

PLATFORM

SALVADOR CARDÚS

When no one votes, everyone's a winner

Victims of their own tricks. It is somewhat distressing to observe the ups and downs of political life. What do I mean by political life? The parties, their leaders, their members and even the voters. On more than one occasion I have analysed this aspect of politics, showing how dependent politicians are on the media. But when I observe this in real life, I can't help but feel surprised.

I refer to the recent European elections, a failure as far as participation was concerned, and I have reached the following conclusion. Those who can impose their policies are able to ignore the high abstention rate. It is pathetic to see how someone (Josep Borrell, leader of the Catalan Socialist Party, for instance) is proud to have won an election with less than 20 per cent of the vote and then dares to preach to those who lost. And what about Josep Piqué, leader of the Catalan Popular Party, who proclaimed that, with 7.1 per cent of votes, his party has become the alternative to PSC?

It is also strange to observe how a party could celebrate their victory after obtaining 4.7 per cent of the vote, as they did in Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya.

It is obvious that the general conclusion is reinforced by the fact that the media are also prone to exaggerate, as can be observed in one headline that read "PSC sweeps the board" after having obtained little more than 17 per cent of votes in Catalonia, or by not including in the humour section the ERC claim that they had consolidated their status all over the Catalan lands: as well as 4.7 per cent of the votes in Catalonia, 1.11 per cent in the Balearic Islands and 0.46 percent in Valencia. You bet!



Totally consolidated! More champagne, please!

But, in contrast to those who are too optimistic, some can drown in an election in which participation did not even fill more than a few inches of the pool. And besides,

since they had planned the campaign in local terms, they have interpreted the results in the same terms. That is what happened at CiU. For some time now I have held the belief that the old saying that politicians have to talk about what is of interest to voters, which is like

saying that they have to talk about our immediate interests, something that we can understand because we have a stake in it, shows a patronising attitude in which we are viewed as being incapable of understanding the important issues. And some, it was clear, thought that talking about Europe was beyond the grasp of Catalans and that they had to focus on the use of Catalan, on the Salamanca archives, and on the part of Europe which has an impact at street level.

We Catalans should go to the polls because we feel like Europeans in Catalonia, not only Catalans in Europe. We should have wanted to hear something of general interest, about our contribution in the past, in the present and in the future. Something about the problems created by the fact of being Europeans, about what our contribution should be to make the project work, not about what Europe can provide us with.

But the politicians show us little consideration. They consider us creatures who need to have it explained to us what their European message is. And the citizens have repaid this lack of respect with some of their own. When the day comes when they treat us as adult European citizens, I am certain that we will go to the polls with more enthusiasm.

For now, the parties and the politicians are stuck as if in a spider's web. And for now, neither those who triumph, nor those who consolidate their status, nor those who have become the alternative, nor those who feel the need for a little self-criticism, seem to be able to free themselves from this web. These people are a worry.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

C31 EXTENSION

I was intrigued by your article "Generalitat Approves Deal" (Wed 23 June) concerning the awarding of money to extend the Barcelona metro lines and extend a few roads in Catalonia. Almost as an afterthought, there is mention of the extension of the C31.

By the C31, I wonder if you mean the northern (eastern) end of it, that which currently ends just before Blanes?

As a resident of Lloret de Mar for nearly three years I have caught wind (via protests) of some plan to extend this road up past our town, carving a swath through precious countryside somewhere between the town and my house, presumably.

I have made enquiries at the Ajuntament and got nowhere: my grasp of the language

leaves me in a fog as to where I should go to view the plans.

The said protesters, SOS LLORET, publish literature in several languages but I can get no information from them in English. I regularly get a look at the newspapers here but have not found much on this proposed road. I welcome the arrival of *Catalonia Today* on the streets, on the assumption that it will not turn out to be a Barcelona paper distributed to the countryside. As a step to prevent it becoming so, may I suggest that you cover these proposed road improvements? I am sure there are hundreds of English-speaking people who will be affected by them and who, like me, would like some information on how it may affect them.

Kevin Allcoat
Lloret de Mar Girona

EU AND CATALAN

The founders of the Irish nation would be disgusted by the EU's attitude towards the Catalan language. Why doesn't Ireland show its solidarity with the Catalan people? Shame on Ireland, shame on Europe.

Josep M. Lloste i Romero
Portbou, Alt Empordà

THE RIGHT TO VOTE

Some European Union states allow immigrants to vote in local elections. But the Spanish state, like other EU member states, does not allow foreigners to vote in Spanish and Catalan elections.

A British or a Moroccan person must live

here for ten years to apply for Spanish nationality in order to get the right to vote. Chile, for example, allows foreign residents to participate in all their elections. One citizen, one vote. That's democracy.

Antoni Fernández Laborda
Barcelona

DISTRIBUTION

I came across a copy of your paper earlier this week in Girona and was most impressed. Although I am not a native English speaker it is very helpful for me to read a paper in English. However, I live in Olot and have not been able to find a distribution site. Can you tell me where I can find one close to home?

Oskar Treuer
Olot



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