

No Ifs, Ands, or “Butts”

In Yemen, it is illegal to import pork products. Flushing your toilet after 10 P.M. in Switzerland can land you in jail. Forgetting your wife’s birthday in Samoa can give you a legal headache you will never forget. In America, we would consider these laws ridiculous and infringing upon our rights. The town of Calabasas, California, however, has created a law just as absurd. The city leaders have passed a law banning public smoking. This is a blatant violation of their citizens’ rights as Americans.

The city passed its smoking ban in March, 2006. Since this time, smokers have been ostracized and their right to smoke has been virtually eliminated. It is now illegal for Calabasas citizens to smoke in restaurants, parks, or even walking down the street! The city has put up signs discouraging smokers from coming to the city and printed cards to hand out to cigar and cigarette smokers “reminding them” of the law. Furthermore, a smoker can pay a fine up to \$500 for their “crime.” A “repeat offender” can even face jail time (Calabasas Smoking Ban).

The situation in this small California town has much greater implications than taking away the people’s right to smoke. It is an attempt to morally police a behavior that some people find undesirable. Similar to the prohibition laws of the 1920’s, this recent ban on smoking is not in place to get dangerous criminals off the street; it is an attempt to control people’s lives. Individuals have been smoking for thousands of years. This attempt to practically eliminate an ancient pastime is simply preposterous.

The Calabasas ban on smoking is just another step toward George Orwell’s, “Big Brother.” Bureaucrats and the self-appointed watchdogs of society have decided that they must protect all from the evils of smoking. What will they target next? Will you be able to walk while

listening to music? How about chewing gum? Will buying a caffeinated cup of coffee earn you a citation?

Whether or not one is a smoker, one can agree that the American people do not require the government to help them discern what is best for their well-being. As an American, I am free to come and go as I please and buy what I wish. If I wanted, I could close out my checking account and buy a plethora of peacocks. Although most would disapprove of my purchase, I have every right to spend my money on fashionable fowl. Every American of age has the right to buy and drink alcohol. Similarly, every adult can buy and smoke cigars, pipes, and cigarettes.

The preferences and convenience of nonsmokers can not be indulged by destroying the personal rights of smokers. Additionally, the banning of smoking in businesses and in cars infringes on personal property rights. The government states the ban will create a "healthier" population. Consider the implications. Will the government once again ban liquor for the sake of our livers and subject us to a diet of radishes and rutabagas to reduce our expanding waistbands?

Fines for flushing, penalties for pork, behind bars for a forgotten birthday; these foreign laws are prime examples of governments infringing on people's rights. The smoking ban enacted in Calabasas, California, is just as invasive and unconstitutional. Regardless of the situation, one cannot forsake and trample upon the Constitution of the United States to please one segment of the population. The ban on public smoking infringes upon personal and private property rights, and if left unchallenged, will show the government that we will allow our rights to be compromised.

Bibliography

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