



# 10,000 JOBS TO GO UP IN SMOKE

## Stark warning from newsagents hit by illegal tobacco trade

By CLAUDINE LEDWIDGE-O'REILLY

**UP to 10,000 jobs could be lost this year if the Government fails to crack down on the multi-million euro tobacco smuggling trade.**

Irish retailers and the Revenue Commissioners lost an estimated €1 billion last year because smokers bought cheap cigarettes from criminals who smuggled them in from abroad, according to Retailers Against Smuggling (RAS).

### Brutal

The new group, which represents 3,000 retailers, has demanded the Government introduce stricter penalties and prison sentences for tobacco smugglers.

**It claimed one in five cigarettes smoked in Ireland is a smuggled product which last year cost tobacco retailers €487 million and the Revenue around €500m in lost income.**

RAS spokesman Benny Gilsean said: "The situation facing us at the moment is absolutely brutal.

"What the Government doesn't realise is that increasing the price of cigarettes

doesn't prevent people from smoking — it just makes them look for cheaper alternatives.

**"The cheaper alternative is, unfortunately, smuggled tobacco.**

"Ireland is the most expensive country in the EU for cigarettes and as long as prices and taxes remain as high as they are, then there's no way we can run our businesses against smugglers."

Shopkeeper William Hanley, who runs SuperValu, in Clondalkin, Dublin, said the huge increase in tobacco smuggling is putting retailers' livelihoods in jeopardy.

He said: "Last year, the loss of turnover of €487m would have resulted in the loss of 4,000 jobs.

"We're estimating that this year it could be up to 10,000.

"In my own shop, we had to reduce working hours and let two people go and a portion of this is down to the sale of cigarettes on the black market."

Mr Hanley called on the Government

to hand down prison sentences and massive fines to those involved in the importation of counterfeit cigarettes.

### Taxman

"The Government needs to wake up and nail criminals who are bringing in these counterfeit cigarettes," he said.

**"Why are they allowing criminals to pocket the money that should be going to the taxman?"**

"The gardai need to be out checking the street markets and the door-to-door sales."



LOSS: Retailers (from left) William Hanley, Benny Gilsean, Joe Barrett, Martin Mulligan, Brian O'Carroll outside shop in Dublin forced to close