

# Tabloid Edition

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August 21, 2005

## Those Textile Quotas.

Aren't you glad that we have this beneficent European Union to watch over us? Isn't it just so wonderful to be protected from the bad consequences of our own behaviour? Should we not be declaring a bonus for Peter Mandelson and [his troops](#)?

*Tens of millions of garments, including sweaters, trousers and bras, destined for shops such as Marks & Spencer, H&M (Hennes and Mauritz) and Gap, have been impounded at British ports after officials in Brussels imposed strict import quotas to safeguard the European textile industry.*

*Retail experts described it as "the biggest crisis in clothing since the Second World War", adding that shoppers might be restricted in what they can buy from as early as next month. "It has the potential to wreak havoc," said Alisdair Gray, the director of the British Retail Consortium in Brussels. "In terms of trading with China, it's the worst crisis ever. It is having a crippling effect and will be a major disruption to autumn collections across the board."*

...

*Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Germany have already spoken out against the quotas, claiming they were introduced, "without proper regard for the realities of modern commerce". Ministers from those countries last week described them as "economic suicide" and "absurd" and urged Brussels to re-examine the system.*

Owen Barder has gently chided me for my previous comments on this issue. Why blame the EU and its bureaucracy when any bureaucracy imposing such protection would get it similarly wrong? He has a point, in that it is the protectionism that is the basic fault. And yet, and yet....it's a fairly basic theory of mine about how the world works that the further away from the people any bureaucracy is the worse it does.

Some twit trying to impose silly rules via the parish council quickly gets reminded, in the most personal and upfront manner, of quite how silly those rules are. Local councils are similarly amenable to personal pressure....derision down the pub for example. As bureaucracies become further and further away, regional, national, continental (and in the uber example, global,) there is less and less of this correction. Those making the rules are living ever more completely inside their own little bubble and ever less amenable to correction by facts or common sense.

Not an original theory I know. It also ties in with the only piece of rhetoric pushed by the EU that I actually agree with, that of subsidiarity. Decisions should be made at the most appropriate level. Fine, I fully agree. It's just that apart from a very few (and I do mean a very few, almost the minarchist view of the State...almost) that correct level of decision making is the individual.

Anyway, enough political philosophy for a Sunday morning. We should, and must, celebrate this example of efficient government. By giving in to a producer lobby Mandy is bankrupting small companies across the continent. Well done Sir!

Now, how quickly can we get him from the payroll onto the pension track? Anyone checked his mortgage in Brussels?

August 21, 2005 in [European Union](#) | [Permalink](#)

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» [The political economy of trade & subsidiarity](#) from Owen's musings  
In which I disagree with Tim Worstall's view that trade policy would be improved by bringing decision making closer to the people ... [\[Read More\]](#)

Tracked on Aug 22, 2005 5:06:46 AM

## Comments

Retail experts described it as "the biggest crisis in clothing since the Second World War"

Good.

I don't mean good that people, as in individual human beings, are going to suffer, but that the inconvenience this will cause will affect so many who are normally oblivious to the day to day lunacies that the bureaucracies inflict.

How many young fashionistas will get pissed off by this? How many mothers seeking to buy bras, knickers and jeans for their growing children.

And for the rest of us? What a glorious opportunity to say "F\*\*\*\*\*g Mandelson, AGAIN. Is the man incapable of handling any role without screwing up?"

Posted by: Chris harper | Aug 21, 2005 9:35:27 AM

Here in sunny Japan, imported Chinese garments are C H E A P. Little subjective on the like for like front, but you can literally buy a new long-sleeved shirt (under £2.00) here for less than charity shop prices in Police State UK. How much of a fashion statement said shirts represent is another matter: "Dork Alert, Dork Alert". Cheaper than dry cleaning. China is such a huge economy that surely it can conduct economic retaliation against the EU. Gay Pete could find himself marginalized (now there's a thought), when the EU needs a scapegoat. You just can't change the rules after the game has started, so Pete may find he's getting it in the ass.

Posted by: Andrew Milner | Aug 25, 2005 12:25:51 AM

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Possibly

Definitely

Sorta

Orta

Yes

But No

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