

## Live Fat-Free or Die

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

According to an article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, written by government researchers, my bartender is a killer. The hamburger flipper at the local McDonald's and all his cronies in the junk-food Mafia are equally homicidal. The local tobacconist has blood on his hands, and so do all the rogues who appear on television, beguiling us into becoming couch potatoes. In 1990—the most recent year in which statistics are available—these hitherto unidentified killers dispatched 1,148,000 innocent Americans. You can be sure that Hillary Clinton's national health-care program will bring them all to justice.

She is going to save the innocent by making it more difficult—or at least more costly—to drink alcohol, eat junk food, and avoid exercise. Alcohol, tobacco, junk food, and a “sedentary lifestyle,” according to these “government researchers,” account for nearly half America's annual deaths. “People may not realize the extent [to] which deaths among Americans are preventable,” says Dr. J. Michael McGinnis, head of the Office of Disease Prevention at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and one of the writers of this tenebrous report. He and like-minded public-health experts prescribe “behavioral change.” Already

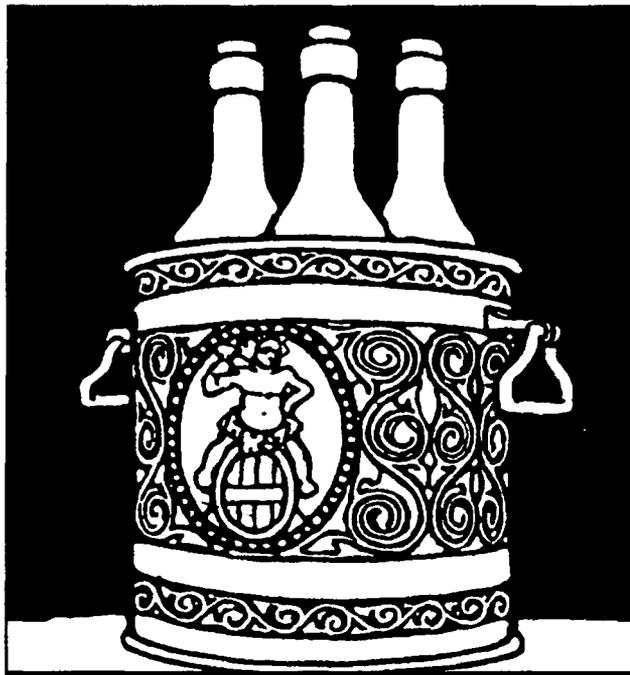
Mrs. Clinton plans to bring about behavioral change among smokers by raising the cost of tobacco 300 percent. Alcohol will be next, then junk food, then sex.

Yes, sex! According to the government study now published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 30,000 deaths from preventable disease in 1990 were attributable to sex. Alcohol helped polish off 100,000. Poor diet and lack of exercise accounted for 300,000 preventable deaths. Once national health care is brought down on our heads and every taxpayer is bearing the cost of your dubious habits, you can be sure that statisticians such as Mrs. Clinton will be promising to keep taxes down by enforcing “behavioral change” among drinkers, junk-food

eaters, couch potatoes, and practitioners of unwholesome sex. That is one of the many reasons I oppose national health care. We have quite enough bureaucrats patrolling our private lives right now.

Mrs. Clinton has already admitted that she would like to impose taxes on substances deemed dangerous to our health. When asked in September during her appearance before the House Ways and Means Committee if she would consider taxing such unhealthy substances as caffeine, cholesterol, salt, sugar and alcohol, Mrs. Clinton pertly replied to her questioner, Congressman Jim Bunning, “If there is a way that you can ever come up with to tax substances like the ones you just named we'll be glad to look at it.” Who doubts that even now this champion of the nanny state is abundant with ideas to tax and otherwise regulate the aforementioned poisons?

A national health-care system will create public pressure behind the health bureaucrats' lust to patrol our lives and tax such traditional pleasures as unwholesome foods and restful repose, rather than the governmentally prescribed 30-minute daily workout. The burden of the *JAMA* article on “preventable” deaths is that they are costly. “When you come up with half the total number of deaths in this country are preventable, that people can do something about, the implications are enormous from an economic point of view,” declares Dorothy Rice, a

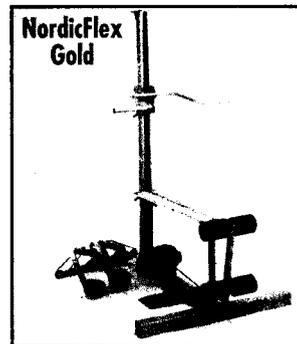
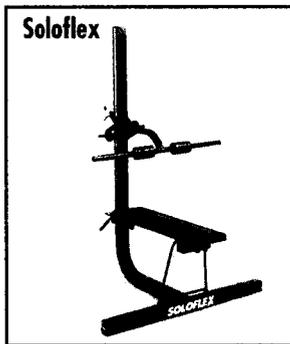
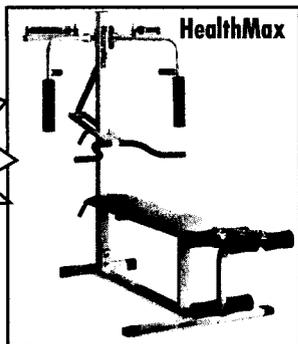


Adapted from *RET's* weekly Washington Times column syndicated by Creators Syndicate.

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medical economist, in the *Los Angeles Times*. And Dr. McGinnis declares: "To the individual the message is 'You can do a great deal to control your own health destiny.'" Right now, if you would rather eat junk food and lie on the couch you can. With national health care the government will put an end to these costly indulgences.

But how did these researchers arrive at their grim figures? They examined death certificates from 1990 and *speculated*. From all I can tell, no serious analysis of the lifestyles of the deceased exists, nor of their family histories, nor any other personal details. No distinction is drawn between the longevity of a hard

drinker, say Winston Churchill, and the early death of an F. Scott Fitzgerald; the longevity of a smoker like the jazz musician Eubie Blake, and the early death of a smoker less favored by fate or by genes.

Raw data is fed into a computer and, hesto presto, hundreds of thousands of "preventable" deaths mount up. Then the health-care experts move in with their mandate for changing behavior. The assumption is that adult Americans cannot be trusted to manage their own lives. Apparently we must live the salubrious lives of the Clintons, lest we cost our society a bundle with our "preventable deaths." □

was appointed to his chair, in a department that now contained such conservatives as Kenneth Minogue. While at the LSE, Maurice became a great teacher. Once past his shyness, students found a devoted mentor and lifelong friend. Maurice wrote scholarly works that will be read for decades. Of particular importance is his work on Locke and Rousseau. Yet he was always available to write the kind of elegant and trenchant essays and reviews that have appeared here and in other periodicals. His review of John Rawls's *Political Liberalism* on page 58 is characteristic.

I personally remember Maurice for his kindness, his wit, his learning, his good sense, his keen analytical mind, his high standards, and his sense of the risible. He brought people together. If he knew I was going to be in London and there was a writer that might be helpful to *The American Spectator*, he would introduce us. He, too, had been an editor.

It was my good fortune to have been his guest for lunch at the Garrick Club in London the month before he died. His other guest was one of the conservative luminaries with whom he had visited and conspired for years, the economist William Letwin. Bill's wife Shirley Robin Letwin was also a stalwart in that circle. She died in June, and the day before our lunch we had commemorated her death at a memorial at St. Martin in the Fields church with Lady Thatcher. Our lunch was lively. When I told them that before every writing session on a book I now have well under way I like to jog or take a warm bath, they reminded me that Machiavelli would dress formally in a black cape before his writing sessions, even in exile. Yet amid the robust chatter and laughs one could still see the grief etched along the rims of Bill Letwin's eyes. Bereavement always seems to leave its mark on the eyes. Now Maurice's many friends and colleagues are suffering a touch of that loss.

Bill and I left Maurice down the street from the Garrick. We hailed a cab and he shoved off to the London Library, to carry on his work in *la grande paix des bibliothèques*. I assume he has now found a still greater *paix*. Kenneth Minogue replaces him on *The American Spectator's* Editorial Board.

—RET

## IN MEMORIAM

# Maurice Cranston

Professor Maurice Cranston, one of the stalwarts of *The American Spectator's* Editorial Board, collapsed and died of a heart attack in a good cause on November 5. He was engaged in a television commentary on Lady Thatcher's memoirs for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. For a profoundly serious champion of freedom and prudent politics, it was a proper way to exit, but it has left his colleagues here at *The American Spectator* lost in sadness.

Maurice Cranston was a great gentleman, a superb teacher, and a graceful, tireless, and extremely wise writer. He was born in 1920 to a theatrical family. In his early years he followed the bohemian life. His involvement in resettling Jewish refugees from Germany eventually turned him towards political philosophy. With his natural independence of mind and a scholarly rigor he pursued the study of freedom at Oxford. A head "full of seventeenth-century rationalism," as he put it, and an interest in continental philosophy kept him free of the hooey of academic fashion. He lectured in both English and French; but in his own words, "I have always sought what Jean Starobinski called *la grande paix des bibliothèques*." In 1958 he married Baroness Maximiliana von

und zu Fraunberg. They had two sons.

Though never doctrinaire, he sustained conservatism's growing influence at the London School of Economics. That institution may have begun as a seedbed of British socialism, but when one of the founders of modern conservatism, the political philosopher Michael Oakshott, replaced the leftist Harold Laski as a professor of political science, it was apparent that conservatism was also a strong presence in the faculty. Upon Oakshott's retirement Maurice

