

MAKING SENSE of RISK

Vic Coleman
Health and Safety
Executive

RoSPA's
Occupational Health &
Safety at Work Congress,
Birmingham
17-19 May 2005

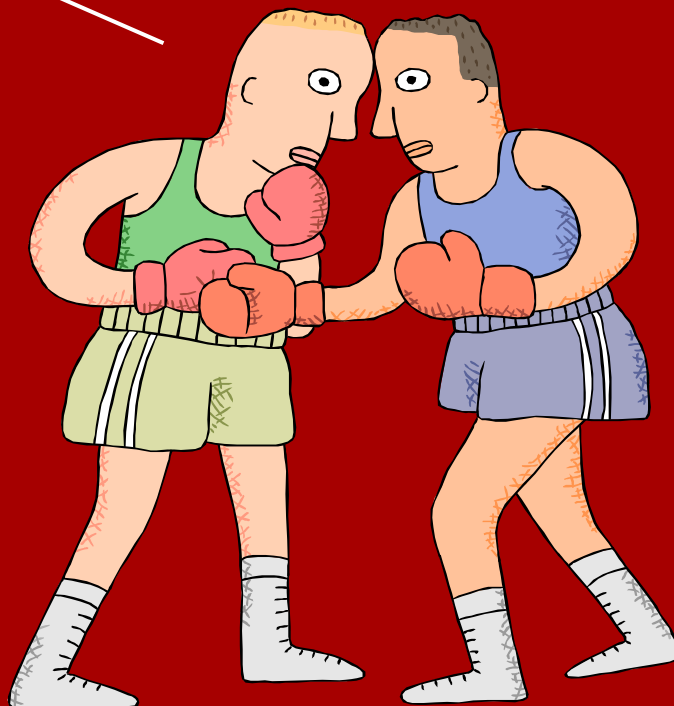
Sensible health and safety
is a cornerstone of a
civilised society.

All publicity is good publicity?



TOO OFTEN A CONVENIENT EXCUSE

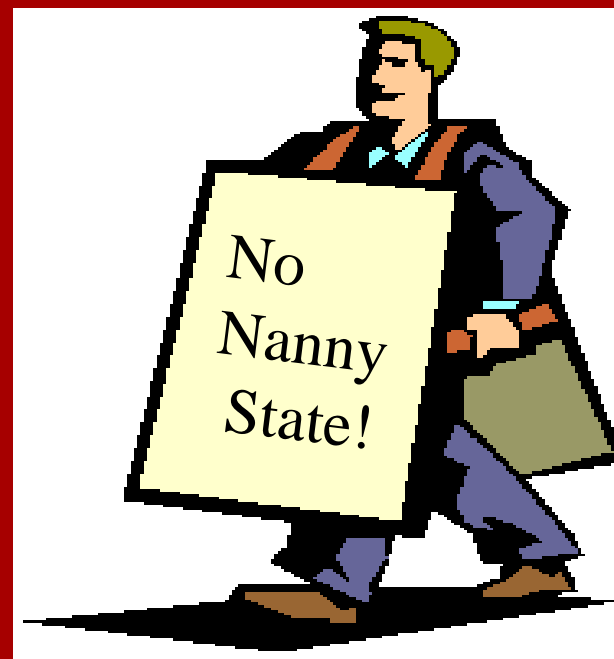
“You can’t hit me -
its against health
and safety rules”



PUBLIC DEBATE TOO OFTEN POLARISED



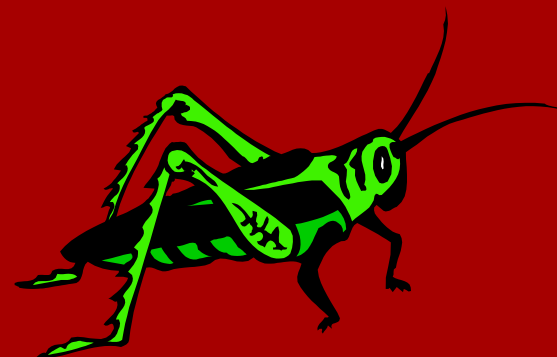
Zealot



Libertarian

Promote the 'middle way'!

Sensible risk management!



Eliminate all risk?



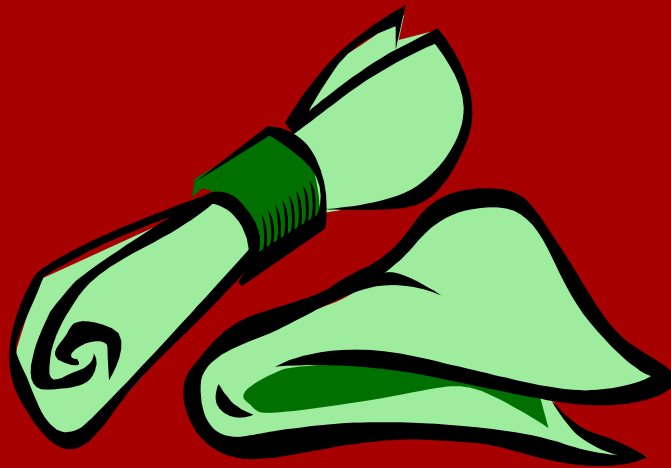
SENSIBLE RISK MANAGEMENT



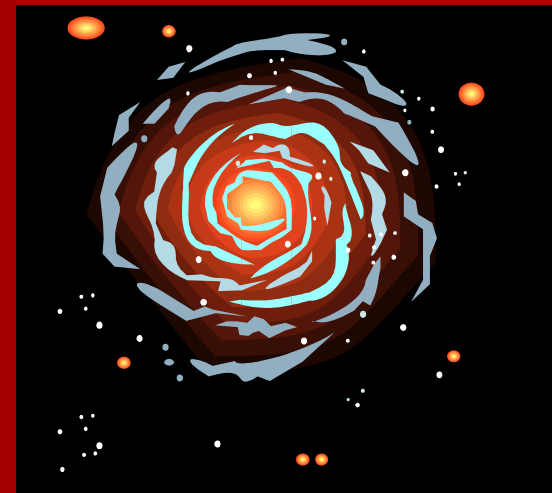
Risks will take care of themselves - won't they?



All risks must be managed?



Trivial



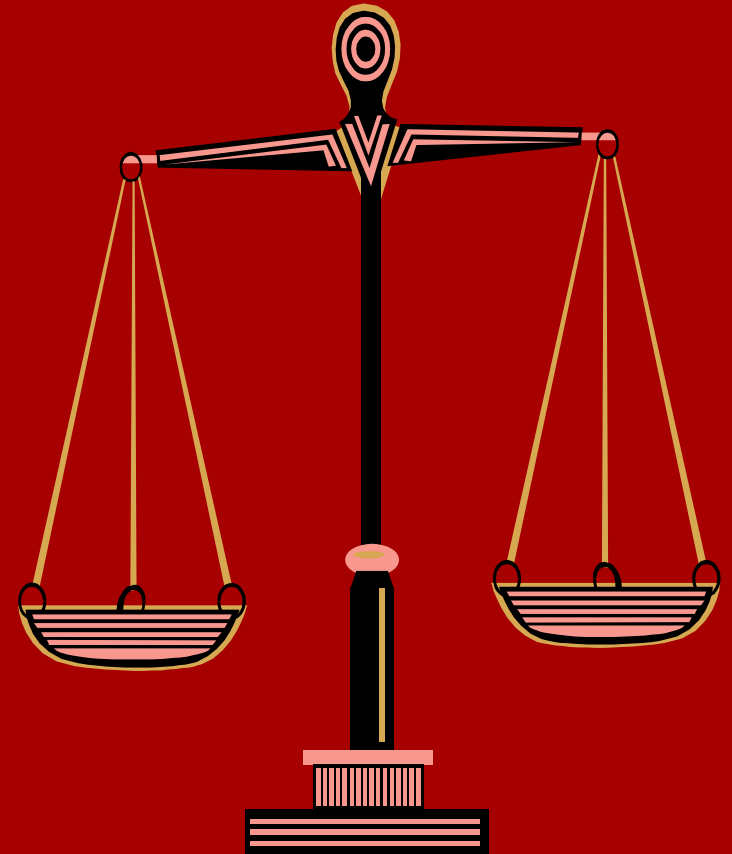
Uncontrollable

SENSIBLE RISK MANAGEMENT



Trade-Offs, e.g...

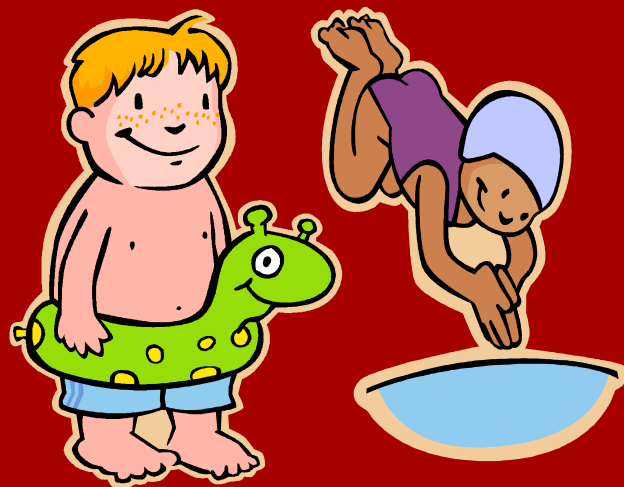
- **risk v. cost**
- **risk v. risk**
- **risk v. public benefit/cost....**



SENSIBLE RISK MANAGEMENT

Trade-Offs, e.g...

- risk v. individual benefit



New skills



Glenridding Beck

Risk Awareness

Human Rights

Making the trade-off.....

Risk Assessment ensures:

- **proportionality;**
- **targeting;**
- **tolerable level of residual risk.**

SENSIBLE RISK MANAGEMENT



But words have power and produce images conditioned by the listener!

“Risk Assessment” - sounds reasonable...but...

- **does the term imply an overblown piece of bureaucracy...requiring a PhD...days of effort...or consultants?**

or

- **do we really use the term as ‘shorthand’...for ‘think what could go wrong – and take it into account’?**

SENSIBLE RISK MANAGEMENT

Remember that Hazard
(anything that can cause harm)



is not the same as Risk
(likelihood harm will occur and its severity)

Low risk

High Risk



Personal responsibility?

PUBLIC DEBATE



HSC is launching a debate.

**Visit HSE's homepage & click on
'Sensible health and safety'**