

malta **today special report**
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The amended contract

In today's extract, Alfred Sant holds forth at length about the exact nature of the bill of the Cottonera contract and

the differences, or otherwise, between the motion he is going to try and pass today and the one he tried to pass

a week before. They say comparisons are odious but Sant can't help comparing the way items are passed

through Parliament in the present and how they used to breeze through a year and a half before. . .

The petition signed by “thousands

ALFRED SANT: As I notified the house yesterday, by a decision taken by the cabinet, this motion that is being proposed by the government is a motion of confidence in the government and later on I will explain further what led to this motion being presented in this way. As your excellency knows, this resolution was already presented in Parliament last week and was rejected, and therefore there are things of an important political nature which are affecting how it is being presented in Parliament today. Only, if the Chair will allow me to, first I would like to make some technical clarifications that have to do with this motion.

Ms President, first of all I would like to make it clear that the contract that is being presented in front of the Parliament along with this motion, in our opinion, is identical to the one that was presented last week. I know that there are arguments from the other side that we carried out amendments that were not approved and that don't show up in the contract and that is why I want to make it clear that this is the same contract that was presented last week. Up to a short time ago, contracts of this type were presented to this Parliament and after an administrative act, they would be changed and even the shareholders would change and it was as if nothing had happened. But since this government has been in power, the regulations as to how a contract should be presented have become much harder. It is enough to say that today when there is a substantial change in the contract or in the shareholders based on a decision taken by the ombudsman, the contract has to be presented in Parliament again. This is a good and serious thing and it has occurred a number of times, but until recently, even though some clauses would be changed in a contract and even shareholders would change, as happened for example in the case of the Valletta car park, it was as if nothing had happened and there used to be simply an administrative arrangement that would approve the situation.

Ms President, in the case of this contract, it happened that on the day it was presented to this parliament, in other words, yesterday a week ago, a change regarding access was made. It is worth noticing that this change has increased the rights of access of the people of Malta and Gozo, which rights were already recognised in no uncertain terms in the bill of contract. So we were given the legal advice that since the new arrangement that was negotiated and that the house

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was informed about was giving the public more rights than the contract, all that was needed was that the house be informed of the changes. Why? Because the access had already been guaranteed in a very clear and serious manner and with Monday afternoon's change that access became more specifically defined – I don't say 'bettered' and clarified. At this point I would like to emphasise again that the advice we were given was that since more rights were being given to the public, or rather, rights were being made clearer so that this contract would be further



improved, it would have been enough to inform the House about the change. That is why yesterday a week ago, before we came to take a vote, I stood up and read the new clause. They told us that this new clause had not been entered in the official minutes. This is true, but it is in the transcript of that debated and the transcript is clear. That day, before we came to the vote, I had stood up to explain exactly what this clause consisted of and in fact this clause, that is to say the one I read yesterday a week ago before we took a vote, is in the bill which is to be found in front of the

House today. That is why I want to make it very clear that today we are presenting the same contract that we voted on yesterday a week ago. At this point I have to say that where before a contract such as this could pass through Parliament by coach and horses, today if so much as a piece of straw is passed through, the opposition try their best to pick on it so that then they can say: you see how the contract was not good enough! With all due respect, there is a world of a difference between the way things were happening up to a year and a half ago and the way they are happen-

and thousands” of citizens



and I hope that now nobody will stay nit-picking and take a whole session about it.

MADAM SPEAKER: Who seconds, please?

CHARLES MANGION: I second.

ALFRED SANT: Ms President, it would be a good thing if I reiterate the motivation behind this motion, which is an important and nice occurrence. Apart from other mobilisation, as from last Friday, thousands of citizens from the second district – as we know this incorporates Isla, Birgu, Bormla, Kalkara, Fgura, Xghajra and part of Zabbar – but specifically in Isla, Birgu, Bormla and Kalkara, made a petition which was widely distributed. This petition read as follows:

"We the undersigned are asking that the resolution to initiate the yacht marina and the development of Dockyard Creek will be presented again for approval in Parliament. We believe that this project, besides providing employment for families and to our youths, will embellish our environs, create business and help so that we as well as the whole population of Malta will be able to enjoy a better ambience in this part of the island. All this will surely lead so that this part of Malta will regain the respect it deserves."

As I have already mentioned, this petition is signed by thousands and thousands of citizens from Isla, Birgu, Bormla and Kalkara and contains the identity card number, the name, surname and address as is requested by the regulations. (Members: Hear, hear) Therefore I now place on the table of the House:

A petition signed by the residents of the second district regarding the construction of a yacht marina in Cottonera and the development of Dockyard Creek.

Ms President, something like this comforts us and strengthens our belief, that is that besides political reasons that I will dwell upon at length in due course and from economic factors from which I plan to start, in Cottonera there is a popular movement in favour of this development, in fact I say that there is this kind of movement throughout Malta and Gozo, because citizens cannot understand how this Parliament reached the point where it voted down a motion such as this. Therefore, just as I have already said, this fact continues to strengthen further and further the will of this Labour Government to treat this motion which is being presented today as a complete vote of confidence in it.

ing now. But now I need to raise another technical point. Ms President, I would like to immediately present – and I hope their won't be hair-splitting about this – another small technical amendment regarding this bill that we have before us, which amendment emerges from what about I am about to say. In the contract that we passed last week there is mention of the time when there will be the authorisation for the government to enable the authorisation of the contract. In fact we purposely left this bill as it was last week so that now, by presenting this amendment we

can show where what we want to do today is different from what there was yesterday a week ago. Let me read this technical amendment that I am proposing. This reads as follows:

"That with immediate effect, at the end of the motion the following words have to be added "And with this, instead of the words "not later than the twelfth day of June one thousand nine hundred and ninety eight" wherever they are found in clause 4.6 of the bill of the contract, have to be replaced by the words "not later than four days after the

approval of the resolution by the House of Representatives authorising the Government to enter into this deed."

This is the technical amendment that we are proposing, since the contract did not pass up to when it had a chance to, so that up to the 12th June it will be possible to sign the contract proper. We are saying that the contract should be moved forward by up to four days from when it is authorised by the Chamber of Deputies. This is the only technical change that we are making for the bill that we had last week