

Persuasive writing/argument essay

(Against an outright ban on the sale of all smoking products in HK proposed by by Dr Judith Mackay of anti-smoking group CASH)

Structure:

Intro - main argument - counter-view ≥ rebuttal - conclusion +

Extras:

cloze test

cohesive devices in italics

Can smoking be prevented by banning the sale and production of tobacco products?

Anti-smoking activists have long raised awareness of issues surrounding the consumption of tobacco. Over the decades they have successfully lobbied for an end to advertising for tobacco products, measures to _____ they are kept out of sight of minors in stores, and universally hammered home the message that “smoking kills”. Yet many people continue to smoke every day even though it is harmful to human health. Some activists now _____ for a total ban on tobacco products in order to eradicate smoking once and for all. However, I believe such activists underestimate the power and tenacity of this addiction, while failing to predict some obvious real-world consequences of an outright ban. Not only would a ban _____ as a preventative, *I will argue*, it could even be counterproductive for public health and society overall.

An immediate and obvious harmful result of a tobacco ban *would be* a rapid proliferation of illegal factories making illicit products, chiefly cigarettes. In the face of a total ban on legal products, many smokers would resort to these illegal ones, obtained furtively on street corners from *an army of black market sellers*. *The impact on society* would be a rapid rise in the corrupting power and influence of organised crime syndicates, as happened during and after the federal ban on alcohol sales and production that was _____ in the US (1920-1933). Leaving aside such disastrous consequences, there is perhaps an even more important reason to _____ a ban. Many citizens would be incensed by it, including smokers of course, but also civil liberties and consumers’ rights activists, leading to protests, demonstrations and even disorder in the streets - in short, yet another dispute between government and citizens.

As mentioned, *some ardent anti-smoking activists* are pushing for a ban on cigarettes, cigars and pipes because tobacco fumes contain toxic substances which can cause cancer, heart disease and a range of chronic _____ problems. If the government banned cigarettes, *they maintain*, there would be fewer people ailing and dying because of disease. *From their point of view*, a ban would also help smokers to beat their _____ and would in time be welcomed as millions of now ex-smokers _____ the positive effects on their health, looks and wallets.

What the activists fail to see is that a complete ban on the production and sale of

tobacco products could actually be a disaster for public health. Legal products already contain harmful chemicals to produce a steady burn, add flavours and so on, but at present these can be monitored. Given no choice but to buy unregulated cigarettes on the black market, smokers would be exposed to a range of unknown chemicals and compounds, ensuring more disease and early _____. As for a ban helping smokers to quit, there is simply no guarantee that withholding legal access to these addictive products would result in the curing of the addiction when illegal sources would rapidly fill the void. It is far safer to avoid tempting fate in this matter and to continue encouraging smokers to quit by using nicotine patches and other treatments to *wean them off the weed*.

There is much idealism in the intentions of anti-smoking activists, but not much common sense. The only people who would stop smoking under a ban are those who would draw the line at buying anything illegal. What percentage of smokers would resort to buying illegal tobacco products is an open question, but we need only observe the thriving illegal drugs trade in our present world or again recall the colourful history of Prohibition with its rowdy and overcrowded speakeasies to understand that when given no other option, a lot of people will do whatever it takes to get a fix of their favourite poison! Viewed with a realistic understanding of human nature, a ban on tobacco would only introduce a range of new public health hazards and create a new black economy lucrative enough to transform the small gangs that traffic contraband tobacco today into vast criminal empires involved in every type of illegal business tomorrow, much as the 13 misguided years of Prohibition boosted the fortunes of the mafia in the US for many decades.