

Coffee and Markets

Nobody asked but ...

Why is it that in Ireland, the UK, and Western Europe you can buy coffee in a jar, whereas here in the USA you can only find *ersatz* coffee in a jar? For once, I am not going to blame the state (although I suspect it is behind this somewhere). The market is here, it's just not evenly distributed, to paraphrase William Gibson, the cyberpunk writer. But markets are self-ordering for the most part. Over the Atlantic, the people are coffee connoisseurs. They will accept dry coffee only if it can be rendered as good as the hot and wet version.

Furthermore, the competition for coffee aficionados is hot and fierce. Here in the USA, perhaps a different set of variables applied. Our major brands of coffee came to us through cronies of the state. These cronies were gatekeepers of this market. What incentives did they have to change our caffeination habits. But we are such suckers for convenience and thrift that we suffered that bad instant coffee. And a good product designer will tell you, don't change anything that you don't have to change. Do you see a parallel with statism?

States have failed everywhere, but the consumers of governance have come to accept badly brewed statism. Sorry, I let a little anarchy into the discussion.

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