



Send your letters to:
The Editor, MaltaToday, MediaToday Ltd. Vjal ir-Rihan, San Gwann SGN 9016 | Fax: (356) 21 385075
E-mail: maltatoday@mediatoday.com.mt. Letters to the Editor should be concise. No pen names are accepted.

Corruption a way of life

MALTA currently comes out worse in the Corruption Perceptions Index than Slovenia and Estonia, but better than Bulgaria and Romania. In 2007 Malta dropped to number 19 within the EU with a score of 5.8 out of 10 for transparency. In the years 2004, 2005 and 2006, Malta scored 6.8, 6.6 and 6.4 respectively for transparency. That means the perception of corruption in Malta increased by 33% from 2004 to 2007, with an increase of 16% in 2007 alone. This is a very dangerous trend. According to Transparency

International, "Malta still lacks both a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy and appropriate coordination for implementing and monitoring such a strategy in the public sector and specific areas of law" Corruption seems to be getting accepted in the mind of the Maltese electorate as a way of life. Little do they appreciate that corruption not only hurts their pocket to the tune of hundreds of euros per annum, but corruption ultimately undermines democracy, the environment, society and the economy.

You can give your children the best education money can buy, but corruption will prohibit them from getting the competitive advantage they deserve. Unless the electorate embraces the concept of meritocracy ("what you know") versus corruption ("who you know"), in Malta we will keep talking about Malta being a centre of excellence but we will never get there. Eliminating corruption starts with a zero tolerance policy, followed by the deterrent of a tough stance by the judiciary. Clearly the judiciary itself has

to be beyond reproach, which in turn requires the process of judiciary appointments to be very thorough. We have seen the case of blatantly corrupt officials at ADT being recommended for a presidential pardon. This does not bode well as a deterrent against corruption. Other recent cases, such as the awards of scholarships or building permits, are not so easy to prosecute, but nevertheless fail the "smell" test and deserve investigation. The definition of corruption is not limited to money

exchanging hands. The EU has provided us with an accurate and wider definition of corruption, which translates to "any act that gives an individual an unfair advantage over another." I trust readers would agree that those people in positions of power who have allowed corruption to seep into administrative processes would now find it impossible to switch to a zero corruption tolerance mode. Hence the need for change. **Perit Martin Debono Sliema**

PeppiPN's mesmerising charade

THE last edition of Xarabank scratched the bottom of an all-time low ebb. For it to go any lower it needs to go underground. We saw a blinding example of all that is deceitful, and a dastardly manipulation that left no doubt in our minds that the show had an imported ingredient added to it. The best recipes of Peppi and Bondi's best endeavours would have not produced that blatantly biased result. It was felt that the "hidden hand" wasn't so hidden after all, because the otherwise productive tricks used in America had not been acclimatised to local conditions and the tele-viewers were not impressed. In their other productions of Xarabank, the producers allowed a reality scene to happen and gave little importance to the image of their participating audience. We had seen shabbily dressed males and females embellished with body piercing and tattoos on their forehead uttering stupid comments, interruptions, jeering and even foul language. None of that was present this time. The cameras focused more on the audience than the protagonists with frequent cameras close ups on a sizeable group of good looking young women well behaved, well dressed, well groomed, very professionally made up and exhibiting an elegant hairdo. Even their applause to Dr Gonzi were executed in style although still laudable. Gonzi himself was professionally made up in an effort to show his best profile.

The presence of the melancholic appearance and the negative attitude of Sharon Ellul-Bonici was not coincidental but meant to vivify the different attitude and was an occasion for the spin doctor to portray an anti-EU presence in the Labour Party. The stage was set for an elegant performance partly to correct the bad image previously given to the GonziPN plan by the university students and the ugly performance at Qormi, with shabbily dressed woman singing and yelling at the top of their voice 'Gonzi, Gonzi'... they certainly left no stone unturned that night. What a gala performance, what a circus! Peppi's behavior towards Gonzi was beyond reproach and relatively polite with the other participants. He made no effort to disguise his admiration for Gonzi and that was not a give-away, it was a planned strategy to further relax Gonzi. A typical example of the clear manipulation of the programme was that of a well groomed, silver haired elderly gentleman who started asking a number of intelligent and well put, disturbing questions. The suave gentleman who was aggressive in a gentle sort of way, was politely interrupted and asked to hold on to his remaining observations until the PM answered his first two questions. At that juncture Gonzi gave him some short and evasive answers that were immediately followed by a commercial break. When the show was resumed the elegant gentleman was completely

ignored, and the microphone was taken away from him. Notwithstanding the presenter's determined efforts, suspiciously aided by some imported specialist, and the PN propagandistic best endeavours, Gonzi's presentation came out looking very deceptive, egocentric, arrogant, sugar-daddyish and above all that of a dangerous power-hungry maniac. The career of a confidence trickster is over when all of his repertoire of tricks become transparent and the jovial smiles turn into smirks. The smiting one-way dialogue which Gonzi demonstrated during parts of the show were a dead give-away that his theatrics are nearing their sell-by-date. During the other parts of the programme Charlon Gauder and Miriam Dalli – more so Miriam – got the full mileage for what the Maltese audience admires: elegance, determination, no beating around the bush and a sprinkle of glamour too. They were both a credit to the fresh and honest image of the Labour Party that are also being enhanced by their young colleagues in the field as well as on the television screens. Although the presenter's Machiavellian empowerment and Gonzi's confidence tricks were all put to use, the final curtains came down after the faces were uncovered and the face masks were stored away. And not before. **Charles J. Buttigieg Via email**

A man of deeds, not words

I am not one of those people who spend hours stuck to a TV set to follow political debates as if I need them as much as I need oxygen, because if there is something I cannot stand is the irrepressible mudslinging that has marred the current electoral campaign. Rather than discuss issues of national interest, most politicians cannot go further than to demonise their opponents and squabble over petty matters. Perhaps the one exception to the above rule has been Angelo Xuereb, who rightly portrays himself as a man of few words but of many deeds. Xuereb may not have the gift of being a great orator, but his six-year stint as Naxxar mayor can arguably be referred to as one of the best-

ever mayorships in the Maltese islands: a fact that even his main detractors find difficulty in denying. Xuereb is indeed a man of great vision and full of resources as his entrepreneurship can demonstrate. He is a man whose track-record does not conflict with the idea of imagining him as a minister for works and infrastructure. With Xuereb we would not build a hospital that overran its costs by three times its original estimates and which took over 15 years to complete, and we would neither have a road network that envies the road network of Rwanda or Burundi. **Raphael Blanco St Julian's**

Torn between four 'liars'

WHAT a daunting choice awaited the Maltese electorate on 8 March. We are to decide whether to vote for the MLP, whose leader, Dr Alfred Sant, "lied" to the people when he said he had consulted MUT on the reception class issue, a claim vehemently denied by the MUT or the PN, where Dr Gonzi "lied" to the electorate when he said he never discussed with his cabinet about the issue of charging fees for healthcare while a document seems to show otherwise. Maybe, at this point Dr Harry Vassallo or Dr Josie Muscat would be tempted to seize the opportunity to tell us: "You forgot that there is us. We never lied to you, so come to our fold. You can vote for us and we will form a coalition government to guarantee that no harm from these 'liars' ever befalls you". But wait a minute!

Isn't this thing of the coalition also a lie? Because facts are that as our electoral system stands, a seat for Alternativa Demokratika or Azzjoni Nazzjonali would only guarantee a majority of seats and power to the MLP. But guys, come on! We always knew it. Politics are for liars in jackets and ties. Since our so-called democratic system allows us to vote only once every five years, our only option is to try and pick which we think is the lesser evil and keep our fingers crossed. Or maybe there would be another option. We could ask Shakira to come to Malta instead of Jaba to run for Prime Minister. At least we can be sure that her hips don't lie! **Deo Cassar Qawra**

Good governance

YOUR argument ("Good governance is not good enough", 2 March) seems to strongly rely on your statement: "But it is debatable whether 'good governance' alone can render profitable a commercial initiative deemed 'unviable' by experts within the same private sector

which will be expected to administer it." However, it should be noted that there are clear motives for these "experts" to arrive at a conclusion that investing less money into projects they will, as you have yourself noted, be running is "unviable".

As such your premise is flawed and this line of argumentation should be abandoned. The second part of your argument suggests that the public/private partnership "hinted at" by Sant would amount to a breach of one of the fundamental principles of the EU, I

find this to be a slightly bizarre observation. As you have alluded to it may I ask what this fundamental principle would be? The EU and its member states all heavily subsidise the private sector in one form or another, be it farmers, airlines, energy etc.. as such any princi-

ple of economic management set forth by the EU could hardly be termed "fundamental". All the more interesting is your deduction that such subsidies will even occur. **Michael Vella Vie email**



Send your letters to:

The Editor, MaltaToday, MediaToday Ltd. Vjal ir-Rihan, San Gwann SGN 9016 | Fax: (356) 21 385075

E-mail: maltatoday@mediatoday.com.mt. Letters to the Editor should be concise. No pen names are accepted.

A one-party State is not 'stability'

READING Matthew Xuereb's article in the Times of Malta under the title 'Malta needs five more years of stability' (25 February) I cannot hold my urge to put pen to paper.

The people should have no regrets about rejecting the Nationalist Party at the polls as a win for the Labour Party would be a victory for Malta against a one-party state. If the Prime Minister wants us to compare, first we have to elect a Labour government for at least five years so that we can compare like with like. I will quote also the words of the Prime Minister. I will tell all prospective voters, not only youths: "This is your country. Do not let anyone shut you up. Express yourselves. Your opinion is

very important for the country. I appeal to all of you to get your message across on March 8."

As regards the art of putting spokes in the wheel, the caretaker Prime Minister has been duly trained by his predecessor when he performed the duties of deputy leader of the Nationalist Party. He should have told us how many of the boasted 20,000 jobs created, are on a part-time basis only.

May I assure him that, whoever is Prime Minister of Malta, will have to remove departure tax, tax on credit cards and the revision of the car registration tax, thanks to the hard working Labour MEP Joseph Muscat. Now you are saying that the environment would be the focal point of

the next PN government. You make me laugh more than you do. Where were you during these last four years? Are you not responsible for the actions of your ministers? You have made a mess of the environment.

Dr Gonzi said that the track record of the MLP in education is scandalous and shameful. This is being considered as the joke of the year. I tell you truthfully that you were scandalous and shameful when in the presence of the top brass of the Civil Service in Castille you had the gall to tell the then Prime Minister Eddie Fenech Adami that I fared much worse than the irregular immigrants held under custody, when I was explaining to him what

needed to be done to tackle the precarious situation pertaining at the time.

"Malta needs everyone, whatever their DNA" said Dr Gonzi at Sliema mass meeting. This means that Dr Gonzi needs everyone because every vote counts. When it comes to appointing Directors, he cannot care less about the recommendations of the Public Service Commission but he chooses almost invariably on his yardstick of the political DNA of the recommended applicants. The difference between the Prime Minister and Dr Austin Gatt is that the latter has the guts to say it publicly and not hide his intentions behind a sarcastic smile. It is not by coincidence that his deputy is Dr

Tonio Borg, an ultra conservative and a staunch fundamentalist.

The public in general should be made aware of the present manoeuvring in the Civil Service and in Public Corporations and should vote Labour to eliminate inefficiency and corruption, to govern with competence and honesty and to rectify all injustices that have been committed by this arrogant administration. The country is waiting anxiously for a safe and clean pair of hands that eliminates corruption from every nook and corner, especially in the public administration.

*Carmel Attard,
Iklin*

Hansen's memory lets her down

IN her column on Sunday 2 March, Pamela Hansen again refers to me saying "I had left Corinne out of the picture the first time around because the article was not about her." Quite why anyone is entitled to invade my privacy by informing newspaper readers of my whereabouts escapes me, but Ms Hansen apparently feels it is justified if it helps her prove a point.

She first said she saw me at Auberge de Castille during the EU accession celebrations, when I was not even in Malta that day. In her latest column she says "anyway, the day does not really matter," but it seems it does, as she also says it was "the day, or the day after, the Referendum on the EU was won."

I don't know who it was she mistook for me at Auberge de Castille the day the EU referendum result was announced, or the day after for that matter. Whoever it was, it could not have been me, because I was not there. My memory of the days Ms Hansen mentions is not of celebrations at Auberge de Castille but

of watching TV, in disbelief, as Alfred Sant swayed onto a stage claiming victory for partnership with the EU even though it did not feature in the referendum question at all.

Before she wrote her column of 2 March, Ms Hansen had asked a third party about my imaginary presence at Auberge de Castille. She failed to mention his reply possibly because it does not serve her purpose.

The person she spoke to confirmed that he had not seen me at Auberge de Castille during the EU celebrations because he was in Athens not Valletta. He also confirmed to her that, though he had met Ms Hansen at Auberge de Castille the day after the EU referendum, he did not recall seeing either my sister or myself there that day.

Ms Hansen is convinced her memory serves her correctly. I'm afraid it has let her down again.

*Corinne Vella
Lija*

Daphne versus Pamela

I too have read Daphne Caruana Galizia's letter full of venom about Pamela Hansen.

Maybe if Caruana Galizia does not like the word "groupie", she ought to at least make it clear that she does belong to the "Gonzi Adoration Society".

I find Pamela Hansen's articles very balanced and has been known to criticise all political parties and various institutions of this country. Hansen does not make personal attacks but criticises the policies

and actions of politicians and institutions. Her articles about noise, MEPA and various others are a testimony to her style of journalism. Objective and constructive criticism is welcome and more likely to be heeded.

PS. I am not a relation of Mrs. Hanson and have never met or spoken to her. In case Daphne Caruana Galizia wants to check with me, she may call me!

*Anthony Borg
Mellieha*

FAA deserve support, not condemnation

I would like to comment on Victor Laiviera of Naxxar's letter 'Where are the environmentalists'? First of all can I say that I read Victor's original letter last year and was in total agreement with what he said. I also fully support his stand regarding the sanctioning of the boathouses at Dwejra.

Where we fail to agree however is with his attack on the various environmental NGO's and in particular his singling out of the FAA in this regard. I have the greatest respect for all of the NGO's and the obvious stance they take to protect the environ-

ment and heritage on Malta and Gozo. My greatest respect however is reserved for the FAA who have achieved so much in their short existence.

Victor talks of a deafening silence and a sheathing of claws and even goes on to accuse the FAA of abandoning their mission because of political leanings! Where in hell, pardon my French, does he get all this rubbish from?

From the distance of Ireland I have seen FAA's media releases go out without abatement, or does he only see what he wants to see? More to the point, where is he himself in the campaign for

the environment? If he were to do his bit and contribute to the environment, he would have been there at MEPA sessions alongside FAA, and not sitting in his comfortable armchair making politically motivated allegations.

The FAA since their inception have been at the forefront of the battle to protect the environment and to make these slanted remarks against them is a disgrace. These people deserve your support Victor, not your condemnation.

*James A. Tyrrell,
Northern Ireland*

Oh what a show!

OH what a circus, oh what a show! Lawrence Gonzi on Xarabank with his cuddly friend Joe Azzopardi (stage-name Pippi) lapping at his heels...drooling on his every word...lobbing him rhetorical question after question for Gonzi to lap up and enable him to look like Leo the Lion... or St. Albert the Great, sword and defender of the poor. Indeed, what a circus, what a show!

Alfred Sant was on Xarabank the week before and Azzopardi

posed a minefield of questions, pressing every point aggressively, pulling out fact sheets and statistics, behaving restlessly like a bull in a china shop, bristling with impatience, hardly giving Dr Sant a chance to answer.

What a different body language and pose when Gonzi was his "guest"!

Oh what a show! Is anybody still wondering about hidden agendas?

Let's be straight: to some

extent, the Broadcasting Authority seems to be more watchful lately. But it is such a shame that they still allow such disgraceful charades on a state station, a station financed by the Maltese tax payer - paying Azzopardi and his ilk hundreds of thousands of euros for such farcical productions - even more farcical than the normally low-life agenda of Xarabank.

*Philip Borg
Birkirkara*

Labour - Green

I refer to Mr John Schembri's contribution (Malta Today 24 February), regarding AD's inconsistency.

I have been following this political movement since its inception which today has matured into a responsible political party. I can say that throughout these years, it has always stuck to its guns.

Mr Schembri is afraid to have a Labour-Green Coalition government. Why? Let's face it, it would be much easier to make the life of a one-party Labour Government hell, than with a Labour-Green coalition government. A single-party Labour Government would be easier to fall into the Nationalist Opposition's traps.

It is my wish to see a Labour-Green coalition government. We

all understand that the country is in dire need of a change. By simply electing a one-party Labour government the electoral change would be only limited to a mirror image of the current Nationalist Government. Instead of having Nationalist political appointees we would then have Labour political appointees. That would be a cosmetic change.

Your correspondent who is also in tune with many other Nationalists mentioned the resignation of Mr. Rene' Rossignaud from the Swieqi local council and from AD. Maybe he did not watch one of the latest editions of Bondiplus when Lou Bondi kept pressuring AD representative about this resignation. As things turned out, during publicity break, I observed

that one of the program's sponsor is a photography studio which also bears the name of the former Swieqi Councillor, ie Rene' Rossignaud Foto-Art Studio. Maybe Mr Schembri who decided to mention this case should make necessary investigations and check if there is any connection between the program's sponsor and the former AD Councillor who coincidentally carry the same name.

If Nationalist diehards like Mr Schembri are really afraid of a Labour Government, then he should do his utmost not to let the Labour Party govern alone and make sure that AD is elected to parliament.

*Enzo Cachia
Marsaskala*