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# EDITORIAL

## SOSS: Save Our Social Security

*Science.* Dr. Noitall, you are the greatest champion of fitness in the world, the man who invented the diet, the man who preaches jogging on every occasion, the man who calls cholesterol the enemy of the people.

*Noitall.* A vast understatement of my true worth.

*Science.* What do you think of the article in *Time* magazine\* pointing out that Americans are more overweight than ever despite all the publicity against obesity?

*Noitall.* A terrible index that the American economy is flourishing out of control. More people need to be below the poverty line.

*Science.* But some of our most educated and disciplined people are still overweight. What can be done?

*Noitall.* Very little. I took a statistical poll of college graduates and asked how many would prefer 120 minutes of aerobic exercise to one piece of chocolate cake. You'd be dismayed by the answers.

*Science.* It has been reported that there is an obesity gene. Could that be the cause?

*Noitall.* Only a very few people can use that excuse. Unbelievably, some people actually enjoy eating, and others prefer to look fashionably well-rounded and die at age 85 rather than look emaciated and die at 100.

*Science.* If the educated and affluent United States cannot discipline itself, is there any hope for the rest of the world?

*Noitall.* Practically none. The forces of evil have a slick slogan, "Eat, Drink, and Be Merry." Our best is "Starve, Abstain, and Go Jogging." Not as catchy.

*Science.* Do you have any solution to this dilemma?

*Noitall.* Of course. The government must start to promote smoking in order to save the social security system from bankruptcy.

*Science.* But the government is educating people to give up smoking.

*Noitall.* Perfectly fine, for an election campaign and an era of unbalanced budgets. Stopping smoking eliminates tax revenues, increases longevity, initiates a war between the generations, and encourages obesity.

*Science.* But aren't you going to warn people of the risks of smoking?

*Noitall.* Certainly. Each pack will contain a statement from the Secretary of the Treasury: "Stay slim, reduce the budget deficit, and avoid the expense of a living will. Hazards to your health as a result of smoking exist, but should be accepted gladly by every patriotic American citizen."

*Science.* But is it moral to advocate a policy that is bad for people?

*Noitall.* I am all for morality if we can afford it, but we can't.

*Science.* Other than running up the debt, what's so bad?

*Noitall.* The population explosion is disastrous. The world has turned its back on birth control; we'll have to proceed with death control.

*Science.* That involves deciding who will die and who won't.

*Noitall.* Exactly. It fits in perfectly with the general philosophy. We would prefer sinners to die rather than us highly moral people. Smokers are clearly sinners, and we need more sinners, who will then die in adequately large numbers.

*Science.* Are there any other sinners you had in mind?

*Noitall.* Lots. People who use "like" as a conjunction, people who say taxes will go down, people who go skiing during the work week, people who claim they predicted stock market dips, and people who boast, after the fact, that they picked the winners of football games, midterm elections, and state lotteries. Also, people who talk when I want them to listen. That's just the beginning, but it should help to stem the population explosion.

Daniel E. Koshland Jr.

\*P. Elmer-Dewitt, "Fat times," *Time*, 16 January 1995, pp. 58-65.