

THE FINAL DRAG

To ban or not to ban?

The government debate on smoke free public places. Will it save lives? It's just a question of smoke.

Parliament is currently considering the ban of smoking in public places in Britain. The proposal received strong backing in the Scottish parliament, with the ban set to take effect from spring 2006. Tony Blair however, is still debating the scale of the restriction. Presently smoking is set to be banned in clubs and pubs that serve food, and only to be allowed in public places serving snacks.

Labour's closest opposition, the Conservative party, made it clear that they thought the ban of smoking in public places was "the worst of all worlds".

Steve Webb, South Gloucestershire's local MP, feels that, "the ban should apply to all enclosed public spaces to allow non smokers the choice of, say, having a drink without having to smoke passively. I am particularly concerned to protect people who work in smoky environments. The evidence from Ireland, where a ban has been implemented, is that it has helped a very great number of smokers to give up."

Since the 29th March 2004 smoking has been forbidden in enclosed spaces of work in Ireland. The Irish government has stated that even though certain places are exempt from the ban, all employers still have the right to enforce the legislation.

"I understand that smoking is quite a social habit and therefore it may be hard to enforce a ban. I feel that a completely enclosed smoking area would be better, as it prevents non-smokers having to breathe in cigarette fumes," says non-smoker Jane Teal. "The government should finance campaigns to educate the younger generation about health risks associated with smoking, so that they can make the right choices."



Types of cancers that are more common in smokers are; bladder cancer, cancer of the kidneys and cancer of the oesophagus. Smoking is also the most common cause of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). COPD is responsible for 80% of cases which blocks the air flow and makes breathing difficult. For example; it is estimated that 94% of 20 a day smokers have emphysema when the lungs are examined after death; whereas 9 out of 10 of non-smokers have little or none.

Caroline Slim, a nurse at Southmead Hospital in Bristol, says, "I think eventually less people will smoke and it will save lives if the ban is enforced. Smoking is a big problem. We get a lot of patients of the older generation who started smoking before they knew the risks and have done for fifty odd years. Some suffer from asthma or need oxygen tanks at home as a result of smoking for so long being unable to give up."

A smoker feels however that, "the amount of deaths caused by smoking will not change. If smoking is banned then the law may as well suggest that drinking be banned too. It would just be ridiculous!"

A tobacco company, who wishes to remain anonymous, agrees, "The following things are not good for your health either; driving too fast, drug abuse, taking part in dangerous sports, the list is endless. Where do we draw the line? I believe the government behaves too much like a "nanny state," telling people what it thinks is good for them. The greatest affect will be the loss of billions of pounds of tobacco duty which is paid to the government each year. I am sure there will be a lot less people smoking in Western Europe in the future; in fact, our own sales support this, with an annual fall in home trade sales of approximately 9%."

Peter Williams, also from the tobacco factory says, "From my perspective the smoking ban is not such a good thing as it means a continuing fall in production output which results in less people needed in the factory. This had resulted in quite a number of people losing their jobs."

Nigel Barlow who works for a Brewery says, "There should be a total ban for restaurants and pubs. The effects on the Brewery business may depend

upon location and the type of pub and restaurant it is. My personal feeling towards smoking are relaxed as I do enjoy the occasional cigar. But I do strongly feel that the real smoker will never give up."

Overall it is clear that there are strong arguments for and against the smoking ban. It is important however that everyone is able to voice their own opinions.

By Hannah Gale

Editorial

It is time that action is taken before we kill off the Nation. If a ban is to be enforced then it must be stronger. It needs to cover all indoor spaces and not just places serving food. We agree to smoking being allowed where there is an adequate supply of fresh air. We recognise the fact that smoking with a drink is a social habit but non-smokers are members of the public too and deserve the freedom of choice.

In Ireland a ban has already been implemented, because of this the amount of inhaled tobacco smoke in non-smokers has already decreased by 85% in bars and restaurants. Taking this into account we know that a ban will work, so the country needs to stop dithering. A decision has to be made now to properly advantage the younger generations. Smoking has more than 50 ways of making life a misery through illness and more than 20 ways of killing you. Isn't this enough evidence that smoking is a disgusting habit? It is estimated that between 1950 and 2000, six million Briton's and sixty million people worldwide died from tobacco related diseases. It is proved that 114,000 people in the UK are killed by smoking every year.

legislation. So why aren't we acting on this, the public voice? Nigel Barlow, who works for a Brewery, agrees with the greater part of the public, and says, "Trends have moved and smokers are now the minority, and we should try and cater for the majority."

We vote for the end of smelly clothes, high death rates, smoky environments and an unsafe planet for the younger generations! Let's stop it now before it's too late!

By Chloe Kemery



NO SMOKING

70% of the public support smoke-free