

Heading for the scrap heap



Get the legal profession back into capable hands before it's too late, urges **Richard Barr**



Richard Barr is a consultant with Scott-Moncrieff & Associates Ltd @scottmoncrieff www.scomo.com

Dateline: 1 April 2020, Little Snoring, Norfolk.

So, here we go again – another election. The parties to the uneasy coalition can now be free to slag each other off and to make it clear that they have disagreed entirely with what they have asserted previously was their own policy.

I will not rehearse everything that has happened since the last ballot, but I guess that there are a few SJ readers (for instance, those in the advowson or tithe redemption departments of big commercial firms, who are deprived both of light and access to the outside world) who will be unaware of what has been going on in the law, so it is to you, ladies and gentlemen that I address the following.

Dark side

I never thought, five years ago, that I would now be saying: 'Come back Grayling, all is

forgiven', but that is the way most of us now feel. The United Kingdom Radical Alliance in Politics (UKRAP) seemed to some of us to be a good idea, as it was a coalition made up of a number of parties, including those on the far left and the far right (who had somehow met on the other side – the dark side), with the balance of power being held by a member of the Pink Grapefruit Party who had got himself elected by the good voters of the smallest constituency in the country – Greater Little Snoring in Norfolk.

He is, as you are aware, Mr Raven Forby, the renowned scrap metal merchant, who, having dabbled a little in the law by setting up an alternative business structure (ABS) with the dubious name Sleazy Lawyers LLP, achieved his lifelong ambition by becoming Lord Chancellor. It was indeed a logical extension to go from a non-legally qualified Lord Chancellor (Grayling) to a not-qualified-at-all Lord Chancellor.

As soon as he was appointed, he hung at the entrance of his scrap metal emporium the Supreme Court coat of arms, wrought out of the parts of a wrecked Ford Focus (modified to show two passant guardant Toyotas and a rampant Rolls-Royce).

Forby, it will be recalled, continued Grayling's work of denying access to justice to all but the very rich and influential.

In a deft move he withdrew legal aid altogether. 'Can't have these solicitor chappies squabbling over who gets what, so better make sure that no one gets any payment to represent their clients. That is proportionate and fair,' he announced to a slightly baffled House of Commons shortly after taking up his position.



Forby continued Grayling's work of denying access to justice to all but the very rich and influential

When lawyers could no longer be found to represent those on criminal charges, the rules about advocates were relaxed. It was found that many convicted criminals who had served time were willing to represent those who had not yet been convicted.

These old hands knew most of the tricks of the trade and were not, of course, constrained by professional rules. They did not have to withdraw from their cases just because their 'client' had told them that they were banged to rights. Furthermore, they could (for an additional fee) help construct plausible defences.

Publicly pilloried

Forby also continued the onslaught on civil justice. If clients could afford fees of 5 per cent of the amount claimed, why then not 10 per cent, also tied to inflation? He declared that the new maximum fee of £20,000 to start court proceedings should be well within the means of those who deserved to go to court.

His view was that lawyers were an impediment to justice, and that good old-fashioned values needed to be reinstated. Criminals were therefore to be publicly pilloried. Stocks were, as we know, introduced to all communities through the (diminished) kingdom of England. These cost little, as they were constructed by the few criminals who were not successfully defended by the new breed of criminal lawyer.

I expect we will have to wait until after the election to see whether his proposal to reintroduce ducking as a punishment is approved.

So, what's to do? At this election we must reverse the trend and try to reinstate a legally qualified – any legally qualified – Lord Chancellor. Whether you are an engaging environmental lawyer, a persuasive patent expert, or a charismatic conveyancer, get your arse down to Little Snoring and stand against Forby. Be sure to take a pocket full of used bank notes as you may have to bribe the electors to change their allegiances. **SJ**