

No smoking at Saint Mary's

The Cranky Professor

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It won't be long now before the entire Saint Mary's campus becomes off limits to smoking. Smokers will have no one to blame but themselves.

Smoking is vile. It's harmful to smokers, of course, and it can be harmful to people who find themselves near smokers. Cigarette smoke stinks, and it makes cigarette smokers stink. Tobacco farming wastes valuable agricultural land. Smoking brings us early to the hospital beds and the funerals of people we love. Nobody looks stupider than a person with a cigarette in his mouth or hand. Don't get me started.

And yet I don't like to see "No Smoking" signs posted hither and yon. Not simply because as more and more territory goes smoke-free, more and more smokers pack themselves into the space remaining and, thereby, concentrate the mess they make for us to deal with. You know what I mean if you have ever walked the sidewalk on Robie Street by the IWK maternity hospital and had to hold your breath as you passed through the acrid blue cloud. You might have wanted to turn your gaze down to the sidewalk to avoid looking at the yellow-stained wretches huddled against the cold as they went about the grim business of poisoning themselves. But you would then be confronted by the foul sight of butts, butts, and more butts. I've taken to walking on the other side of the road.

I don't like to see "No Smoking" signs everywhere because I want people to be free to smoke if they want to. Some idiot wants to smoke, well let her. It's her choice; she's an adult. I want her to be aware of what she's doing, I want that help is available to her, I want her not to smoke. But I don't want her to be pushed and pulled by regulations and restrictions.

If smokers had used their common sense, it would not have come to this, with one area after another being declared smoke free, the campus of Saint Mary's next in line. Here's common sense: If someone else is at the bus stop, don't light up. If someone comes to the bus stop after you have lit up, put out your cigarette or stroll half a block downwind. Never smoke where a child can see you. Don't smoke within ten feet of signs that say "No Smoking Within Ten Metres of this Sign." Just to be sure, go twenty or thirty metres away. Don't smoke near places where people walk, at least not while people are walking there. Don't smoke in front of a door. Take your cigarette far away from the entrance to the Patrick Power Library and far away from the entrance to the Burke Building. Use the intelligence with which you are blessed before the carbon monoxide wipes it out to find a spot to smoke that puts no one at risk and causes no one any discomfort.

Had smokers at Saint Mary's used their common sense, then the rest of us would have had no cause to complain. There would have been no problem for the university to have to solve. We'd

have had our health and our comfort even as you had your cigarette. As it is these days, we've got smoke in our eyes and up our noses and we really should not have to stand for it. The only recourse we seem to have at this late date is to send the smokers packing. (I hope we won't try to put a moral gloss on it, as Capital Health did when it banned smoking on the grounds of the IWK, as though we are not rendering another section of Robie Street putrid and ugly. In any case, to institute a restriction is never to occupy the moral high ground.)

Why haven't smokers at Saint Mary's used their common sense? Smokers know that smoking is at least a serious nuisance to non-smokers, if not a hazard. Why didn't smokers at Saint Mary's take the very small steps required to ensure that when they smoked on campus they caused no one physical discomfort?

Someone who cares so little about her own comfort or health that she would intentionally inhale cigarette smoke cannot be expected to care anything at all about the comfort or health of others.