

## PROTECTING THE PUBLIC (Originally published December 1977)

Two items of interest appeared in late November, both having to do with those annoying and irrational government agencies, the Food and Drug Administration and the Consumer Products Safety Commission (CSPC).

The first was a bit of research by a couple of cancer investigators from Denver, who, tongue in cheek, inserted sterilized dimes into the peritoneal cavities of 35 rats. In less than a year and a half, 507 of the rats had developed malignant abdominal tumors. In mock seriousness, the researchers concluded that the FDA and CSPC should, to be consistent, convene an emergency meeting "for the purpose of removing all coins from circulation." They also theorized that they could produce similar results by using wads of paper money or by cutting out dime-sized discs from plastic credit cards and implanting these in rodents. It was reported that the agencies, along with a spokesman from the NIH, were not amused by what they called a "pointless experiment," and they labeled the research a "disgraceful misuse of cancer funds and laboratory animals."

The second item reported on the findings of something called the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System, which is a computerized network of data collection from 119 emergency rooms across the country to tabulate injuries associated with consumer products. This system is another Nader-inspired brainchild of the CSPC, and the particular wisdom emanating from this most recent report was that skateboards were not dangerous. After five years of data collection and analysis, the Consumer Product Safety Commission concluded that it wasn't the skateboard that caused injury; it was the people who rode them.

In the first instance, it should be obvious by now that any substance at all, in the hands of energetic researchers supplied with enough funds, can be made to produce cancer in susceptible strains of laboratory animals. Applying the Delaney Amendment indiscriminately to anything exhibiting carcinogenicity is an example of the FDA's continuing simplemindedness.

In the second instance, you may remember that just two years ago, the same Consumer Products Safety Commission banned Kooky Eyes and Bloopy Dog among 1300 other items as toys too dangerous to be sold. In the case of the skate board, however, Joann Langston, CPSC's "associate executive director for hazard identification and analysis," brilliantly discovers now that, "It's the kids that are the problem."

Shielding the public from all hazard—internal and external—is an expensive HEW

obsession that supports an army of incompetent government busybodies. The common idiocy about all this is our toleration of the concept that protecting the health and well-being of the country is better managed by a bevy of bumbling bureaucrats than by the public's own common sense.

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