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Mark Featherstone

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GWU officials' future on the line after internal purge

KARL SCHEMBRI

THE fate of two prominent moderate General Workers' Union officials Michael Parnis and Roberto Cristiano is in the balance following the dramatic resignation of the chairman of the union's travel and insurance companies, Untours, last week.

Charles Mizzi resigned last Tuesday after 39 years working with the union, in the wake of an investigation into the accounts of the companies he headed carried out by president Salv Sammut and deputy secretary general Gejtu Mercieca.

Mercieca had reported allegations of financial irregularities at the union's companies to Sammut, after learning that the



Under the spotlight: Michael Parnis (l) and Roberto Cristiano (r)

board had increased Mizzi's allowance over the last four years from Lm2,000 to Lm6,000 and was using his personal credit card receipts to get repaid for company hospitality expenses.

The two of them then called a general council meeting making their case to union officials about the company board's decisions, about which the GWU administration was apparently left in the dark.

The Untours board of directors, however, includes two GWU officials representing the union as shareholder of the two companies – Deputy Secretary General (International & Education) Michael Parnis and Section Secretary Roberto Cristiano. Another board member representing GWU is Gaetano Dimech,

who is not a union official.

"We were never informed by the board of Mizzi's increased pay packet and the way he was using his credit card to pay hospitality expenses," Mercieca said when contacted Friday evening. "I just reported the matter to Sammut upon receiving the allegations about the companies' accounts – it was my right and duty to do so. And Sammut had a duty to investigate the reports we received, as GWU president."

Mercieca said that none of the directors informed the union's administration of the decisions.

"In fact, the increases to Mizzi's packet were never approved by the shareholders," he said. "This couldn't go unchecked." **▶ page 2**

Malta with fastest cancer treating times in Europe see page 3

Malta's 'no go zone' see page 11

Whips lash back at Victor Borg's 'half a villa' jibe

JAMES DEBONO

TA'CENC developer Victor Borg's insinuation that he could have bribed parliamentarians by offering them half a villa each has caused offence to the whips of the two parliamentary groups, with Nationalist MP Mario Galea telling MaltaToday that he was "hurt" and "insulted" by this declaration.

Referring to parliamentarians in a public meeting organised by MEPA, developer Victor Borg declared "Had I given them half a

villa each, we would probably not be here today, but I chose otherwise, because it is my right."

Victor Borg made this remark during a public meeting organised by MEPA.

"I am not only offended but hurt by any insinuation that parliamentarians are corruptible. If someone offered me a villa instead of a permit I would immediately report him to the police," Nationalist MP Galea told MaltaToday.

According to Galea the vast majority of parliamentarians of both sides of the house do not

abuse of their position.

"I am irked by the kind of mentality which lumps all politicians as corrupt," Galea told MaltaToday.

Labour MP and whip Joe Mizzi was more offended by Borg's insinuation that even opposition MPs are corruptible.

"Had he directed his remark at the government and MEPA, I would not have been surprised. But what power does an opposition MP have in determining building permits?" asked Mizzi.

Mizzi referred to his past role as a **▶ page 2**

Vella's insinuation shot down

MINISTER Frendo told MaltaToday that the insinuation made by George Vella, that the minister or Foreign Affairs ministry had received correspondence related to Richard Muscat's son's incident in November 2006, was a fabrication.

George Vella, a former foreign minister, said when interviewed by Manwel Cuschieri on Super One that he would like to ask minister Frendo to confirm or deny that he had received any correspondence related to the incident a month after it took place in October 2006.

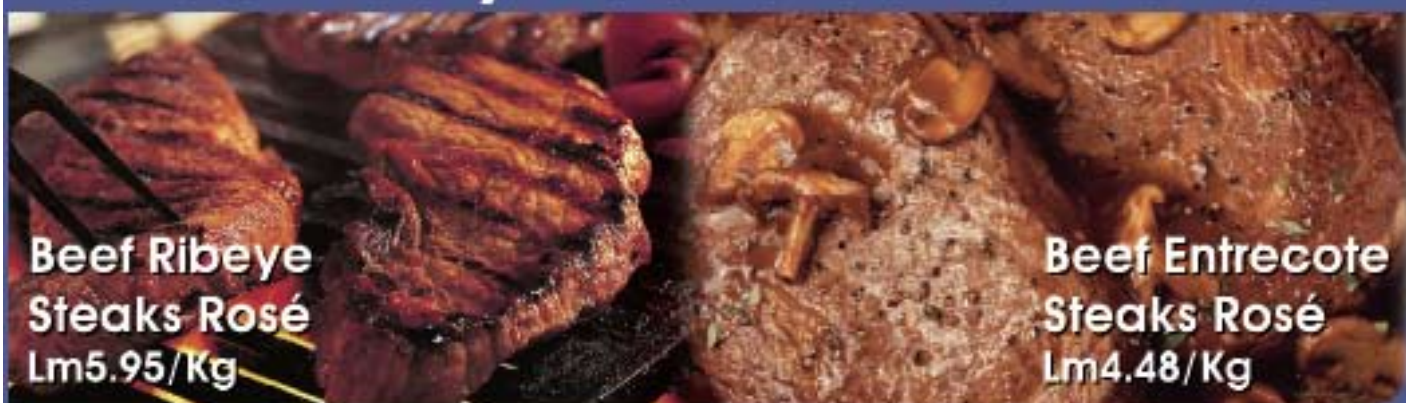
Last week, Malta's ambas-

sador to Ireland Richard Muscat resigned after Irish papers revealed a 10 month-old incident which alleged that his son had sexually assaulted an Irish woman.

Michael Frendo who talked to MaltaToday from South Africa, said that the Maltese government had acted at once on learning of the incident and all necessary steps were taken to waive any diplomatic immunity for Muscat's son.

He added that all the insinuations and questions being banded about by the Labour party were only meant to sow inventions and untruths.

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