

- Out of sight, out of mind? Mother government has now hidden the tobacco so that we can no longer see it. For our own good of course, writes Ole Michael Bjørndal ironically in conservative journal Minerva.

Out of sight, out of mind? *

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The State has now tucked away tobacco products so that we can not see them anymore. For our own good, of course.

When I was a child, I would often watch TV with my parents. It could be Friday night crime shows like Derrick or Bergerac, or some thriller that state channel would air. Occasionally, these programs had scenes that my parents did not find suitable for my impressionable children's eyes, and I was then asked to look away or leave the room temporarily. So I sat there then, and heard sounds from the movie while my imagination worked hard to create the most frightening images possible, probably much worse than what was actually shown. Now that I've grown up, I fortunately do not have to ask permission from my mother and father when I want to see a film. They simply trust me and my assessment capability, and also believe that I, as an adult, am free to decide which pictures I want to see. Not so with the government.

Most could not have avoided noticing the covers that have been introduced in kiosks and shops in the weeks before Christmas. Because the government can use the cover. The tobacco cover. Tobacco goods must now be hidden away so that we can not see them anymore. We all know the arguments. Smoking and smokeless tobacco are harmful. We must protect the children. Healthy people are happy people. It is easier to quit if you do not have to see the product. Everything is basically about the fear of what others will come to do against their own bodies.

Importantly, staff must move fast to so that people do not get more than a brief glimpse of the glamorous cigarette packs. Someone else who's in the same queue could be tempted to try.

The fear they seemingly feel has thus been materialized through the tobacco cover. What cigarettes are concerned, they are now hidden behind the gray plastic curtains that staff must remove each time they give someone a pack. And they must be quick. Someone else who's in the same queue could be tempted to try. And just think what could happen if there is a child present. A look at the golden Marlboro-letters for more than a few seconds, and the child will more than likely smoke like a chimney for all future. Because children are certainly not curious creatures. And they prefer not to test the limits. They will obviously not wonder what is inside the giant fridge with letters SNUS on. Personally, the black refrigerator makes me wonder if we have been invaded by aliens every time I go into a store.

Behind every such regulation, there is a voice that we all have in our minds. Our collective conscience. Her voice is trying to tell us that this is OK. This is not so dangerous, and think of the children. Accept, accept, accept! It is time to ask the voice to shut up.

Because what happens every time we go into a store? Are we not reminded of how mortal we are, how weak we are and how little we are allowed to be aging? "Beware, do not look! You can be damaged and die!" society screams, while projecting its fear into us. It's as if Mom and Dad still sits and says what I can see and can not see. The feeling of powerlessness grabs you, followed by an infinite emptiness. Is this what it means to be an adult? Hayek wrote in the Constitution of Liberty that "to be

free may mean freedom to starve, to make costly mistakes, or to run mortal risks." It was at that time. Soon the only freedom we Norwegians have is the freedom to be healthy and terrified.

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Personally, I do not currently enjoy any tobacco products. I stopped smoking 18 months ago, and snus disappeared nine months ago. Think about it, I stopped without the government cover. At work, many colleagues are openly snusing. The box is usually fully visible on the table, and if I wanted, I could certainly have had one. But I have taken a personal choice to put away the snus, and this is my choice alone. The mood at work would probably be slightly strange and awkward if I had demanded that snus should be hidden whenever I was present. In that case I could just as easily have started again, because such behaviour implies that the fear of starting smoking again is so strong that the need to control the urge to smoke surpasses the joy of having quit.

It is even more difficult with those still using tobacco. They must themselves be hidden behind the cover, a cover that reminds them of how disgusting they are, how undesirable their behaviour, which, strictly speaking injures only themselves, is. They are sick people who need what is behind the government's cover. They are the ones who, during the time of the porn covers, went to Sweden for access to the really good stuff: someone else's genitals in motion. At least the Porn Tourists did not have to endure the smokers' stigma. It is easy to hide some magazines in the car crossing over to Norway from Sweden. Smokers and snusers will have to be stigmatized in their own neighbourhoods, however. And it is their fault that the covers from time to time must be lifted, so that children can be tempted, initially, and eventually, die.

This law is going to stay standing. None of the government parties are going to bother to remove it, perhaps with the exception of a majority government from The Progress Party. This law is probably forgotten soon. Our freedom as adults is diminished either way. We look at the gray shades in the store and know that death lurks behind them. The fear has had another victory.

Link: <http://www.minerva.as/?p=8961>

* (English translation)