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# Commentary: Land of the free now the home of the 'busybully'

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**ERIC BELLAMY / FOR THE INQUIRER**

JDENVER19 .New Jersey State Senator Kip Bateman, right, of the 16th District looks at recreational marijuana products at Ground Swell Cannabis Boutique on Tuesday Oct. 18, 2016 in Denver, Colo. The New Jersey legislators were on a day-long seed to sale tour to see how legal marijuana is grown, cultivated and sold.

by **Antony Davies and James R. Harrigan**

The land of the free has become the land of the busybody.

Where vices are concerned, from prostitution to marijuana to tobacco, even to sugary drinks, the United States has become a place where citizens use the power of government to bully each other into submission.

Don't like pornography? Pressure the government to declare it a public health crisis.

Don't like marijuana? Pressure the government to ruin the lives of those who use it.

From prostitution all the way to drinking a bottle of soda, busybodies have made a national pastime of sticking their noses into other people's business.

But when busybodies convince the government to stick its nose in your business, they become busybullies. Busybullies not only disapprove of what you do but use the government to force you to do something else instead.

Busybullying is really about social inequality - busybullies believe that their opinions as to what is acceptable should matter more than other people's. Busybullies, believing themselves morally superior, will happily lie to get the government to force you to submit to their enlightened wills.

First they will say that the thing they don't want you doing is dangerous to you. When you tell them it isn't or that you don't care, they will tell you it is dangerous to others. When you demonstrate that it isn't dangerous to others, they will tell you that it's bad for "society." They will offer exactly no evidence for any of their claims because, in their eyes, moral superiority is its own evidence. But your evidence they will subject to the highest scrutiny before dismissing it out of hand.

Take marijuana for example. Believing that marijuana destroys lives, jobs, and families, busybullies pushed for ever more severe laws against its use. In its quest to "save" people from marijuana, the government then destroyed the lives, jobs, and families of anyone it found using the drug. Under the sway of busybullies, government proved far more dangerous to marijuana users than marijuana ever was.

How do we know? Because recreational marijuana is now legal in eight states and the District of Columbia, and medical marijuana is legal in 20 more. Yet, contrary to what the busybullies claimed, all hell has not broken loose. Where marijuana was legalized, crime rates are generally flat or down, and neither teen marijuana usage nor drug-related traffic fatalities has risen.

But never mind the evidence. The Trump administration is set to crack down on states that have legalized marijuana. Why? The White House gave no actual reason, just some nonsense assertion that marijuana somehow leads to opioid abuse. Never mind that no such link has been demonstrated. Never mind that marijuana isn't an opioid in the first place. Facts don't matter when you have moral certainty.

It doesn't stop at marijuana.

Busybullies across the country are working to declare pornography a "public health crisis." How it could possibly be one is a mystery to all thinking people, but that won't stop them. All they have to do is to assert, as they did in Utah and Virginia, that pornography somehow makes people less likely to get married, or to claim, as they did in South Dakota, that pornography leads to eating disorders. Forget about pointing to evidence - the busybullies can't even point to a victim.

Even if it is true that watching pornography makes a person less likely to marry, that's none of anyone else's business. It is only the business of the person who chooses whether to watch the porn.

The United States was founded on the ideals of freedom and equality under the law. Yet today, we are less free because busybullies use government to tell us what we may and may not do. We are less equal because they convince government that their opinions, fantastically, matter more. They seem congenitally incapable of leaving people alone.

Because of busybullies, we are no longer a nation of free and equal people. We aren't even a nation of children, for children eventually grow up to make decisions for themselves. We have become a nation of pets, mere vassals to be guided, cared for, and reprimanded by our betters: the busybullies.

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