200% Proof perfect that we're being ruled by (...)s [1]

Written by **Tim Worstall** [2] | Sunday 25 March 2012

I'm afraid that I don't struggle at all, like Sam did [3], to find something to say about minimum alcohol pricing. This is the most monumentally insane, stupid and illiberal nonsense that we've had imposed upon us in years. There have been things more illiberal, yes, but not insane at the same time. I'll leave you to fill in the (...)s in the title there for I'm afraid that my carpet biting outrage at this silliness might lead me to become intemperate in my language. Idiots just isn't strong enough.

As Sam points out a lot of the detailed heavy lifting on this has been done by Chris Snowden [4], sometimes of this parish. Alcohol consumption is falling, definitions of "binge drinking" are ludicrous, the statistics on alcohol related hospital admissions are nonsense (they are assumed, not counted or calculated), boozers, smokers and lardbuckets [5] save the NHS money, not cost it and anyway, what is this interference in our charting our own way from cradle to inevitable grave? Not to say that it's regressive in distribution [6].

There is worse though than just entirely shakey evidential support (much of it cooked up by people paid by the government to lobby the government) and gross illiberalism. There's actual stupidity as well in at least two points. The first is that minimum pricing is almost certainly illegal [7]. We even have case law on the point.

The second is so glaringly, inanely, stupid that it even has the European Commission on the right side of the point. And yes, you know someone has to have been really barmcaked to have managed to get them on the right side of any question more complex than the cuteness of kittens [8]:

> The European Commission sounded a warning to Britain about the policy, saying it believed ?minimum tax rates to be preferable to minimum pricing for alcohol?.
>
> ?Minimum tax rates put all products on an equal footing from a market perspective, whereas minimum prices can increase the profit margin of products with the lowest production cost,? a spokesman said.

Let us assume that all of the evidence is in fact sound: that there is an outbreak of binge drinking, that this is doing harm and that higher alcohol prices will reduce these evils and harms. How magnificently chocolate teapot do you have to be to insist that that extra money from the higher prices goes to brewers and supermarkets rather than into the Treasury? If you're going to sting the boozers because they've been naughty boys and girls then the least you can do is reduce the tax burden on others, no? Instead of pumping up the profits of some favoured sector?

I can reveal that I've once met Cameron, just after he came down from Oxford. I took an instant dislike to him and I'm able to say that the intervening years haven't produced any evidence that I should have changed my mind.

Minimum alcohol pricing is doing something that almost certainly shouldn't be done and then compounding the error by doing it in the most cackhanded way possible and illegally to boot. Just what is it that they

teach in PPE these days?

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