

BILLBORED

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(International Society for Suppression of Nastles)

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

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Ad Ruled 'Not Offensive' Despite Widespread Offence

An ad for underwear, universally acclaimed as the year's most offensive billboard, appeared on the streets in June. Bearing the heading "The Perfect Billboard" it provoked a volley of spray-painted responses. The campaign, run on a small budget according to Ad News, attracted widespread media publicity, by no means all of it favourable. Sympathy was with the graffitiist to the extent that several refaced versions appeared in the papers. The Daily Mirror published a photo of "The Pervert Billboard" with the caption "try to picture these knickers billboard size and you'll understand why some people are offended". Leo Schofield devoted an article to the ad in SMH's Weekend Magazine headlined "The Perfect Billboard Meets its Match". He contended that BUGA UP's commentary is usually more inventive than the advertisers' copy.

The ad also provoked numerous complaints to the Advertising Standards Council and to Kayser, the manufacturers of "Lace Perfect" panties.

Sensing column inches in the offing, the advertising agency were not slow to admit that there had been some complaints, notably one from Sydney BUGA UP. Rosslyn Beeby of the Age tracked down the author of the complaint for more information. Her article also included some interesting comments from Kayser, the campaign publicist, Ms Bev Pinder, and Higgins Ullin Advertising, the agency responsible for the billboard and magazine ads. The spokesman for Kayser said "We don't want dirty old men looking at it". Ms Pinder said "Of course it's a very sexual shot. How else do you sell panties?" and that BUGA UP's complaint was predictable; "The Billboards are a perfect target for the anti-feminity groups".



In the light of "The Perfect Body" contest it is hard to credit the advertiser's claim that the promotion focuses on the product, not the body inside it.

Meanwhile the creator of the ads said that they were not sexual but "tasteful and interesting" and focussed "on the product, not on parts of the female anatomy". Strangely enough, in the light of that last comment, one of the publicity stunts used in the campaign was a contest for "The Perfect Body" held in front of a 24-sheeter "Perfect Billboard" in Myer's Melbourne store.

Sydney BUG, Michael Sorensen, wrote in his complaint to the ASC:

"This advertisement is offensive both because it suggests that the perfect woman is devoid of any features other than genitalia, and because the display of such an image is inappropriate for public streets ... the result of this particular ad is that the general public is involuntarily exposed to images of giant pantied crotches looming over the city."

The ASC dismissed the complaint, saying that they would have upheld a complaint against the ad as refaced (Mr Sorensen had not mentioned any graffiti in his complaint). They concluded by saying that the Council would "write to the Attorney General expressing its concern at the activities of an organisation known as BUGA UP in defacing such billboard advertisements."

His letter was also published by B&T, the advertising industry's trade journal, much to the ire of Outdoor Advertising Association chief executive, Neville Trethowan. Mr Trethowan's hysterical response under the contradictory heading "Freedom of speech versus censorship" claimed that outdoor advertising stands for freedom of speech which BUGA UP seeks to censor, whilst objecting to the publication by B&T of a letter from BUGA UP. He further referred to billboards as "almost the first visible sign of arriving in a country which is free and which takes pride in offering competitive products and services."

Other complainants wrote to the manufacturers and to the newspapers to say that they would never buy Kayser products again, and a Glebe resident complained to Leichhardt Council that the advertisement opposite her home was offensive. Like the Advertising Standards Council, Leichhardt Council thought that the graffiti which the ad had attracted was the offensive material and had it cleaned off. The complainant, Ms Pauline Johnson said "Give me the graffiti any day". Hear, hear.



The perfect billboard goes live.

BUGA UP Legal Roundup

1. Graffiti Guerrilla Will Fight On

No doubt the Army has its share of graffiti artists but until recently they have evaded detection. Not so long ago, however, a Private Detective spotted a BUG refacing a cigarette billboard and followed the car back to the Army base. Interrogating the soldiers on duty at the watch-house did not elicit the name of the driver, but the story was reported back to the Commanding Officer.

The graffiti artist was summoned to answer to the CO as to the truth of the detective's allegations. Not only was the fate confirmed, but no assurances could be given that the incident would not be repeated. The Commanding Officer was not amused, nor interested in the soldier's motives for undertaking the campaign, but was anxious to avoid any adverse publicity from the event. He therefore warned the graffiti artist that as a result of leaving a button undone on parade the previous week, any further 'Incident' would mean a demotion in rank.

While the officer's reaction was dishonest, it is certainly a more astute handling of the situation than the civilian authorities have managed lately.

2. 'Graffiti is more cost-effective' says arrested film-maker

A mother who takes her small daughter out for expeditions to the billboards armed with spray cans was arrested while refacing an ad in the Sydney suburb of Leichhardt.

Martha Ansara, a film-maker, was arrested by an off duty policewoman in Marion Street when she lingered too long in front of a Benson & Hedges billboard changing "Excellence In Extra Mild" to:

"Excellence in extra mildew Also rots your lungs and kills you."

She was charged under the "Offences In Public Places" Act with "Wilfully marking premises".

A recent precedent had shown that advertising posters do not constitute "premises" within the meaning of the Act, so Martha called Australian Posters and advised them to change the charge to "malicious damage to property" (a charge that could succeed). She said that she wished to have a chance to explain her motives in court.

Martha said that while researching a film on drugs in 1981, she had discovered that the health authorities regard smoking and alcohol abuse as far more serious problems than illegal drug addictions. She had noticed that her local billboards hadn't been refaced lately and decided to do them herself, on the principle that graffiti is a more cost-effective way of reaching a large audience than making films. "I'm fighting for the kids", she said.

When she appeared in court in early August, the prosecution complied with her request to change the charge to "malicious injury". The hearing of the new charge was adjourned until January 1985.



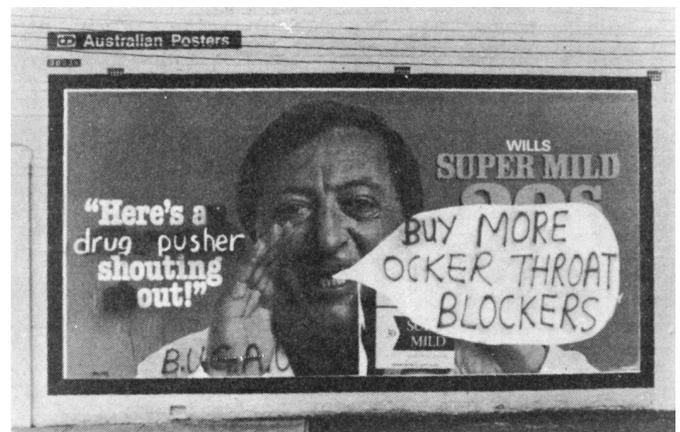
An innocent graffiti artist is jostled by an irate citizen.

3. Surgery For Graham Kennedy

BUGA UP's best documented arrest ever took place in Melbourne on 5 July during the evening peak hour. An extraordinary chain of events led to the arrest of Karl Horsburgh and Tim Read, both final year medical students.

According to Horsburgh, the two were busy "rendering more truthful a cigarette billboard in Flemington Road" when almost simultaneously three events occurred to put them off balance. One of them had just prepared some red paint to write "I am a drug pusher" across a billboard featuring Graham Kennedy shouting about Wills Super Mild. Suddenly a passing pedestrian decided to take his responsibilities seriously by performing a citizen's arrest. While he was grappling with the bewildered graffiti artists and shouting abuse at them, a passing press photographer happened along to take some action shots. The surprised citizen stepped backwards into the paint tray, and within minutes an unmarked cruising police car screeched to a halt and two policemen joined the confusion.

The end result of this melee was the two students were charged with "wilful damage to property, to wit a billboard", and will appear in court on 3 October to defend the charges.



An example of a successful operation.

4. Art Gallery Protesters To Be Heard At Last

Regular readers of "Billbored" will recall a report of a rather unusual protest which took place at the New South Wales Art Gallery in October, 1982. (Billbored No. 2, September 1982).

At that time, an exhibition sponsored by Phillip Morris was taking place, and a racing car plastered with marlboro advertisements was placed in a prominent position in the foyer of the gallery. Sydney artist and BUG, Richard Bolzan, chained himself to the car, refusing to leave until the car was removed.

The demonstration drew great support from the public, who cheered as the police rescue squad used bolt cutters to liberate the protester, who was then arrested on a charge of "serious alarm".

Two weeks later another BUG who had sprayed paint over some of the marlboro stickers on the car at the protest was arrested and charged with "malicious injury" to the car. When the case came to court, a count of "malicious injury" was added to Bolzan's charge.

Because the damage claimed was over \$2,000 the case was indicted for hearing before the District Court and jury.

The case will be heard on Monday 15th October, 1984 at the Darlinghurst District Court. Three days have been set aside for the hearing, and it is expected that a video tape of the protest will be tendered by the police as evidence in their prosecution.

5. Brisbane BUGs take arrest in their stride

As reported in June Billbored, Queensland has recently formed its own BUGA UP "cell" with a certain amount of fanfare. Not surprisingly, graffitiists had not long been operative in the liberal paradise of the north before their first arrests took place.

The Queensland chapter had decided to perform their first raids with plenty of bravado, several cars and a number of groups of graffitiists. Only one of the groups was challenged by the police and the members fled with all suitable discretion. Only one unlucky activist dropped his spectacles in the chase and in stopping to pick them up was captured and arrested. A spokesman for the group said that such mishaps were only to be expected and they would not be deterred from continued activity.

6. Prosecution Fails To Prove 'Damage'

In Adelaide on 4 July, a charge against Fred Cole for malicious damage to a cigarette billboard was dismissed as the result of yet another ineptly carried out prosecution.

The prosecutor had alleged that Mr Cole had caused \$2636 worth of damage to the sign, a marlboro supersite at Gepps Cross. The sign read "Come to Marlboro Country" and the words 'land meet BUGA UP' had been added.

The prosecution was unable to produce any documentation in court to show that more than \$10 worth of damage had been done, and there was therefore insufficient evidence to initiate a jury trial. The Magistrate, Mr W J Ackland, commented that had the prosecution been adequately prepared, he had no doubt that the trial would have gone ahead.

Mr Cole was remanded on \$1000 bail as Senior Constable Hogg suggested that the prosecution would wish to relay the same charge. This would require a special consent to be granted by the Attorney-General for a further hearing, as it is not normally possible to be tried twice for the same "crime".

CUB Puts Money On Horses

Yet another major sporting event has fallen under the fatal spell of the promoters of ill-health. A new sponsorship deal was announced by the Victoria Amateur Turf Club and Carlton and United Breweries on 9 July which renames one of Australia's greatest horse races "The Foster's Caulfield Cup".

The sponsorship deal will increase the value of the Cup by \$75,000 to \$327,000 this year, as the brewers try to Foster racing's dependence on their "goodwill". When the race was first run in 1879, the prize money was \$200.

Organisers of the Melbourne Cup, the Victoria Racing Club, confirmed that they are also following the worldwide trend by seeking substantial sponsorship from corporate backers.



The Proof Of The Pudding

Those readers who have noticed the TV advertisements for sugar over the last few months, which claim that sugar is an essential component of the diet and of high nutritional value, will be interested to know that the campaign is working.

An article in Ad News (29 June) says that the \$4.5 million campaign was intended to combat "sugar's declining market share" and the "nutritional trend away from sugar".

How does this result stand up to the advertising industry's claim that advertising does not influence people's decision to consume or not to consume, but merely to change brands? No doubt the advertisers would say they don't encourage people to eat, but want those who do, to swap to sugar.

A spokesman for the Australian Sugar Industry said that a survey shows that while only 24% of people "felt positively towards sugar" in 1982, now 38% share that feeling.

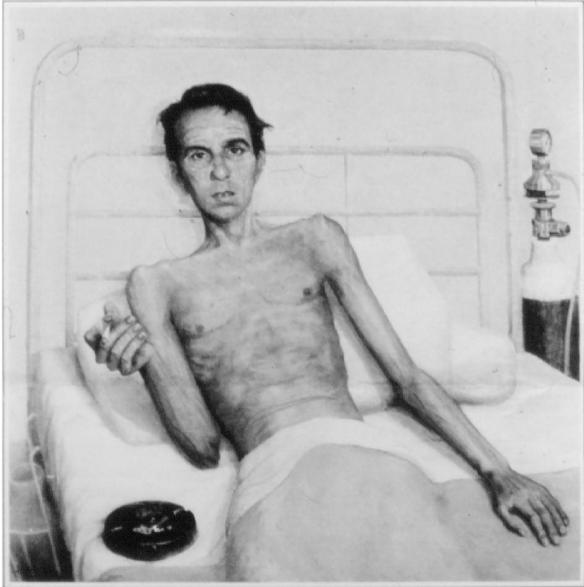
BILLBORED Receives Stamp Of Authority

The editor of Billbored has recently received notification from the National Library of Australia that Billbored has been listed as a periodical and accordingly allotted an ISSN number (International Standard Serial Number - see top of page 1).

This means that it can be identified internationally by this number for the ease of reference of the many libraries around the world who need information about the Australian campaign against unhealthy promotions.

The editor just hopes that such an unsolicited accolade from the establishment does not mean that readers will expect Billbored to conform by producing regular issues.

John Slayer Portrait Award



The Early Death of Jack Filbert (1949-1983)
Painting by William Guiding

In the tradition of the BUGA UP entry for the Marlboro Man competition, debunking the glamour of the images promoted by tobacco advertising, the British Action Group to Halt Advertising and Sponsorship by Tobacco (AGHAST) made an imaginative protest against yet another sponsorship by the John Player company. A member of the group, William Guiding, painted his own entry for the John Player Portrait Award, to be presented at the National Portrait Gallery in London. The picture, called 'The Early Death of Jack Filbert', was a portrait of a victim of lung cancer, smoking a cigarette as he lies dying in his hospital bed. The group produced handouts with a photo of the portrait and the story of the dying man.

"Lorry driver Jack Filbert started smoking when he was 14. At 34 lung cancer was diagnosed and he died soon after. His widow, severely depressed, was admitted to a psychiatric hospital and his five children were put into care.

"Do you think that 'The Early Death of Jack Filbert' is worth the 7,500 pounds prize money from John Player?

"Would it be adequate compensation for his family or for the families of the 50,000 other people who die early from smoking each year?"

A spokesperson for the group said that the sponsorship was particularly objectionable because the prize is the only one in England which is given for portraits and is specifically aimed at young painters. It therefore links success in the arts with tobacco promotion for these young people.

William Guiding's painting was short-listed for the prize but rejected in the final stages by a panel of judges including those nominated by Imperial Tobacco, who own John Player. AGHAST held an alternative ceremony outside the National Gallery, where the portrait was displayed and the Lung Slayer Portrait Award presented.

Drink Up, Kiddies

The latest innovation in promoting unhealthy consumption patterns to children is a new confectionery item being advertised in the UK - "Pint Pots". "Pint Pots" are apparently a beer-flavoured sweet in the shape of a glass of beer, and promotional material claims that 10 million of them are now on their way to Australia.

A wholesaler from Glasgow (an area with the highest consumption of both junk food and alcohol in the British Isles) endorses the product as the "hottest sales line since Skull Crushers". Is Australia getting 10 million of them too?

RAS Under Fire Again

A proposal to erect yet more advertisements around the RAS Showground in Sydney is the subject of a prolonged battle between Sydney City Council and Heath Outdoor Advertising, which has now been joined by the Moore Park and Centennial Park Residents' Associations.

The plan is for the erection of three illuminated advertising signs on the Showground boundaries which will combine brand name advertisements with information about events at the Showground. Local residents, including novelist Patrick White, have already conducted one successful campaign against the building of a sports complex in Centennial Park in the 1970s. Now they are supporting the Sydney City Council's rejection of the application to erect the signs.

The Council has said that the signs do not comply with the height and size code and would cause "visual pollution" in the area. The Planning and Environment Court has heard an appeal against this decision by Heath Outdoor, but the Residents' Associations claim that they had inadequate time to prepare their objections. They have now submitted an affidavit and the Court has agreed to reopen the appeal.

Speaking for the Residents' Associations, Dr Cathryn Runcle said that the signs would reduce property values in the area, counter the effects of beautification projects in Centennial Park, and destroy the historical atmosphere of the area. She also pointed out that the intersections concerned have a history of traffic accidents which illuminated signs would probably aggravate.

The case is due to be re-opened on 22 October, Sydney City Council bearing the costs for the new hearing.

Heath Advertising are particularly prominent in the increasing number of court battles taking place between local councils and the visual pollution industry. Apart from this proposed adornment of Centennial Park, they are also fighting a court action against the State Rail Authority's commendable decision to phase out tobacco advertisements on their property.

South Aust. back in business

A recent flurry of activity in South Australia has resulted in BUGA UP's "branch office" in Adelaide being reopened. Anyone wishing to contact BUGA UP in South Australia should write to:

BUGA UP
Box 616
Modbury
SA 5092

In other states write to:

N.S.W. B.U.G.A. U.P.
Box 90
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