

On Zombies and Zombieism

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About 8000 people in the UK are currently on The List, waiting for a new organ. For whatever reason, one of theirs needs replacing, and without a replacement they'll die. If, somewhere, someone dies and their organs would fit into one of those 8000 people - or even better if they could give the right organs to several of those people - then surely something good will have come from their death. And let's face it, dying is hardly something most people look forward to. Unless you're trapped in a room with Pat Robertson. Or at a Celine Dion concert.

I digress. The people who get these organs have to make sacrifices too. It's not simply a case of pulling out the old kidney, slapping in a new one, and hey presto, a new life. Kidney and liver transplantees have to give up alcohol or anything else mildly toxic, for life. Lung transplantees may find themselves short of breath from then on. Brain transplantees may find themselves with Pat Robertson's brain. Or at a Celine Dion concert. I jest, of course. Pat Robertson doesn't have a brain.

The point is that many people on The List die still waiting for a replacement organ. Getting an organ certainly gives someone a second chance, but with the responsibility of knowing that your second chance has cost several hundred other people theirs. That's why George Best's drinking binges after receiving a liver transplant pissed me off so.

People don't die willy nilly of course, but when they do die I can't think of any good reasons to not give up your organs. I mean really, come on people. They fill you back up with cotton wool before the funeral so it's not like you'll resemble a balloon with all the air let out. And if you're really fat then maybe they won't fill the gaps with cotton wool, and people at your funeral will peer into the coffin and say "Wow, I don't remember Dave looking so slim." Which will be nice in a posthumous compliment kind of a way.

I'm certainly on The Other List, the one that says "When I die, take anything you want to. Skin, organs, and bones; if all they have left to bury is my nose hair then I'll save my next of kin money on the funeral as well. Everyone's a winner." It's a list that's 13 million strong at the moment, and if I die tomorrow and my dad has a funny turn and refuses to let the doctors steal my left testicle then there's even a law that says: tough titties. It's my testee to do with as I will.

I bring all this up because at present our PM Gordon Brown is pushing for a change in the law which automatically puts everyone on the other list,

so in theory there would be organs aplenty. The idea probably is that many more than 13 million people would like to be on the list, but it's just one of those things that you never get round to. Like buying kitchen roll or paying the rent. And then before you know it you're dead and being buried with all your suddenly useless organs. But if all 60 million of us were put on the list then the crazies who didn't want to save a life after death could still remove themselves from it, but all the normal and lazy people would do something good with their death. Apparently there'll be a national debate about the subject before a law is passed (although Mr Brown likes to say there'll be a national debate about stuff, I've yet to see one in the past eleven years). I really can't see any worthwhile objections to the scheme. Maybe immediately after death - when the organs have to be removed - loved ones would not want to see their recently deceased relative's body be plundered, but a week later perhaps they'd decide that donating the organs would be for the best. But by that time the organs have started to look like that piece of pork you forgot about in the back of the fridge. You know the piece, it evolved legs and started playing football with the brussel sprouts. Suffice to say by the time most people realise their loved ones would want to donate organs, those organs are useless. It might be upsetting to have organs harvested so soon after losing someone, but in the long run it really would be better for everyone.