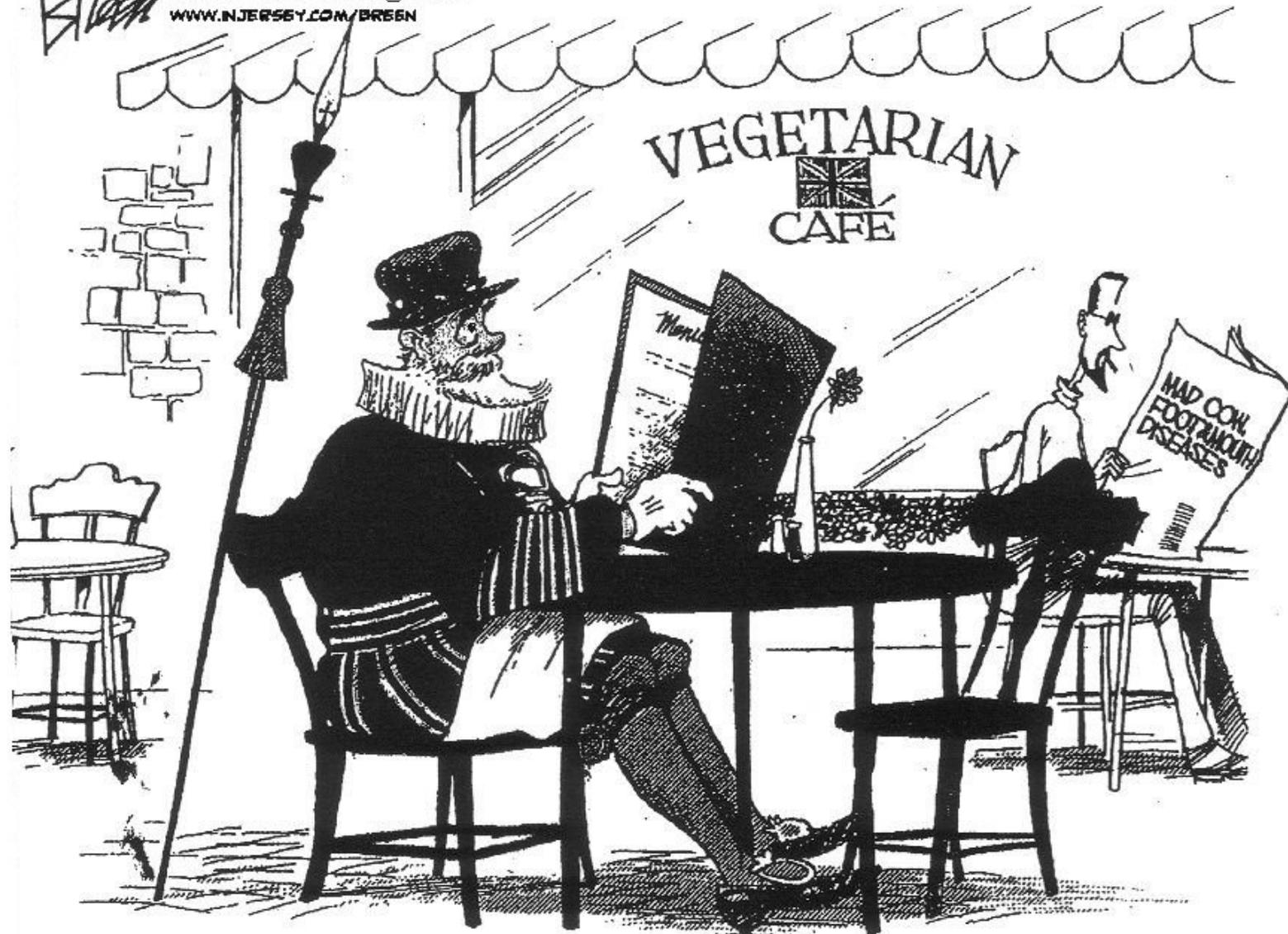


is this the end of a british tradition ?

Breen

ASBURY PARK PRESS © 2001
WWW.NJERSEY.COM/BREEN



The Beefeater

Steve BREEN Today in English (June 2001)

NOTE TAKING

A) Document:

- i cartoon issued in 2001 - topical matter (probably English)
- ii extracted from a magazine "Today in English"
- iii black & white drawing

B) Scene: terrace of vegetarian café, break time, sup.dly London

C) Description:

- i text:
 - title: "*Is this the end of a British tradition?*"
 - caption: "*The Beefeater*"
 - source: cartoonist's signature, website, magazine, date
- ii foreground :
 - bearded beefeater sitting at a table, looking at the menu (old, sad, desperate)
 - halberd (lance) resting (leaning) on the back of the chair
- iii background :
 - window with "*Vegetarian café*" & British flag on it
 - bearded young customer sitting at another table, plunged into the reading of a paper whose headline is "Mad cow, foot & mouth diseases"

D) Topics:

- i British traditions
- ii health risks (hazards) in eating meat (b.e. in what to eat)
- iii vegetarian diet

E) Analysis:

- i nothing but vegetarian restaurants in England ("Is this the beginning of new eating habits?")
- ii both sitting, on the same side (left), both reading
- iii contrasts (black/white, old/young, traditional/modern)

F) Conclusion:

- i are eating habits changing?
- ii can we trust our modern societies food?

COMMENTARY

What we have here is a black and white cartoon from Steve Breen issued in June 2001, from "Today in English" which is probably a British magazine. The scene takes place outside a vegetarian café. This restaurant is undoubtedly situated in London for the drawing features a Beefeater during his lunch break.

The document falls into two parts, the main one being the drawing itself and some text. We can see the title of the document "Is this the end of a British tradition" which reinforces the idea of something typically English, then we have a caption saying: "The Beefeater" as well as the source of the document.

In the foreground, an old Beefeater is sitting at a table of the terrace, his halberd resting on the back of his chair. He's desperately studying the menu, looking very sad. He's probably having a short break for lunch but hasn't had time enough to choose a restaurant suiting his taste.

In the background, under the window saying "Vegetarian café" and with a British flag on it, we can see a middle aged bearded man smoking a cigarette and plunged into the reading of a paper. On the front page we can distinctly read the headline "Mad cow, Foot and mouth diseases", which naturally reminds us the problems with the meat that England has known in the beginning of the 21st century (2001).

In this cartoon, the author ironically raises the problem of the evolution of our eating habits. The poor Beefeater whose reputation is built on eating meat has no other option than taking his lunch in a vegetarian restaurant because the traditional cafés are more and more disappearing because of food hygiene problems and health hazards in eating meat. In a sense, another title for this document could as well be: "Is this the beginning of new eating habits?"

Vegetarianism and organic food associations have long been exposing the problem of the quality of our food. But still, more than a choice in the type of food we consume, shouldn't our questioning simply focus on the quality, whatever food it is?

I find this drawing very interesting because it illustrates in a funny way a real important problem in our modern societies. Through the use of different contrasts such as the black and white, the old and the young, the modern and the traditional, the cartoonist tends to convey the idea of a changing society. Even though the two characters are looking in the same direction, it is clear that they do not belong to the same world.

But shouldn't we stick together and make a better future?