

A PLEDGE TO HER MAJESTY

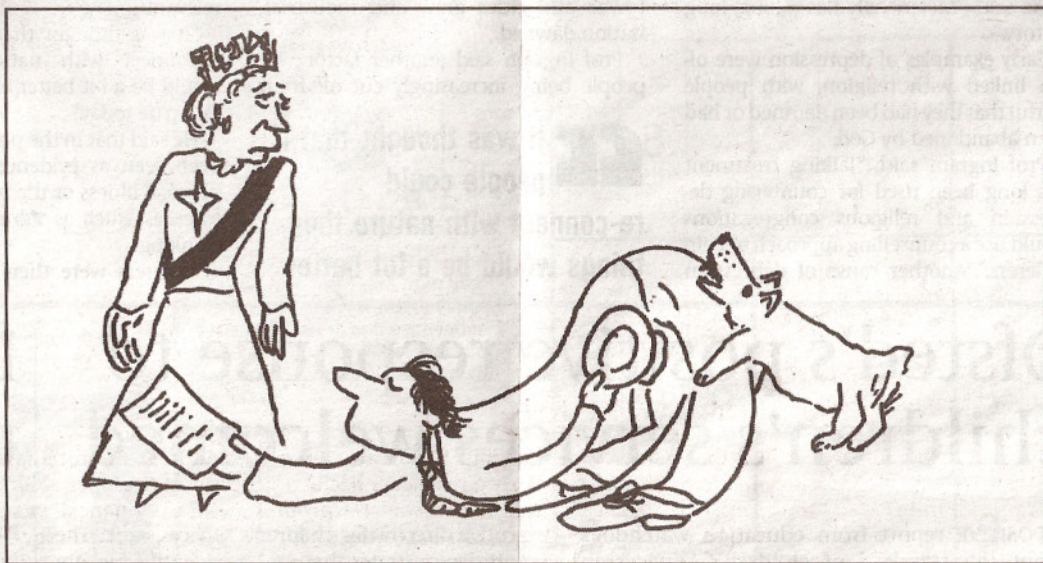
if she appoints me as her POET LAUREATE.
by William Radice

Your Majesty! I promise – and my back is sore from training –
I'll bow before your throne as if bent over for a caning.
My head will touch the mud and dust and all that is inferior:
I'll reach for the stars with all of me, including my posterior.

I promise too when dressed up posh I'll wear no made-up bow:
I'll do my best to tie it with the only knots I know.
Compared to the present Poet I may seem in quite a tangle,
But when the times are crazy, don't we need a different angle?

And further, if appointed to ascend the public tree,
I shan't hide in the leaves, nor be too high for folks to see,
Nor with the weight of reverence put strain on any bow:
I'll skip and swing from twig to twig to stay up there somehow.

Fourthly, from our mixed-up world I'll gather for my bow
Strings from whatever source I can to make my music flow.



Christian, Muslim, Hindu, atheist, all wrapped up as one –
My bow will squawk, sing, scrape with every racket under the sun.

Finally, my dear neighbours' barking corgis' cheerful malice
Has warned me not to wear, Your Majesty, sandals in your palace.
I'll wear stout shoes, and thus from me you'll hear no 'ouch' or 'ow':

Perhaps I'll even learn from them to yelp 'bow-wow, bow-wow'.

Bow or bow, bough, bow, bow-wow – if it is hard to tell
How we should spell or say the words, blame the cracks in the bell,
Flies in the ointment, farce, confusion: everything's got to be there.
Don't we need a Laureate who can serve but also dare?