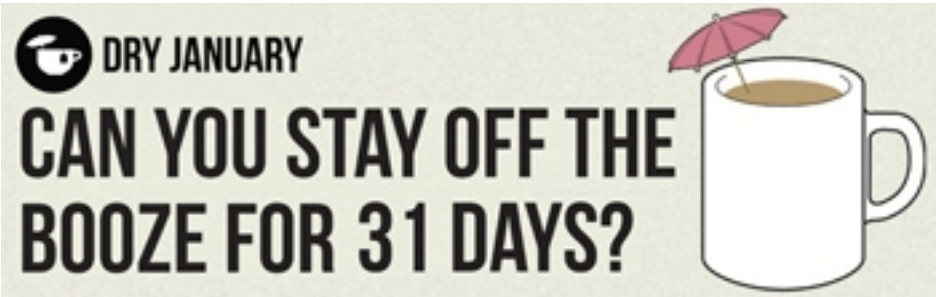


# Healthy Living and Dry January

**by Simon Belt**

Christmas and New Year is a great time for most people to relax away from work, let your hair down with friends and family, and eat drink and be merry. Well it used to be until the wannabe Victorian patricians thought of a new party game - ***prod and poke the proles***.

There has been something of a revival of patronising and prohibitionist trends in recent years, well against working class people at least. This does make me wonder if the class focused target of the campaign is more what it's about, rather than any of the specific issues of concern.

Take for example the consumption of alcohol which has been bubbling out of the mouths of today's champagne socialists . Nicola Sturgeon's SNP campaign to introduce minimum pricing of alcohol managed to enact legislation in Scotland in 2012, setting a minimum price of a unit of alcohol at 50p. In response to the European Court of Justice suggesting that this breached their

rules on open and fair competition, Nicola said "We believe minimum unit pricing would save hundreds of lives in coming  years and we will continue to vigorously make the case for this policy." By we, she didn't mean the consumers, but herself and other patricians of the people.

I understand that out of every 100,000 men who died in Scotland in 2013, the less than 30 who died of alcohol-related diseases may be profoundly disturbing for Nicola and her patricians friends, but it doesn't amount to very many in truth and there are clearly bigger fish to fry if preventing deaths is such a concern. Did I just mention fried food? I'll come back to food shortly. As the UK average for deaths due to alcohol related diseases is just 19 per thousand per year, there's surely something dubious about such interest.

Clearly there will be less severe medical conditions adversely affected by the consumption of alcohol, but it's hardly the only activity that adversely affects people's health so why single this out for such high profile, indeed overwhelming, interest and intervention? The campaign for the minimum pricing of alcohol does seem to give away the unwritten rules game. After all most of the campaigners wouldn't dream of spending so little on their vintages or favourite tipple - the consumers targetted for the prohibitive measures are the ones who deliver the finer wines, not the ones drinking them.