Editorial

When is a data base an automobile?

Although I don't get to Europe as often as I used to, I am still bemused by the xenophobic comments and programs brought to my attention when I do. Largely, they are directed at non-European data bases and systems. I hear talk of "reversing the information flow", and presumably reversing the cash flow as well.

I hear about "uniquely European needs" and "preemptive marketing" and so on and so forth. In my humble way, I usually smile enigmatically and offer some soothing comment or other.

Recently (probably at IOLIM), I got a sense of déjà vu. I had heard all of this *before*! But where? Then I realized that what I remembered was an *American* whine, and it was about cars.

"You-know-who" is flooding the American market with their miserable (high quality), funny-looking (fuel-efficient) cars. What are we going to do about it? Set up quota's, send a trade mission, establish a Congressional committee. Result? Lose significant parts of the market.

Then some heretic figured out that it would be a good idea to make a *competitive* car. Or, make a deal and buy some of *their* cars and combine their product with *our* distribution and sales organization. It also occurs to me that "you-know-who" doesn't make the best of *every* kind of car. What about the kind that *we* make best? *ISU* readers can install additional approaches for themselves.

The analogy is not perfect, but it will serve, and hopefully provoke a response. These pages are open for that purpose.

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