



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on April 21, 2024

Control-freak Nanny Staters Make Clear: Tasty Food Is the New Tobacco

It was generations ago that C.S. Lewis warned of “omnipotent moral busybodies ... who torment us for our own good.” Such people are more dangerous than robber barons, he explained, because they “will torment us without end, for they do so with the approval of their consciences.” Enter Lindsey Smith Taillie, “nutrition epidemiologist,” associate professor at the Gillings School of Global Public Health — and candidate for the current Moral Busybody of the Week award.

Most everyone has a passion that in certain cases can become obsession. Some people collect stamps. Others exercise compulsively. And there are men who turn their wives into golf widows. Taillie’s obsession is controlling what we eat and lobbying for government regulations to that end.

Taillie’s [X account](#) is replete with posts warning about this or that gastronomical peril, along with throwing shade on things such as what she calls the “heteronormative gendered division of labor.” But her latest effort is to prohibit producers of candy and other tasty foods from “targeting” kids with commercials.

This is, mind you, precisely the road we trod with tobacco, as Taillie well knows. She mentions that since 1998, tobacco companies have been “prohibited from targeting youth in advertisements” — and, she states, because the foods in question “can be addictive like tobacco, this precedent could pave a way forward.”

If this doesn’t appear a big deal, consider that this precedent has now led to another precedent: Britain’s House of Commons [just passed a bill](#) that would prohibit *anyone* born after January 1, 2009 from *ever* buying tobacco. Total prohibition would eventually result.

As for embarking on this road with tasty treats, Taillie [writes](#) at *The Hill*:

A gummy candy shimmies on stage, dancing to “Flashdance.” The music swells, it pulls a chain and is showered in multi-colored candies. The [ad](#), for Nerds Gummy Clusters, was one of dozens of food ads that [123 million people](#) saw during the 2024 Super Bowl. While the nostalgic soundtrack entertained adults, the cartoon candies are engineered to appeal to a different audience: children.

And it works. Following the ad, my four-year-old shouted, “NERDS! Mom, can we buy



Jeffrey O. Gustafson/Wikimedia Commons



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them?!” Two weeks later, the ad’s influence was still palpable when she begged for them in the supermarket.

Now, some might say the real problem here is that Taillie let her daughter watch the kneeling multimillionaires in the NFL/BLM. Whatever the case, a “30-second commercial seems harmless,” the professor continues. “However, new research from my lab shows that food marketing to kids is more than a nuisance: it’s a key driver of poor diets. Food marketing impacts what kids like, buy and eat....”

Taillie proceeds to explain that not all is lost, however. “This week, a [unconstitutional] bill introduced in the Senate, the Childhood Diabetes Reduction Act,” she writes, “proposes a crucial step forward by proposing limits on the types of techniques used to target kids (for example, dancing animated candies).” This is necessary because, Taillie says in her title, “The junk food industry is targeting our children.”

Yet as an MSN commenter asked rhetorically, “Y’all just figuring this out?” For sure, this is nothing new. Below, for example, are some black-and-white, ’50s-ish candy commercials.

Here’s Tony the Tiger selling Frosted Flakes to kids in the ’70s. (Taillie surely wants Tony terminated.)

And here are some dancing ’70s Rolos:

The point? This is what manufacturers are *supposed to do*: market their products. But then there’s what parents are supposed to do.

Note, while Taillie wrote that food marketing “impacts what kids like, buy and eat,” young children don’t “buy” anything without parental facilitation. Kids don’t generally have money without adult provision.

Parents are responsible for shaping kids’ food tastes, which *are* formed when young. But Taillie’s opening story about her four-year-old’s NERD demands is perhaps telling. It’s reminiscent of the mother years ago who complained that ice-cream trucks shouldn’t be allowed in a certain park after her child importuned her for ice cream. Is this the same phenomenon? Is the issue that Taillie, being overly permissive (as per fashions), hasn’t taught her daughter that no means “No!” and wants the government to do the job modern parents won’t do?

She does [write on X](#) that she can robustly pursue her career ambitions because her husband “is not tied to heteronormative gendered division of labor” and does most of the child-rearing and housework. So is the issue that instead of spending more time being a mother, she’s trying to mother the whole world?

This is how moral-busybody status is attained — and it doesn’t improve society. Consider Taillie’s complaint (below) about how “Lunchables” shouldn’t be on schools’ meal programs.

It's unacceptable for schools to serve Lunchables to kids. Not only are they high in sodium and other nutrients of concern, they're ultra-processed and bad for health. Kids deserve better. <https://t.co/OxKNa9pbT8>

— Lindsey Smith Taillie (@lindseypsmith) [April 18, 2024](#)

We already tried such nanny-statism with Michelle Obama’s 2010 brainchild, the “[Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act](#).” The result? Children didn’t get healthier, and [tons of food was just thrown away](#). (Apparently, kids aren’t interested in horrible, unripe, bulk-purchased fruit.)



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The idea that Taillie types are needed to mother the world presupposes that they're smarter than everyone else. And as the professor relates, quoting another source, "Consumers don't know what's in their food, and they deserve to have that information." Okay, I've read much about nutrition and can simplify matters: If it's sweet, it contains sugar in some form. If it's salty, it's high in sodium. If it's creamy, it contains fat. And here's another, expert epicurean analysis:

It's also probably delicious.

The irony is, the very same food Nazis who wag their fingers at you for giving your kid a cookie (Taillie also supports a sugary-drink tax), usually have no problem with your putting him on puberty blockers. The conclusion:

None of this is about love. It's about the swells legislating their own ever-changing pseudo-elite tastes.



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