

Wake Me Up When It's January...

There is a rumour that The Edinburgh Reporter's very own Victor Meldrew – aka Mike Smith – isn't keen on this time of the year and is something of a bah humbug. We can't think how this rumour started...



The Croatian government has banned Christmas and New Year parties in the public sector because of the global financial crisis. State-run firms and organisations have also been told that they won't be allowed to dip into their funds to buy Christmas presents.

The ban follows a proposal to freeze public-sector salaries next year. Prime Minister Ivo Sanader said there was no need for panic, but the country had to be serious. "For that goal we forbid buying of Christmas and New Year's gifts as well as organising of Christmas and New Year's receptions," said Mr Sanader.

This story in the news caught my eye. I can't say I've ever entertained any thoughts about visiting Croatia. Until now. Cancelling Christmas parties is an excellent idea in my bah-humbug book.

I have opted out of my office Christmas Party this year as have some of my colleagues. Like most other organisations ours is a corporate bash where all the different departments attend. I simply no longer have the urge to sit in a room full of people who either give you grief or simply choose to ignore you if you pass them in the corridor the rest of the year. Trying to make small talk to someone who you don't really give a toss about whilst wearing a stupid paper hat, eating barely edible turkey and having bloody Shakin' Stevens singing Merry Christmas in the background isn't my idea of fun. And paying

way over the odds for the privilege merely adds insult to considerable mental injury.

'So what are you doing for Christmas? Are you having the family? 'Sorry, I'm not going to answer your ridiculous questions because then I would feel obliged to ask you the same and I really couldn't give a Jonathan Ross about you or your family. No offence...

Enduring the meal and the small talk is bad enough; there's the 'disco' afterwards. Middle aged women who in normal circumstances barely give you the time of day are suddenly transformed by a couple of glasses of cheap red wine and drag you on to the dance floor *'because it's Christmas'*. Strangely enough, come Monday morning they're back to their non-communicative ways and looking quite sheepish as they try to remember what they were up to on Friday night.

So (paper) hats off to the Croatians. Christmas becomes more and more of a commercial festival with each passing year. And for this grumpy old Edinburgh Reporter, more and more tedious.

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