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Ten reasons why the Left should like the ASI, 7: Killing nanny [1]

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The Left should back the ASI's objection to having the state make decisions for working class people under the claim that it knows best what is good for them.

The ASI opposes the paternalistic notion that working class people in Britain are incapable of making their own choices. People in authority, including many involved with the medical profession, often take the view that they know better than ordinary people and are therefore entitled to impose their choices. They seek both laws and punitive taxes to constrain people into living the lives that 'experts' think they should live. They ban indoor smoking and hide packets from view, and call for plain packaging and ever higher taxes, and justify all of this on health grounds. The ASI view is that people are entitled to do unhealthy things if they wish, and while it is acceptable to warn them, the choice must be left to individuals to make.

The same applies to high taxes on alcohol and calls for minimum pricing and restriction on its advertising. Again, health grounds are adduced, even though Britain is among the low consumers among EU members. If people feel they derive sufficient pleasure from alcohol to justify any adverse consequences, that is a decision they can freely make. It is no function of the state to treat them as children incapable of making choices for themselves. Such an attitude is patronizing.

This is also true of foods deemed by experts to be unhealthy, including fats, salt, sugar and fizzy drinks. There are proposals for fat taxes, for taxes on fizzy drinks and limits on the salt and sugar content of foodstuffs. Labelling is acceptable so that people know what they are doing, but measures to force them into diets favoured by 'experts' demean and diminish the values of ordinary people. These 'experts' never seem to consider that ordinary people, especially low-income people, might find that tobacco, alcohol and appetizing foods add interest and satisfaction to their lives. These might be what some regard as unwise choices, but they are for people to make as adults, not as the protected wards of an over-mighty state.

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