

Inmates Running the Asylum

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Inmates Running the Asylum

by

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Still relevant today. A history lesson from a land far away and a time long ago.

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I swear that sometimes I feel as though I have slipped into an odd version of a Monty Python universe in which giant feet descend from the heavens to squash you flat. What should be the fodder for absurdist humor is sculpted into reality. Who but a comic would consider that the amount of water you use to flush away your waste might transform you into a federal lawbreaker? Who but a jokester would morally condemn you for having a top-loading clothes washer and make it verboten to own? Who but a screwy chap would think it other than a source for farce that a shotgun barrel that was a quarter-inch too "short" would make you a felon? *

A 1600 word essay examining a situation in which anti-smoking zealotry combines with an out-of-control child to harass an overwhelmed single mom.

Johnita DeMatteo's lawyer thinks her son Nicholas is a helpless pawn of his father using him to get back at Johnita. Perhaps. If so, the propaganda mills of government-run education and tobacco-financed anti-tobacco television ads such as

JEL, 'Just Eliminate Lies,' (now there's a bald-faced lie;) certainly help reinforce the boy's hysteria.

Johnita says she cannot afford to contest the ruling or appeal. She hopes some organization will assist her in fighting this judgment. She thinks the real issue at stake here is 'the problem of the intrusion into people's personal lives.'

Of course, she's correct. Given the statist tendencies of most Americans, however, and especially so in this age of 'terrorism,' she is swimming against the current. Far too many citizens are willing to sell out 'not just their freedom, but yours, too' for a bit of illusory security.

The anti-smoking fascists are celebrating this fresh notch on their belts. But this case is not really about smoking, even if it advances the fascists' iron agenda. It is not even really about yet another attack on parental responsibilities and prerogatives, another assault that weakens parental authority in favor of greater control by and power for the State.

DeMatteo's struggle is simply one more step in the inversion of common sense, in the destruction of rationality bleeding through this country. While I support questioning authority whenever it oversteps its bounds as fervently as anyone I know, to accept the facts of this case as in the slightest manner being justified is to declare that the crazies have seized the reins and are now in charge of the asylum.

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