

## The Chairman of the Parliament's Environmental Committee

### about CAAG's activities

At the end of 2000 several laws were modified by the Hungarian Parliament for which the Clean Air Action Group worked a lot. Dr. Zoltán Illés, Chairman of the Parliament's Environmental Committee, was asked to comment on these cases:

*"I consider a tremendous success the modification of the law on advertisements, which prohibits tobacco advertisements in the press from July 2001 and forbades all tobacco advertising from January 2002. The Environmental Committee took over in their entirety the proposals worked out by the Clean Air Action Group for this purpose, and it submitted them to the Parliament. Árpád Gógl, Minister of Health, also praised the proposals worked out by CAAG, emphasising their thorough professional justifications, and asked the Government to support these proposals. The Government finally supported another proposal which was quite similar to those of CAAG, but was submitted later by my MP colleague, Mihály Babák. But that is beside the point. The essence of the question is that, as the result of our joint efforts, the modification was accepted by the Parliament, and that is undoubtedly advantageous for the whole society.*

*Further success is that the state budget support has been withdrawn from the Central Nuclear Fund. This idea, that we espoused and brought in as a bill to the Parliament with my MP colleague, László Mádi, chairman of the Budget and Financial Committee, also originates from the Clean Air Action Group. This proposal is a practical implementation of the user-pays-principle, i.e. not to support with public money activities that should survive on the market. I have to point out that the amount saved by this measure (which means almost 2 billion Forints in 2001, and more than 2,5 billion Forints in 2002) together with other, regrouped amounts of money, will be spent on raising pensions. This also corresponds to the conception of the Clean Air Action Group according to which the amount taken away by the financial restrictions in 1995 should be entirely given back to the pensioners.*

*I also have to mention the reduction of the social security tax and the extension of benefits concerning the personal income tax, which also coincide with CAAG's demands. Although the amount being spent on environmental protection did not rise to the required degree, there are some positive developments in comparison with the previous years. For instance, in the former years the environmental product charges were not increased by at least the extent of the inflation, and now we were also able to achieve this.*

*The amount of financial support for energy efficiency investments also increases substantially – from 1 billion Forints in 2000 to 5 billion in 2001 in the budget of the Ministry of Economy. Although this sum is less than what the CAAG has been asking for, we can consider it as a huge step in the right direction."*

*(Lélegzet, 2/2001)*