

**TALKING TO
ME, PUNK? P15**

Not yet out of the Woods

Sant pledges zero tolerance on corruption, but denies that former PN activist Michael Woods, whose brother was investigated over bribery, taints the seriousness of his policy

LABOUR leader Alfred Sant yesterday pledged he would enact laws that would force Labour ministers to sever their business ties and interests, and to regulate the transfer of business interests to their family members.

However, while addressing a press conference outside Auberge de Castille on his zero-tolerance policy on corruption, Sant dismissed claims that the presence of former PN activist Michael Woods at the recent MLP general conference, raised

questions about the seriousness of Labour's policy.

Woods defected over to Labour when his brother Thomas Woods, who worked in the private secretariat of Health Minister Louis Deguara, was investigated over bribery in the award of invalidity pensions.

Ironically, the same case was mentioned yesterday in an exhaustive breakdown by Sant of corruption cases in the Nationalist administration – but without mentioning Thomas

Woods's name.

Asked by MaltaToday how he could reconcile his zero-tolerance policy with the fact that Michael Woods had been now given a political platform at the Labour general conference,

"I disagree with you," Sant replied. "Michael Woods is simply making a political statement about the PN, in the same way that Carmel Cacopardo and Ray Bondin have done," referring to the former PN activ-

**Alfred Sant said he will amend the law to prevent conflicts of interest for Cabinet ministers**

ists. Cacopardo has since joined the ranks of Green party Alternattiva Demokratika.

Woods contacted MaltaToday

yesterday to clarify that he has been absent from the PN for the past five years.

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MaltaToday editor calls for fast hearing of libel suits

MALTATODAY managing editor and director Saviour Balzan yesterday expressed preoccupation at the way libel suits were being filed by politicians to hinder freedom of expression.

Saviour Balzan, director of Mediatoday, the company which publishes independent newspapers MaltaToday, MaltaToday Midweek, Illum and BusinessToday, was referring to the recent two libel suits filed by Labour deputy leader Michael Falzon.

"It was made even more clear by these two suits from Falzon over a report which appeared in MaltaToday and MaltaToday Midweek which was entirely based on facts, and not opinion.

"Therefore, MaltaToday is appealing to Dr Michael Falzon to file a writ calling on the Courts to fast-track these two cases and be heard before the end of the general elections, if he really feels libelled.

"If Dr Michael Falzon believes he is right in both cases, then he should accept this appeal. Mediatoday has nothing to fear in rebutting Dr Michael Falzon's claims in these cases."

DI-VE.COM GAGGED NO ELECTION REPORTING

MATTHEW VELLA

THE news portal website di-ve.com yesterday evening announced, in a bizarre statement, that a new corporate policy had been passed not to report the general elections.

The announcement was posted as main item on the di-ve.com website at 9.00pm.

"As a result of new corporate policy, di-ve.com will not, for the foreseeable future, cover political activities and statements as part of its day-to-day operations.

"We shall focus our news coverage on matters of factual, current affairs and general interest. We trust that you will continue choosing our portal as your daily source of Malta-related news – the management," the portal announced.

Di-ve.com is owned by telephony company Go, whose major shareholder is Dubai-based Tecom Investments – the developers of Smart City.

Go chief executive David Kay yesterday evening steadfastly refused comment when contacted by MaltaToday.

"I can't. It's rather late, and I suggest you call corporate office tomorrow morning," Kay said.

Pushed by MaltaToday for a reason why di-ve.com, Malta's foremost news portal, will not be covering the general elections, Kay was adamant not to give any answer. Kay also refused to comment on whether the company had been put under pressure by government.

But it is reliably understood that government was not too pleased with di-ve.com's coverage of political affairs. MaltaToday is informed that government officials put across their views on the coverage of di-ve.com to the management at Go.

Only recently the Nationalist party's internet news portal maltrightnow.com was also launched in a new, bilingual format. The PN campaign is banking heavily on the effective use of the internet to communicate with potential voters, this week marking the revamp of the Nationalist Party website, as well as the launch of Lawrence Gonzi's personal website, including both his blog and another for his wife.

maltatoday SURVEY HARD CAMPAIGN FOR THE PN VOTER

A significant 8% of respondents consist of former PN voters in 2003 who are now either undecided, intent on not voting or unwilling to disclose their voting intentions in the next election.

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GONZI PROMISES 10% TAX CUT

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ONE MAN AND HIS PARTY

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