

ACID HOUSE PARTIES AGAINST THE LIFESTYLE POLICE AND THE SAFETY NAZIS

PAUL STAINES



Imagine a regime so totalitarian that it will not allow its young citizens to dance when they want. Imagine that this regime introduced a law which banned dance parties unless they were authorised by the state, and even then the parties would only be allowed to be of limited duration and on state-licensed premises. Naturally this regime would, in line with its ideology, only apply these laws to parties held for profit.

The populist pro-government newspapers would of course launch a propaganda campaign against what it would call “evil dance party organisers”. The pro-government press would conduct a hysterical smear campaign, describing the party organisers as “criminals”.

In order to combat the “subversive profiteering free-market dance party entrepreneurs” the state would form *Lifestyle Police*. Using undercover agents they would infiltrate the parties, discover where they were to take place and then, using helicopters and road-blocks, they would try to prevent the parties going ahead, by turning away thousands of dissident party-goers and arresting the organisers.

This is truly a regime of which Stalin or Hitler himself would be proud, implementing socialist policies to protect the citizens from their own “moral weakness”.¹

THE LIFESTYLE POLICE AND THE SAFETY NAZIS

Sadly the above is not a fantasy, it is based on reality. In Britain in 1990 all this happened, not under a Com-

munist regime, but under an increasingly authoritarian Conservative government. What the tabloid press called the “Acid House Party” generated a momentum for yet more restrictions on our civil liberties.

This is another example of the Lifestyle Police in action, but the Lifestyle Police are not the police in uniform, they are the conservative, intolerant bigots who demand uniformity. The Lifestyle Police and lifestyle policies are supported by comfortable suburbia and the reactionary readers of the *Daily Express*. For them different means dangerous. They truly believe that they represent decent values when in fact they have narrow intolerant values.

The Lifestyle Police have infiltrated almost every aspect of our culture. They are the foot soldiers of organisations like the National Viewers and Listeners Association, Mary Whitehouse is the Lifestyle Policewoman *par excellence*. The Lifestyle Police are controlled by members of a powerful but little known clandestine entryist political party known as the *Safety Nazis*.² They are politically active in the Conservative Party and the Green Party. In America the Safety Nazis’ greatest political success was the Prohibition Act. (Only the valiant actions of the Mafia managed to save America by machine gunning leading Safety Nazis.)

Safety Nazis want to ban things: video nasties, cigarettes, drink, drugs, loud music, pornography, toy guns, real guns, artificial additives, swear words on TV, fast cars, unusual sexual practices, dancing around Stone-

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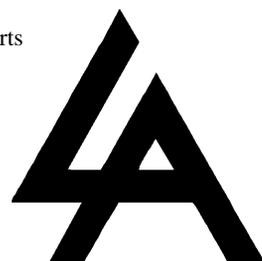
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FOR LIFE, LIBERTY AND PROPERTY



henge on the solstice and Acid House parties. They also make you do things “for your own good”, like wear a seat belt and watch public information films.

Overt Safety Nazis are active in the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, the Health and Safety Executive, the Health Education Authority, Alcohol Concern and Action on Smoking and Health.

Safety Nazis have a secret greeting: “Sieg Health”. Their ultimate totalitarian objective is to take over the world and make it a nice, safe place.

The difference between the Lifestyle Police and the Safety Nazis is one of degree. Safety Nazis are politically motivated. They are consciously in favour of safety, despite the ramifications for freedom of choice and individual liberty. Safety Nazis positively enjoy food scares. They go out of their way to deliberately protect the public, they think up laws and regulations, they smile a lot, they care and they are boring. Extremely boring.

The Lifestyle Police are everywhere. Your grandmother could be one. They mean well. They have proper jobs. They are “normal”. They exert a subtle pressure on their peers and offspring. They think it’s disgusting, even though they do not think very hard. They are decent upstanding members of the community. Their methods are so subtle that even they themselves do not realise that they are Lifestyle Policemen. They are unwitting collaborators with the Safety Nazis.

WHAT AN ACID HOUSE PARTY IS

The Lifestyle Police and their allies the Safety Nazis do not like people enjoying themselves. Why else would they introduce a law to stop people dancing all night? Graham Bright MP³ introduced a private members bill, The Entertainments (Increased Penalties) Bill, to prohibit Acid House parties. The penalty for having a good time is six months in prison and unlimited fines. Since I derived a great deal of pleasure and a substantial proportion of my income from these parties I want to use the example of Acid House parties to illustrate the anti-libertarian nature of the Lifestyle Police.

Before going any further it would be wise to explain what an Acid House party is, since I assume that the majority of people reading this have not attended such a party.

The origin of the term “Acid House” is the subject of some debate. It was claimed in the debate in the House of Commons, as well as endless articles in the music press, that contrary to popular belief “Acid House Parties” did not derive their name from the colloquial term for the hallucinogenic drug LSD. The term “acid”, it was claimed, comes from the streets of Chicago, where it is a slang word meaning to steal, and acid music takes its name from the fact that an acid music track will include samples of music “stolen” from other recordings and then mixed in to form an end product.

Since this particular musical style grew out of the “Chicago House” sound it was christened “Acid House”. That at least is what it says in *Hansard* and you can’t get much more official than that can you?

I know this to be completely untrue because I made up this explanation at a press conference held to launch the Freedom to Party Campaign at the Conservative Party conference in October 1989. I was attempting to desperately play down the drug aspect in a forlorn attempt to discourage anti-party legislation, reasoning that the British public might accept massive noisy parties, but thousands of teenagers on drugs were definitely not acceptable. (This, incidentally, is the most successful lie I have ever told. Japanese music journalists have solemnly repeated it to me in the course of interviews and from MTV to ITN it has been broadcast as a fact. Only once was I caught out, when at a seminar held at the DMC World Disc Jockey Mixing Championships, a DJ from Chicago stood up and told the 1,000 or so people in the hall that I was “talkin’ a complete load of fuckin’ bullshit” — which I was. This proves that if you tell a lie often enough people will believe it — except when they know it’s complete bullshit.)

Despite my best efforts the Safety Nazis simply changed their reasons for wanting to ban the parties. They wanted them banned not because they were party pooping killjoys, worried about drugs, but because they were concerned about the physical safety of party-goers at unlicensed venues! The Safety Nazis outwitted my best lie by changing their tactics.

The parties got their name from the widespread use of the drug LSD (acid) at the parties in the early days. The whole scene revolved around drugs, anybody who knows anything about it will tell you this, unless you are a journalist or a policeman. A plentiful supply of drugs is sure to make the party kick - LSD (A, acid), MDMA (E, Ecstasy), cocaine (charlie), cannabis (dope, hash, grass) — the more the merrier. Combine this with pulsating music played at 80 plus beats per minute, thousands of young people dancing wildly, more lasers than the Strategic Defence Initiative, a 50,000 watt sound system and special effects that would make Steven Spielberg proud and you have a truly superior form of entertainment. It might not be to your taste, but for those of us who do like that kind of thing, it is unbeatable. The fact that we had to beat police roadblocks to get in made it even better, since forbidden fruit tastes sweeter.

BRITAIN’S PURITANICAL LICENSING LAWS

Britain’s archaic licensing laws demand that public entertainments such as nightclubs must be licensed, not just for fire and safety as one might reasonably expect Safety Nazis to demand, but also to serve drink, to play music and to allow dancing. Why do you need a licence? Because the Safety Nazis want to make sure that you’re safe! Why do the licences only let you

dance till a certain hour? Ask the Safety Nazis. Licences allow music and dancing only until a certain hour, usually 3.30am in London. Few nightclubs in London are licensed beyond that hour. In effect there is a state enforced curfew, strictly monitored by the Lifestyle Police. Break the curfew and you lose your licence, putting you out of business. The whole situation is crazy and without any logic.

I have been to nightclubs in pre-perestroika Moscow that were open all hours. I know of nowhere else in the world — except Ireland — that has more restrictive licensing laws, and in Ireland nobody pays the law any attention. If ever there was an area crying out for Thatcherite deregulation it's the archaic system for the licensing of music and dancing.

HEDONISTIC RESISTANCE

Fortunately over the years illicit underground warehouse parties developed to cater for those people who quite reasonably liked to party all night despite the law. People would set up a sound system in an empty warehouse and hold a party. If you were in the know you could turn up, pay cash at the door, and party till the next day in the company of a few hundred other party-goers. Drinks would be sold off the back of a van from crates. A little rough and ready, but fun.

Then in late 1987 and early 1988 a new style of music became popular in Ibiza, the sunny holiday hideaway isle for London's avant garde. The music was energetic and people liked to dance to it all night under the influence of a new designer-drug called Ecstasy (also known as E or more properly by the chemical compound's acronym MDMA). The loose Ibiza lifestyle encouraged parties that lasted for days, and if you were reasonably fit, took the right drugs and refrained from alcohol, you could dance around the clock. Ibiza, you will understand, does not have licensing laws or Life-style Police.

When the holiday was over, so was the party. Some of the more enterprising party people decided that they could recreate the atmosphere by holding warehouse parties. As London's party culture absorbed Ecstasy, the demand for underground warehouse parties grew, hundreds of people wanted to do the new wonder drug and dance all night. If you could not get any Ecstasy then some old fashioned acid would do.

Amongst the enthusiastic crowd who went to the parties was a young man called Tony Colston-Hayter. An imaginative, entrepreneurial technocrat with a relaxed attitude to legal formalities, he revolutionised the scene. He thought big. Instead of using dark, dodgy warehouses in London's docklands catering for a few hundred party-goers, why not organise parties for thousands of people in bigger venues?

How he did it provides a fine illustration of free enterprise's ability to innovate by taking advantage of technological developments. The parties were attracting

the attention of the police, who would raid them and close them down as soon as they found out the location, unless the party was already in full swing, in which case they just turned people away rather than precipitate a riot.

Colston-Hayter reasoned that if he could get the people to the location in large numbers before the police arrived, the party would be unstoppable. He invented a system called TVAR — Telephone Venue Address Releasing.

The system worked as follows. During the day a production team would set up the venue, which could be a large warehouse or even an aircraft hangar. In total secrecy generators, sound systems, lighting, lasers, crash barriers, fire extinguishers, portaloos, merchandising stalls, food stands, soft drink stands and even a first aid room would be set up.

At a given time Colston-Hayter would use his cell phone to call a computer which would digitally record his spoken directions to a meeting point, usually somewhere on the M25 orbital motorway which circles London. The computerised system was linked to hundreds of phone lines.

The phone number would be printed on the tickets, and at a given hour would be party-goers (and the police) would phone that number and within minutes thousands of callers from all over the South East of England would be in their cars and on the way to the meeting point. At the meeting point accomplices with cell phones would report back to him. Once a critical mass had been reached, and this might be as many as a thousand cars, he would record a new message giving the venue location. The sheer weight of numbers would render the police unable to stop the convoy of freedom loving party-goers heading for the party.

The profits on a party attended by over 10,000 people could be up to £50,000. The total turnover could easily be in the region of £250,000 — fines for licensing offences were a maximum of £2,000.

LIFESTYLE POLICE BRUTALITY

The police and the authorities became tired of being outwitted and resorted to roadblocks, bugging phones, harassing organisers and mass detentions — at one party 836 people were detained overnight at 30 police stations, only 12 of whom were charged. The tabloid newspapers waged a hysterical scare campaign branding party organisers as evil drug pushers who were poisoning Britain's youth. A special police unit was set up to deal with the parties and undercover police were used. The police pressurised the phone companies into preventing organisers using the TVAR system. Pirate (i.e. free market) radio stations which broadcasted party location information were raided and shut down.

Civil liberties were crushed in order to stop young people committing the heinous crime of dancing all night without a licence. If that was not enough a dra-

conian new law was introduced in July 1990 which meant that party organisers could face up to six months in prison and confiscation of all profits. It was at this point that I decided to get out of the business.

The Safety Nazis advanced another step on their long march.

Late last year Dr Timothy Leary,⁴ the guru of psychedelia, was refused entry into Britain. He was due to speak about his ideas to willing audiences. The Home Office refused him entry, but where were the human rights activists protesting about restrictions on freedom of speech? If a NORAID fundraiser for the IRA had been refused entry, endless left-wing Labour MPs would have protested. If a bloodthirsty, CIA-backed African guerilla leader intent on publicising his anti-Marxist struggle had been refused entry, every Conservative MP who has been on a free trip to South Africa would be up in arms.

Timothy Leary is an interesting man with interesting ideas, yet I am not allowed to hear what he has to say.

The Lifestyle Police strike again.

SELF LIBERATION AND UPTIGHT CONSERVATIVES

I have fond memories of taking LSD and pure MDMA, trance-dancing and thinking that I had turned into a psychedelic, orgiastic wisp of smoke — it was the most staggeringly enjoyable, mind-warping experience I have ever had. The sense of self liberation was awesome and is to be recommended. The only word to describe it is WOW!

Acid House parties represented the perfect environment for drug taking, they provided a marvellous market place for drug distributors and consumers. The chances of being arrested were minimal because of the massive number of people. The atmosphere allows you to enjoy your trip in conducive surroundings, safe in the knowledge that thousands of others are doing the same. The feeling that it is a shared experience is very powerful, people are friendly. If you should bump into someone “Eeed Up” on Ecstasy/MDMA/E they will just smile, you will say sorry, they’ll say its okay, you’ll smile and dance off — in a bar even the most minor collision is likely to result in an unpleasant exchange of words, if not a fist fight. Alcohol leads to aggression, MDMA encourages tolerance.

A lot of my Thatcherite/Libertarian friends get very suspicious when I tell them about the “love and peace” aspects of taking Ecstasy/MDMA/E. To them “love and peace” equals hippies equals leftist. The feeling of unity and shared enjoyment to them smacks of collectivism, not the rugged individualism that they favour. But the drug actually removes inhibitions, liberating your mind from petty concerns. You feel a sense of solidarity, but it is totally voluntary, there is no coercion. Libertarians are opposed to coercive collectivism, but if I as an individual choose to enjoy a collective

experience because I want to, than that is up to me. I suspect that a lot of right-wingers, Conservative, Thatcherite or Libertarian, cling to their inhibitions and are actually afraid of letting go. Many Conservatives by their very nature fear the dynamic. They are wary of the unusual and prefer tradition, stability and the conventional. The idea of losing their inhibitions to the extent that they might say or do something embarrassing horrifies them.

Some people, particularly those of a Conservative inclination, have an irrational dislike of drugs, often based on what they believe or know about drug addicts. Somehow drug pushers are evil, akin to poisoners. A lot of drug pushers are unpleasant, but that is because it’s an illegal business, and criminals are often unpleasant, violent people. Some drug dealers I know are ruthless, dishonest, dangerous psychopaths, while others are honest, peace loving, fair minded people who just happen to be in a business of which the majority of people are said to disapprove. If alcohol or tobacco was made illegal a similar situation would arise with them.

Most British Conservative groups are not at all sympathetic towards legalising drugs, the Committee for a Free Britain being the only one that has come down in favour of decriminalising drugs. This might have something to do with the fact that during my time at the Committee for a Free Britain we got through quite a lot of the stuff.

Yet uptight Conservatives are probably the people who would benefit most from taking drugs, particularly Thatcherites, with their machine-like obsession with efficiency and abstract attachment to the freedom to make money. I’m as much of a believer in Capitalism as the most earnest of Young Conservatives, but couldn’t we put acid in the punch at the YC ball and then really have a party?

NOTES

1. If you think this is hyperbole see *The Guardian*, 3 February, 1990: “Police fear Acid House boom in spring”. This reports “a combined intelligence unit drawn from twelve police forces, the Home Office’s most powerful computer system, sophisticated radio scanners, monitoring of underground magazines, light aircraft, helicopters, roadblocks and arbitrary arrests.” These are surely the hallmarks of a totalitarian state.
2. The Safety Nazi conspiracy was discovered by P. J. O’Rourke, the American investigative humorist and political philosopher. *Republican Party Reptile*, Picador, London, 1987.
3. Graham Bright is the Conservative MP for Luton South. He first came to prominence for introducing a private members bill to ban “video nasties”. He went on to introduce another private members bill to ban Acid House parties. He is polite, friendly and very concerned. All the circumstantial evidence points to the fact that he is a Safety Nazi, or at least a serious killjoy. He is probably the most formidable ongoing threat to individual liberty faced by the British people since Leonid Brezhnev. Sinisterly, he is currently John Major’s parliamentary private secretary.
4. Dr. Timothy Leary coined the phrase “tune in, turn on, drop out” in the sixties. He is an expert on LSD and an advocate of LSD consumption. He was due to talk about “Virtual Reality” computer software.