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Decisions on Flu Shots, Safety Belts Should Be Left to Free Americans

OFFICIAL Washington has decided that a federal law is needed to have everybody inoculated against the flu. Punishment for failure to comply has not been specified.

Nobody wants the flu, and immunization probably is a good thing for most people, but this law is just one more example of how big government is making personal decisions for us.

It was recently reported that we now have 228 federal health programs, 156 income, security and social service programs and 83 federal housing programs. More are pending in Congress.

Of course, that is not the whole story. The Code of Federal Regulations, containing only basic rules set out by law and the bureaucracy, fills a shelf 15 feet long, with 60,000 pages of fine print. Since some may not apply to everyone, individuals and businessmen might not be required to know about and obey more than half or two-thirds of these rules of conduct.

Only a few people seem to consider seat belts in cars to be undesirable, but the Oklahoma division of the American Automobile Association (AAA) found that 76 per cent of its members are against a federal law requiring them to be used. Motorists favor safe driving, but they seem to resent a bureaucrat, in the form of an automatic buzzer, nagging at them to buckle down.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has specific authority to spend as much as \$1 million a year to write new rules for business and industry. Rulemaking appropriations for other bureaus may be even larger, but might not be as readily identifiable.

Only vigorous last-minute protests

by farm organizations resulted in a law to exempt custom grain harvesters, hay crews and sheep shearers from having to register and file up to 25 different forms and statements about their work as they travel.

Harvest crews move with the weather and ripening of crops. They may not know one day what county they will be in the next. This Department of Labor rule, which still applies in other areas, would have hampered the 1976 wheat harvest seriously.

Farmers also face a new run of rules and expenses due to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). With few exceptions, farm tractors manufactured after Oct. 25, 1976, must be equipped with "Roll-Over Protective Structures" and seat belts. In June, OSHA will require farmers to install safety signs and devices on field and farmstead equipment.

Consideration of rules to protect people from themselves is not restricted to Washington. Laws for or against paternalism have been proposed or enacted in most states and municipalities.

The Oklahoma legislature right now is cooperating with 29 other states in a drive to get the unpopular 55 m.p.h. federal speed limit adjusted. A single state can't do much about it, because of the federal threat to cut off highway funds for failure to comply.

Liberty is based upon limitations on the power of government, not upon big government's authority to protect us from every real or imagined hazard of life. We should be allowed, as free Americans, to make a few mistakes on our own, and not leave this privilege exclusively to lawmakers, bureaucrats and politicians.