

Towards a Nanny state *

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We are about to get a public health regime in which the state increasingly becomes a guardian of our lives, and where the standard of a good life is the notion of perfect health, writes Trine Skei Grande in tabloid newspaper Dagbladet today.

The head of HUNT (health survey in Trøndelag) Steinar Krokstad recommends a total smoking ban, and previously, the Sørums kommun in Akershus decided a total smoking ban for their employees.

"Let us not hesitate to say that smoking is very harmful. Health hazards of smoking are well known. Smoking is one of the most important preventable single factor with an impact on the health of the individual," writes Skei Grande.

Approx. 6 700 deaths annually are due to smoking-related diseases in Norway. Obviously, this is serious. Government parties have said they will use all possible means in the fight against more people becoming ill or die as a result of smoking. Consequently, cigarette packs are no longer visible in stores.

"When we in the social liberal party do not support this, it is because the Liberals do not think it has any effect, and we believe that we have to draw a line somewhere," writes Skei Grande.

All possible means?

"We all agree that smoking is harmful, and that it should be limited from a public health perspective. But what kind of methods should be employed? What kind of other measures is the Government envisaging to ensure that we all live as long as possible and die as fresh as possible," writes Skei Grande.

"We could start by banning sugar, hide alcohol under the counter, decrease speed limits to 60 km per hour, and prohibit all extreme sports such as skydiving and mountain climbing. We can outlaw the crossing of Antarctica, and we can prosecute children who climb trees. Life is a risk!

We can not ban everything that is harmful and all we are afraid of, or remove the risk of any potential dangers that are in people's lives. Striving for the perfect health also creates problems and inflicts people an expectation and a pressure which in itself might be harmful."

"I set this in an extreme form because the Liberals are beginning to have had enough with a guardian state that will regulate all aspects of people's lives and deprive the people responsible for how they should live their lives. We know that smoking is harmful. We will arrange for a variety of measures that improve public health. But we do not like that the government dictates how people should live a perfect life. It is a mockery compared to the rest of the world. How healthy do we need to be in Norway compared with the rest of the world?" Asks Skei Grande.

Better priorities

We have problems in Norway. We have alcoholics and drug addicts who receive no treatment. We have many sick elderly people who should have been in nursing home, and who do not get it. The government should provide better treatment to those with COPD and others with chronic diseases. Provide better and safer walking and bike paths so that children and adults make better use of them.

The Liberals want better education about nutrition in schools, and ensure that vegetables and fruits are cheaper than biscuits and candy.

" By allowing the state and health care to become a guardian of how life must be lived, I think we achieve the opposite, namely that people are passive and unable to take responsibility in their own lives. From a public health and prevention perspective, this is more damaging," says Skei Grande.

Link: <http://www.venstre.no/artikkel/25430>

* (English translation)