

I am standing for election to the CBA Executive Committee as both a criminal defence practitioner and a socialist. Whereas in most years political affiliation will probably not feature in your votes for the CBA, this year must be different. The last 12 months have redefined our profession. We are no longer simply advocates for our clients, but now also must be advocates for ourselves. Whilst I am not of the view that only the CBA can save us from the destruction of our profession by further cuts, our next fight against the government, of whatever colour, will be considerably less difficult if the CBA stands with the profession, not against it. As a profession we need a politically astute CBA, which will be prepared to rally criminal barristers behind it to take on the government. We need a CBA that doesn't buckle under pressure from a government on the back foot. We need a fighting CBA to stand up for us, and for justice.

Furthermore, we must be prepared to not merely demand to retain the status quo, but also to seek to put right the grievances we already have. As a barrister of 3 years' call, I understand and share the frustrations felt at the junior end of our profession. Our remuneration rates are an insult: no professional should be required to spend 8 hours in a magistrates' court in the hope that a solicitor might pay them £50 (or often less); no barrister should be waiting until mid-2016 to be paid for a preliminary hearing on a trial they play no role in; and none of us should have to face the choice of whether, from a financial point of view, we can continue in a profession we have invested so much in entering. These are legitimate grievances which require more than just grumbling amongst ourselves: they require united action as a profession.

As a member of the CBA Executive Committee I will seek to ensure:

- That any negotiations with the government are conducted in an open and robust manner;

- That we stand alongside our solicitor colleagues, understanding that in the long term our interests are the same as theirs; and
- That the legitimate grievances of the most junior sections of the bar are not ignored, either by those more senior in our profession, or by the government.

I am a member of the Executive Committee of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers, with experience of representation and campaigning throughout my adult life. The Haldane Society were the first in our profession to press for direct action, including the withdrawal of our labour, last year. Being a socialist doesn't mean I'll try to sell you a badly printed newspaper: it does mean that I believe that in an economic struggle, the workers are the ones who ultimately have the power. In the criminal justice system, we are the workers. In the face of attacks by a legally illiterate Lord Chancellor on justice as a whole and on our ability to survive financially as a profession in particular, we, as workers, must stand together again and through direct action take on this government. And this time, we must not stop until we win.

Vote Stephen Knight for a fighting CBA.