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Fat taxed enough already [1]

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Easy on the cheddar, chubby! Don't even think about eating those fries, fatty! Do I even have to mention the profiteroles, porky? Are these merely playground taunts? Worringly, they increasingly echo the voice of governments worldwide.

Owing to the rise of so called 'fat taxes', authorities are taking an ever-more active part in what their citizens digest (and what comes out of their wallets, of course). In the last few months alone, Hungary, France and Denmark have all implemented their own 'fat tax'. And whilst, as it stands, no gendarme will be confiscating your next banana-split, authorities, in their paternalistic wisdom, are increasingly frowning upon foods deemed undesirable.

Take Denmark, for example: a range of fatty foods, including even milk and butter, will be subjected to a tax [3] if their saturated fat content is above 2.3%. The price of a pack of butter, for example, will increase by 45% due to the tax. Therefore, so it is thought, those selfish souls who indulge themselves on fatty foods will buy tofu and lentils instead: hey presto, obesity problem solved!

Things are never so simple, of course. The tax has already been received by many Danish firms as a 'bureaucratic nightmare', piling on additional costs to firms in an already tough period. Once more, any tax such as this is going to be inherently regressive; those least able to afford any price increases will be hit the hardest. But what does it matter? The French 'fat tax' [4] is expected to raise an estimated €120,000,000 p.a.. A nice little earner.

Nor are we immune to such government meddling here in Perfidious Albion. Having successfully tackled all our other social, political and economic dilemmas, David Cameron [5] is allegedly so enamoured by the idea of a 'fat tax' that he is toying with the idea of implementing one of our very own, as too are Finland and Romania.

Most are in agreement that obesity is a society-wide problem. The more rotund we become, the more our healthcare costs increase. So what's the solution? Surely not pricing poor people out of the market for fatty foods. We must seek a solution other than 'more taxes' ? the default position of any government. Perhaps our BMIs could be helped by making it easier for people to help out at sport clubs without undergoing a raft of CRB checks [6], or by reforming our health system which currently permits the cost of atrocious health habits to be picked up by someone else.

Sadly the precedent has already been set. When we already allow the government to dictate what we may and may not consume in the form of innumerable drugs, letting them control what we eat is a logical advancement. And it will all be done for our 'own good'.

And nor is this merely a European phenomenon: the world over governments are beguiled with the notion of controlling our bodies. In New York, for example, it is now compulsory to display [7] the calorific content of foods, presumably because people use to think that a bucket of KFC was a healthy snack. How long is it till cars are plastered with images of car-crash victims? After all, cars are dangers, didn't you know?

Along with this, Chicago's new mayor has implemented a mandatory 'wellness programme [8]', in which one can only presume that those unworthy enough to be a few pounds overweight are scolded by their organic-mung-bean-fed superiors.

Can't we be left alone to comfort-eat in peace? Lord knows we need it, considering how grim the new is nowadays. If only someone would implement a tax on bad ideas produced by government.

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