America and the United Kingdom share a great deal in common; language, music, and film, for example. What we don’t share so much is Puritanism, a legacy of government involvement under the guise of moral posturing. The reason is simple: England wanted Puritans gone, so they moved to the U.S. where they could have religious freedom to control society and government in England could wield all the power and appoint Archbishops and such.

The legacy of Puritanism in America remains, but it does shift with culture. In the 1980s, puritans were primarily influencing one political party but today it's the other side that wants to use government regulations to control social outcomes and endorse some speech while banning the kind it dislikes. Yet government oppression concern remains a part of American culture fabric across the spectrum; our ancestors once moved here to get away from totalitarian governments in Europe, and still at any given time at least 47 percent of Americans retain an innate skepticism about those in positions of power. Contrast that to Europe where they are taught to trust in elites, even if they claim water doesn't cure thirst and that ugly fruit is only for poor countries.

What about when it comes to science and health? There, things are a little more conflicted. To its detriment in science credibility, England gave the world both the anti-GMO and modern anti-vaccine movements, while America leads the world in adult science literacy, science output, and Nobel prizes. Yet on health policy, Brits are a lot more progressive. At the same time our U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was doing surveys to try and claim that e-cigarette advertising was going to cause children to smoke toxic cigarettes, scientists and health experts in
England were embracing them as part of the tool chest to stop the real health threat, cigarette smoking. They encourage harm reduction in the context of addiction, while America is making the perfect the enemy of the good.

We've seen this kind of Puritanical response to health issues before in America, like with needle exchanges and methadone for drug addiction. That same fetish for the precautionary principle, what government scientists criticize when it comes to GMO foods and vaccines, was once common for needle exchanges and is in vogue when it comes to e-cigarettes now. They would rather not have e-cigarettes used for smoking cessation or harm reduction, they claim, until they can be proven completely safe. Well, as we know with vaccines, and any medication, and even about water, nothing can be proved completely safe. Instead, what the weight of evidence shows is truly harmful is smoking.

Smoking is what needs to stop. Especially among kids.

Cigarettes remain a pediatric illness, almost all smokers take them up when they are young, so if that happens a hasty migration off of them using e-cigarettes or patches or gum should be welcomed, and if a rebellious teen is going to experiment with something, an e-cigarette is far less dangerous than cigarettes, alcohol or drugs. An e-cigarette is much less addictive than caffeine.

This is the same organization that recently told women they shouldn't drink alcohol if they weren't on birth control [4]. Yet it is run by Dr. Tom Frieden, not Cotton Mather [5].

Instead of being trusted guides for the public, like the American Council on Science and Health encourages, our government is picking winners and losers in the smoking cessation marketplace and engaging in Puritan policy-making about nicotine. The exact opposite of what is happening in the original home of the Puritans.

It's not 1650 any more. The CDC should stop acting like it is.

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