SHOULD TOBACCO BE BANNED?

The rapid spread of tobacco products and users all over the world is now causing momentous concern. It has become an international challenge. The leaders and lawmakers of different countries are now expressing their concern about the continuously growing number of smoking-related deaths associated with smoking. Recent reports show that approximately 4.9 million deaths worldwide every year can be attributed to smoking every year. This number is expected to rise to a notable 10 million deaths by 2030, if strong policies on tobacco control are not implemented worldwide. Tobacco smoking is currently considered as the second major cause of death. It is not only deaths caused by smoking alone itself are not the only ones that is causing the concern. Based on statistics from the late 1990's, more than 3,000 of the 400,000 smoking-related U.S. deaths related to smoking in the US, more than 3,000 are actually caused by secondhand smoking. One can only imagine just how much larger those numbers must have grown over the past few years.

As tobacco use continues to rise, with the total number of users worldwide is rapidly now reaching the billion mark, it is becoming obvious to leaders and policy-makers that the regulations on smoking are not working. With the problem growing worse by the minute, more and more a larger number of people are pursuing a more aggressive course of action such as a tobacco ban to counter the negative effects of smoking, in the form of a tobacco ban. Some brave nations are pursuing this path, partially, if not completely. For example, the small nation of Bhutan chose to take the road less traveled. The small nation by constituting a complete tobacco ban that penalizes anyone who smokes or sells tobacco within the country.

Some countries, however, are pursuing a milder course of action: they are choosing to, limiting the ban to just public areas and workplaces. In addition, these bans are also only applicable to tobacco use, while selling tobacco products is still completely...
legal. The most recent effort was undertaken by England, when the country declared all their virtually enclosed public places and workplaces smoke-free. As countries begin to declare a war against tobacco, anti-smoking advocates and health organizations are saluting their efforts.

On the other hand, pro-tobacco advocates are criticizing their efforts.

In fact, pro-tobacco advocates even go so far as to ridicule these efforts. According to these individuals, a tobacco ban will only cause an increase in the tobacco black market to rise. They claim that keeping people from smoking is virtually impossible, they say. Just as the governments are having experience difficulties prohibiting the use of drugs that have always been illegal, they will definitely find banning tobacco an even more challenging task. There will always be certain people who will always look for ways to smoke, and there will always be tobacco manufacturers who will always exist, even with laws in place to prohibit smoking and tobacco.

As anti-smoking advocates continue to remain hopeful that their cause will prevail, tobacco advocates take on a different note. They are also advocating the freedom of choice for people who want to smoke. Smoking, according to them, is an individual’s own choice based on his or her preferred lifestyle. People freely choose to smoke even when they realize the associated health risks associated with smoking. They are legal, responsible adults who make the decision to continue smoking as legal and responsible adults and who have the capacity to think and decide on their own. Tobacco manufacturers are banking on the argument that people know and understand the health risks when they choose to take that puff. They are not discounting the fact that tobacco indeed kills. However, but they claim that they are honest to their customers about what the consequences of smoking are through the large enormous health warnings on every pack of cigarettes. Although they are knowing full well aware that tobacco indeed is dangerous to public health, these companies are simply fighting to retain the old regulations, to avoid a complete ban for tobacco not to be entirely banned.
Health organizations and anti-smoking campaigners may call the manufacturers selfish for only taking into consideration their own vested interests in the continuous cultivation and commercialization of tobacco. However, tobacco manufacturers and the leaders of the tobacco industry claim that the tobacco trade industry contributes millions per year to a country’s revenue because of tobacco trade. The stipulated amount of contribution can be translated to almost 16 billion sticks of tobacco per year. Such a huge amount of tobacco consumption definitely has definite economic advantages; and also benefits the government as well through tax earnings gained from the tobacco trade. They also say that they are not the only ones who benefit from the sale and consumption of tobacco consumption and sale. There are also the tobacco farmers and the employees working at the tobacco companies also benefit. The tobacco industry is indeed providing a lot of jobs, especially to tobacco farmers who are completely dependent on the said industry for their most basic survival. These people are economically dependent on their jobs at the tobacco companies, and they will definitely suffer a huge blow if tobacco is banned.

It seems, however, that the arguments used by the pro-tobacco advocates are becoming more and more faulty. Compared to the many disadvantages of tobacco and smoking, not only to the smokers, but also to the entire public as well, the abovementioned reasons are heavily outweighed. The medical and dental health risks related to smoking are causing a worldwide stir in the medical world. Smoking is oftentimes likened to “a slow march to death”, and several campaigns have been released warning saying that every stick of tobacco smoked takes away a day from the life of a smoker by one day’s life. Even if the effects of smoking on the smokers’ health are not immediate, this should not be a reason we should to stall or do nothing in preventing the eventual deaths and the growing health risks.

Smoking is a common popular cause of cancer, asthma, chronic lung diseases, and heart diseases. It is also a well-known cause of dental problems such as tooth decay,
tooth loss, and periodontal disease. The effects of smoking also impede the ability of the gums and teeth's ability to respond to dental treatments against these said problems which, thus causing even bigger problems. The anti-smoking campaigners are using these facts to counter the arguments that tobacco companies are contributing to their countries in terms of revenues. According to studies conducted in different countries, any the revenues brought in by the tobacco trade are quickly offset by the medical expenses incurred by the smokers, their families, and the governments' public health departments are incurring due to diseases caused by smoking. The cost of a heart surgery alone is already humongously high; further coupled with the risk to the patient's life and the possibility of death, the price becomes far too high.

There is also the issue of secondhand smoking, which is also causing concern not only to anti-smoking advocates, but also to every single non-smoking person and to environmentalists as well. They are now also pursuing their right to freedom and protection from exposure to dangerous carcinogens. Tobacco use should definitely be more strongly regulated, if only for the sake of these people who consciously choose to live a life free from the smoking-related health risks brought about by smoking. In a nutshell, the anti-smoking advocates state that the tobacco companies continue earning, but the revenues that the governments incur immediately dwindle as public health calls for necessary actions. The worse part is that the tobacco companies are immune to any consequences caused by smoking. It is the smokers, their families, and the land that ultimately suffer.

Using chemicals that are proven carcinogens, tobacco can be considered a dangerous weapon. And anti-smoking supporters are stating that this substance should be banned just as dangerous weapons are banned. There is no way to hide the fact that tobacco is very dangerous to a-smokers. The substance contains 69 known carcinogens, two of which are benzopyrene and polonium 210. To falsify the arguments made by smokers, maintain on their right to choose their lifestyle and
decide whether they want to smoke or not. However, the opposing side answers based on some certain leaked documents leaked from the tobacco industry. These documents supposedly that are said to prove an even greater nicotine concentration and the inclusion of additional materials in tobacco products to make them more addictive. Even if people choose to smoke on their own, they do so under the subtle influences of tobacco companies. The mere availability of tobacco, prevalence of tobacco advertisements, and the addictive content of tobacco products all influence the smokers. Therefore, anti-smoking advocates the claim that the argument that smoking is a “free choice” is not valid, says the anti-smoking advocates.

The debate continues to heat up, as both sides show no signs of relenting. However, the final answer lies in the governments that rule over the different nations. Even if this problem has become a worldwide challenge, the decision whether to ban or not to ban tobacco depends one each individual country. Some countries are taking an active stand. Some are even declaring May 31st as “a World No-Tobacco Day.” During the late 1990’s, in an effort to launch a worldwide campaign during the late 1990s, the World Health Organization also released the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control to restrict the spread of tobacco and tobacco products. However, it is still a fact that a complete legal ban is not entirely feasible. This is especially true in developing countries and countries with larger populations where the number of smokers is also higher. If the current restrictions are not working, medical and environmental campaigns are the next best thing. Forcing people to stop smoking may not solve the problem. In fact, it and may merely lead to even more problems. Consequently, health organizations and anti-smoking advocates are instead focusing their efforts on encouraging people not to smoke. If it is a person’s conscious decision to smoke, it should also be this individual’s conscious decision to quit.

REFERENCES
1. “UK Ministers Urged to Ban Tobacco”, BBC News, Dec 2005
2. www.wikipedia.org/Smoking_ban
3. “Tobacco Cessation in Dentistry”, Utah Tobacco Prevention and Control Program
4.
3.