

Torches of Freedom: Women and Smoking Propaganda

Wendy Christensen on February 27, 2012

Edward Bernays (1891-1995) is largely considered the founder of public relations (or “engineering consent,” as he called it) but is not known very well outside of the marketing and advertising fields. A nephew of Sigmund Freud, Bernays was the first to theorize that people could be made to want things they don’t need by appealing to unconscious desires (to be free, to be successful etc.).

Bernays, and propaganda theorist Walter Lippman, were members of the U.S. Government’s Committee on Public Information (CPI), which successfully convinced formally isolationist Americans to support entrance into World War I. While propaganda was commonly thought of as a negative way of manipulating the masses that should be avoided, Bernays believed that it was necessary for the functioning of a society, as otherwise people would be overwhelmed with too many choices. In his words:

Modern propaganda is a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to an enterprise, idea or group.

After WWI, Bernays was hired by the American Tobacco Company to encourage women to start smoking. While men smoked cigarettes, it was not publicly acceptable for women to smoke.

Bernays staged a dramatic public display of women smoking during the Easter Day Parade in New York City. (These women were hired to ‘seed’ the crowd and encourage others to ‘light up’ in support of the movement – which they did.

He then told the press to expect that women suffragists would light up “torches of freedom” during the parade to show they were equal to men.

Like the “**You’ve come a long way, baby**” ads, this campaign commodified women’s progress and desire to be considered equal to men (relevant clip starts at 3:00):

Here are some of the news photographs of women smoking publicly during the Easter Parade:



The campaign was considered successful as sales to women increased afterward. Cigarette companies followed Bernays's lead and created ad campaigns that targeted women. Lucky Brand Cigarettes capitalized on recent fashions for skinny women by telling women to "Reach for a Lucky instead of a sweet":



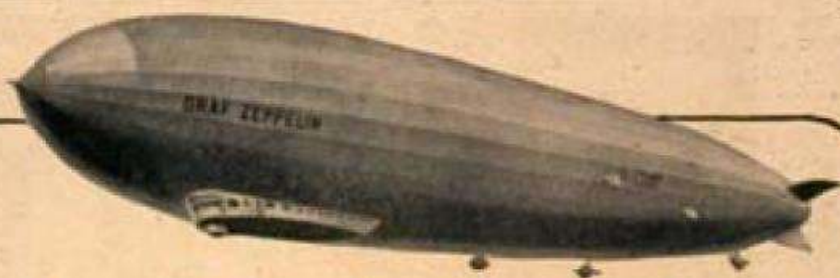
To keep a slender figure
No one can deny...

Reach
for a
LUCKY
instead of a
sweet

LUCKY STRIKE
"IT'S TOASTED"
CIGARETTES

"It's toasted"
No Throat Irritation - No Cough.

The advertisement features a woman with dark, curly hair and rosy cheeks, wearing a purple spaghetti-strap top. She is leaning forward with her hands clasped, looking upwards with a serene expression. To her right is a pack of Lucky Strike cigarettes, tilted to show the front and side. The pack is dark green with a red circular logo containing the words "LUCKY STRIKE" and "IT'S TOASTED". The word "CIGARETTES" is printed in gold on the side of the pack. The background is a solid light green color.



“I smoke a Lucky instead of eating sweets.”

Grace M. Hay Drummond Hay
Lady Grace Drummond Hay,
only female passenger on the
Graf Zeppelin.



“The fact that we were not permitted to smoke from the time the Graf Zeppelin left Friedrichshafen until we landed at Lukehurst only increased my appetite for a Lucky Strike. Oh, how good that first one tasted! I'm really keen for Lucky Strike—the toasted flavor is delightful. I smoke a Lucky instead of eating sweets—that's what many men have been doing for years. I think it high time for women smoked Luckies and kept our figures trim.”

LADY GRACE DRUMMOND HAY

The modern common sense way—reach for a Lucky instead of a fattening sweet. Thousands are doing it—men keep healthy and fit, women retain a trim figure.

Lucky Strike, the finest tobaccos, skillfully blended, then toasted to develop a flavor which is a delightful alternative for that craving for fattening sweets.

Toasting frees Lucky Strike from impurities. 20,679 physicians recognize this when they say Luckies are less irritating than other cigarettes. That's why folks say: “It's good to smoke Luckies.”

A reasonable proportion of sugar in the diet is recommended, but the authorities are overwhelming that too many fattening sweets are harmful. So, for moderation's sake we say:—

“REACH FOR A LUCKY
INSTEAD OF A SWEET.”

“It's toasted”

No Throat Irritation—No Cough.

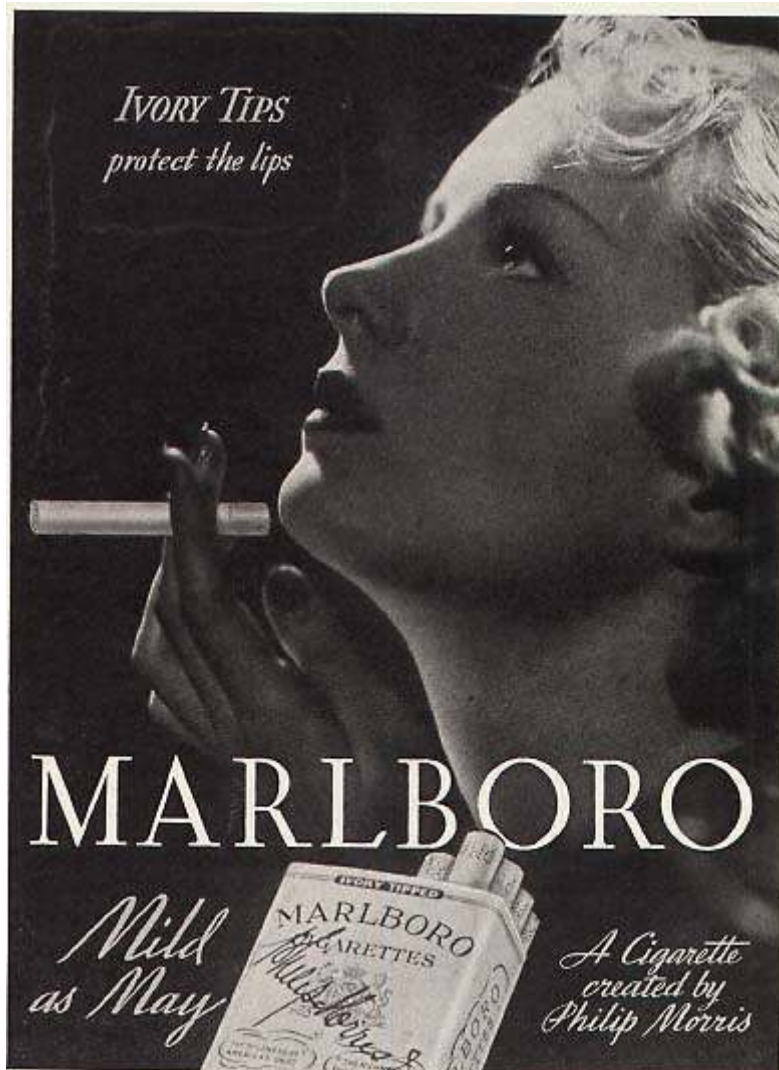
Count to assist radio hook-up every Saturday night through the National Broadcasting Company's network. The Lucky Strike Dance Orchestra in “The Tunes that made Broadway Broadway.”

© 1928, The American Tobacco Co., Manufacturers

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weet.

Marlboro, in stark contrast to the Marlboro Man ads we're familiar with today, started the "Mild as May" campaign to encourage women to take up smoking cigarettes that were appropriately mild and easier to smoke:





Chesterfield, in a 1930s ad, argued that “women started to smoke...just about the time they began to vote”:

I really don't know
if I should smoke...

... but my brothers and my sweetheart smoke, and it does give me a lot of pleasure.

Women began to smoke, so they tell me, just about the time they began to vote, but that's hardly a reason for women smoking. I guess I just like to smoke, that's all.

It so happens that I smoke CHESTERFIELD. They seem to be milder and they have a very pleasing taste.



the Cigarette that's Milder

the Cigarette that Tastes Better

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF!



Don't test one brand alone ... compare them all!

TRY THIS TEST!
 Take a PHILIP MORRIS—and any other cigarette. Then, here's what to do:

- 1 Light up other cigarette. Take a pull—just inhale and exhale the smoke some through your nose.
- 2 Now do exactly the same thing with the other cigarette.

NOTICE THAT PHILIP MORRIS IS SIGNIFICANTLY LESS IRRITATING. DEFINITELY MILDER!



Unlike others, we never ask you to test our brand alone. We say ... **compare PHILIP MORRIS ... match PHILIP MORRIS ... judge PHILIP MORRIS against any other cigarette!** Then make your own choice! Remember

NO CIGARETTE HANGOVER
 means MORE SMOKING PLEASURE!

CALL FOR PHILIP MORRIS



Cigarette makers also worked to teach women how to smoke properly. Ads often depicted women in the act of smoking. Some companies, like Philip Morris, even held smoking demonstrations for women:



HOW NOT TO SNUFF OUT A CIGARET IS ONE OF MANY BAD SMOKING HABITS DEMONSTRATED BY MISS LINDEN

CLUBWOMEN GET LESSONS IN CIGARET SMOKING

To a small group of members of the Society of New York State Women, Florence E. Linden, pretty registered nurse and ex-actress, recently lectured on the etiquette of cigaret smoking. The women were mostly over 40. The lecture was mostly about habits and manners which make smoking objectionable. The anomaly in these statements derives from the fact that 90% of women over 45 do not smoke and that the lecture was sponsored by Philip Morris & Co.

During the past year Miss Linden has toured the country lecturing to clubs, department-store employees, nurses, charm-school students on smoking manners. Women are the greatest potential market for future increase in cigaret sales. But women's bad smoking habits have furnished the

anti-women-smoking campaigners with their best ammunition. Therefore, in her lectures, Miss Linden smartly stresses all the things not to do with a cigaret.

Men's pet peeves against women smokers are 1) messy way of opening packages; 2) affected mannerisms; 3) puffing like a steam engine; 4) lipstick smears. Women growl at men smokers for 1) using dishes, flowerpots and rugs as ash trays; 2) dousing butts under faucet and then dropping in sink. To smokers of either sex Miss Linden advises: when smoking in bed use closed type of ash tray (smoking in bed caused hundreds of deaths last year); in the woods grind butt out against a tree; on a lawn let butt burn to ashes. For additional hints on smoking posed by Miss Linden turn page.

The article describes how a "pretty registered nurse" is touring the country to teach women proper smoking etiquette. The article also lists "men's pet peeves" and "women's pet peeves" for men and women smokers. (Full text after the jump below.)

Together, these efforts to conflate smoking with freedom and make smoking acceptable for women created a new set of consumers and reinforced Bernays's argument that demand could be created.

Article Text:

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