*TASK: It has been suggested that smoking be banned in the UK. Write to your local paper sharing your views on this.*

01/01/2011

123 Street Lane

Leeds

West Yorkshire

Dear sir or madam,

Can you imagine my surprise when I opened my copy of the *Yorkshire Post* to hear that this government plans to take away the right to smoke from British citizens? For a moment, I thought it was April Fool’s Day!

Firstly, I’d like to make it clear to your readers that I’m not a smoker. Personally, I think it’s a filthy habit and would advise any young person against making such a dangerous and expensive choice. However, that’s the key word, isn’t it – *choice*? Many people *choose* to drink alcohol, eat fattening foods and sit on the sofa rather than exercising. Countless avid rock-climbers, white-water rafters and parachutists *choose* to endanger their lives to enjoy what is – for them – a worthwhile pleasure. Getting in a car, crossing a road, or in fact even leaving the house at all carries a certain risk, and far more people are involved in car crashes or other accidents than are killed by smoking.

Crucially, this is a free country, not a police state. Why shouldn’t we able to make our decisions? Smoking in practically every public place is already banned, so even those wet blankets who claim we’re endangering the lives of others can’t pretend this is for the public good. And what’ll be next – a ban on beer and wine? Next, cake will have to be outlawed, if people can’t be trusted to make their own decisions. Every year, two to three people in the world are killed by toilets – shall we ban those too?

Moreover, this is an issue that will hit Yorkshire particularly hard. Several local factories produce cigarettes. Shall we shut them all down and send those people home, just because a few politicians want to create a splash? Imagine the lines at the job centres, the hopeless faces of skilled workers who have been robbed of their livelihoods.

However, our community won’t be the only one to suffer. Over 200,000 people are employed nationally making and selling cigarettes. Millions of pounds of tax is generated by sales, to pay for our hospitals and schools. One expert at the London School of Economics has suggested that Britain might even suffer a lasting and disastrous recession if smoking was banned. We may all think we’re doing out children a favour by outlawing smoking, but if they’ve no jobs and no future, I doubt they’ll be grateful to us for making such a hasty and ill-considered decision.

Finally, do you think die-hard smokers will simply shrug and accept life without tobacco? Like drugs, cigarettes will merely be riven underground, making money for criminal gangs and driving the desperate and hopeless into poverty. No sane and right-thinking person can support this ban; of that, I’m confident.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Beatrice Simmons

*TASK: It has been suggested that smoking be banned in the UK. Write to your local paper sharing your views on this.*

05/01/2005

50 Red Road

Leeds

West Yorkshire

Dear Ms Appleyard,

Do you believe that people sold the means to kill themselves? Should guns be available in supermarkets? Should people be able to pop into their local newsagents and pick up lethal poisons? Of course not – these substances are illegal, and for good reason. Frankly, it astonishes me that in this day and age, smoking is still actually legal, and I applaud the suggestion that this grievous error be swiftly corrected.

We’re all aware nowadays that smoking is a death sentence. Cancer, heart-failure, lung disease – the list of health risks connected with smoking is endless. Even the youngest child is conscious that the choice to smoke robs you of decades of your life.

Yet smoking continues. Why? Addiction. That’s why a total ban is the only possible solution.

Moreover, experts believe that, without people selfishly indulging in this disgusting habit in streets, at bus stops and – most shockingly – even outside hospitals, air pollution would be halved. Imagine a world where children could breathe clearly and asthma sufferers no longer had dodge out of the way of plumes of harmful smoke, clutching their inhalers.

Some very short-sighted people have claim that local factories would have to close. However, as a manufacturer of machine parts, I can assure you that only minor alterations would allow any cigarette factory to quickly switch to making medical equipment. Rather than producing instruments of death, much-needed medical supplies could roll off local assembly lines. Wouldn’t that be something for Yorkshire to be proud of?

Admittedly, tax revenue would be lost, although with numbers of smokers in the UK declining anyway, this amount would be relatively small. Furthermore, the amount that the government claws back from those greedy companies selling cigarettes is actually less than 25% of the annual bill that smoking-related conditions costs the NHS. So whether this a decision that you’re making with your head or your heart, there’s only one conclusion we can reach – smoking must be banned, and without delay.

Yours sincerely,

Mr J. Beardman