

HEALTH AND THE NURSEMAID STATE

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The emotional illogic of our time is nowhere better demonstrable than in government's recent action, which banned cigarette advertising on television. Presumably this came about as a health measure intended to protect the American public from the danger of lung cancer. The contradictions inherent in this action defy analysis.

Now no one should deny that cigarette smoking is an unhealthy habit and with a probable cause-and-effect relationship, not only to lung carcinoma, but other systemic disorders of circulation and respiration. But logically, if this present ban is justifiable as a health measure, cigarette advertising should also be prohibited in the printed pages of magazines and other promotional media. In addition, if cigarette tobacco's potential danger is so great, consistency should demand that government destroy the tobacco warehouses, the processing and manufacturing plants, and drastically restrict tobacco as a farm crop.

A similar schizophrenic situation exists in the ban on liquor advertising. The culprit here is alcohol. Yet for some reason, advertising the same alcohol in beer and wine on the television screen is considered acceptable. Presumably, chronic alcoholism, cirrhosis and Korsakoff syndromes are limited only to whiskey and gin consumers. And of course, here again, there is no ban on magazine, newspaper, and billboard advertising of any alcoholic product.

In the case of tobacco there is the additional hilarious absurdity of many in the same crusading reformist groups rejoicing in their victory over television advertising, while still attempting to justify their support for the legalization of marijuana smoking, a habit not only with the same potential hydrocarbon carcinogenicity, but infinitely more damaging in respect to drug habituation and mental degeneration than all of mankind's cancers.

Also, if the goal of the sociologic do-gooders is the protection of citizens from all dangers, they have entirely overlooked that greatest health destroyer of all, the automobile. Literally millions are killed, injured or permanently disabled each year on the roads. Does it follow then that automobile commercials on TV are responsible for this unending yearly damage? Why not a ban on them too?

From the National Review Bulletin: "The Nursemaid State: Is this what American consumers, American citizens, really want? Are we such babies that we need a million

bureaucratic nannies to wipe our noses and change our diapers? Or are we grownups who prefer to make up our own minds, who know that life is not a nursery and that every choice carries with it risk as well as promise."

And finally, in this context, last month's quotation of Albert Jay Nock is worth repeating: "It is the quality of life that counts, not its length, and America has not and has never had the faintest notion of regarding human life as a quality product, but only as a standard product like American merchandise. I never encounter our intense preoccupation with health and a long life without asking myself, what for? One wonders what America would make of Julius Caesar's observation that life is not worth having at the expense of ignoble solicitude about it."

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