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

The New Puritans [1]

Written by **David Cuthbertson** [2] | Tuesday 18 December 2007

Half asleep on Sunday night I was listening to a discussion on the radio about 'New Puritanism'. It's the ghastly mix of emerging social attitudes that says that it?s ok to bully people into thinking your way about anything 'bad' in others.

Take the smoking ban. There are, of course, those of us who believe that it is a load of authoritarian tripe, forcing the views of one group of people down the throats of others for no good reason. Then there are those who feel that people in public places shouldn?t be exposed to 'passive smoke' because it may damage their health. This is the old 'nanny state knows best' argument ? we disagree, but at least it's a coherent position. The New Puritans however took it one step further, banning smoking in private clubs for no better reason than they don't like smokers and don't think people should be free to choose whether or not to associate with them.

This attitude is showing up more and more and extends right to the top of government. The smoking ban, fuel taxes, 4x4 road tax, school until 18, bans on pistol-shooting and hunting with dogs, the old rules of John Stewart Mill that 'if something doesn?t hurt others you don't stop people from doing it', have been thrown out and replaced with, 'if something offends a leader writer in the Guardian then ban it'.

So if the country is now ruled by a 'Neo-Cromwellian' dictatorship of the 'liberal' elites, why did I fall asleep feeling so happy?

Well the thought occurs, every time in history that we have been taken over by a puritanical government it has been followed by a backlash of ridiculously hedonistic proportions. Think, Cromwell and the Restoration or Post-War Rationing and the 60s.

Viva, la revolution!

blog comments powered by Disqus [4]

Source URL: http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/politics-and-government/the-new-puritans

Links:
[1] http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/politics-and-government/the-new-puritans
[2] http://www.adamsmith.org/taxonomy/term/5892
[3] http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript
[4] http://disqus.com