



Big top topless

Jack Lang, the French minister of culture, has accused British MPs of hitting back at the beef ban by trying to suppress a government-sponsored French circus. It is called Archaos, and features, among other things, chainsaw juggling, topless acrobats and burning cars. Last year it narrowly escaped being banned in Edinburgh, where it won a Fringe award, and Islington, where it went ahead only after anxious

telephone calls to Lang by the council leader, Margaret Hodge. Now Archaos is back in Britain, and because of the French beef ban, Tory MPs are determined to keep it out of their constituencies.

While admitting that he is relying entirely upon hearsay, Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak) says: "I am very much against shows like this that can lead to disorder, but nothing would surprise me about the French government." Michael Stern (Bristol North West), who has not seen Archaos either, is also adamant that it should be banned. His local police force in Somerset and Avon is investigating – and officers are volunteering in droves to go to Manchester to see it. The last word goes to Jack Lang, who has given the circus a grant of £500,000: "England is run by petty bureaucrats," he says.