

A 'feint-and-pass' in EC deputy chair's denial?

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COMMENT Are we seeing the opening play in the Najib Razak administration's pattern of 'feint-and-pass' in the assertion by the Election Commission's deputy chair that he has never been an Umno member?

Students of this pattern would have noted that when the administration is under intense pressure, it feints, like a rugby player, in the direction of reform before slipping the ball to the back-up who will then proceed to maintain the status quo, with minor trimmings.

Thus primed, observers of the 'feint-and-pass' maneuver ought to be wary of the latest twist to the saga of Wan Ahmad Wan Omar's membership in Umno.

Yesterday, he denied he had ever been a member after he had last week behaved like a guilty party, surprised when it was revealed that he is a member in benefit of the Pasir Mas division of Umno in Kelantan.

NONEA similar denial is not forthcoming from the EC chair Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof (right) who last week was also exposed as a member of the Ampang division of the party.

Both disclosures destroyed - except to Dr Mahathir Mohamad who plays by the rules of a Florentine political scientist of the 16th century - their bona fides as impartial referees tasked with running of the EC.

This could well mean that if public pressure intensifies for Abdul Aziz and Wan Ahmad to resign on account of they being members of Umno, the government will feint in the direction of appeasing popular demand - by allowing the chief to resign - and will pass the buck to his deputy - whose denial he had ever been a member - serves as cover for his promotion to the chief's post where he will essentially maintain the status quo.

This gambit of 'feint-and-pass' has thus far marked the pattern of the Najib administration's response to popular pressure for change and reform.

When public pressure for change wells up from the deep, the administration shapes its rhetoric to sound like it is not averse to change and would shortly be ringing it in.

But when the substance of the pledged change is exposed as counterfeit, the administration not only battens down the hatches and but gives the nuts and bolts of repression another devious twist.

Thus observers of the 'feint-and-pass' stratagem ought to be alert to move that may soon follow hard upon the EC deputy chair's denial that he is an Umno member.

Membership brokers

When last week it was suggested he is an Umno member, Wan Ahmad reacted in the time honoured fashion of those who are caught with their pants down - by berating the bearer of the bad news, in this case the PKR secretary general Saifuddin Nasution.

It's not usually the case that individuals elect to become members of a political party and then forget they have done so.

Enlisting in a political party is not a casual decision like choosing to play a round of golf or but a pair of shoes.

It's a move that the passage of time may consign to the recesses of one's memory but it's not something one forgets without a trace.

True, political parties are no strangers to the exertions of membership brokers, adept at collecting photocopies of identity cards of the unsuspecting to tender to party secretariats as evidence that the brokers have gained for the party new members by the scores.

NONThe signatures of the new recruits on membership receipts are all a matter the broker will arrange to obtain in due time, offering the standard excuses as to why the new members can't themselves come up to the offices to sign the receipts: lack of time and busyness with work.

This is the modus operandi of membership brokers when they out to strengthen their claims to promotion in the divisional and state party hierarchies of the party they have elected to join and in which they desire to become upwardly mobile.

The critical bit here is that these brokers target their new member canvassing drive at the unsuspecting and the naïve who don't really know what the brokers are really up to when asked to hand over their identity documents for photocopying.

The unsuspecting can easily be inveigled into momentarily surrendering their personal documents; the educated and aware are not easily bamboozled.

Same name, different person

Thus when last week it suggested to Abdul Aziz and Wan Ahmad that they were members of Umno, they spoke vaguely of having been beguiled into joining by something that looked like the tactics of 'membership brokers'.

But as members of educated class, this excuse can easily be discounted; they could not have joined involuntarily.

kuala terengganu parliament by election spr ec announcement 051208 wan ahmad wan omarHowever, now that Wan Ahmad has come out in robust denial that he had ever been a member of the Pasir Mas division, even up to contending that he is from Terengganu and not Kelantan, the way appears open for him to be retained in the EC, possibly as replacement for Abdul Aziz who may have to be sacrificed, in partial appeasement of popular pressure.

Wan Ahmad claims that a person with a name similar to his had enlisted in the Pasir Mas division of Umno, adding the bit of his not having originated from Kelantan as further proof of his assertion he had never been an Umno member.

It's odd he did not say all this at first blush, which ought to have been the case because the act of joining a political party is not a casual step, just as choosing not to join is not easily forgotten.

As matters spurt and twist, the only constant seasoned observers can expect is 'feint-and-pass', the tactic to bamboozle the movement for reform.