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Freedom to Choose

(Scotland)

NEWSLETTER NO 4

Petitions presented at the Petitions Committee have been referred to the Health Committee where we will be able to give evidence at the hearing. However, just when a thorough post-legislative scrutiny of the ban should be on the agenda, Scotland's capital city is hosting ...

'TOWARDS A SMOKE FREE SOCIETY' (OH YEAH?)

This conference is scheduled in Edinburgh for September. A typically disingenuous title from the likes of ASH. Why disingenuous, you might ask.

Well, would the elimination of tobacco make society 'smoke free'?

What about chimneys? Industrial and domestic ... no more cosy coal or log burning fires? And what about barbecues? (of which, see over).

Such misleading wording should not surprise us, since the smoking bans are based, as we have previously pointed out, on misinformation.

A demonstration is being planned to welcome this extravaganza. Approval for the demonstration has been obtained from Lothian and Borders Police.

RESISTANCE IN ENGLAND

As reported in an earlier newsletter three landlords south of the border have defied the ban. The good news is that they are still doing so, and other pubs are following suit. Things are hotting up now. Hamish Howitt of the Happy Scots Bar has become the first publican to be prosecuted under the new law. Ironic that the resistance is going on in England and the first one in court is a Scot!

A London club owner is also challenging the ban: Dave West of the Hey Jo Club is bringing a High Court action against the Government. His QC is ... Cherie Booth!

Meanwhile, in Darwen Lancashire, two sisters have caused a fuss by turning the ban on its head: they've banned non smoking customers from using the tables outside the café – unless accompanied by a smoker.

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THE BARBEQUE STORY

'a study by the French environmental campaigning group Robin des Bois found that a typical two-hour barbeque can release the same levels of dioxins as up to 220,000 cigarettes' BBC, 29 July 2003

Yes, *two hundred and twenty thousand!* Professor Desmond Hammerton (retired) said, '... if you have a barbeque once or twice a week through the summer and all crowd round it and inhale the fumes, then over 10 or 20 years *maybe* that would do something' (our italics).

In other words: if one inhaled the fumes from a two-hour barbeque – the equivalent of 220,000 cigarettes – once a week each summer for 20 years, it *might* just cause a problem.

At ten BBQs per year that would be the equivalent of the smoke from *44 million* cigarettes.

Let's transfer that data to a hypothetical non-smoking bar tender in a smoking pub. To inhale the same amount of the same chemicals, at, say, 220 cigarettes per shift, how long would that bar tender have to work? At one shift per day ... c. 548 years! (Of course, that's assuming no holidays or days off in that half-millennium spanning career.)

ASH tells us, 'there is no safe level of secondary smoke' due to the carcinogens it contains. However, it seems that if you inhale the same carcinogens from a BBQ, that's okay.

Smokers, non-smokers. Whether you like the ban, hate it or just don't care, this law is based on misinformation. Can a law built on such a foundation be right?

AND IN CASE YOU THOUGHT OFFICE WORK WAS SAFE ...

Be afraid, be very afraid ... the BBC now reports that laser printers emit particles that 'can damage lungs in much the same way as smoke particles from cigarettes' (BBC, July 2007). Researchers in Queensland, Australia have called on governments to regulate air quality in offices – the solution to *all* air-borne contaminants proposed by Freedom to Choose.

Also, in order to ensure dispersal of harmful particles, they recommend placing equipment in VENTILATED AREAS.

But alas, we are told – by no less than ASH – that ventilation doesn't work.

Or could this be more double standards?

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