

Who's Responsible? We Are.

A tongue in cheek look at the shortcomings of our sophisticated modern life.

Some time ago, The Times – Business Section, gave over two thirds of one of its pages to an article under the heading “French supermarkets make their TV debut as advertising rule is scrapped”

What is it with our Gallic neighbours? It seems that for the last ten years the French chain stores have been banned from advertising on television in order to protect the local press from losing these lucrative advertising contracts. In consequence, the local shops have a better chance of trade, as presumably they can afford to compete in advertising in “La Daily Ville” or somesuch.

Admirable, in its way, but would Sainsburys or Tesco's in the UK put up with this sort of restriction on what they would see as an infringement of their right to advertise wherever they feel is most efficacious for them?

However – this is not my “boeuf”. Alongside this article is a half page photograph of a local French merchant displaying his wares out on the pavement in front of his Arkwrightian shop. His particular product line is (quelle surprise) cheese. Now I have long believed that the dictate of Brussels decreed that this particular product has to be individually wrapped, and kept in a temperature-controlled environment, (which requires an electronically powered cooling cabinet). Not so for this French entrepreneur. His cheeses are displayed on wooden trestles out in the open, some of them with no covering whatsoever, alongside scales and a selection of large (and I bet very sharp) knives, one of which he is using to slice a cake (of cheese?) on a wooden carving block – *without using gloves*.

Ok, ok, we all know the scenario. We are the only idiots to be good boys and girls and pay attention to the regulations laid down by our betters in Brussels. But WHY? It really isn't going to get us anywhere sneaking to Brussels about these damn Frenchies not playing by the rules. It may be extremely irritating that they seem to be able to get away with it and we can't – if one of our grocers tried to market cheese in this way, he'd be shut down and marched off to court tout suite. But in this instance aren't they right? It gauls (sic) me to say it, but there is something very wholesome about cheese openly on sale like this. We used to do it (Arkwright - again), what stopped us? Someone, somewhere, in a position of power (no doubt our fault), couldn't allow it in case another someone, somewhere else, went down with a case of the Aztec two step, and sued.

We don't seem to be able to turn a blind eye as most of our continental friends can. And this is to our detriment. Perhaps if we lopped off the heads

of some of our betters a few centuries ago, we would have lost some of this unwarranted respect for authority, and taken more responsibility for ourselves in our day to day life, and instead of the traditional two fingered salute being directed at the French, we should aim it at some of those power freaks on the gravy train sitting in the EU terminus.