

1987/8 ? B's retirement speech. *

(he was? 62/63)

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for coming. I knew a speech would be expected, so I typed out what you see in my hand. The trouble is that my wife has cut out most of the best bits. In fact the only reason she's here this evening is to make sure I don't put them back in. Here, for instance, is a marginal note: "yes, I always thought he was that way, but you can't possibly say it in public"

Over the last twelve months many people have been asking what I'm going to do after retirement. Well, the first thing I'm going to do is write a short handbook on how to retire. Looking around, I see quite a few of you for whom retirement is near - or at least it should be. So let me take this opportunity to give you a sneak preview of the book.

Section 1 is headed **The Symptoms**. Yesterday evening you were the last to leave the office. Even the cleaners had gone. You left your blue biro diagonally on the green file on the left side of your desk. You remember doing it. You arrive at the office early. There is a red biro on the yellow folder on the right of your desk. Something odd has happened to the relative heights of your chair and desk. For the first time a bright blue Picasso print looks wrong against a pink wall. Your secretary is in front of you trying to communicate. All you notice is a mole on the left side of her nose that you hadn't noticed before. You knew you had to come into an office this morning. But was it this one? You decide you need a holiday and then remember that you've just had one. A client arrives and begins talking. You become fascinated with his teeth, particularly with one upper left molar. You hope he will say more words with a long e so that you can get a better look. You are fairly sure that you have an appointment elsewhere, but your diary is blank.

These are early warnings. As with Angina, they may mean nothing at all. But if they persist and multiply - if, for instance, your colleagues become kind and understanding, if you find yourself in the loo reading the Ecclesiastical Appointments, if you notice that the view from your window is of windows the view from which is windows, then you should begin to listen to what something is trying to tell you.

It is outside the scope of a short handbook to deal with what happens to those who fail to listen. In any case I must hurry on to the more practical sections of the book.

Section 11 is headed **Simplify The Problem**. It consists of a single paramount piece of advice, which is: the moment you decide to go, simply and immediately go.

Whether you are about to give a crucial judgment on demurrage, or are still on your feet arguing it, or chairing a vital partners' meeting, or just about to clinch a settlement or broke the risk for the whole of next year's North Sea Oil - whatever you are doing, treat it exactly like a call of nature. Simply say: 'I've got to go now' and go.

Do not be put off by any argument that acting promptly like this is irresponsible. Regard it more as a duty to yourself. And remember that below you are hungry and ambitious juniors who are itching to take over. You owe them that chance.

That is the best solution. At one stroke it avoids many of the problems with which the handbook has to deal.

But if, like me, you lack that kind of nerve, if you feel that you have to give some kind of advance warning, then you will have to turn to Section 111 which is headed **Winding Down**.

* He gave him :- an Austrad
- a fancy wine power, silver