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TOBACCO INSTITUTE TRAVELING EXHIBITS

This is the statement of the subcommittee appointed at a meeting in Washington on February 24, to investigate and report to the Public Relations Committee on the proposal that the Tobacco Institute might sponsor a traveling exhibit about the tobacco industry to be shown at state fairs and other appropriate places.

Members of the subcommittee talked to and corresponded with various firms specializing in the construction and setting up of exhibits, gathered information on state fairs and similar public exhibitions and reviewed information on dioramas furnished to the subcommittee.

This group exchanged views through correspondence, and met to evaluate the information collected and to formulate this report.

It is the unanimous opinion of the subcommittee that the creation of a traveling exhibit is not a practical undertaking for the Tobacco Institute.

In arriving at this conclusion, the group first considered what appeared to be the most desirable end-objective of a traveling exhibit. It felt the broad aim should be to create an exhibit which would present the positive side of the tobacco industry to the viewing public; its history, its established place in the social life of the country, its role as an employer, and its contributions to the economy of the U.S. in agriculture, manufacturing and tax payments, and to do this in a manner which would exert a powerful public relations influence.

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We agreed that our mission was to determine whether this could be done effectively and at reasonable cost.

We were first confronted with the difficulty of conceiving of any sort of traveling exhibit that would prove sufficiently persuasive. The trouble lies not in a lack of factual material, but in the problem of presenting the information so dramatically as to effect a change in public attitude about the tobacco industry.

We did not wish to recommend something which would merely leave viewers with the feeling they had seen a nice exhibit about tobacco.

Other negative factors were immediately apparent. These difficulties include: overlapping schedules of state fairs; the probable poor location of the exhibit if we limited ourselves to free space (or conversely -- the added cost of space in locations of assured good traffic); the problem of manning the exhibit, or of restricting it to a completely static display requiring no one in attendance; the cost of transportation and maintenance.

For instance, we learned in a study of a preliminary listing of state fairs that 88 of them are compressed into a period of 16 weeks, beginning with the fair in North Dakota on July 17, and ending with the fair in Arizona on November 18. These schedules, incidentally, brought up another point -- the very short time span within which it would be necessary to create, build, and schedule a traveling exhibit before the state fair season is upon us.

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Taking our cue from the brief discussion of traveling exhibits at the Washington meeting preceding the appointment of the subcommittee, we concentrated our greatest attention on state fairs. However, we also discussed the possibility of an exhibit for such locations as airport terminals and railroad stations. But the problem of effective presentation would not be eliminated and all such space would undoubtedly have to be leased.

Considering these negative factors, we felt we could not, in good conscience, recommend to the Public Relations Committee that the Tobacco Institute include a traveling exhibit among its approved projects.

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May 5, 1960

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