

Your Majesty, please grant us a new Magna Carta



As George Osborne sets aside £1 million to help celebrate next year's 800th anniversary, David Thomas (journalist at the Telegraph) requests a 21st-century charter to defend our threatened liberties

Noting the grievous loss of liberty suffered by hunts and hounds forbidden to chase foxes, we plead that they should be allowed to pursue pests of a different kind. These include: cold-callers; people who eat in the street and leave a trail of greasy litter behind them; dog owners who never scoop poop; mobile-phone users who insist on inflicting their half of any conversation on everyone in a 50-yard radius; motorway drivers whose car appears to have a magnetic attraction to one's rear bumper; blind-drunk revellers in public places, and sundry other undesirables too numerous to mention. Set the dogs on them all!

Being fed up with senior politicians of all parties who have never had to run their own business; or suffer the bureaucratic insanities of work in the public sector; or worry about paying the mortgage; or fear unemployment, we humbly beseech Your Majesty to ban anyone from entering Parliament until they can demonstrate even the faintest familiarity with life in the real world.

We the people, if we are old enough to vote, marry or die in the service of our country, are also old enough to choose whether to undertake potentially hazardous activities without having busybodies in hi-viz jackets insist that we conduct risk assessments, or take out millions of pounds in insurance. If we fancy chasing a cheese down a hill, that's our own damn business.

Likewise, if we wish to sell or buy and consume cakes, jams and other comestibles at village fetes;

and/or have a concert in a village hall; and/or put up Christmas decorations in our place of work; and/or put on an am-dram musical inspired by the local book club's reading of Fifty Shades of Grey, without having to get a licence, prove that we're not criminals, or have the whip-and-manacle props approved by health and safety officers.

It should not be possible to sue for negligence unless the plaintiff can prove that the defendant was knowingly, deliberately careless or incompetent. Equally, a defendant should not be liable for damages from any plaintiff who is either (a) a blithering idiot, or (b) engaged in a criminal activity. So, if you get burnt because you've held a cup of hot coffee between your legs while you put in the cream and sugar, or you're a burglar and a drainpipe collapses while you're climbing up it, tough titty.

Essentially, we're just fed up with having so many of life's little, innocent pleasures crushed by dictatorial bureaucracy and ambulance-chasing lawyers.

By law, no manufacturer should be allowed to package its products in any plastic container that cannot be opened by the use of fingers alone. The frustration, fury and physical injury caused by trying to force one's way into impenetrable packaging with scissors, knives, pneumatic drills and chainsaws is simply not acceptable in a civilised society.

No country can call itself democratic if one political party can win around three million votes and still not elect a single MP, as Ukip is likely to do in 2015; another only has one MP for every 100,000 votes (Lib Dems); a third requires an 11 point lead over the runner-up simply to form a majority in the Commons (the Tories); while a fourth (Labour) needs just 33,000 votes to elect an MP and can win an overall majority with a mere 35 per cent of the vote. We do not presume to determine the precise nature of the electoral reform required to bring fairness to the system. But reform there must be.

The Scots will vote on independence this September. We therefore suggest that if they do decide to stay in the Union, the three other UK nations should be given their own referendum on the simple question: "But do you want to keep them?"

Whichever way the vote goes, it is egregiously unjust for Scottish MPs to vote in Westminster on issues concerning English and Welsh constituencies that are dealt with in Scotland by the Scottish Parliament. This must be stopped at once.

In fact, please can we have an English Parliament, too, with its own tax-raising powers like the ones being offered to Scotland under "devo max"? Come to think of it, we wouldn't mind our own independence referendum because, frankly, it is extremely tedious to be insulted, moaned about and resented by people whose public services are largely funded by English taxpayers.

And why stop there? We beseech Your Majesty to draw a line between the Wash and the Bristol Channel. Everything south of that line will declare independence from everything north of it. The South will take the money and the sunshine. The North can have the rain, the cold and the chips.

Please, Ma'am, can we stop faffing about and just have that EU referendum right now? To be in the EU, or not to be, that is the question. Now let's answer it.

Since we believe in freedom, we would not seek to limit either the wages or the bonuses that corporate employees or directors may earn. But there is nothing truly capitalist about a system in which reward is not matched by risk. Thus: all bonuses for profits and share-price increases must be matched by "maluses", or claw-backs for losses and share slumps. And: company directors, wherever they are based, should be personally liable for losses caused to others due to any fraudulent activity, such as rate-fixing, or malfeasance, such as PPI mis-selling that their company undertakes in the UK, up to the full value of their personal assets.

Since the jails are full, reoffending rates are sky-high and community service is a joke, let's celebrate the medieval spirit of Magna Carta by bringing back the stocks. These would punish offenders, while bringing both pleasure and healthy physical exercise to those who threw the tomatoes and rotten eggs at them.

The first few sets of stocks should be tested on the directors whose greed and incompetence led to the assorted crises at the Northern Rock, RBS, Lloyds, HBOS and Co-op banks.

We note that in Denmark, a nation noted for its tolerance, liberalism and spiffingly trendy TV dramas, foreigners may not buy property until they have lived there for five consecutive years. Might we have the same law here, please? That way, it wouldn't be quite so hard for Britons to buy houses in their own country.

Crooks whose activities are, by definition, an infringement of an innocent party's human rights have chosen to place themselves outside the law. The law should stop bending over backwards to place criminals' rights above those of their victims and of society as a whole.

Similarly, any foreign criminal whose argument against deportation is that the legal system in his own country is less than benign and its prisons somewhat below five-star standard should have thought of that before they raped, killed or stole. Send them home.

Young men who long to grow vast beards, take part in assorted jihads and intifadas, crush the Great Satan, bring down the Jews and Crusaders, and create a sharia-based caliphate from Damascus to Dundee must be taking the proverbial if they suddenly remember that they're UK citizens and demand protection from the system they supposedly hate, the moment they're apprehended abroad, tortured by Middle Eastern security services and then sent to Guantanamo.

And finally, the right to free speech matters a great deal more than the right not to be offended. Indeed, there is no free speech if one is only allowed to be inoffensive. So someone said something you don't like. So what? Grow up. Get over it. Think of a better argument to make right back at that idiot who offended you. But for pity's sake, stop whining.