

malta**today special report**



In the interest of the nation

In this sixth episode of the log that records how a government was brought to its knees, Dom Mintoff speaks again

and says that, though he could, he is not going to bring down the government. Today. As to what he will do in the future,

Mintoff informs Parliament that that depends on whether Parliament was ready to change its ways and shift to a more

acceptable stance. If it chose not to, then he would do what he had to do in the interests of the nation and the party...

I don't want to be the one respons

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Dr Eddie Fenech Adami.

FENECH ADAMI: When I said that it results that there isn't a majority that agrees with the politics of the government, naturally I was including everybody; the honourable Spiteri shouldn't consider that only he can talk against the government and that he is going to continue to vote in favour of the government. I have no doubt about this and this is his affair, but in this Parliament declarations have been made by other deputies where they said that they don't agree with the policies of the government when it comes the European Union, foreign affairs and fiscal policy. And the tariffs and the bills for water and electricity form part of the fiscal policy of the government. It is true that the Honourable Spiteri made comments about this motion, and I have read his article where he said that he can't understand why the first consortium was eliminated and the contract is going to go to the second consortium. In this article he also said that he does not know enough about it, and neither do I. We both raised this point but I think we had better stick to the facts.

I am asking so that the Chamber will adjourn under the Permanent order 13 and your chair will decide, Madam Speaker whether this request falls within the parameters of this Permanent Order.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Dom Mintoff.

DOM MINTOFF: Madam Speaker, I think that I have the right to speak on this matter.

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Mintoff, we are talking about the request that Honourable Fenech Adami has made so that the House would adjourn according to Standing Order 13.

DOM MINTOFF: I am not talking about this! Madam Speaker, if you please, do not interrupt me. I have the right to talk about this because now they are saying that I spoke about the budget, they are saying that I spoke about European policy – and these are facts which I carried out in front of everyone – but it is not I who am choosing between the road of confidence or not. I am being shunned so that the party won't know what my views are, what I am doing and what the alternatives are. This is wrong and it does not engender trust in the government. I have already said today that I do not want to defy the government and I don't want to be the one responsible for sending us to an election. This is the responsibility of the one who insists on going on even though he knows for sure that that we don't agree about certain things but he does not even want to listen. This is what I am saying. Therefore to show that I don't want to topple the government today I am not going to vote with the opposition but if we go on like this I will have



to choose what is in the best interest of the nation and what is in the best interest of the party over the personal interests of the Prime Minister. And if I have to choose, I will choose with a clear conscience. As I said last time, today I am neither going to resign, because if I resign I will still topple the government, and neither am I going to vote with the opposition. But neither am I going to accept that you impose conditions that are not in the programme and you expect me to vote for them. I am saying this so that we will be clear about this and so that tomorrow nobody will come and say that he did not know what I was going to do and that I'm going to stay playing around, sometimes one way and sometimes the other. I am not going to vote in favour of this motion. And I am not going to vote in favour because I believe that the party has another way open before it; I

believe that the party can remain in government, I believe that we can find solutions which are acceptable to everybody and I believe that we should not follow these bad roads that we took and that we should change to another path.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Prime Minister.

ALFRED SANT: Madam Speaker, about the point brought up by the leader of the opposition, I reiterate that the proposal of the government to proceed immediately with the discussion of the motion that we have in front of us about the yacht marina of Birgu, fits exactly the problems and concerns that the leader of the opposition raised.

MADAM SPEAKER: Does the opposition insist that the Chair considers the request for standing order 13?

EDDIE FENECH ADAMI: Yes, I insist that this is something which should be discussed now.

MADAM SPEAKER: The house is suspended.

The house was suspended at 8.00 p.m. and resumed at 8.57 p.m.

RULING

The Chair has considered the request of the leader of the opposition so that the house will suspend its work so as to discuss the material mentioned by him.

The Chair requires that each request that is proposed according to permanent order number 13 has to satisfy three requisites:

- That it is definite
- That it is of public importance and
- It is urgent.

Essentially the Fenech Adami's de considering the which says "The or sequence of the F address is that he c diate resignation t of Malta" is nothin request for the Hou motion of no con Prime Minister an ment. This is, with matter of public im As to whether materiel, to sul request, the leader tion referred to c Prime Minister ha house, and in his does not have cle definite materiel th the chair to cons been given satisf materiel, other th mentioned discuss

...ible for sending us to an election



prerequisites are satisfied; and

b. Secondly, taking into consideration the seriousness of this request, the Chair does not feel that at this stage normal procedures which are usually required to put forward a substantive motion should be put aside. And without doubt so that a motion of no confidence, which is a substantive motion be put forward, it should not be presented and discussed at this point in time by putting aside the procedures that are established in the Permanent Orders. Therefore the request is denied.

Time is up and I ask the Honourable Mizzi to present the Adjournment of the House, if he pleases.

We resume following the saga in the next parliamentary session, Tuesday, 16th June 1998.

RESOLUTION ABOUT THE TEMPORARY EMPHYTEUSIS OF THE QUAYS AND RIGHT OF MOORING IN BIRGU AND L-ISLA TO PORT COTTONERA LIMITED

ALFRED SANT: Ms President, I propose this motion:

Since the Government of Malta intends to concede under the title of temporary emphyteusis to Port Cottonera Limited the quays, buildings and right of mooring in Birgu and Isla as better described in the bill of contract placed on the Table of the House, for the time, co-respective and under the conditions that are to be found in the aforementioned bill;

And because it is thought in paragraph (c) of the sub-article (1) of article 3 of the Act about the transfer of government lands, Chap. 268, that property which belongs to the Government, or is administered by the Government can be transferred "according to a special resolution of the Chamber of Deputies that would be in force at the time of the transfer";

And as it is fitting that the aforementioned transfer happens according to the special resolution of the Chamber of Deputies;

Therefore it is with this resolution that the quays, buildings and right of mooring in Birgu and Isla as better described in the bill of contract that is to be found on the Table of the House as well as in document 'A' which is annexed to this resolution, which document 'A' gives a new clause that substitutes the clause number 2.2 of the bill of contract placed on the Table of the House on the 26th of May 1998, are given to Port Cottonera limited for the scope, agreements and conditions mentioned in the self-same bill.

MADAM SPEAKER: Who seconds this resolution, if you please?

JOE MIZZI: I second.

MADAM SPEAKER: Remarks? The Prime Minister.

Regarding the urgency, the situations that have materialised in this parliament and which give pause for thought, none ever progressed enough for the Chair to decide in favour of the immediacy of matters which create a state of urgency.

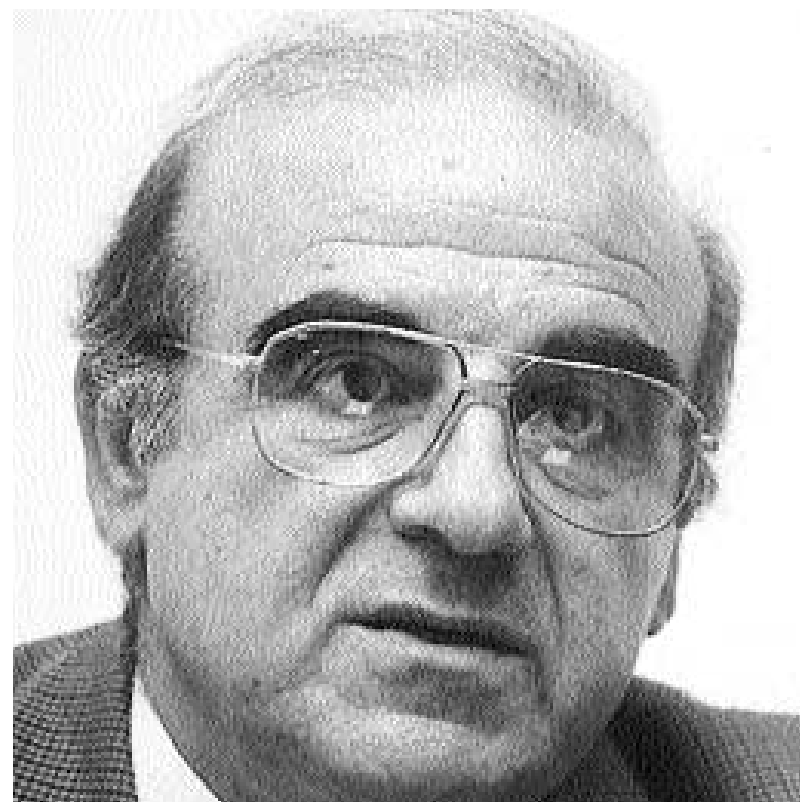
Besides this, it has to be remembered that the same declaration made by the Honourable Eddie Fenech Adami is touching on articles 80 and 81 of the Constitution of Malta. As well as Permanent Order 13 (4) which states:

"No discussion can be raised by this method that has to do with matters that would have been scheduled for discussion or that would have been noted as Order of the Day, or as an issue of privilege, or something which cannot be discussed except after a specific motion."

Therefore, the Chair, as it has already explained hold that:

a. In the first place, not all three

When it became obvious that Mintoff was not going to budge



Speaking to **MaltaToday** in June of last year, **George Vella** recounted the dilemma facing the Labour party in the summer of 1998.

Dr Vella admits that the MLP knew the 1998 election was going to be a challenge, but stresses that those at the top could genuinely see no alternative to going to the polls.

"The party was definitely not in its best form and of course, we didn't want a mid-term election when we had internal division and all those mixed messages were flying about," he says. "But when it became obvious that Mintoff was not going to budge from his standpoint, we decided if we could not govern, there was no option but to once again seek an electoral mandate."

He admits that people from all walks of life, including political analysts, have since told him that they now question the wisdom of the decision.

"And to those people, I always say the same thing," he says. "Yes, we could have stayed on as a figurehead, as a government not passing laws, just waiting for time to pass. But this would not have been in the best interest of the country."

Dr Vella stresses that no one was more against such a scenario than the Labour party leader himself.

"From my years with Alfred Sant, I have realised that whatever people say, his prime objective before personal power is having the best governance for the country," he says. "In those critical days, some of us were hoping against hope that another solution would present itself. But Dr Sant wanted to rid the country of the crisis as quickly as possible, so much so that people were almost holding him back from taking a decision."

Dr Vella admits that the MLP had not expected to lose the 1998 election, since, although they knew it would be tough, their own polls had indicated they would win by a very small majority.

"Obviously the result was a disappointment and we inevitably went through a period of gloom," he says. "But we passed through this stage and after Dr Sant was reconfirmed leader, we reached a point when we knew we had to muster up our courage and begin working again. And now I believe it appears that we are once again relaying our message successfully and getting people on our side."