2

The government should not have a say in our diet if "A SAY' means directive influence. It does not include education, which should be given full support.

It is obvious that the incidence of obesity in America is high, and that health effects and costs are immense. Nutritional experts and politicians see the problem and design solutions based on reason, and believe that development can only occur by enforced national directives limiting choice, and further that such autocratic power will remain good and self-limiting. Such coercion is not compatible with the spontaneous forces found in a free society, and the conflict may be restated as the more fundamental debate of authoritarian versus free development. The seduction is that this approach offers power, and the rationalization of that power, which is irresistible to the experts, to autocrats, to humanitarians, and philanthropists.

Our bad choices are based on personal preferences, not lack of information, and rules can be easily circumvented.

Recommendations have changed drastically and frequently over time, because the science is limited. Even if we were sure of the science, recommendations would need to vary by age, sex, reproductive history, activity levels, medical status, and cultural and religious predilections, a task well beyond government's ability. Bad advice is also expensive. The taxpayer spent billions of dollars needlessly and dangerously on cholesterol control, lowering drugs, which may have been influenced by the drug companies.

What will happen when the government mandate does not work? Are we free to disobey? Can we order a second 16 oz. soft drink? Will enforcement become increasingly coercive and include body mass testing and mandated exercise programs? Would regulations expand in time to cover ALL risky behavior, like power tools or contact sports? Are we starting a giant, ever expanding, self-serving, autocratic, increasingly expensive beaurocracy? Will their policies be in the best interests of the public or the multibillion dollar sugar, poultry and meat industries and other large campaign donors? How quickly will a beaurocracy update or admit it was wrong, if increased costs or political implications or donations are involved? We may get Flint Michigan on a national scale.

 The experts think everything can be solved by technology, and that planned nutrition will create better human material. ANY such approach discards freedom of choice and individualism. This effort should be left to a much more efficient mechanism is called free development, which occurs in a society of independent minded, educated individuals, with protected rights, tolerant of discordant points of view, where opinions are debated. Through market competition, consumers choose the solution with the highest benefit at the lowest cost.

Government recommendations take only the immediate problem into consideration, but history is a web, and is not linear. Any change in point A changes every other point because everything is connected. If you recommend exercise, you need time, which then comes from any function in life that consumes time, like wrinkle free garments, epidural anesthesia, and speed dating. A change in the price of a vegetable will affect all prices in the economy, including bicycles. Every choice in a culture consumes precious resources, and leaves other important needs unmet. Free development is the most efficient way of distributing scarce resources that are needed elsewhere.

Diet and food choices are complicated solutions to complex problems. The technical solution always involves coercion to adopt the new rules and requires forfeiture of individual rights, thereby destroying the very social machinery that would create an EFFICIENT solution. We actually ARE tackling the problem of obesity. Entire INDUSTRIES are built around consumer demand for dietary and healthy living, from diet foods to weight loss programs. When there is free thought, free of government restrictions, new trades, technologies, and services are created, that cannot be foreseen and which would never happen in a controlled environment. The internet is saturated with nutrition and exercise sites. These entities did not exist before the problem of obesity was recognized.

The comparative advantage of free development over government mandate is that millions of minds can be engaged in the process, rather than a few experts. As a whole, the population has unlimited imagination, resources, energy, and time. The consequences of a decision are much better considered and built into the solution. It is possible for the public to experiment with every possibility, and then choose among problem solvers. Solutions can be tailored to an infinite number of needs and individuals. There would be no research costs, no maintenance costs, no enforcement costs, and upgrades would be free and immediate. In such a system, the squeaky wheel gets the grease, not a prison term.

Government directive in our diet is a waste of money, time and effort. Such centralization must be constantly resisted, or it results in beaurocracy, inflexibility, and decline. -Calvin Coolidge (paraphrase).