Published on *Adam Smith Institute* (http://www.adamsmith.org)

Olympic arrogance [1]

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For some weeks transport within London has been dislocated and delayed by road closures as Olympic venues are prepared. Soon now whole lanes will be closed off to ordinary drivers so that these 'Games Lanes' can whisk Olympic officials around in their limousines without hindrance from other motorists. Any cyclist entering one of these lanes faces a fixed £130 penalty, and motorists have been advised to avoid London altogether during the Olympics.

My use of the word 'Olympic' risks an enforcement lawsuit from the committee 'protecting' the trademark. Also banned are words and phrases made up of terms that might refer to the Games, including London, 2012, games, medals, gold, silver and many more. Bullion dealers should be careful when they talk about their work.

The Spectator tells of a butcher [3] in Weymouth banned for arranging a display of sausages like the 5 Olympic rings, and of a florist in Stoke-on-Trent ordered to remove similarly arranged paper tissues in her window. Only Macdonald's chips will allowed at the Olympic stadium; others are banned.

There is a no fly zone around London, and some homeowners have to put up with anti-aircraft missile batteries installed at the top of their apartment blocks. Residential areas will have to put up with the noise of commercial garbage being collected nearby between 1.0 and 4.0 am during the games.

There are queues of several hours sometimes for air passengers arriving at Heathrow, even before the games have begun. The cost of all this long exceeded its planned budget, and is now reckoned to top £12bn, though if the cost of public transport upgrades is included, even that figure doubles.

And for what? So that the "international sporting community" can have a good time at the expense of the locals? So that Olympic officials can congratulate themselves on the way the locals were whipped into line to minimize any inconvenience they faced?

Welcome to the true spirit of the Olympics. Its rings stand for corporatism, cronyism, extravagance, bullying and arrogance. The sensible course is to be as far from it as I can be until it's all over.

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