

Don't it just drive you *mad*...

It seems that last month's column has riled one or two people, Mark Burton of Caversham writes that what makes him mad are 'ignorant right wing rants like the one by Michael How, who obviously thinks he knows what he's talking about as he hails from the mean inner city streets of Abingdon.' Firstly the piece was not a rant, it was based on an opinion from Michael who has a right to his views, as I have the right to agree with some of them. Anyone has the right to agree or disagree and contact me with his or her own views on any subject, I add my own opinion but I do not exclude opposing views. Disagreements and varying interpretations on subjects makes life interesting. The fact you choose to moan about Michael and my views, but failed to offer your own leaves me to believe perhaps you lack the conviction to voice them. That does drive me mad, when someone offers derogatory comments about other people's views; yet lack the backbone to give their own views in a forthright way, without being disparaging. Secondly, it certainly was not ignorant, ignorance is applicable to those who say things without knowledge or supporting evidence. My views on the asylum seekers were based on the facts of the recent case, my summary that our country will become over stretched is logical and the comments about the smoking ban were based on observations at several pubs, as to the changes it had wrought.

Stephen Gray of Abingdon comments on the smoking ban 'as usual, all that is heard is from the poor smoker and their "rights." This is unfair, even some who smoke agree with the ban, my friend Rebecca who I lovingly refer to as fag ash Lil, said 'I

prefer not sitting in a smoky atmosphere in a pub and it is encouraging me to cut down, but I am not sure I will like it in the winter.' Stephen also says 'gone are the days of putting our heads around the pub door, smelling the smoke through the haze and moving on to another one. This is great news for the majority of people that want a smoke free evening and also for the staff that in the past have had no choice.' I have to say that I never mentioned the poor smoker or their rights, as a non-smoker that would be slightly hypocritical. I can't say that I am sad to see the vile ashtrays, that were once a feature of every table, disappearing along with the plumes of smoke, but that was not my main standpoint. I commented on the strain that this legislation would put pubs under; a well-known brewery has already recorded a drop in profits of 30% in one-area, which is certainly a telling statistic. Drawing people into a pub to spend their disposable income is already hard, with many mortgaged up to the hilt. Many pubs put on a variety of entertainment to entice people and this seems to be another spoke in the wheel. What will happen in the winter when it's freezing cold and raining? Will people continue to go to the local and stand outside for a cigarette? Does anyone wish to champion the small business? I agree with the fact that it is nice to have smoke free environments, especially in restaurants, but I also consider the larger picture, I would rather put up with smoke in my local pubs than see them close.

As usual I would invite you to E-mail me with your views on any topic, which drives you mad.

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