

100 WORD ideas to change MALTA

Legal Contract Drafting Support

by
PROF. GORDON PACE

The notary drafts the contract on her computer – fixing a highlighted typo, ignoring the complex grammar warning. More worrying is the clause highlighted with an explanation of how it conflicts with another contract her client has signed. A few modifications later, she presses ‘Send’...

You open the document, selecting ‘Simplify’ to view a version leaving out legalese linguistic somersaults. But the complexity is still overwhelming. You click ‘Query’ and ask ‘Can I always cancel an order within 24 hours?’ A detailed scenario is presented, involving different time-zones, a re-order and another agreement. You start composing a reply to your notary... ●

BOOK REVIEW

by The Editor



SCIENCE IS EVERYWHERE!

A common calling card, Mark Henderson (Head of Communications, Wellcome Trust) takes it one step further. Henderson demands that science pervades everything and that our lives would be better off for it.

The Geek Manifesto starts with a call to arms, in a similar vein to Karl Marx. By the end of the book, Henderson demands that geeks should unite! Being geeks, the call is not to the nearest rifle or pitchfork, but towards good science, evidence, lots of computers, blogging, and a bit of well meaning activism — none of that chaining yourself to stuff.

Henderson makes a good case why science should always be considered in politics, government, media, economy, education, justice, healthcare, and the environment. Some instances are obvious; few people would support new health procedures that are not based on evidence. Others, like justice and government, might be new to readers.

The author focuses on UK problems, but they resonate locally. The problem is that science is rarely considered in decision-making, since few scientists (or persons with a solid scientific background) occupy public decision-making positions. How many scientists occupy these positions in Malta? Scientists also rarely raise their voices against policies based on thin air. The idea: you have a vote so use it.

In the UK, science was the only sector that did not suffer budget cuts when the coalition government came to power. In

The Geek Manifesto

Mark Henderson

contrast, the humanities suffered a 25% reduction. Why? *Science is Vital* started after the cell biologist Jenny Rohn heard cabinet minister Vince Cable smear science with false facts: ‘45% of public funds rewards research that is not of an excellent standard’, Britain is a scientific world leader. Rohn wrote a blog which went viral, received celebrity endorsement, followed by a protest that chanted ‘Hey! Osborne! Leave our geeks alone!’ Within two weeks, they lobbied over 140 MPs to sign a petition and obtained over 33,000 signatures (I signed it myself) — government realised the fallout from science cuts and decided to freeze the budget instead. Science was saved.

The case raised easily applies to Malta. Instead of large educational reforms that seem to follow the latest fad, perform pilot studies with proper controls to see what works and what doesn’t. In politics, instead of abusing the evidence and shouting the loudest, which Henderson labels as cargo-cult politics, let policies be formed by independent rigorous data. Like in the UK, our drugs policy is driven by political ideology rather than evidence — as is crime and sexual health.

The manifesto doesn’t push science above all else, but asks for policies based on evidence. Review the relevant data, if it doesn’t exist then fund a good study, afterwards construct your policies. Instead of pushing your own agenda, exploit science to resolve questions. *The Geek Manifesto* is a recommended read for any scientist, science student, or concerned citizen. ●