

Would you vote for Count Biface?

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Just suppose for a moment that you lived in Clacton and were now facing the prospect of a by-election, effectively called by Nigel Farage as a consequence of his resigning as an MP. None of the major political parties or Restore are fielding a candidate because the chance of another by-election if Nigel Farage were to win this contest is very high indeed. That is because, if he is returned to Parliament, it is thought to be highly likely that the Parliamentary Standards Office will exclude him from office because of the non-declaration of the donations and support he received prior to the 2024 general election.

So, what do you do now?

Do you abstain, like all the main parties, and give him a free run?

Or do you vote for the only alternative available to you, the most likely of whom will be Count Biface, a person who, like Screaming Lord Sutch of the Monster Raving Loony Party in the past, has made a habit of standing in by-elections in a way that most people find hard to understand, but who has, nonetheless, succeeded in bringing an element of humour to the process?

I admit that I would face a dilemma. Count Biface is not a serious candidate, and would not make a good MP, I suspect, although I note that when Hartlepool voted for the town's football mascot, who masqueraded as a monkey, to be its mayor, it turned out he did quite a good job.

That, though, would not be the reason for voting for Count Biface. As has been true in many recent elections, the choice of who to vote for on this occasion is determined by who you are opposing, and not by who you are supporting.

Would I vote for the Count precisely because defeating Farage would be a worthwhile objective, by excluding him from Parliament, potentially forever, whilst totally undermining his Reform Party? The temptation would be very strong.

I know that Count Biface is being given odds of 7 to 1 by Ladbrokes this morning. I

suspect that they are understating his potential. His standard by-election offer, which is to build at least one social home in the constituency, arguing that this is one more than anybody else will achieve, might, I think, win the day on this occasion.

I am not underestimating the people of Clacton. I know that many of them will vote for Farage. But it is also possible that there will be significant opposition to him, and those who want to record that might vote for Count Binface. If so, we might get the strangest by-election result of my lifetime.