

Fishy business

AS I WRITE this, it is now six hours since the general election was announced and I am already bored with the already overblown news items featuring every conceivable aspect of the forthcoming election. By the time you read this, another week will have passed and election fatigue will have set in for most readers of *Solicitors Journal*, so I expect that you will now be lying with your head on the last page of the journal, obscuring the latest brilliant offering from David Haldane. But wake up, because not all of this article is about the election.

Over the years I have, like a chameleon, passed through various shades of political colour. I used to go to many political meetings. At school I even attended a meeting addressed by Mr Brown. At the time I was going through a blue period. So captivating was he that I emerged from the meeting a new and exciting shade of pink. Mr Brown had the entire audience with him and received a standing ovation even from those who were blue at the time. It may be the effect of rose or pink-tinted spectacles, but my recollection is that elections then were much more exciting events than they are now.

Unfortunately, this Mr Brown was George Brown – the former deputy leader of the Labour Party. He is no longer with us and is no doubt tub thumping at an election rostrum in the sky. It is a pity his modern day namesake has the skill only to make us yawn. In the interests of balance, the same comments apply to the other two leaders.

There is well-known graffiti which reads: "Don't vote. It only encourages them." That might well have been scrawled on walls by my little brother William – except that as a solicitor he is a pillock of society like the rest of us and he would not be seen doing such a thing. Instead, he has written an allegorical book in which he compares our current political system to the activities of a fishing club. *The Carp Club – or the Election that Never Was* by William Barr (Morrow Books, £8.99) covers the build up to the election of the members of the House of Carpentry and could not be more topical. It is laden with fishy puns and accurately fixes the date of the election: 6 May. When I asked my brother how he knew, so far in advance, when the

election was to take place he just opened and closed his mouth in a passable imitation of a fish.

Soon we will be seeing the manifestos, with their carefully crafted promises. Have you ever read the manifesto of the winning party two years after an election? Don't. It is too depressing.

Election fever

The Law Society has issued its own election manifesto which sets out its views on delivering justice. The foreword from the president and chief executive includes the following: "The role of solicitors and of a healthy, independent legal profession in maintaining the rule of law needs to be recognised, supported and maintained. Over time, the profession has been crucial in upholding the rule of law, thereby guaranteeing the rights of citizens which underpin our democracy. The solicitors' profession remains committed to this duty."

If I were at a political meeting and listening to those words I would undoubtedly shout "hear hear". You can download the entire manifesto at <http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/new/documents/2010/manifesto2010.pdf>. Now is the time when all candidates will be desperate to please, so get out there and extract as many commitments as possible, because sure as hell they will lose interest in solicitors and the rule of law once the election is over.

Even the Law Society is not immune to election fever. It is at this time of the year that the deputy vice president is elected. At the last council meeting there were hustings to give the candidates an opportunity to show us their qualities. Eggs were not thrown but there were certainly awkward questions. Most of them confessed that they would rather be bullied by an appeal court judge than face questions from fellow council members. The result will be announced later this month.

Nearly two years ago I reported my experiences as a new boy on the Law Society's Council. I may be nearing the end of my time on the council as there is an election in a cou-



ple of months' time and in the spirit of getting rid of anyone who has mentioned duck houses more than once (I have mentioned them twice in these columns) I may be replaced by a younger model. But I intend to fight to the last.

When my election day comes along I propose to shower the Norfolk constituents with bribes and inducements. I shall stand outside the offices of high street solicitors (if there are any left) with a big rosette (of indeterminate colour) and promise high legal aid rates, low practising certificate fees and to turn the Law Society's Hall into a gambling den in return for votes.

Better still, I may be an MP by then. Now is the time to stand for Parliament – but you will have to hurry. The deadline for nominations is 20 April. You have to be supported by ten electors and pay a deposit of £500, but in return you get a free mailing to all your constituents and the right to free use of certain public rooms for meetings.

So, go to it. Let's see candidates for the Conveyancing Party, the Probate Party and the No Win No Fee Party. When you fill public halls with excited electors you can then bore them to tears with the niceties of inheritance tax and wayleaves. Or, taking a leaf out of the book of the late George Brown, get them all so excited about the mysteries of conveyancing that they go out and buy houses – thus at a stroke restoring the economy of the country, the wealth of solicitors and doing away with the need for the other parties.

Getting into my paces as a would-be candidate, I have already delivered my first election lie: despite my promise, this article was all about the election after all.

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