More on postage stamps

To the Editor – The editor's note accompanying John T Tierney's cover essay, "A final note on postage stamps",[1] observed, "Two previous cover essays on anti-tobacco postage stamps were published in *Tobacco Control* (1992; 1:5–6, 87–8). The former included a list of 43 countries that have issued anti-tobacco postage stamps". This list needs to be updated. Countries omitted from the original list are:

Cape Verde – 1980
El Salvador – 1990
India – 1991
Korea – 1973

Countries that have issued anti-tobacco stamps since the list of March 1992 are:

Guinea Bissau – 1992
Laos – 1992
Slovenia – 1992
Tonga – 1993
Venezuela – 1993

Countries issuing second anti-smoking stamps since the 1992 list are:

Syria – 1992
Uruguay – 1992

As a matter of clarification, in the original list of March 1992, the postal issue of Hungary (1980) was a post card and that of Russia (1980) was airmail stationery. Poland, omitted from the 1992 list, has the distinction of having been the first country to issue (in 1971) an anti-smoking post card. This brings the current total to 53 countries that have issued anti-tobacco postage stamps or other postal items. The list of countries that have issued postage stamps that honour tobacco is 125. Currently, over 200 countries of the world issue postage stamps.

Two countries noted in my 1992 cover essay[2] not to have issued anti-tobacco stamps were the US and Great Britain. The US has still not issued an anti-tobacco stamp, but the US Postal Service has given up smoking. Postmaster General Marvin Runyon eliminated smoking at all of the 40000 US postal Service facilities on 13 June 1993. Great Britain, likewise, has still not issued an anti-tobacco stamp. However, in 1992, the Queen relieved Dunhill Tobacco of its royal warrant. The *Lancet* editorialised 15 years ago on royal warrants: "Another matter which deserves attention in Britain is the use of the Royal Crest and the words 'by appointment to her Majesty, The Queen', on some cigarette packages and advertisements..., some cynics refer to the warrant as a Royal Health Warning, the last four monarchs having died of diseases related to smoking".[3]

We can look forward to a new day now that Tonga has issued an anti-tobacco stamp. The Kingdom of Tonga is adjacent to the international date line and thus is the first country of the world to see the beginning of each new day.

JAMES H LUTSCHG
Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

1 Tierney JT. A final word on postage stamps. *Tobacco Control* 1993; **2**: 97.
2 Lutschg JH. Anti-tobacco postage stamps. *Tobacco Control* 1992; **1**: 5–6.
3 Gift horse with nicotine stained teeth. *Lancet* 1978; **2**: 880.

Smoking in Japanese toilet facilities

To the Editor – In Japan, people began to pay attention to the situation of public toilet facilities around 1985, coinciding with the rise of the issue of waste disposal. It was just around that time that Japan Railways launched the Clean Toilet Campaign and began to rebuild toilet facilities at various stations. With these factors as background, a toilet boom was generated, and it expanded rapidly throughout the nation, resulting in the appearance of luxury public toilets in many cities.

As public toilet facilities improved in cleanliness and comfort, people began to use such facilities not only for their inherent purposes but also for smoking. Smoking is permitted in many toilets provided at service areas along expressways, railroad stations, airports, supermarkets, coffee shops and some other public places. A significant percentage of the toilets in these public places have ashtrays. With or without ashtrays, however, a considerable number of people smoke in such toilets.

Many of those who smoke in toilets hide their smoking from the people around them. In a survey of 100 working people, I requested the subjects to write down the reasons why they smoke or have smoked in public toilet facilities. The major reasons mentioned by them were: "Japanese society still does not favour women who smoke in public," "Smoking is not allowed in the employees' room of my company," "I have to smoke secretly because I leave work without permission," "All the rooms in my office are non-smoking areas," "It was fun to do mischief behind the backs of teachers," "When I was a minor, I wanted to experience what grown-ups do," "All of my friends were smoking," "I smoke secretly to diet," "Smoking is a kind of fun which one can do alone," "I want to feel that I am really relaxed," and "I smoke in a toilet because no one can disturb my privacy".

Thus, for many smokers, smoking in a

toilet is a quite stealthy, gloomy act, which is connected, more or less, with various social problems, such as stress, lack of enthusiasm for life, excessive school and social pressures, and poor working conditions and environments. The use of public toilets by many people to smoke is partly due to how Japanese public toilets are operated. Unlike those in some foreign countries, few Japanese public toilets are operated under a tip system. With few exceptions, Japanese public toilets are free of charge and have no attendants. These differences will have to be taken into account when analysing the act of smoking in a public toilet. People smoke in public toilets secretly, very often as a means of escaping for a brief moment from their individual problems. Such acts, therefore, will never be eliminated by prohibition alone.

KIYOMI ONO
Chiba College of Health Sciences
Chiba, Japan

This letter is based on a presentation at the 3rd Asia-Pacific Conference on Tobacco or Health, 6–8 June 1993, in Omiya, Japan. The artwork that accompanies the letter was done by Teresa Menzer-Butler and Marge Forslin. – ED