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**JAN 24 1985**

# ***Jobs Must Come Before 'Want To's'***

**T**HE discharge of a rookie Oklahoma City fireman for violating a department rule against smoking during his first year of employment is a spark that could start something big.

Firemen are called out frequently to douse fires started by careless smokers, sometimes with loss of lives. They are aware of this hazard, even if they might not be close observers of lives cut short by lung cancer attributed to smoking.

A fire department spokesman said that after one year on the job firemen "can do whatever they want" about smoking. People smoke because they want to.

That generally is the case with use of alcoholic beverages, narcotics and other vices. We are free to do what we want, even if it kills us, but we don't always recognize what stimulates these habits. Somebody may be selling us a "want" in order that they may make a profit on our weakness or gullibility.

Stores and offices that put up tactful "Thank You for Not Smoking" placards for customers are now posting "No Smoking" signs for their employees.

According to Personnel Journal, a California publication, surveys show an overwhelming majority of workers favor a ban on smoking. Opposition has run as high as 80 percent against tobacco in some cases.

Employers may have mercenary objectives as strong as those of tobacco companies. Smoking costs businesses money. Smoking workers have an absentee rate 50 percent greater than non-smokers and cost employers an average of \$4,000 a year more. Smoking takes up time, as well as money.

Business executives always have been aware of lower output of alcoholic workers on their payrolls but if they kept bars hidden in their offices they were not in a favorable position to tell workers not to drink on the job.

**Beer manufacturers have used TV**

heavily to portray workers cheerily going to nearby taverns after hours for drinks. The idea has been presented regularly to young athletes that professionals drink and play ball, so they should do likewise. Some youngsters fall for it.

Now beer manufacturers are showing workers taking "beer breaks" from what might be company refrigerators in their shops. Drinking on the job is being pushed. Whether the idea is taking hold is unknown, but it will be costly if it spreads.

Employers have a right to be concerned about anything that causes poor productivity, absenteeism, or bad attitudes. Workers have a responsibility to stay healthy.

Employees expect their employers to be ready with the payroll and fringe benefits on time. If employees don't deliver their part of the bargain because they smoke, drink or use drugs, it is because their "want to's" are given preference over their jobs, their employers, their families, and their loyalties.