

It's the fat patrol

Cigarette smokers are fast becoming a persecuted minority, much as lepers or Anabaptists once were. Joining them are that new class of miscreants, people who drink and drive. These malefactors are now being ruthlessly hunted down by thousands of gendarmes and will soon go the way of the passenger pigeon and dodo bird.

All of this tells us that big government is now hard at work protecting our health. Smoking causes lung cancer so cigarette makers are slowly but surely being run out of business. Drunk driving causes deaths so pillory drivers who drink. We cheerfully accept such government intervention as good and necessary.

But wait! Heart attacks kill more North Americans than cancer and traffic deaths combined. Recent medical research has confirmed beyond doubt that heart attacks come from plaque buildup in the arteries caused by eating too much fat. Most North Americans eat a diet in which almost 50% of the calories come from fats.

There are good fats — like olive oil — and bad fats — like lard, hydrogenated vegetable oil and that old killer, butter. These bad fats are termed "saturated fats." It is clear that saturated fats cause heart disease and may also contribute to some forms of cancer, particularly those of the colon.

The U.S. Centre for Science in the Public Interest has lately published a study on the amount of saturated fats in meals of fast food chains. Without mentioning any names — let it suffice to say foods at such outlets generally deliver 50% of their calories from fat. These fats, says the report, average 47% saturated fats.

ERIC
MARGOLIS



Simply put, fast foods are loaded with saturated fats. Now, it is proven that such fats cause heart disease — North America's No. 1 killer. Ergo, if the government is going to protect us from cigarettes and drinking drivers, from not wearing seat belts and other perils, then should it not do something about the far greater threat of saturated fats?

Will we soon see on our burgers a little note: "Burger eating may be dangerous to the health and can cause heart attack and obesity." Or, "Caution: These french fries can cause hardening of the arteries, angina and should be avoided by pregnant women."

Ludicrous? Well yes, but if the government does this with smoking and cars, why not with food? Seat belts were made mandatory, and those East Berlin police spot checks enforced, on the argument that such measures were for the public good, reducing medical costs and hospital care! Then what about fat? More people end up in the hospital because of heart problems than from lung cancer.

Perhaps we should have a Fat Control Board of Ontario. Our much-loved LCBO was supposedly created to regulate the sale and consumption of dangerous alcohol. Since fat kills a hundred times more people than booze, why not a FCBO? You go in, fill out a form and order Number 32-67845-B. Out of a little window, in an unmarked brown paper bag, comes a bottle of vintage Crisco Oil. Number 12-98674-R gets you an order of mega-greasy onion rings.

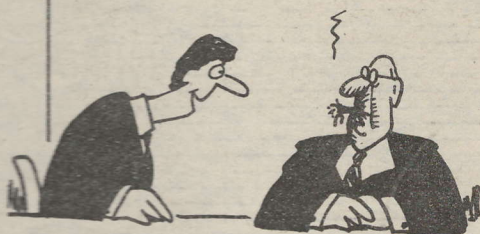
You don't think this is possible? What will all those government bureaucrats and those issue-hungry politicians do when the last smoker has fled into the north woods, when the last drunk driver has been drawn and quartered? Why, fats, of course. Once big government gets rolling, it does not stop because a problem has been removed — it simply finds, or creates, new ones.

I never liked government intervention against cigarette makers, liquor firms or drivers. Yes, I understand the very good reasons for doing so but, in the end, you come back to the same question: What next? Once big brother is allowed to regulate portions of people's private lives, where does it end? Will killer fats now be next? Will the Big Boy, Popeye, the Colonel and dear Wendy become public enemies? "Wanted: Ronald McDonald for serving saturated fats to minors." Will Baskin and Robbins become the new Bonnie and Clyde?

Once saturated fats are purged from our diets the next likely target will be salt. Sodium, as we all know, causes high blood pressure, so out with salt! "Caution: This pretzel may cause hypertension and should be avoided by people over 30."

Next thing you know, we will all be eating a steady diet of stale government bread just like those happy consumers in Romania.

Berry's World



Jim Berry
© 1985 by NEA, Inc. 11-C

"I'm just trying to help you QUIT!"