

THE NOISY BUTCHER

The Facts

Brian Clapton was a butcher living in Essex, England. He spent his mornings chopping meat and occasionally singing familiar tunes. When a new tenant moved in above his shop in 2007, several complaints were made to the local authorities about the loud chopping noises coming from the shop. The town council confirmed that the noise was quite loud, and ordered Brian to cease chopping between 6:00 and 8:00 AM on week-day mornings, and before 9:00 AM on weekends. Brian refused, stating that such an order would destroy his livelihood. "I've got no criminal record," he stated, "no driving offenses and yet I feel like a criminal in this great country." The council also suggested that Brian soundproof his shop. He argued that soundproofing would cost thousands of British pounds, and since the town council owned his shop, they should be responsible for the expense. Brian was charged with four counts of breaching noise abatement orders.

You Be the Judge

Should Brian Clapton have been required to cease chopping meat in the early morning so as not to disturb the tenant living above his shop?

The Outcome

After nearly two years of fighting the town council, the charges were dropped in January 2009. The upstairs tenant moved elsewhere, and Brian was free to chop meat as loudly as he liked. According to Brian, "A great cloud is gone and it is sunshine."

Let's Talk About It

- Do you think the upstairs tenant should have been made aware of the noise issue prior to moving into her apartment?
- Have you ever lived above or next to a shop? Did you enjoy the convenience? Was there a lot of noise living near a shop?
- Butcher shops are not as common as they were in the past. Do you miss visiting a butcher shop or do you prefer the convenience of a larger grocery store?

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