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Liberty?s poster boy? [1]

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Is Lib-Dem leader Nick Clegg slowly becoming Britain?s poster boy for liberty? His full participation in the UK coalition government?s drive to reduce the size of the state is heartening enough. And now comes news that Mr Clegg would be a suitable challenger to the state?s nanny-ish ways. On the BBC?s Desert Island Discs [3] this weekend, he admitted to smoking cigarettes, going so far as to request a pack of smokes as one of his luxuries on that deserted island. While not advocating smoking, Mr Clegg was refreshingly honest in not declaring any intention to give it up.

It might be too much to expect Mr Clegg to lead any counter-revolution against the deeply entrenched anti-smoking forces within the government but his candour might encourage others to do so.

The beneficial budget implications from smoking are worth trumpeting. Between excise taxes and VAT, smokers contributed some £10.5 billion to HMRC in the last financial year, about enough money to keep the Home Office running. And then there?s the untold billions saved from pension and nursing care costs due to smokers? shorter life expectancy.

More than this, though, is the libertarian case for smoking. As long as smokers are aware of the dangers from smoking and the externalities of their smoking are controlled, what business is it of the state to harass and bully this particular minority?

Smokers of Britain unite! Reclaim your right to start the day with a strong coffee and that first drag. Indulge that quiet satisfaction of the after-dinner cigar and cognac. Mr Clegg understands you for he told the BBC that ?I can just imagine, as the sun goes down, sitting there with my beard flowing down to my knees, just puffing away at a cigarette.?

Yes, Mr Clegg is poised to free us all. A couple of years ago in another interview, he admitted to having had sex with some 30 women. Now, on Desert Island Discs, he admits to an addiction to tobacco while including Johnny Cash, Price, Radiohead and David Bowie in his musical choices.

That completes the sex, drugs & rock?n?roll trinity of true freedom.

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