop decked out with Winfield ads. See diseases promoted and cured all under the one roof.

* The Rothmans Chamber of Horrors

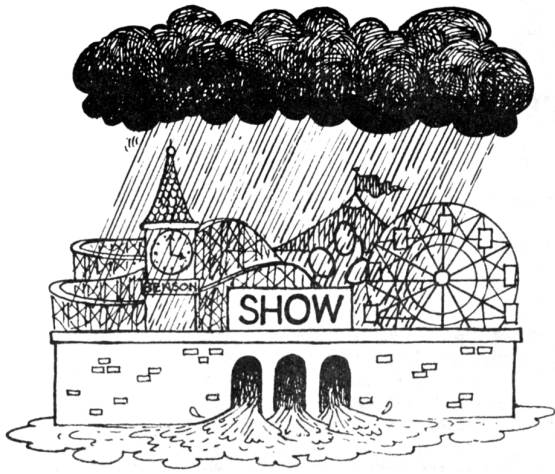
Innocent children wander among a display of photographs while drug pushers lurk in the shadows. The kids will thrill at photos of police arresting criminals while the thugs who contrived this shameful exhibition are praised for their contribution to the arts.

* Branding Demonstration

After watching Marlboro cars and smiling cowgirls offering cigarettes, a new brand will be indelibly burned into your child's subconscious. To the Marlboro Man, your child's mind is as vulnerable as a cow's backside.

Issued by: B.U.G.A. U.P. Box 78, Wentworth Building,
University of Sydney, 2006

Press release issued by BUGA UP.



CARES Pours Cold Water on Show

Thousands of householders in the Centennial Park and South Paddington areas around the showground received leaflets from a newly formed consumer action group called CARES - the Campaign Against the Royal Easter Show - a week before the show opened.

The CARES pamphlet explained that CARES was "the consumer backlash against the over-commercialisation of the Royal Easter Show" and that "over the past few years, the show has degenerated into yet another thinly-veiled excuse for exploitation of children by commercial interests."

CARES appealed to local residents to boycott the show and to complain about the noise, litter and traffic jams. The leaflet announced ambitious plans to reduce attendance at the show by 100,000:

"The worst thing for the show is wet weather, and we all know that it always rains just after washing the car. You can participate in this innovative consumer action by washing your car on Friday 13th. Our rainmaking consultants have advised that all car washing must be synchronised to the one day for maximum effectiveness, and we have chosen the 13th as being a particularly appropriate day. We trust that the offending ads will have been removed and the weather will have cleared in time for Children's Day." Residents who were unable to wash their cars were offered a free car wash if they called the CARELINE and gave details of their car's registration and where it would be parked on the Friday.

The "Stay In Touch" column in the Herald reported how they had received "an interesting pamphlet" and told readers how to participate in a "remarkable mass exercise". They concluded "Ever eager to help a worthy cause, this column would like to suggest that those persons who do not own a car might assist by hanging their washing out on Friday."

The CARELINE answering machine urged callers to assist in the rainmaking activities by dressing in black, banging metal pots, creating smoke clouds and boiling water. Callers were asked to leave the location of their car. Public response ranged between enthusiastic support, laughter, stunned silence and abusive swearing. One woman caller suggested CARES was a car stealing racket and, being without a car, suggested the team could come round and wash her instead. Embarrassment was avoided however as she didn't give an address.

The organisers of CARES, James Espy and Captain Henry Piddington, invited the media to the "free car wash" on Friday 13th. The CARES car wash team equipped with buckets and sponges and decked out in their most colourful wet weather gear duly assembled in front of the billboards in Moore Park Road. By the time the CARES concept had been explained to the cameras and two cars had been washed it was raining steadily. The operation was declared a success and further car washing was abandoned.

In radio interviews spokesperson Jim Espy drew attention to the cynical attitude of advertisers who exploit the show to establish the link between their products and having fun, while insisting that their promotions do not influence children. He suggested that it would be appropriate for an agricultural show to promote fresh and natural foods rather than processed junk foods.

On the ABC, Buzz Kennedy, having noticed that CARES and BUGA UP shared the same address, pursued a strong line of questioning on possible links between the two. Jim Espy insisted that the only link between CARES and BUGA UP was the common box number. The Telegraph described CARES as a "mysterious organisation" and this "mystery" was no doubt enhanced by the fact that Espy and Piddington were previously unknown as consumer activists. Senior officials of CARES have approached BUGA UP with a view to pooling resources for a combined protest next year.



This year Carlton United Breweries, out of the goodness of their hearts, promoted the Royal Easter Show on their billboards.

W.H.O. Will Stop the Drug Pushers?

As advertising bans and growing consumer awareness continue to impact sales of cigarettes in the developed countries, the drug pushers are setting their sights on the enormous potential of the Third World. With governments greedy for international trade and indifferent to possible long-term consequences, the highly sophisticated tobacco industry are having a field day promoting their wares using techniques which were outlawed elsewhere years ago.



Tobacco advertising: contributing to third world prosperity.

The governments of developing countries are faced with an unpleasant choice between allowing the slow-motion genocide of their people by the tobacco pushers, or instant political suicide should they act against an industry which is bringing desperately needed foreign investment into their economy.

The result is booming cigarette sales, with a corresponding trend in lung cancer. The WHO says that lung cancer mortality is growing as a result of the energetic promotion of high nicotine (and hence highly addictive) cigarettes in developing countries.

The WHO has announced that in the fight against cancer, priority will be given to educational programmes to arm the unwary consumers against the onslaught of cigarette ads.

If successful, these moves, combined with similar initiatives recently announced by the International Organisation of Consumer Unions, will no doubt make aerosol paint the new growth industry of the Third World.

NO Right to Advertise

The tobacco industry continues to support its right to advertise with that well-worn argument, "if it's legal to sell, it should be legal to advertise". Joining in the debate, Michael Blakeney and Jill McKeough of the Law Faculty at the University of New South Wales have brought their legal expertise to bear and come out firmly against the tobacco advertisers.

In their article published in Media Information Australia, Blakeney and McKeough examine with some thoroughness the claims of the tobacco advertisers and how these conflict with their practice in denying freedom of speech to those who oppose the promotion of tobacco products. The stand of the self-proclaimed guardians of the civil liberties of the people of Australia is considerably less impressive when one considers that they are not "... bodies which one would imagine to be vitally interested in these issues, but ... commercial groups having pecuniary interest in the continuation of lucrative cigarette advertising revenues".

Looking at the question from the legal point of view, the article points out that there are many controls which limit any advertiser's freedom in describing and promoting his product, which are not merely an infringement of public freedom but which are designed to protect other producers and consumers.

BRIBERY

Blakeney and McKeough go on to discuss the way in which the tobacco lobby has effectively bribed its way into political and social power through sponsorship, the advertising dollar and tax revenue and has used that power to deny freedom of information to anyone opposed to tobacco promotion. They describe the biased decision of the Media Council in upholding complaints against the "Quit for Life" campaign while dismissing those against cigarette advertisements as "the suppression of free speech upon dubious, idiosyncratic and capricious grounds".

They further discuss the lack of information, or misinformation, provided by cigarette advertisements. It is suggested that a more effective Trade Practices Commission would long since have curbed the more extravagant claims and associations made by cigarette advertising, which effectively breach both self-regulation and the law.

The tobacco lobby's suppression any sort of equal treatment of both sides of the question demonstrates their true concern with freedom of information. OAs with the law at a more corrupt time, justice is extended according to the furniture of one's pockets."



FREEDOM FROM ABUSE

As with the freedom to advertise, it is pointed out that "our society confers a freedom of enterprise subject to a more important freedom from abuse." This is really the key issue in the debate as to whether the suppression of tobacco advertising constitutes an infringement of rights to freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and free enterprise. It is normally the role of the law to protect the public from abuse by the unscrupulous and, in this context, the significance to of a proposed ban on cigarette promotion is succinctly summarised: "it is a greater infringement of liberty that taxpayers support the medical and social consequences of smoking through income tax, than to have to endure legislation aimed at decreasing the habit and its costs to the community".

In the light of this legal interpretation of the case, it is not incompatible with the fundamental notions of freedom to seek a ban on the advertising of a product which is as harmful as tobacco is acknowledged to be. On the contrary, the anomaly is that it is still, under existing laws, legal to sell the product.

According to Blakeney and McKeough the success of the tobacco industry in maintaining the status quo "may well derive from the fact that they have been able to convince large numbers of consumers that their carcinogenic, addictive, noxious and foul smelling products are socially acceptable, masculine, feminine, ruggedly individual, egalitarian, elitist, healthy, fresh, mild and sexually potent."

(The Right To Advertise: The Cigarette Debate" by Michael Blakeney and Jill McKeough. Media Information Australia No. 31, February 1984)

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Cinzano's marketing director, Dick Tyrrell, attempting to justify a new advertising campaign in women's magazines:

"We feel print gives us a better opportunity than TV to explain exactly what Cinzano is, how to drink it and what the benefits are."

VISUAL POLLUTERS LOSE APPEAL

Following two recent court battles between Sydney City Council and Claude Neon, the inner city suburbs of Redfern and Surry Hills have been spared two gigantic billboards, each 9.1x4.6 meters.

The battle started when the Council rejected an application for a "Come to Marlboro Country" sign to be erected on the side of a building at 230 Elizabeth Street, near Central Railway. The Council felt that the area already had more than its fair share of unsightly billboards, and as the proposed sign had nothing to do with the premises concerned it did not benefit the community and was therefore not justified. The sign would have been visible to rail commuters, not to mention those citizens enjoying the morning sun in the park opposite while sipping from bottles wrapped in newspaper.

VISUAL POLLUTION

The Council believed that the sign would be nothing more than visual pollution and tried to convince the Land and Environment Court of that when Claude Neon's appeal was heard in March. The Council won, but only due to a technicality, rather than on the grounds of visual pollution. Claude Neon had failed to get the required permission from the owners of the building, and the permission of the lessee was not legally sufficient.

Late in March a similar court hearing took place over another marlboro billboard, this time proposed for the roof of an old hotel in Cleveland Street, Redfern, near St Paul's place. This time the cause was argued on its merits, with the Sydney Council calling as witnesses the Chief Town Planner, a representative of the National Trust, a road traffic expert and a "concerned citizen" whose affiliation with BUGA UP was quickly recognised by Claude Neon's lawyer.

A QUICK CHECK UNDER THE BED

Desperately trying to discredit the witness during cross-examination, he asked the inevitable question, "Are you a member of BUGA UP?". The equally inevitable answer of "BUGA UP doesn't have members" did not satisfy the lawyer who then alluded to the lack of advertising in certain countries, and proceeded to ask the witness "Have you ever visited any iron curtain countries?". The answer was negative, so one can only guess at what the next question might have been.

While the Council's witnesses presented evidence that the proposed billboard would be a blot on the environment, Claude Neon argued the commercial side of the case, reiterating the industry line about advertising being the bedrock upon which all that Western civilisation holds dear is founded. They also promised that the sign would be neatly constructed and of the highest standard.

In a reserved decision, the Court eventually refused permission for the sign, primarily because of "the potential of the sign to be a traffic hazard" in distracting motorists approaching the nearby intersection, and secondly because "the sign would be unacceptably intrusive in the streetscape of Cleveland Street, which in its relevant portion, is, characterised by relatively small-scale continuous buildings" and would be "unacceptably out of scale and character with the building to which it is proposed to be attached."

NEW BILLBOARD BATTLE LOOMS

This ruling has set an important precedent for local councils who have so far felt impotent under the Local Government Act to prohibit billboard proliferation on aesthetic grounds. Several other Councils who have tried unsuccessfully to refuse planning permission are now gearing up to challenge rampant commercial interests on a broader, united front.

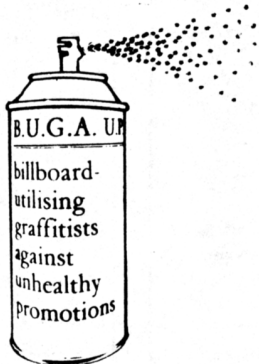


Royal Standard Hotel, built 1896



Graffitist's impression of the proposed sign in position.

B.U.G.A. U.P. NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT



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