

**NATIONAL PARTY HEALTH SPOKESPERSON'S PRESENCE IN BAT BOX
EXTREMELY ILL JUDGED SAYS SMOKEFREE COALITION
3 December 2006**

Smokefree Coalition Director Mark Peck is calling National Party associate health spokesperson Jonathan Coleman's presence in British American Tobacco's (BAT's) corporate box an unbelievable lapse in judgement.

His presence in the box at last weekend's U2 concert in Auckland has been made public because of an incident that took place. Dr Coleman was allegedly punched by a man in an adjoining corporate box after blowing cigar smoke at a woman while in a balcony area. MP Simon Power was also in the BAT corporate box. A BAT spokesman has confirmed an altercation took place.

Mark Peck says when he met with Dr Coleman earlier this year the MP was very clear on his understanding about the harm caused by tobacco and the need for tobacco control.

"Dr Coleman was also at a recent function at Parliament that highlighted the harms caused by using misleading descriptors such as 'light' and 'mild' on tobacco packets. I am surprised and disappointed, therefore, to find him accepting hospitality from BAT. I'm also amazed a GP who has seen the ravages of tobacco-related illnesses would smoke and subject others to his second-hand smoke. It calls into question his understanding of tobacco control and his judgement.

"John Key says he is not going to 'mother hen' his MPs but I would hope he will use this gaffe as a way of impressing on his caucus the stupidity of associating with an industry that cares nothing for the damage its products do to thousands of New Zealand families through the illness and death tobacco causes."

Mark Peck says Nicky Hager's book *The Hollow Men* also shows the lengths to which the tobacco industry will go to attempt to influence politicians. The book details meetings between MPs and BAT.

He says tobacco smoking kills around 5000 New Zealanders each year, and MPs' positions on tobacco control should be dictated solely by health concerns.

Further information:

Mark Peck, Director Smokefree Coalition, 0274 461 650

Liz Price, SFC Communications Advisor, 0276 957 744, 04 527 3290