

24. Smoking & Drinking

Despite harsh anti-smoking laws, many people continue to light up. Around the world, legislators have tried to eradicate smoking by restricting smoking areas, banning or limiting tobacco ads, imposing steep taxes, and putting ominous health warnings on cigarette packages. But the addictive habit is too strong to be ended overnight. The number of young smokers is rapidly growing. Some kids are curious, and others blindly imitate adults. An even larger portion of young smokers bend to peer pressure. Another problem is that many governments rely heavily on income generated by cigarette sales, so that they are reluctant to crack down aggressively. They don't seem to realize that skyrocketing health costs will outpace current income sometime soon.

Government are even less aggressive in their attack against alcohol. Perhaps this is because of the miserable failure of a famous attempt. In the 1920s the United States had prohibited the sale, transport, and manufacture of liquor. The idea was that society would benefit in many ways-not only by removing obvious bad effects associated with drunkenness and alcoholism, including accidents, lost work, chronic poverty, and spousal abuse, but also by reducing the incidence of other social evils such as gambling and prostitution (since most of the drinking was in saloons rather than at home).

But since many people simply ignored the law and drank anyhow, the main difference was that they had to resort to expensive, illegal methods of obtaining spirits. The result was that organized crime grew tremendously rich and powerful. The gangs that profited most also committed many more violent murders, bribed even more public officials, and sponsored even more casinos and brothels. After about a decade of Prohibition, the Americans gave up on the attempt.

Comprehension

1. Name three ways governments have tried to control smoking.
2. Why do youngsters usually begin smoking?
3. What is the problem with the unaggressive policies most governments follow with regards to smoking?



4. Why did the said Prohibition fail?

Express Yourself

1. Do you smoke? Why or why not?
2. How many cigarettes do you smoke a day?
3. Do you think you could quit if you wanted to?
4. Have you ever tried to quit smoking? Why or why not?
5. Are you worried about smoke-related diseases?
6. Do you smoke inside the house?
7. Are you worried about second-hand smoke?
8. What do you think about a law that bans smoking in public places?
9. Do you think cigarettes are expensive?
10. What would you do if you noticed your child smoking?
11. What do you think about women smoking?
12. Are you a social drinker?
13. What kind of liquor do you usually drink?
14. How often do you drink?
15. Does your job force you to drink?

