

Essay

On January 29, 1919, the Federal Government passed the Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which stipulated: “the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors...is hereby prohibited.”^{vi} Although prohibition was repealed by the twenty-first amendment, “The Noble Experiment” demonstrates an epic failure for democracy and provides an excellent example of tyranny of the minority, which often results in less respect for the rule of law and increases disorder and conflict. The mistakes of history, however, are currently being repeated.

Journalist Mark Steyn recently predicated: “In most of the developed world, the state has gradually annexed all the responsibilities of adulthood...to the point where it’s effectively severed its citizens from humanity’s primal instincts.”^{vii} The United States is no exception to Steyn’s statement. The Federal Government recently passed the SCHIP bill, which raised the tax on tobacco products astronomically. Although the bill does not make smoking illegal, it is an obvious attempt to reduce smoking in America, but clouded as legislation *supposedly intended* to provide healthcare for low income children. However, economist Frederic Bastiat claimed history has shown that all government regulations have unintended consequences. In reality, the SCHIP bill has caused people to spend more money on tobacco, decreasing their expenditures in other areas; causing a detrimental effect on the economy. Big Brother will surely not stop there.

As government grows, freedom diminishes. The Progressive Era led America to a centralized administration of unelected “experts” who dictate regulations to, allegedly, increase the well-being of mankind. This “angel-theory” political philosophy has caused massive government growth. Evidenced by recent excise taxes on tobacco products and smoking bans, increased government action presents a contradiction to the fundamental principle of our Constitution: individual freedom and personal responsibility.

Our government was formed to curb all forms of tyranny and promote individual liberty. None

of the current trends of government toward socialized healthcare, anti-smoking campaigns, or regulations geared toward food consumption are supported by our founding document. The United States Constitution has transformed into a constantly changing document, malleable to bureaucrats. The battle for individual rights and personal responsibility, a once revolutionary idea, is, apparently, archaic once more. Big Brother is, once again, encroaching on each individual's right to live how he or she chooses. For example, the Board of Health (an unelected government agency) of New York recently banned trans fats from foods. Neither individuals nor private industry had any say in the matter, because the "government knows best" attitude prevailed over liberty.

In a free society, individuals are encouraged to live according to their own will. The actions taken by the Federal Government in the realm of tobacco taxes and extensive food regulations are axiomatically opposed to freedom. As Stephen R. Covey eloquently stated, "While we are by nature free to choose our own actions, we are not free to choose the consequences of our actions." The role of government, as established by the framers of our carefully crafted Constitution, is to guarantee each individual's right to life, liberty, and property. If the United States Government continues to establish additional excise taxes on everyday products such as high sugar and high fat content foods, the morale of the American citizen will inevitably diminish, resulting in adverse, unintended repercussions for the economy. The events occurring at the time the Eighteenth Amendment took effect should remind government officials what happens when government steps outside its proper bounds. The last concern elected officials or bureaucrats should have is what individuals choose to eat, drink, or smoke. It is time for our government to quit babysitting, and focus on ensuring liberty, security, and stability.

ⁱ United States Constitution, Article 18, Section 1.

ⁱⁱ Mark Steyn, "Live Free or Die!"