

Mr V Cable

Business Secretary,

HMG.

Dear Mr Cable,

At about 08:30 this morning, 13th June, I saw an article about your work on tied pubs on Breakfast TV. I should like to support your initiative with my experience in my own village, which I believe has suffered for 20 years from tied arrangements. I should be grateful if you would keep details confidential, as there is implied criticism of some local people.

When I first moved here in 1970 the only local pub, The Crown, was full and thriving. The Landlord had a good food business, probably then HIS interest, not the brewery (Theakston) and people often queued to get a seat before the pub was open! In 1980 it was taken over by S&N, and sometime after this the rent and food 'arrangements' were changed such that the successful landlord quit in acrimonious circumstances, to find alternative work.

Since then there have been several landlords, of varying success, but never of the success above. Many have complained that it is not possible to make a living. It would appear that the method of recruitment for a tenant has been to offer the first year at half rent. Most people who considered taking on the pub realised that if they were successful in year 1, year 2 would correct that and therefore shied away from the business. Some who took it on in the last 20 years clearly did not have the right skills for the pub business, including the initial decision on whether the pub was viable under the contractual terms.

Regarding the potential of the pub, there are 1500 people in an affluent village and it is the **only** pub. This is not an isolated village of 50 people. One evening recently I spent an hour **alone** there, reflecting on the current business success of the Brewery and its selection of tenants. I knew of people taking buses to the pub in a nearby village. In my home town in 1970 I see similar examples of old coaching inns, such as the 'The Crown', which is now closed and shuttered awaiting redevelopment as houses. This has followed a number of tenants of varying quality.....some of whom it seems were there almost to kill off the business!

I would give a further example of a village in Slovakia, which is of the same size as in 'The Crown' but has four licensed premises. The beer here, which is excellent, is 25% of the price in the UK.....but that is a different issue, and links also to taxation!

I would point out that I only spend a couple of hours on up to a couple of evenings per week in pubs, so this is not the most important issue in my life! However, in one respect I would go further than you. The right to continue with a monopoly position, such as that in 'The Crown', must surely be questionable. The value of the property and land seems to be more important than the responsibility that a monopoly position puts on its owners. I question whether the tied houses deserve to retain that position and note that Heineken International now owns my local pub.

Yours Faithfully,