

Londoner's Diary

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Mandelson foe knew he would betray electorate

THE BACKLASH against Peter Mandelson has begun. Just hours after the announcement that his name has been put forward as Britain's new EU Commissioner, a former Labour party official, who stood against Mandy in the 2001 general election, has accused him of betraying the electorate. Mandelson defeated John Booth, the Genuine Labour candidate, on the night he famously declared

a candidate in any byelection," says Drummond. "It is up to Mandelson if he wants to go off to Europe. If he goes he would have my support."

Optimistic valuation

SIR RICHARD Branson's stock market float of his Virgin Mobile phone business has raised eyebrows in the City. Shares began trading at 200p, well below the initial price range which stood at 235-285p, with the valuation of Virgin Mobile at £500 million, rather less than he had hoped for.

This has given rise to talk that Branson has been vastly inflating his wealth. Could the *Sunday Times Rich List*, which valued his fortune at



Booth and Mandelson: look who's quitting now

PINTER SEES STEPSON FOR A DOSE OF CITY VERSE



Steve Waters

My picture shows, from left to right, Lady Antonia Fraser, her daughter-in-law Lucy Fraser, son Benjie Fraser and husband Harold Pinter at the Guildhall Art Gallery for the launch of Benjie's collection *City Poems*. Currently the Managing Director of The Bank of New York, Benjie Fraser is also the Square Mile's unofficial poet-in-residence and a spokesman for Poet in the City, which brings together City institutions and the world of the written word. The scheme promotes verse among City workers and gives poets an opportunity to visit inner city schools to inspire children to read and write it themselves. Asked what his colleagues thought about his compositions, Fraser laughed "They're thoughtful and kind — to my face, at least."

Snow bias allowed

MANY HAVE been startled by the increasingly robust views expressed by Channel 4 news presenter Jon Snow in his emails to viewers called Snow-mail. Whether discussing his opposition to the Iraq War, or contempt for the House of Lords, or the depressing state of the Tory party he has been

radio broadcasts, not emails," says a Channel 4 spokesman. "The emails sent by our presenters are subject to editorial checks in the normal way. We regard them as an interesting and provocative view on the day's news events."

While Channel 4 newsreaders are not allowed to express support for a political party, they are allowed to join marches such as those opposing the Iraq war. But Ofcom say the political views expressed by a news presenter

SHERIDAN Morley, the *Daily Express's* new theatre critic, must have been feeling very self-confident, having appeared to snooze through much of the first half of *Jerry Springer* starring David Soul in the title role. Soul does not take such things lightly. When Matthew Wright wrote a scathing review of Soul's *The Dead Monkey* in 1998 without seeing the play, he cost his then paper the *Daily Mirror*

Mawer after it transpired she had not registered a payment for the same programme between January and November 2003. Embarrassingly, Abbott had to lodge a retrospective declaration.

Michael Portillo, her co-contributor, has been upfront about his payments for the show. On 8 July, he declared a payment of between £10,001 and £15,000 for his appearances.