

**INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OF MONTREAL
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**MESSAGE FROM THE MAIN
HEY STATE! STAY OUT OF OUR FATE**

THE TRAVESTY OF THE HOTEL GODIN AFFAIR

Paris was always worth it, and you received in return whatever you brought to it. And this is how it was in the early days, when we were very happy. If you were lucky enough to have lived there, then wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays with you, for Paris was a moveable feast.

[Ernest Hemingway](#)

Thats pretty much how we Montréalais feel about our Big Easy North. Our moveable feast. You do get back what you put in. But youve got to be given a chance to put something in. Youve got to be given the chance to live lucky.

This past week those dry and brittle souls from the netherworld of the nanny-state took some of that chance away..again. The Régie des alcools, des courses et des jeux (in other words the controlling body of fun and games in Québec) has decided in its sagesse not to grant a liquor license to the Hotel Godin nine months after its opening and its revitalization of a rundown corner of Montreals Boulevard St-Laurent, the Main to all of us here.

In its nineteen page decision, the Liquor Board outlined the grievous sins of the owners who, allegedly, have tolerated overcapacity in their other establishments; sold booze after hours, and - horror of horrors - sold alcohol without accompanying food orders. My, my, my, my, my. I do feel safer now that Im protected against such purveyors of pleasure.

The board concluded its decision with the suffocatingly hypocritical comment that the Godin could pose a threat to public security and public peace. Well from where I sit the only ones threatening my security and peace are the statocratic social engineers who would put us all in straightjackets. I dont need my fun and games controlled.

The group behind the Godin has revitalized the St. Lawrence strip over the past several years by opening some half-dozen restaurants and clubs in the three blocks running north from Sherbrooke St. The city and province certainly havent objected to taking in the increased tax revenues these establishments have brought in and quickly took credit for the clean-up of the strip that was essentially the result of the efforts of this group of entrepreneurs. And Belinda Stronach obviously wasnt worried about her peace and security when she held her swanky party at the Godin during the Conservative convention in Montreal this past March.

To add to the duplicity of this decision, the Régie - which also controls gaming and horse racing in the province - has just given approval in principle to moving the Montreal Casino into one of the poorest sections of the city over the objections of almost every social action group who have warned of the risk of increased gambling addiction among the very people who could least afford

it. It has also approved the sale of the Montreal racetrack, located in another underprivileged section of Montreal, to a private group with no consideration given, or conditions imposed, for some minimum levels of public housing which residents of the area have been demanding for years.

Short of any new evidence coming to light, this looks like nothing more than the usual salisage sliming so common when some bureaucrat gets pissed off.

Whats really troubling about this whole affair however is that it brings into stark relief once again how feckless and frivolous our society has become. Instead of having the courage to address the real political and distributive problems of our society, our legislators set up these regulatory bodies, that are nothing more than transparent fronts for more tax collection, and sell us a bill of goods that all this is for our own welfare. This is their evidence of their public service.

In fact, aside from bringing in more revenues on the backs of the working men and women of this country, the only other practical use of these tentacles of the state is to obfuscate and complicate our lives to the point where we dont notice that our political elite wreaks havoc on the laws, institutions and assets of this nation. To paraphrase Adlai Stevenson, its time to talk sense to the Canadian people.

Citizens cede their natural liberties to a state in return for the provision of those services that even the strongest among us need, and that are best delivered in commonweal, so that each of us as individuals can have the freedom to realize our full potential as human beings by pursuing our singular passions and poetry. Public security, food, health care, education, human welfare, these are the appropriate agenda items of governance. The state has no role to play in dictating, defining or denying our pleasures and passions.

This was the message and metaphor of Pierre Elliot Trudeau when he boldly stated that, the state has no business in the bedrooms of the nation He wasnt just talking about sex. He was talking about protecting our private lives from state rape. Thats what he tried to entrench in the Charter. How far we have fallen in the past twenty years.

In the past year alone we have lived through a flood of new rule and regulation infringing on our individual territorial imperatives. Quebec copies Ontario on smoking bans. Ontario goes a congenital idiots step further by restricting everything from types of dogs that can be kept to what helmets you have to wear when you ride a bicycle. The education Minister even made it a crime to leave high-school before you are eighteen. The federal government is considering utilization of electronic security anklets, legalizing interception of emails and allowing random stopping of cars for drug checks. The CRTC pulls radio licenses for inappropriate words and language, controls foreign broadcasts and balks at allowing satellite radio. Police raid reporters homes without warrants. Businesspeople are forced to fill out forms for revenue departments informing on their outsourced contractors. City Halls in Montreal and Toronto put street level surveillance cameras in downtown cores. The CCRA announces giant new databases that will share citizen information, once kept confidential, vertically and horizontally through all departments and with all governments. Biometric ID cards are to be introduced. And we are told its all for our own good.

Well we can decide that. The point of a free society is to have the freedom to make mistakes. The freedom to choose what is injurious to us and what is not. Public security measures must never be allowed to mirror precisely what we seek to destroy tyranny over our freedoms of action and assembly.

The tolerance of the governed is becoming sorely strained. Nobody elected anyone to do this. We dont need to be protected from ourselves. It has become abundantly clear who poses the real danger to our private peace and private security.

We Montrealers want our streets teeming with sensual echoes framed in smoky blue-grey hazes fuelled by intoxicating spirits. We crave to hear the sweet murmurs of pleasure. We yearn for those breathless encounters with the precipice of peril and menace. Without all this life would be nothing but a vast treadmill from birth to grave.

In the face of what George Jonas has called the divine right of bureaucrats, a disrespect for authority through the indulgence of national vices rather than national virtues may be our last surety against autocratic authority. As he went on to write, they are safety valves that mitigate the fiats of the interventionist state All that stands between us and the sterile false pieties of our governors.

Without a healthy degree of anarchic resistance, what is life? Life in the only way it was truly meant to be lived. Life in all its glorious, chaotic and passionate uncertainty and unpredictability. If we succumb to the modern Lilliputians we might as well put a warning label on our existence..and stay in bed.

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