

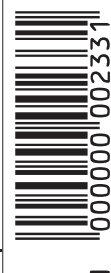
ELECTION SPECIAL

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Jeffrey slams Simon

Pullicino Orlando fires a broadside at Busuttil over 'bad taste' comment on Mistra party

'Busuttil snubbed the PM on the secretary-general offer to retain his lucrative MEP post' – JPO



FULL STORY PAGE 8

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As from today, Saviour Balzan is blogging on the European election



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JULIA FARRUGIA

FLANKED by his wife Kate, PN leader Lawrence Gonzi addressed an average-sized crowd of PN supporters in one of the most notoriously polluted towns in Malta: Fgura.

Just six days prior to E-Day, Gonzi once again launched an appeal to the thousands of voters who as yet have not collected their voting documents.

"It is very important. We only have five seats in the European Parliament. Each vote is worth gold. Maybe we'll get the sixth seat, God be willing. I genuinely appeal to everyone – make the right choice. Go and vote."

Gonzi urged PN supporters to vote for each and every Nationalist candidate.

"I am trusting you. On 6 June go and pick your preferences, make the best choices. Don't leave any candidate out."

Lawrence Gonzi accused the Labour Party of being irresponsible for shrugging its shoulders over important issues such as immigration.

"We can make mistakes. And please forgive us if we do mistakes. But what will the country gain if someone simply rubs salt into an open wound?" the Nationalist leader asked.

Lawrence Gonzi stressed that during this campaign there was a stark difference between the PL and the PN: "PL wants to go to Europe. We want to bring you Europe here. We want to bring Europe to the centre of your village, in our streets, in our families, in our homes. We want the EU to be a tool in your hands," climaxed Gonzi at the uproar of the present supporters.

"We will get Europe in the centre of the village in the centre of housing estates..."

Taking advantage of the applause, the PN leader flaunted his party's track record over the past five years.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY RAY ATTARD

Highs

- Average delivery but well focused.
- "We will bring you Europe in the centre of your village, in the roads and right in your homes ..."

A good punch that lifted the spirit and morale of the supporters. Managed to create a climax in the repeated refrain heard over and over again during this electoral campaign.

- "Small is beautiful" – Well, it depends...

"Today we can speak with facts at our fingertips. Five years ago we joined the EU.

We can say that just with a small part of what the EU provides, we succeeded in sending 9,300 young people on EU projects."

Gonzi said that Malta managed to give back a lot to the European Union, including the Maltese values and the perspectives of a small country.

"Small is beautiful," Gonzi claimed, as the crowd laughed at the various connotations that this phrase might evoke.

The Prime Minister said that in the past year there were 37 organisations that applied for EU funding, which in turn amounted to €6,300,000.

According to Lawrence Gonzi, the Gharb and San Lawrenz councils in Gozo applied to get EU funds to restore the façade of their churches.

"This will improve the Maltese touristic product, more work and a better economy ..."

After the PN activity journalists could not pose any question to PN leader as he was whisked in his car by party officials.

Lows

- Sorry, Gonzi, but you are not Bryan Adams. "Please forgive me (us)" is a cliché uttered by PN leaders during the last six days of every campaign. In Fgura, this statement lacked credibility big time. At least the PN leader should have made an effort to give a few sincere examples of what he truly believes were the mishaps. If there were any, of course...

- Lawrence was very smart in his long-sleeved shirt, but it must have been sweltering under the noon sun under the soaring temperatures of a floodlit tent.



Educational divide marks MEP elections

Simon Busuttil is ahead among all categories, but PN wins only among those with post-secondary education

JAMES DEBONO

WHILE voters with a post-secondary education are more likely to vote for the Nationalist Party and Alternattiva Demokratika, those with a secondary and primary education are more likely to vote for the Labour Party.

This is the main result of a MaltaToday survey which predicts an absolute majority for the PL in Saturday's vote.

While the PN is 10 percentage points ahead of the PL among those with post-secondary education, it lags 22% behind the PL among those with a primary level of education.

The PL is also six points ahead of the PN among those with a secondary level of education.

AD's support is limited to respondents with a post-secondary level of education, among which it gains 6.3%.

But the Greens enjoy very little support among respondents with a secondary or primary level of education.

Anti-immigration pary Azzjoni Nazzjonali is likewise also more popular among those with a higher level of education.

Immigration is in fact the most important issue of the campaign according to respondents with a secondary and post-secondary education, while the cost of living is the top concern of respondents with a primary education.

Predictably, concern with bread and butter issues, such as the cost of living and the hike in utility bills, prevail among those with a lower level of education while concern on the environment is highest among those with a post secondary education.

Simon Busuttil, Edward Scicluna and Louis Grech emerge as the most popular candidates among all categories of respondents.

Arnold Cassola is the third most popular candidate among respondents with a post secondary education but enjoys no significant support among other categories of voters.



mt survey

Voting intention by education level

	Post-secondary	Secondary	Primary
PN	36	30.9	43.6
PL	25.7	36.3	21.5
AD	6.3	0.8	1.2
AN	1.7	0	0.6
Others	1.7	0.3	0
Not voting	6.3	7.7	8.6
Don't know	22.3	24	24.5

Top candidates among post-secondary respondents:

Simon Busuttil	23.4
Edward Scicluna	7.4
Arnold Cassola	5.1
Louis Grech	2.3
Roberta Tedesco Triccas	1.7

Top candidates among respondents with secondary education:

Simon Busuttil	15.8
Edward Scicluna	4.1
Louis Grech	4.1
Marlene Mizzi	3.8
Vince Farrugia	2.1

Top candidate among respondents with primary education

Simon Busuttil	10.4
Edward Scicluna	4.3
Louis Grech	3.1
David Casa	2.5
Joe Cuschieri	2.1

Most important issue of the campaign

	Post-secondary	Secondary	Primary
Immigration	46.9	29.8	14.1
Environment	8	4.4	4.9
Utility Bills	2.9	3.8	9.2
Hunting	2.9	3.3	4.3
Employment	2.2	4.4	1.2
EU regulations	2.2	0	0
Cost of Living	0	7.4	18.4

Methodology
A total of 1,127 respondents were randomly selected and contacted by telephone. Of these, 720 accepted to be interviewed. The results were weighed to reflect the age/sex balance of the population as represented in the latest demographic review. The survey has a margin of error of +/-3.65. The survey was conducted between Wednesday 20 May and Wednesday 27 May.

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POINTS OF VIEW

MaltaToday asks prominent personalities and opinion formers to comment on the campaign themes and main electoral issues ahead of Malta's second-ever European election next Saturday

Joseph Cassar SJ Jesuit Refugee Service

When the Berlin Wall came down almost 20 years ago, that unbelievable event sparked off a new beginning for Europe, the healing of a deep wound that had scarred the lives of millions of ordinary men, women and children over several decades.

Thankfully, today we live in a different Europe, one without internal borders. Ironically, this new Europe is increasingly putting in place external walls of a different sort, in the form of measures and legislation that deny access to refugees in need of protection. For many asylum seekers from around the world, the only way to reach a place of freedom and security is by travelling and entering in an irregular manner. More effective border controls will simply mean that their journey will be harder and the risks greater, but these will unlikely stop people from moving. The European Parliament needs to ensure that refugees can still gain access to territory where they can safely obtain protection.

The Member States which are on the borders of Europe receive more asylum seekers. We, who are on the southernmost border, are directly affected by this situation and the highest proportion of asylum seekers in the 27 Member



States. The EP should ensure that responsibilities are shared more fairly throughout the EU. Moreover, the EP should arrive at a common European asylum system where all persons seeking protection will be treated according to the same high standards, in every Member State. At the same time, it should ensure that measures to combat illegal employment do not drive migrants who for some valid reason cannot be returned home to destitution.

As the EU negotiates various Readmission Agreements with third countries, in order to facilitate the return of those irregularly present in its Member States' territories, MEPs should use their power to ensure that these agreements include human rights safeguards and guarantee that under no circumstance people are sent back to a country where they may face persecution.

Most refugees flee to neighbouring countries, many of which are among the world's poorest. Europe should

continue to do its utmost to ensure a safe and dignified life to refugees who are living in such countries. It should also renew its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals which, in the face of the global economic downturn, risk being indefinitely postponed or altogether forgotten.

We must have the courage to think differently. I envis-

age MEPs who transcend the view of the EP as a trading floor where the competing interests of Member States are played out against each another. I vote for a forward-looking rather than an inward-looking Europe. I want future generations in Malta and on the continent to inherit a Europe aware of its Christian roots and firmly established on a consoli-

dated reserve of trust, setting standards of humanity rather than consumption. I expect our MEPs to push for a Europe where the weakest have their dignity upheld and the voiceless are heard. Only when the rights of the weakest are guaranteed will the rights of all be assured.

Joseph Cassar SJ is director of the Jesuit Refugee Service



Mario Azzopardi Playwright, poet and author

Since joining the EU Malta has had its fair share of achievements: it entered the 16-Block Euro zone, gained success for most of the island's SMIs, made marked advancement in the education sector and created a serious awareness about responsibility sharing in respect of clandestine immigration. Malta's draft of the EPP electoral programme on immigration is also to be noted.

But my impression is that the



national, almost provincial element has been too pronounced, as if Malta can't rid itself of its colonial mentality, clamouring at most times for support and assistance and geared on a reactive mode. What Malta

needs is to have all its EP representatives switch to a more proactive European mind-frame, politically, economically, socially and culturally. One would expect that this involves also a departure from a certain confessionalist attitude which saddles Maltese voting at the EP when it comes to civil rights issues, include gay rights, divorce and other such matters having to do with personal liberties.

On the other hand, Malta is letting slip by important occasions where we could indeed take a leading role, for instance as regards the notion of the Mediterranean Union and the actualisation of the "bridging" concept between Mediterranean countries, the Middle

East and Africa. Too much lip service has been paid to Malta as a crossroad island for politics and cultures but nothing was forthcoming to redimension Malta's profile. Malta's proactivity can cover various areas, for instance university social research, once we shed our traditional fixation with teaching for certificates rather than perceiving third level education as a source for innovative ideas. A banking network involving northern African countries could also be explored in terms of economic diplomacy.

Given Malta's accent on its tourism industry, it is a shame and a waste that we have not entered the field of cultural research which denotes the varied sensibilities, lifestyles

and forms of distinction marking the countries forming the EU. Unfortunately, we have no voices coming from Maltese intellectuals lobbying for and encourage open, democratic and multi-cultural diversity, with Malta as a centre for multilateral and intercultural initiatives. What we need in this context as in others, is to become imaginative dreamers but also rational technicians/entrepreneurs. Malta should not remain indifferent to conceptual and empirical investigation which can bring into sharp focus its role as a creative catalyst in a Euro-Mediterranean space.

Mario Azzopardi is head of the Malta Drama Centre

ON THE RECORD

Compiled by James Debono

Edward Scicluna Partit Laburista

On the deficit:

I would rather keep the deficit as it is for a year or two, reduce public expenditure on a yearly basis by one or two per cent and pass on those cost savings directly to the taxpayer through a tax cut aimed at boosting the productive sectors. Rating agencies and other similar international agencies are expecting a significant cut in public expenditures
Malta Financial and Business Times, July 2005

On trade unions

Eurostat statistics show that our unit labour costs have been increasing by about 4%. Although wage increases lately have not been enormous, in view of our declining productivity, unit labour costs are increasing making our product more expensive. The unions have to be shown the statistics.
Malta Financial and Business Times, July 2005

On Malta's chances of joining the Eurozone

So it seems you are not entirely sure of Malta's chances at joining the euro in 2008?

I'm afraid so... it looks more like one who is trying one's luck at passing an exam... I'd say Malta is pushing its luck. My cold-blooded assessment would be that the examiner would say that overall there are too many risks and uncertainties suggesting to us to give it another year.
MaltaToday, October 2006

On economic reforms

The EU, the IMF and the rating agencies are all very keen to see whether the government would credibly start a public finance reform, which includes pensions, health, tertiary education and social security.
MaltaToday, July 2006

On the PN's tax and spend economic policies

You have a clearly unproductive shipyard. What do you do? You borrow heavily to subsidise their wages and low productivity for two decades. You provide expensive university education for free with a small salary to the student to boot. You provide the most generous pension scheme in Europe, free health for all, keep over-staffed ministries and government departments, and so on. And how do you do it? Tax and spend. And when you cannot tax, just borrow and borrow.
MaltaToday, November 2008

On his decision to contest with Labour

After Labour's third consecutive electoral defeat last March, I felt the democratic deficit was too significant to ignore," he begins. "On the one hand you have the Nationalist party which is projecting the image of 'party is king'. They act as though they own the country, and will be in government forever. On the other hand, there was an Opposition whose morale was rock-bottom, absolutely zilch..."
MaltaToday, May 2009

On stipends

"It would be very presumptuous of me to say that we should 'do away' with stipends... But even a recent European Commission document suggests that they are a burden on the system. But these are things the taxpayer has to decide. Does the taxpayer want to keep subsidising university students? If not, there are a number of ways the system can be revised. They could be converted to loans, or grants, or part-loans, part-grants... it's not up to me to decide how to reform the system."
MaltaToday, May 2009

Josie Muscat Azzjoni Nazzjonali

On Mintoff

While workers in Tal-Bastjun live on their daily bread, Mintoff now lives in his Olive Garden villa, works in a palace and dines with the rich.
In-Nazzjon, 1974

On the 'new order'

We should propose a totally different road. We should show the people a new order where everyone earns as much money as he can and pays the least possible taxes, where enterprise and hard work are rewarded with money and the best jobs, and where the highest values are cultural and spiritual, not monetary.
Ir-Rieda, 1981

On the construction of Mater Dei

It only serves to make some people rich but it made Malta poorer.
MaltaToday, February 2006

On the PN government

Do we have a government who is leading, or do we have four or five powerful people holding the two political parties by the balls?
MaltaToday, February 2006

On the far right label

What is far right in us? We want to elevate peoples' status higher, we are concerned with the levels of taxation being imposed upon the middle class so that their monies go to the rich, and we're concerned the gap between rich and poor is growing. Is that far right?
MaltaToday, June 2007

On marrying foreigners

I'm not saying it's wrong. I can't tell people whom to marry. My uncle was married to an English woman; my daughter-in-law is of mixed stock but born here. But it worries me: look at single-parent families, broken marriages, more cohabiting couples and more people refusing to get married. It's this whole state of affairs that worries me, and it's being compounded. There's also illegal immigrants, which as you know are now allowed to bring their families here.
MaltaToday, June 2007

On reopening the EU package

What we want to do is renegotiate the treaty 'a modo nostro'... in a way that is acceptable to both the hunters and the EU.
MaltaToday, February 2008

On broadcasting

Let me tell you how serious this country is. We have to pay to make our voices heard. PBS, the national broadcaster, never invited us on any of their programmes. And obviously both Net and One TV ignored us completely. So we had to pay to go on Smash TV... and then, by law, we have to invite representatives of the other parties for the sake of balance. So from the programme we have paid for ourselves, we only have one third of the airtime to make our

own point. Is this serious? Come on! You can't even call this a Mickey Mouse country, because Mickey Mouse will get offended...

MaltaToday, February 2008

On times gone by

It is more encouraging to learn that the majority of you are deeply concerned by events unfolding in our island, an island that up to some years ago was known for its family values, rule of law, honesty and righteousness. Unfortunately, all this has gone overboard. Our social and financial problems worsen as our values reach rock bottom. To add insult to injury, the illegal immigration problem is worsening and as things stand, tends to become worse, with all that brings with it in the immediate and worse still, in the not too distant future.

An appeal to Maltese migrants on Facebook, January 2009



Cassola slams Delimara power station contract



PHOTOGRAPH BY RAY ATTARD

CHARLOT ZAHRA

ALTERNATTIVA Demokratika (AD) chairperson Arnold Cassola yesterday slammed the award by the Nationalist Government of the contract for the extension of the Delimara Power Station to a company that will be supplying a plant operating with heavy fuel oil.

Addressing a press conference on jobs at the party's offices in Sliema, Cassola said that the Nationalist administration "has made a mistake and shown its hard-headedness when purchasing the power station turbine operating with heavy fuel oil in Delimara when there is much cleaner technology available."

Regarding the economic crisis, Cassola said that "we have to concede... that is a crisis that is coming from abroad. We cannot blame the Maltese Government exclusively for what is happening."

But despite all the bickering on television between the main parties and the negativity – "because you have not done this and because you have done this" – there was however a topic on which everybody was now agreeing – the need for work.

Now Malta had to see how to tackle this problem, and that was one of the main aims of AD.

"AD is proposing the 'Green New Deal', which is a new pact for work," Cassola said.

"We want to create work in those sectors about which we did not think till now," the AD leader explained. "The economic crisis has led us to change our sources of energy and think of alternative energy sources."

Cassola insisted that had it not been for the crisis, "we would not have changed our sources of energy."

"If it had not been for climate change – and the world's climate is changing, even in Malta, with deep cold in winter to searing heat for the next six months, where we do not even see a drop of rain – we would not have changed our lifestyle," the AD Chairperson added.

Under the Green New Deal, "we will try to create five million new jobs in Europe in the next five years," the AD leader pledged.

Cassola explained that according to a study commissioned by the Green Party in the EP to the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and En-

ergy on the feasibility of eco-industries found that the global market for eco-industries had a volume of around 1,000 billion Euros.

Cassola called on all AD activists not to be disheartened at the last four days of the electoral campaign.

Referring to the polls published in yesterday's MaltaToday and other paper, he noted that there was a huge disparity between them. "In the polls you have the MaltaToday poll which shows that Cassola, together with Yvonne Arqueros, will be the fifth candidate that will obtain most votes in the EP elections."

"On the other hand, The Sunday Times is predicting that we will obtain 500 votes across the entire country with 0.25%. The polls have their validity. I do not think that Malta Today will be 100% correct, neither The Sunday Times will be 100% correct," the AD chairperson insisted.

"We have to fight till the very end, until Saturday at 10pm, we have to do our best to convince people," Cassola insisted. "If you think that after 20 years of activity, AD should have one of the six MEPs elected on 6 June,

then you should vote for us," he said to a huge applause of the activists present.

Cassola explained that unlike the Maltese Parliament, the EP had eight different political groupings forming it. "During the debate on television with AD, Simon Busuttil said that there was the need for a balanced representation in the EP."

"He is right – there is really the need for a balanced representation; we need to have a representation in as much different groups as possible," he insisted.

If an AD MEP was elected, Cassola added, "Malta will have 500 deputies that can be lobbied instead of 450 (200 from the PES and 250 from the EPP, because there will be fifty Green MEPs that can be influenced."

Yvonne Arqueros Ebejer, who is also contesting next Saturday's EP election, expressed her happiness with Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi's declaration on the extension of maternity leave.

"I am very happy that Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi at the end agreed with us on the extension of maternity leave," Arqueros-Ebejer declared. "I am very satisfied not only

for me, as by doing so, Gonzi agreed with what the Greens all across the EU have been insisting on the increase of maternity leave."

Arqueros-Ebejer explained how AD has been insisting for the past four to five months that maternity leave should be increased for various reasons. "Irrespective of whether I am elected, hearing the Prime Minister declare that he now agrees with the extension of maternity has already been a victory for me," she said to the applause of the activists present.

The AD candidate for the EP elections explained the Estella report in the EP did not only included the extension of maternity leave to 20 weeks but also provided for the introduction of paternity leave where men would stay with their families for a number of weeks.

The meeting was also addressed by AD candidates for the Local Council elections Michael Briguglio (Sliema) and Mario Mallia (Birkirkara), who were already serving in the two local councils respectively and were up for re-election on 6 June.

czahra@mediatoday.com.mt

Cuschieri to sue Mument, denies One TV fallback job

CHARLOT ZAHRA

LABOUR MEP candidate Joseph Cuschieri strongly rebutted claims made about him that appeared in the Nationalist weekly paper Il-Mument yesterday, describing them as a “fat, big and ruthless lie” about him.

The article in Il-Mument claimed Cuschieri and fellow Labour candidate Glenn Bedingfield were going to be appointed as Managing Director and Head of News at One Productions Limited, the company running the PL’s radio and television stations, if they were not elected.

Cuschieri accused the Nationalists of trying to get their revenge on him at the eve of the European Parliament elections. “The Nationalists and Lawrence Gonzi still have not forgiven me for ceding my



LIES, ALL LIES: Cuschieri denies Mument claims

parliamentary seat to Labour leader Joseph Muscat so that he could be elected in the House of Representatives as Leader of the Opposition,” Cuschieri insisted.

The Labour candidate described the plan mentioned by the Nationalists’ media machine as “solely a figment of their imagination”.

He said the Nationalists were “well aware” that with him elected an MP, they will not be able to “bulldoze on workers, pensioners, the middle-class, students, hunters, and the rest of the people”.

Cuschieri explained that the only way the Nationalist Party had at its disposal to stop him from being elected to the EP on 6 June was by coming out with a huge lie on him.

The candidate recalled how it was the Nationalist Party leader Lawrence Gonzi himself who had declared in Parliament that

the country still needed Cuschieri’s services and expressed his admiration for the contribution that Cuschieri gave to the country and to parliamentary democracy over the years.

“Now Lawrence Gonzi and his party are panicked because they know that in this election I am attracting towards me even Nationalist voters as well as floaters who have admired the step that I had taken,” he declared.

Cuschieri accused the PN of being afraid of the consequences that they would be suffering with the electorate, as well the fact that Labour leader Joseph Muscat was increasing his popularity with the electorate.

In view of this “barefaced lie” about him by Il-Mument, intended to harm him personally, Joseph Muscat and the Labour Party, Cuschieri had instructed his lawyers to start libel proceedings against the Nationalist newspaper.

EU must accept Libya’s \$1bn demand – Ellul Bonici

SHARON Ellul Bonici yesterday welcomed Libya’s proposal for a \$1 billion (€707 million) in EU aid in exchange for collaboration to stem illegal immigration, saying Malta should urge the EU to assist Libya and ensure that this leads to an EU-Libya readmission agreement.

“If the EU could squander €16 billion on illegal immigration, then it can spare another billion to help Libya help us stem the tide,” Sharon Ellul Bonici said, referring to recent UK press reports revealing how the EU squandered over £14 billion (€16 billion) on a project that was to combat illegal immigration from North Africa as part of the Barcelona Process.”

“Some people are saying this is blackmail on Libya’s part, but I don’t see it that way. Combating illegal immigration is costly. The EU should take this opportunity and make sure it paves

the way towards a readmission agreement with Libya,” Ellul Bonici added.

“Then it should strengthen Frontex in order to patrol the EU border and deal with the whole process itself – from asylum applications to readmission and reallocation.”

Ellul Bonici pointed out that the EU dishes out billions in aid across the globe, excluding loans. She said that this month alone, the EU had committed \$640 million in financial aid to Pakistan, €400 million to Kenya and will be committing an as yet undisclosed amount to Afghanistan. Even the Solomon Islands are receiving yet another instalment of \$80 million, which is roughly what Malta contributed to EU funds last year.

“If it takes another billion towards solving this problem it would be a billion well spent,” Sharon Ellul Bonici concluded.



One billion would be money well spent - Ellul Bonici

Ministry discussing VAT-free vaccines with Brussels

THE government in a statement said that it was currently under discussions with the European Commission to define the list of medicines that would be exempted from Value Added Tax (VAT) under the terms of the extension of the derogation on food and medicines agreed a few weeks ago.

The government is charging a reduced 5% VAT rate on medical vaccines like those against meningitis and cervical cancer, despite an exemption on VAT on medicines granted to Malta

before EU accession.

Both vaccines are not provided for free by the national health service.

Malta had requested the Commission to exempt vaccines from VAT in the pre-accession negotiations, while those selling them would be refunded the VAT incurred in their importation. But the request was not accepted.

The European Commission had confirmed that “in view of the fact that the government managed to negotiate the right not to impose VAT on food and medicine, Malta “has the right,

even in the case of vaccinations, not to apply any VAT, to apply a reduced VAT rate and even to apply the normal VAT rate, that is, 18%,” the Finance Ministry said in response to a statement by Labour leader Joseph Muscat that Malta would still be applying a full VAT rate to vaccines despite the derogation negotiated on food and medicine.

Moreover, Cyprus did not have the right to apply a zero VAT rate on food and medicine indefinitely as Malta obtained last month, the Finance Ministry concluded.

Nationalist Party says Muscat lied about Working Time directive

THE Nationalist Party yesterday accused Labour leader Joseph Muscat of not saying the truth when talking about the Working Time Directive during an online debate with Lawrence Gonzi.

It said in a statement that contrary to what Muscat said, when the directive regulating the 48-hour week started being debated in the European Parliament, two of the three Labour MEPs abstained when asked to vote on whether workers should be allowed to choose how much overtime to work over the 48-

hour limit.

The vote concerned an amendment to the report not to allow workers to work more than 48 hours each week.

The Nationalist MEPs voted to allow workers to decide for themselves, whether to work over the 48 hour limit.

In its statement, the PN said this was not the first time the Labour leader tried to “twist matters”.

“An example was when he said that 2,000 jobs were created. The facts were that 7,000 jobs had been created while 2,000 were saved. He had said

the three Labour MEPs voted correctly on immigration when each of them voted differently. And he insisted Malta was a net contributor to the EU when it was a net beneficiary,” the PN said.

The party added that Labour was reiterating “the old lie” that the government would not allow free healthcare, and that it had selectively edited a speech by PN candidate Alex Perici Calascione on hunting to suit the party’s purposes. “Muscat acted like an unethical journalist,” the PN said.

JPO blitzes Busuttil over ‘bad taste’ jibe

“I refuse to be judged by others whose primary concerns, when it comes to their political involvement, are manifested by their behaviour. Busuttil snubbed Gonzi when he offered him the post of secretary-general and chose instead to retain the lucrative position of MEP.”



NATIONALIST MP Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando yesterday hit back at MEP Simon Busuttil's comment that the party he organised last Saturday on his land in Mistra – the controversial site that nearly cost the PN the elections in 2008 – had been

appraisal of Busuttil's opinion: “It is in even greater bad taste when the criticism is levelled by someone who, by his own admission, puts his personal interests before those of his party.” He was referring to Busuttil's refusal to accept the post of PN

post of parliamentary secretary in the Ministry of Finance by Prime Minister Fenech Adami.” Pullicino Orlando said he refused to be judged by Busuttil, who refused to serve a secretary-general to retain his MEP's salary.



After the fall - Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando on Reporter



Alfred Sant reveals on right in the middle of the March elections



The Mistra scandal is born



TV gold as Pullicino Orlando turns up for the televised BA debate with Alfred Sant

“in bad taste”. “It is the epitome of bad taste, and bad form, to unjustly criticise a colleague who is simply exercising his right to legitimately use his property,” Pullicino Orlando said when asked by MaltaToday to comment on Busuttil's succinct observation, carried in an interview in yesterday's edition. Some 600 guests attended Pullicino Orlando's party in honour of MEP candidate Alex Perici Calascione on Saturday night. But Perici Calascione himself could not be among them, after being hospitalised for a minor ailment. The property in question had been the scandal of the 2008 general election when Labour leader Alfred Sant revealed in the final TVM debate that Pullicino Orlando was about to lease the area to be used as an open-air disco. Pullicino Orlando has been in defiance mode ever since, and on Saturday morning he put in an appearance at a press conference by Alternattiva Demokratika – who protested the issue of a permit for the party – by standing on his land behind the boundary wall, sipping from a cup of tea. Yesterday, the outspoken backbencher was clear in his

secretary-general when asked by Lawrence Gonzi. “I refuse to be judged by others whose primary concerns when it comes to their political involvement are manifested by their behaviour. Dr Busuttil himself admitted publicly, a few months ago, that he snubbed our Prime Minister, Dr Lawrence Gonzi, when he offered him the post of secretary-general and chose instead to retain the lucrative position of MEP.” Pullicino Orlando, who has been distanced from the party since 2008's events, and has meanwhile taken bold stands on immigration and the controversial Cathedral project in Valletta, said he was “proud to consider myself a loyal footsoldier of the Nationalist Party.” “My main political concern over the 30 odd years I have been serving my party, first in the youth section of MZPN, then as a local councillor and, for the past 13 years, as a backbench MP has been to give my contribution to my party, my constituents and my country to the best of my ability. “It is a well known fact that I have never done this in the hope of being given a particular post or to further myself personally. It is a publicly known fact that I actually refused the offer of a



Bad memories Pullicino Orlando's decision to hold an electoral party in Mistra has rekindled bad memories of the scandal which Alfred Sant had revealed, and nearly managed to tip the election to his favour. The dentist, who had won favour among the PN's top echelons for his standing within the environmental lobby, became embroiled in an explosive controversy during the election campaign after Labour revealed that he had leased his land in the Natura 2000 site for the development of Spin Valley, an open-air discotheque. While Labour leader Alfred Sant milked the revelations before the 2008 election, the PN went into attack mode. They defended Pullicino Orlando publicly and even accompanied him to a Broadcasting Authority press conference for journalists with Sant, by issuing him with a temporary press card. Although Pullicino Orlando claimed he had no knowledge of the lease of the land, Alfred Sant only revealed the private contract signed by Pullicino Orlando and the lessee of his land, on Thursday night during a debate between the two party leaders. Gonzi emerged from the de-

bate unscathed, as Sant's fleeting reference to the contract, which he momentarily waved to the camera, was not emphasised enough by the Opposition leader.

And on the day of the broadcast on TVM, the mass meetings for both Labour and the PN at Luxol and Floriana were taking place. The timing was such that the deeply embarrassing revelation, which effectively ousted Pullicino Orlando as having lied about his ignorance of the disco development in Mistra, could not be reported the next day by the press due to the silent day of reflection.

Perceived as one of the most promising candidates, Dr Pullicino Orlando was

excluded from the new Cabinet appointed by Lawrence Gonzi, who claimed that he did not want to have a minister under investigation. Dr Pullicino Orlando said he understood the Prime Minister's position at the time.

In the end, Pullicino Orlando's antics – turning up to face Sant at his press conferences, standing in as a journalist at the BA press conference, and his tearjerker performance during a PN meeting – saw him returned to power from two electoral districts thanks to a massive sympathy vote from PN grassroots voters.

But his standing within the party has been dented ever since.

MISTRA REVISITED

Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando's fall from grace

30 February – With speculation rife over a Labour 'bombshell' that will expose new allegations of corruption, Labour leader Alfred Sant summons the press to the MEPA offices. Surprisingly Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando presents himself at the press conference but Sant says nothing of the case.

1 March – Sant holds his damning press conference in Mistra, right next to Pullicino Orlando's land, to reveal that a permit had been issued by MEPA for the construction of a mega-disco in the protected valley, right on the MP's land. Pullicino Orlando arrives soon after Sant leaves, and categorically denies knowing anything about the project or the lessee of his own land. He retaliates to Sant's allegations, alleging that Labour deputy leader Charles Mangion and MP Karmenu Vella failed to declare earnings from apartments rented out to Malta Freeport.

2 March – On Sunday, Pullicino Orlando presents himself at a party activity in Mosta, where he openly cries and then flies into rage, accusing Alfred Sant of mudslinging.

3 March – Pullicino Orlando, supplied with a 'temporary' press card by the Department of Information, is fielded as a PN journalist to face Sant at the BA press conference. Sant leaves the PBS studios as the MP refuses to budge. After the PBS ruckus, Pullicino Orlando never made another public appearance again.

6 March – On Thursday evening at the PBS debate between Gonzi and Sant, the Labour leader discloses the Mistra lease agreement. But the evening broadcast is not seen by party supporters out at the mass meetings; while the day after is the day of reflection, when no political messages can be issued. Labour's coup is too late in the day to create its desired effect.



Everyone else is doing it so why can't we?

FRANICA PULIS spoke to the MEP candidates on their electoral spending limits

EDWARD Demicoli hasn't done it yet, but thinks he will have by the end of the campaign.

Arnold Cassola and Josie Muscat avoided doing it themselves, but both agree there shouldn't be a law about it in the first place.

Alan Deidun hasn't done it yet, but thinks everyone else already has. And on this, nearly all other candidates agree with him.

We are talking about overspending on their personal campaigns - a thorny issue, in a country where the national legal limit of Lm600 (€1,400) per district has been routinely flouted for decades.

For the MEP election of 6 June there are 34 candidates fighting for Malta's five available seats (six, if you include the observer status seat to be decided by the Irish referendum in October). Candidates were asked three questions: have they spent the €1,400 (Lm600) on every district which totals up to €18,170 (Lm7,800)? If not will they spend them by the end of their campaign? And do they agree with these constraints in the first place?

From the 16 candidates we managed to get hold of, only Edward Demicoli (PN) admitted that he might go overboard as the sum "does not even cover sending a flyer by post to all Malta and Gozo".

The rest all said that they haven't spent the sum yet, and will not spend it in the next few days.

Arnold Cassola (AD) and Josie Muscat (AN) both said their campaigns were held by the parties themselves and no personal promotional material was created. Personal expenses were limited to phone-calls, petrol and a deposit of €90 for their candidature.

Glenn Bedingfield (PL), Claudette Abela Baldacchino (AN) and Marthese Portelli (PN) replied that they chose to focus their campaign mainly on meeting personally with people, for which reason they did not overshoot the financial limit.

But Cassola, Muscat, Abela Baldacchino, Alan Deidun (PN), Yvonne Arqueros Ebejer (AD) all hinted that surely other candidates were spending a lot of money, much more than they were actually saying.

In fact Muscat, like Demicoli, mentioned the expenses involved in posting a letter to all households in Malta and Gozo, which according to him amounts to the total permissible sum of €6,000.

Deidun likewise said: "I haven't spent more than €5,000. Others spent much more. I know that for sure."

Cassola further pointed out that this situation has been ongoing for ages.

"People have been breaking this law for years. One need only check the Sunday newspapers to realise that. But nothing has ever been done to change it. I'm against people breaking the law, but this law doesn't make sense.

If it is not feasible, why create a law and then and put no one to enforce it?"

Candidates who agreed with the existence of a limit to personal campaign expenditure include Deidun, Arqueros Ebejer and Abela Baldacchino, who thinks the sum might have to be reviewed.

Those who disagree were Rudolph Cini, Josie Muscat, Arnold Cassola and Sharon Ellul Bonici. Cini believes that nowadays there shouldn't be any more limitations and one should be responsible for his/her expenses. Ellul Bonici replied: "I don't believe in having these limits. After all, the candidate is working for the party and to promote what he believes in..."

Those who were Maria Camilleri (Libertas), Portelli and Joseph Cuschieri (PL) felt that it was not up to them to decide on this matter. Vince Farrugia (PL) argued that there should be a limit, otherwise the campaigns will depend on donations and will lose their independence. However, in certain cases the limit might not be fair on candidates who are not as well known as others, and therefore had to spend more.

Christian Zammit (PL) and Steve Borg (PL) both claimed to have kept their expenses very low, by focusing mainly on distribution of flyers in specific parts of Malta.

Zammit has focused only on Gozo, while Borg on the south of Malta.

BirdLife calls for an end to rabbit hunting 'loophole'

MATTHEW VELLA

BIRDLIFE Malta yesterday said it was urging government not to issue any more rabbit hunting licenses as the number of licensed rabbit hunters has soared by over 20% in the last 15 months, coinciding exactly with the first ban on spring hunting in 2008.

The rabbit hunting season due to start today (1 June).

As reported by MaltaToday, ever since the ban on spring hunting gave migratory birds some respite from an annual massacre, licences for weapons used to kill rabbits increased by 22% since January 2008.

Comparably, the licences for shotguns used to hunt birds from land increased by just 2.9% over the same period – possibly indicating the effects of the Birds Directive may have led to more hunting of wild rabbits.

There are 1,483 licensed weapons for rabbit hunting in Malta compared to 7,364 licences for bird hunting.

BirdLife said that every year it documents numerous instances of illegal hunting targeting Malta's rare breeding birds once the rabbit hunting season opens on 1 June.

"Furthermore, the Police Com-

missioner has also started allowing the use of airguns to hunt rabbits, making it even harder for law enforcement officers to catch poachers targeting wild birds who use the rabbit hunting season as a loophole," a BirdLife spokesperson said.

BirdLife said that the problem is further exacerbated by the fact that from June onwards the Administrative Law Enforcement unit are no longer focused on hunting and trapping incidents, and instead are put on other duties such as beach patrols.

"Since the ban on spring hunting, ornithologists have recorded species such as Turtle Dove and Common Kestrel remaining in Malta after the migration period has ended, carrying out breeding displays and pairing up in preparation for breeding. However, as we saw in 2008, as soon as the rabbit hunting season opens up these birds disappear one by one," said Dr André Raine, BirdLife's conservation manager.

"It is utterly irresponsible to allow such a blatant loophole, especially after so much time and effort has been put into ensuring that these birds survive the depredations of illegal hunting during the vulnerable spring period," Raine said.

As confirmed by MEPA, the

ultimate responsibility regarding rabbit hunting licenses and legislation falls under the remit of the Office of the Prime Minister.

BirdLife called for a "serious review" by the government of the current legislation on rabbit hunting and repeated its call for the Prime Minister to set up a wild life crime unit that concentrates on environmental crimes throughout the year.

No fun for bunnies

The rabbit hunting season extends between 1 June and 31 December. Licenses are issued only to landowners or persons who obtain a written permit from landowners to hunt rabbits on their land – they can only hunt rabbits on a particular piece of land as specified by their licence.

Sources told MaltaToday that the number of licenses for rabbit shooting increased after hunters were allowed to use air guns to hunt rabbits in 2008. Hunters with a shotgun permit had to reapply again if they wanted to hunt rabbits with an airgun.

Maltese wild rabbits mostly live near cliffs and in garigue areas. Hunters usually wait for the rabbit to emerge from their burrow or else they flush it out with a ferret.

Dead man talking

Saviour Balzan argues that Lawrence Gonzi is the perfect stand-in for Dead Man Walking

Today's issue of MaltaToday, the election special describes Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando's mindset. I have to say I quite understand his decision to lambaste Simon Busuttil. Simon is today the official campaign strategist for the European election (together with his buddy Stefano Mallia) and has decided to take on JPO. He is of course entirely justified in expressing his opinion. But his lack of battle-readiness is apparent when it comes to weighing the realities of politi-

cal boomerangs. JPO is not exactly someone you can ridicule or send to a gulag. He is in the enviable position of being in a government with a one-seat majority. Yesterday on NET radio I listened to Simon, needless to say talking in his saintly voice – which obviously strikes a chord with thousands of Middle Earth soft-spoken Nationalists – and he said that we should not forget that this is not the national election but the European election. In other words, he was emphasising that if the PN does badly in these elections it does not really matter. What a stupid comment!

He went on to say that in the last election the people had chosen Lawrence Gonzi. Of course there was the usual applause to such a declaration. Yet Simon conveniently forgets to mention that had JPO not been shielded and positioned favourably by Gonzi et al before the last days of the last election, there is little doubt in my mind that today we would have Alfred Sant as Prime Minister.

The few hundred votes between the two parties could easily have moved from one border to another, had the electorate been aware of the whole JPO Mistra saga. But JPO is a hurt man. He has experienced first hand what it means to be sidelined by Gonzi and his lieutenants. Perhaps many onlookers will recall that JPO 'was' one of Gonzi's closest supporters and someone who stood diligently behind the former Speaker of the House in his Fenech Adami-backed campaign to become leader of the PN.

JPO may possibly regret having taken such a stance. He seems to be under the impression that the Gonzi clan are not to be trusted. He has been ostracised and left out in the cold.

In the meantime, Gonzi – in typical tradition – has left destiny take its own course – and chosen to ignore JPO. But he cannot ignore JPO. He could ignore JPO if he had a two or three-seat majority. With a single seat majority, JPO has more influence than one could imagine.



SAVIOUR BALZAN

And with all the present discontent in the PN ranks, Gonzi is essentially a perfect candidate to be a 'dead man walking'. This is further attenuated by the general demise and incompetence that surrounds his campaign team, captained now by Simon Busuttil, who as we have heard from the bewildered Alan Deidun, is a perfect replacement for Lawrence Gonzi.

Surely something that has made JPO far more uncomfortable. Simon Busuttil has a political career which emulates the rise and fall of Valentino, complete with peacock feathers, velvet cushions and flashy bulbs. No dishwashing, no back-room jobs, no potato peeling. Busuttil's climb in politics has been one amazing unstoppable catapult into space. Busuttil has never had it so good.

A bright kid by all means, he is a fine example what a Nationalist should look like and sound like. But really and truly he is decades away from the pains and aches of the Nationalist electorate. The burly guys from Zebbug and Naxxar, the militants from the seventies

who have no time for silly arguments on how to use buttons in the European Parliament. No connection to small businessmen and to the real suffering the middle class.

Simon, according to Deidun, is PN leadership material, but what the hell does Deidun know about the PN or leadership? All these upstarts who land suddenly inside the PN think they know something about the PN. But they should really return to their roots and do what they are best at doing. In Deidun's case I guess it has got to do with biology, you know birds, bees and nasty creepy crawlies!

Simon is in no position to lecture JPO. The new party he represents, known as GonziPN, is in no position to dictate to JPO.

Log on to www.maltatoday.com.mt for more.

Election frenzy at Ta' Qali

The Labour party is of course having a field day. Yesterday at Ta' Qali with the music score to Slumdog Millionaire and Coldplay blaring in the background, Muscat did his best to rise to the occasion. It could not be any easier for Labour.

But in his political declarations, Muscat is rocking the principles, which are sacrosanct for a modern social democrat. Watching the Labour supporters gathering Ta' Qali you could see that the party has found the vitality that you would have found in the PN.

But in doing so, it is getting carried away and on the verge of losing its soul – some would argue that they never had a soul. The PN may have made false promises on many fronts, but the PL should not tackle the issues from a strictly populist point of view.

And Muscat has looked at the surveys and seen what the people are worried about: desperate Africans in boats are at the top of the concerns of most people. But it is a false concern, motivated by the need to find a scapegoat. In doing so, we are fomenting more xenophobia than this country deserves.

Then there is the issue of free health. Once again, the debate of free health is a difficult dis-

“

JPO is not exactly someone you can ridicule or post to a gulag. He is in the enviable position of being in a government with a one-seat majority

course. There is no such thing as free health: if anyone wants to have a feel of free health, then one should only see the number of medical services which are unavailable to the general public.

So Muscat should not get carried away. There is little doubt in my mind that if he ever gets to Castille he will be faced with other realities which are linked to the limited finances of this country. As a social democrat he should worry over the future of the underclass and the underprivileged who will never get to the private health many Maltese presently utilise to bypass the many dysfunctional public medical services presently on offer.

Follow Saviour Balzan's blog on www.maltatoday.com.mt

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Muscat has looked at the surveys and saw what the people are worried about: desperate Africans in boats are at the top of their concerns. But it's a false concern motivated by the need to find a scapegoat

For more news and info log onto

www.maltatoday.com.mt

As from today, Saviour Balzan is blogging on the European election



Deidun sees the light...

From Deidun's quip on 'illuminated billboards' to Casa's scaremongering among immigrants 'dictating' policy at the Birzebbuga council, JULIA FARRUGIA showcases the most memorable moments from five PN candidates' speeches at Fgura yesterday

David Casa

The incumbent MEP focused on illegal immigration, accusing the Labour Party's MEPs of never pulling the same rope on this issue. Casa insisted that the PL wants to give legal immigrants the right to vote and thus create a scenario wherein immigrants 'dictate'.

"The Labour Party wants to give legal immigrants the right to vote. Do you know what this means for the residents of Birzebbuga in their local councils elections? That the immigrants get a quota. Do you know what this means? If the PL elects three councilors and the PN elects another three, the seventh candidate will be a legal immigrant. He will dictate what happens in Birzebbuga.

"This is the politics of PL: here in Malta they scare the Maltese and in the European Union they work against the interest of the country.

"We believe that we can solve the immigration problem. I call on the Labour Party to declare on the eve of an election that they will be close to us. At least on immigration we pull the same rope. I am proud to be part of the PN as we are stretching out our hand to the PL. Now it is their turn to give us their hand to work in the interest of our country."

Roberta Metsola Tedesco Triccas

Sitting pretty just three seats up from Lawrence Gonzi, Roberta Metsola Tedesco Triccas managed to impart a message to the party grassroots by harking back to the first speech of former PN leader Eddie Fenech Adami on workers' rights – 30 years ago. She also attacked the General

Workers Union that was against EU accession.

"Work is what gives mankind dignity. With work we can give great input in democracy. It is with work that we can strengthen our families..."

"I would like to mention something that until today was not mentioned in this electoral campaign. A few years ago, before the referendum, a large union that represents thousands of workers approved a motion just with a simple show of hands, stating that it was not in the workers' interest to join the EU.

"This motion was never withdrawn by the GWU – it is still



in place. Does the GWU still believe we were wrong to join the EU? Does the GWU still believe that workers did not benefit from Malta's accession in the EU? You can never be a union battling in the interest of the worker when at the same time you are against joining the EU.

My appeal to the GWU is: once and for all, come forward and admit that you were wrong..."

"We will act like this: 30 years ago, when Eddie Fenech Adami was elected PN lead, what did he say in his first speech? 'Our heart will be with the workers. And our heart will remain with the workers. The worker will stay in the centre of our activity in Malta and also abroad..."



Simon Busuttil

Incumbent MEP Simon Busuttil wrapped up the three dominant issues in this electoral campaign: illegal immigration, a free healthcare system and whether the electorate should choose the PN or the PL.

"If there was a Government that introduced a fee on the healthcare system, it was a Labour Government between 1996 and 1998. If there was a candidate who said that the healthcare system cannot remain free, it was a PL candidate. Sometimes I suspect that the PL wants this to be not a lie, but a truth... so that we introduce tariffs on the health services, so that his lie becomes the truth. But I will tell the PL 'we will not do it'.

"From October till now, the PL MEPs not only pushed the wrong buttons in May, but between October and May they never gave us a helping hand on the burden-sharing issue. There was not a single amendment proposed on their part so that the burden sharing become obligatory. We did it."

"On 6 June we have to remember this – EU membership is a tool, that we have to use it for the benefit of all. Whom would you trust with the membership tool?

I have no doubt that if we all think hard on this question the answer is clear – entrust this tool only to those who know how to use it: the PN candidates.

Rudolph Cini

The former Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses president

harped on the Maltese Bishops appeal to the electoral earlier last week and hammered on the word 'values'. According to Cini only the PN's manifesto is making reference to this term.

"I leafed throughout the manifestos. In the electoral programme of the PL I did not find any single word that talks about values. But when I read the PN's manifesto I found that the values are one of the pillars. We believe in values, we believe in the Maltese, we believe in families. So it is a must that we add values as a foundation for this society."

"Malta took €1.5 billion in the budget covering till 2013. I emphasize on the word billion as it seems that the Labour Camp has a problem not just with buttons. The have a problem also with the alphabet. One and a half billion. Not one and a half million..."

"Next Saturday the Maltese people will pass its judgment... At the beginning I did not know each candidate but I can assure you that we have become one family, one team... My mind is at rest. Whoever gets elected will lead us in a successful direction."

Alan Deidun

By far the most colourful of all the candidates, a frenzied Alan Deidun compared the

PN candidates to the parties billboards that according to him "light up even at night". Deidun also confirmed Labour Party attacks, by claiming that Simon Busuttil and his team are helping in the PN in the electoral campaign by briefing the candidates on all issues. Repeating the same stunt as last Friday on Xarabank, Alan Deidun closed his speech by feverishly waving the EU flag.

"I would like to ask a question to each and every one of you. Do you know what the difference between the PN and the PL's billboards is? Come on, tell me. I spent a lot of time thinking about this. Let me point out the first difference. On the PL billboards there is no reference to the word 'Europe'. But there is a much more important difference: PN's billboards light at night. Do you know what this means? That the PN candidates throw light and they will bring light wherever there is darkness..."

"On Xarabank we had the 'cream of the cream' (kellna l-perla): Joseph Cuschieri insulted Simon Busuttil for being politically immature...Cuschieri, who has only just cut his teeth in politics... And I would like to applaud all my fellow candidates, but what you might not know is that Simon placed all his time at our disposal. He briefed all us candidates with information on all issues. I would like to thank Simon and his team."

"It is true that there is a steep road ahead of us, but we are succeeding in climbing it. I just came from Siggiewi where we have our people working there to make sure that all votes that were not picked up will be picked up. I was told that in the beginning there were 2,000 undelivered votes. Today the number went down to only 150."

VINCE FARRUGIA

YOUR STRONG VOICE IN EUROPE



"Mr Farrugia has been a committed member, active on many European dossiers affecting the interests of Maltese commerce. He has also always been prompt to defend and promote the interests of SMEs in the commerce sector.

With a good understanding of European dossiers which can often be very technical, and excellent inter-personal skills, Vincent Farrugia is well placed to represent the interests of Malta within the European parliament.

On this basis, we would like to support his candidacy."

Xavier R. Durieu
Secretary General of EuroCommerce
The Retail, Wholesale and International Trade representation to the EU

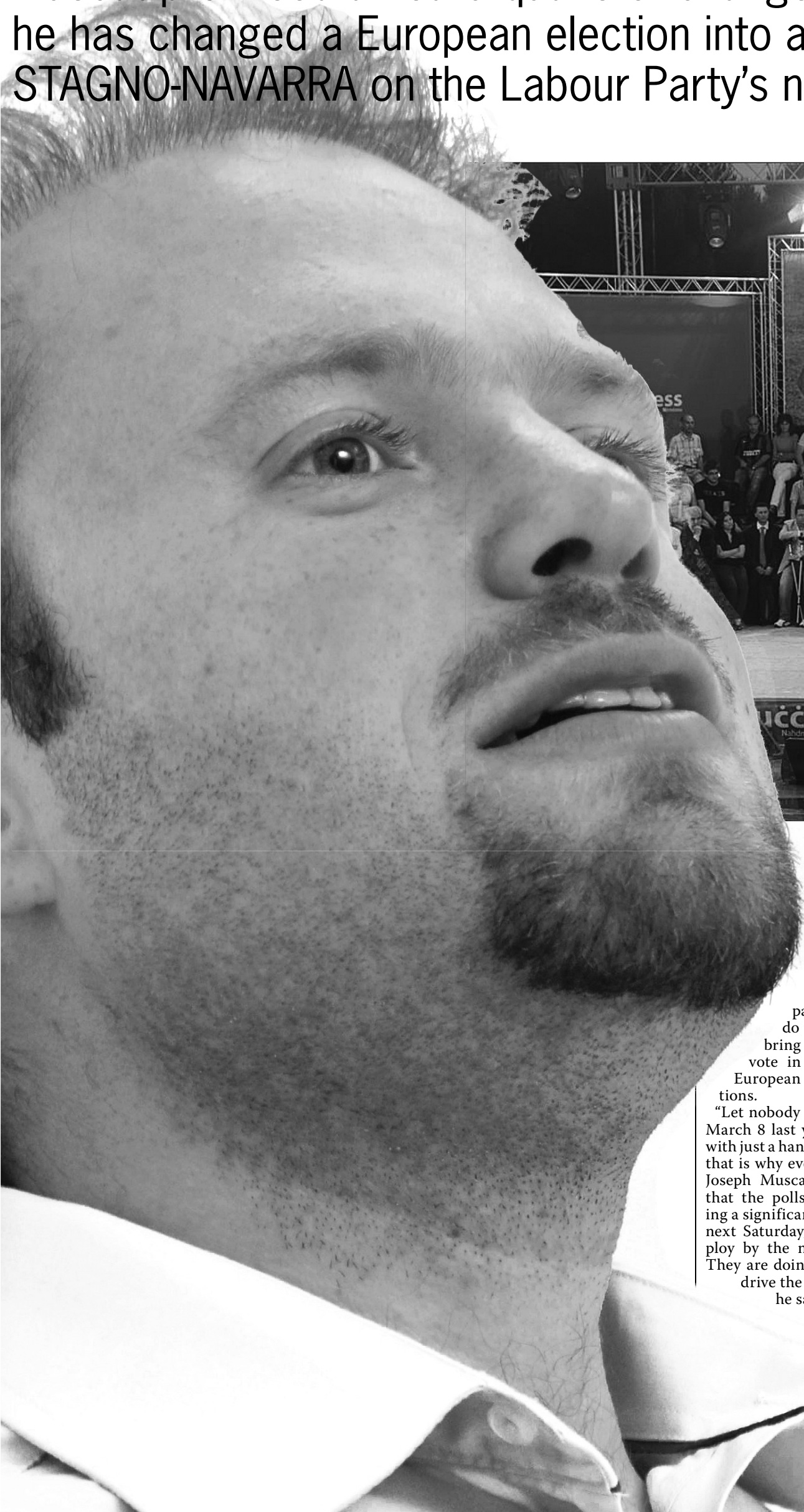
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From earthquake to

Muscat promised an earthquake of change, and for starters he has changed a European election into a local one. KARL STAGNO-NAVARRA on the Labour Party's new direction



OPPOSITION and Labour leader DR Joseph Muscat yesterday shunned electoral polls and made a heart-felt appeal to all party activists to do their utmost and bring out the Labour vote in next Saturday's European parliament elections.

"Let nobody forget that in on March 8 last year, Labour lost with just a handful of votes, and that is why every vote counts," Joseph Muscat said, insisting that the polls that are showing a significant lead for the PL next Saturday, "is yet another ploy by the nationalist party. They are doing all they can to drive the result their way" he said.

Addressing a large

crowd that thronged the Greek Theatre in Ta' Qali – waving EU flags for the first time – Muscat insisted that a successful Labour vote will guarantee what he called a "coalition for a brand new dawn."

During his 40-minute speech, Muscat warned that the electorate must be aware that yet again, the PN was shamefully activating its "web of deceit" as people who approached ministries were receiving follow-up phone calls from the PN.

"It seems that the PN has an endemic problem with its email server, as more mistaken emails were falling into the wrong hands or mistakenly delivered to others, and this is how their web of deceit is being uncovered," he declared.

Muscat went on to say that next Saturday's vote is not exclusively a European vote, but most of all, "a vote that has to do with a lot with the current state of affairs in the country."

Families facing the plight of coping with an ever-increasing cost of living, and pensioners facing exorbitant medicine prices, were "unacceptable" and therefore – according to Muscat – "the electorate must send a clear message that this situation cannot go on any longer."

He insisted that medicines in ►

brand new dawn

◀ Malta were unacceptably more expensive than in any other EU member state and this is why, the PL will work hard within the European institutions together with the European Socialist Group towards the setting up of a European agency that will safeguard the consumers interests against price

electricity bills, while facing a hypocritical admission by Minister Austin Gatt who said that he regretted the new tariffs should have been introduced in January rather than being backdated to October.

Joseph Muscat added that employment is also an important issue that must be addressed in

selves as victims of abuse.

On healthcare, Joseph Muscat said that if the Prime Minister wanted to be true to his pre-election promise that this would remain free of charge, he should have made this clear when he commissioned a report on the subject.

He insisted that it was shame-

name: Joseph Muscat.

Exploiting the US President Barack Obama's electoral campaign twister recounting 'Joe the Plumber's plight' Toni Abela quoted constituents by name and ID card numbers, who faced situations where government showed no respect towards them and left them to

PL was poised to be the social democrat party that is expected to achieve the best result next Saturday.

The Dutch politician strongly criticised the Gonzi administration for having increased utility tariffs when many EU member states were reducing them.



Highs

- Well done for Joseph Muscat's surprise appearance with his wife Michelle through the enthusiastic crowd gathered at Ta' Qali. It was an effective move which set a tone of jubilation and celebration.
- Waving EU flags during a PL activity was a first, and quite a surprise for many gathered in Ta' Qali. The flags were distributed by a party activist shortly before the meeting, and were all identical.
- The decision to invite senior members of the European Socialist Party to speak at the meeting gave the impression that the PL is firmly anchored in Europe: a clever way to dispel the PN's current propaganda campaign of Labour as the "No to Europe" party

abuse.

Saturday's vote should also be a strong message to government from families and businesses who have received hefty

Saturday's vote, explaining that workers were facing an unacceptable situation where employers were asking them to register themselves as self-employed or face the sack, while denying themselves the right to a single union boss.

Many other workers, he said, were also facing illegal immigration as a threat, as employers were seeking migrants to work with lower wages and unacceptable condition.

However, he appeared more careful in his choice of words than on previous occasions, describing the immigrants them-

ful for Malta to be the only country among the 10 new EU member states to be charging VAT on vaccines, and added that the PL will investigate comments made by the health parliamentary secretary that this measure was given the green light by the EU.

"Prime Minister Gonzi deceived you and your families," Muscat said to applause adding that there were people who did not want to vote because they had lost hope.

While urging all to vote next Saturday, Joseph Muscat appealed to all Labourites to fling their doors "wide open" to all genuinely disgruntled PN supporters and Labourites who had strayed from the party during the last few years.

"We want a true vote coming from people's hearts, electing deserving representatives to defend the Maltese, and not cover up for Gonzi" he said.

Shortly before Joseph Muscat made his speech, the crowd was addressed by PL deputy leader Toni Abela who said that Malta's problems had a name and a face – Lawrence Gonzi – while in contrast the solution to the problem also had a face and a

their fate in health-care and taxes, while Ministries and PN insiders were allowed to squander money and buying luxurious cars.

The crowd was also addressed by Jan Marinus Wiersma, Vice President of the European Socialist Group who said that the

Lows

- Muscat's delivery was clear and articulate, but his gesticulations leave much to be desired. The 'hand on heart' salute was so fake it was almost comical.
- The PL leader ought to invest in a better selection of shirts. His dress consultants must advise him to get rid of his striped shirts, and opt for clear whites or blues, that can also hide the sweat under his armpits.
- Similarly, deputy leaders Toni Abela and Anglu Farrugia should consult each other on what to wear when they both appear in public. They emerged wearing very similar white shirts with black stripes, looking for all the world like Tweedledum and Tweedledee...

"I was surprised to see the situation in Malta when I have just read the Belgian papers that explained that utility tariffs in Belgium were reduced because the cost of energy is down," he said.

On illegal immigration, Wiersma pledged full support from the European Socialists, adding that the support would be "factual" and not "as Gonzi is surrendering and letting Berlusconi, from the same party, solve the problem for himself."

AN fires warning shot against migrant integration



DAVID DARMANIN

IN a strongly-worded address to the media, Azzjoni Nazjonal (AN) leader Josie Muscat yesterday expressed fear at the prospect of third-country national integration in Maltese villages, arguing that multiculturalism poses a threat to the local traditions, culture and the labour market.

“Illegal immigrants are taking the jobs of the Maltese,” he said. “If we allow their families to come here too, the number of immigrants in Malta will multiply five or six-fold,” he said.

Muscat warned that we should heed the examples from other parts of Europe, where multiculturalism, in his view, has caused social division and unrest.

“We are now seeing the effects of immigrant settlement in other European countries, like the UK,” he said, “Christians cannot make the sign of the cross in public, because it is considered offensive to other religions. Neither can they place baby Jesus in the manger during Christmas, so they put a teddy bear instead.”

Supporting his own statement that “immigrants do not adapt in European countries”, Muscat said: “These people start looking for a ghettoed life – and establish their own schools, their own places for prayers and their

own shops. In no time, you will find that they occupied entire districts of a city, and unless you’re one of them, you’d feel inadequate entering because it would feel like you’re in a different country.”

In response to questions by MaltaToday, Muscat said he disagreed with efforts made by the General Workers’ Union to integrate third country nationals in the Maltese workforce. In order to curb illegal employment of immigrants and allow a level-playing field to Maltese and foreign workers alike, the GWU is actively pushing for measures aimed at promoting multicultural diversity.

This would lead to the integration of third country nationals into the Maltese labour market, with the insistence of offering them same working conditions as the Maltese.

“No, I don’t agree with the GWU,” Muscat said. “If we are short of employees in certain sectors, let us issue an international call for applications and bring people to Malta for employment reasons. When our shortage problem is resolved, we must then make sure to give priority to the Maltese and tell foreigners to leave so that they can be replaced. What the GWU is suggesting would flood the labour market...”

At that point, MEP candidate for AN John Spiteri Gingell in-

“
People entering Malta illegally are given the right to be employed – and this means that our country is promoting illegality.”
– John Spiteri Gingell

tervened: “You’re all missing a crucial point here. People entering Malta illegally are given the right to be employed – and this means that our country is promoting illegality.”

Reminded that once third country nationals apply for humanitarian status, their position in Malta becomes legal, Spiteri Gingell retorted: “Yes but they would have still entered the country illegally, which means that if Malta needs to employ people from abroad, they are effectively jumping the queue, and this is a gross injustice.”

Spiteri Gingell then launched a somewhat vague warning. “With the way things are going, we are seeing a vacuum created in society. We all know that, as has happened in the past, when a vacuum is created, it is filled with something else.”

Upon hearing Spiteri Gingell’s remark, a party spokesperson jumped in to clarify that what was being said was meant to be of “a preventive nature, because we would not want this to happen.”

On the integration issue, AN MEP candidate Malcolm Seychell added: “If the GWU aims to keep the strength of the Maltese workforce by promoting balance, it is then contradicting itself by wanting to flood it. Plainly put, how would you feel if the GWU brought 500 journalists to Malta?”

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Plainly put, how would you feel if the GWU brought 500 journalists to Malta?
– Malcolm Seychell

PHOTOGRAPH BY RAY ATTARD

A day of farewells

Yesterday, especially in the Italian league, many players and coaches either played the last game of their career or played knowing they have a deal with other clubs in hand

KEVIN GRECH



PAOLO MALDINI played his final professional game of an unrivalled 25-year career, and it was a happy ending as Milan beat Fiorentina 2-0 at the Stadio Franchi to secure third place. All the talk in the build-up to this game was about Paolo Maldini, who was playing the final match of his legendary one-club career. However, there was still a lot to play for, as Fiorentina could snatch the third automatic Champions League position by beating the Rossoneri by two clear goals. This sending off was much better than last weekends were Maldini was given a bad sending off from the Milan Ultra's in front of his home crowd.



LUIS FIGO "It was an incredible day, it was all perfect and I will remember it for all my life, and it's nice when a player ends his career in this way. It was also beautiful to receive the captain's armband from Javier. "I don't know what I will do from tomorrow. I will certainly go on holiday with my family, but I will be always be together with Inter because they have given me a lot in these four years and it will be impossible to forget.

I didn't think I would stay in this team for so long. I will never forget the affection that I have received since the first day I arrived here, the affection of the president, of my team-mates. Inter helped me start a winning cycle with some extraordinary men."



HERNAN CRESPO went to this game knowing he is on his way to Genoa, spoke of his emotion after saluting the Inter fans at the Stadio Giuseppe Meazza. "What happened today was incredible," he told Inter Channel. "It was emotional to see the banners written from the bottom of the fans' hearts. "It has been a strange season for me but anything can happen in football. It's only the strength of love that helps you overcome everything. "The good and the bad matches aside, I am pleased to have transmitted my passion for this sport and these colours. I was very emotional today. There's blood in my veins and seeing so much affection from the fans is extraordinary."



CARLO ANCELOTTI Confirms he will leave Milan this summer, but there is no Chelsea agreement. Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti has finally confirmed that he will be leaving the club this summer after he mutually agreed to terminate his contract

with them a year early.

The coach has been hounding by constant press speculation linking him with the Chelsea hot seat. But, before Chelsea fans get carried away, the Italian has revealed that he has not found another club yet.

"It's simply that I had an agreement with the club, and we decided to anticipate the times and agree to end my contract, and thus my time with Milan finishes a year before 2010," Ancelotti said after the game.

"It finishes with happiness as we have reached our objective and I would like to thank the club and all the players as well as the president and all the staff and fans.

"I think my time has ended in the right way and I think it's the best for both parties.

"These eight years have been a beautiful adventure for me."

"I cannot officialise my future because there is nothing official," added the coach. I have not made any agreement with any club, and thus there is nothing.

"London? There are no certainties."

"Would I take a player with me? There is one [Maldini], but I don't think I will be able to convince him." concluded the coach.



DIEGO MILITO, ahead of his last match for Genoa before joining Inter, striker Diego Milito decided to write an open letter to his fans.

Argentinean striker Diego Milito will play his last match with Genoa before joining Inter. The 29-year-old decided to write a goodbye letter to the fans, in which he revealed his hopes of returning to the club one day. Here is some of what he wrote on the club's official website.

"This letter was written to make you understand, if it's possible, how much I care about you.

"I would like to look you in the

eyes and embrace you, telling you we will see each other again and that this isn't a goodbye. I said a year ago when I came back: this is my home. And I think it will stay that way even after I will quit football.

"There is something between me and this city, these people, this shirt, that goes beyond the profession and the work. Thank you president, thank you to the Preziosi family. Without them I would not be the player or the man I think I am. Thanks to coach [Gian Piero] Gasperini and the whole staff, who have helped me improve and with whom I have a great understanding. And thanks to my team-mates...

"Thanks to all the fans, young and old, who have welcomed me like a friend, like one of you. I want to tell you that this is part of why I've always tried to give my best, on the pitch and in life.

"Now we leave each other, hopefully with a smile, with an affection that became love. At least, that's the way I feel. I hope it's the same for you. [...] In the life of a professional, there are moments in which reason prevails.

"I'm not saying goodbye. An embrace to you all."



WALTER MAZZARRI waves goodbye to Sampdoria. In a day full of goodbyes, the Samp coach announced his decision to walk away from the Doria bench.

Following an exciting 2-2 draw with Palermo yesterday, the Sampdoria coach announced his decision to leave the club and look for pastures new.

There had been rumours about Mazzarri wanting to leave the Genova outfit for the past few months and this was finally confirmed when he spoke to Rai in this afternoon's post-match interview.

"Both myself and the club have decided to separate by mutual

agreement. I will think about my future from Monday morning," he announced.

With Atalanta coach Gigi Del Neri seemingly the favourite to replace him on the Doria bench, it remains to be seen where Mazzarri will be plying his trade next season, as he joins the current merry-go-round of resigning tacticians in Serie A.



PAVEL NEDVED confirms he will leave Juventus.

The midfielder has announced that he will be leaving Turin this summer.

Pavel Nedved has played his last game for Juventus.

The Czech international joined the Turin side back in 2001 and has been one of the star performers in the midfield for the bianconeri.

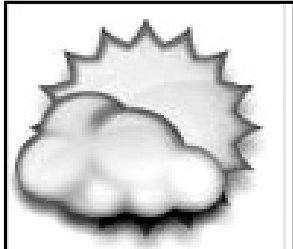
However, at the age of 36 he has decided to call time on his career with Juve, announcing that he will play his final game against Lazio tomorrow.

In a statement published by the official Juventus website, Nedved thanked all those at the club for their support, and said he will start thinking about his future on Monday.

"After eight seasons with Juventus it is time to thank all the fans, my team-mates and the club, for all the support that I have received. In Turin I have won four titles and the Ballon d'Or," he said.

"From Monday I will think about my future. I would like to thank in particular my wife Ivana and my sons, who have been very close to me and have accompanied me throughout my career as I have scored so many goals. I will continue to have lots of affection for Juventus and I am grateful to the Agnelli family for giving me the chance to play in this side. I want to say that the decision has not been made for economic reasons."

Today's Weather



PARTLY CLOUDY
27 °C / 20 °C
UV INDEX: 10

WARNINGS: Nil

GENERAL SITUATION: A ridge of high pressure extends from the North sea to the Ionian sea as a low pressure area over Tunisia will tighten the pressure gradient over the central Mediterranean.

WEATHER: Possibility of rain in the morning becoming partly cloudy.

VISIBILITY: Moderate.

WIND: Rather strong Southeast (force 5) becoming rather strong Northwest (force 5).

SEA: Moderate becoming locally moderate to rough.

SWELL: Low Southeast.

SEA TEMPERATURE: 21 °C



A matter of accountability

ELECTRONIC communication is evidently not the Nationalist Party's strong point.

Never mind the promise of Malta as a centre of IT excellence, the investment in mega-projects like Smart City, and the long queues for special offers on Microsoft products. When the microchips are down, the fact is that PN exponents – including those at the very top – clearly need a crash course in basic computer literacy: starting with the basics, like... how to send an email.

The first indication came when PN general secretary Paul Borg Olivier accidentally forwarded a confidential email to his counterpart in the PL – Jason Micallef – under the impression he was sending the message to Nationalist MP, Jason Azzopardi.

The email revealed details of a “secret” meeting between PN and OPM officials at the party headquarters in Pietà. Despite the initial brouhaha surrounding this indiscretion, nothing ever came of it and for all we know, OPM officials still regularly meet at the Nationalist Party headquarters, for all the world as though as

the Office of the Prime Minister was simply an extension of the Stamperia in Pietà.

Now, a second email – this time inadvertently forwarded by Nationalist candidate Vince Farrugia – has once again embarrassed the party by revealing a shocking (and quite frankly unacceptable) gagging order on candidates regarding expenses on their individual campaigns.

In an answer to questions by another newspaper, Farrugia forgot to remove the instructions handed to him (and all the other candidates) by PN activist Stefano Mallia. In an interesting journalistic coincidence, identical questions were also sent by our sister paper Illum. The resulting answers were entirely comparable... and thanks to Farrugia's blunder, we now know that answers to both newspapers had been censored by the party.

A number of issues immediately spring to mind. On one level, this consistent lack of technological savoir-faire among PN exponents makes a complete mockery of the Nationalists' billboard campaign on “pushing the right buttons”. If Vince Farrugia

cannot be trusted to send an email without somehow getting it wrong... why should we trust him more than John Attard Montalto to “push the right buttons”, when it comes to taking a crucial vote in the European Parliament?

But there is a good deal more to this issue than button-pushing. For this latest leak also reveals the remarkable extent of paranoia, whereby candidates were prevented from disclosing what should really be public domain information.

The PN's instruction in this instance is entirely unwarranted. Granted, some of its candidates may have exceeded the legal campaign expenditure limit – and congratulations are due to Edward Demicoli for his honesty in this regard – but at the same time, all parties are in agreement that this archaic law, which limits campaign funding to a mere €1,600 per candidate, is woefully inadequate in today's circumstances.

From this perspective there was no need for secrecy at all: no one in his right mind would even bat an eyelid to discover the limit had been

surpassed... and by silencing candidates on this issue, the PN campaign organisers have only succeeded in raising additional suspicions regarding the precise extent of its candidates' pre-election spending spree.

But the most intriguing revelation by far is that the gagging order itself came from Stefano Mallia, currently an aide de camp in MEP Simon Busuttil's team. This finally dispels any doubt that may have existed about the issue: the Nationalist campaign for the European election is indeed authored and co-ordinated by Busuttil.

Meanwhile, if any further confirmation were still required, this was generously provided by PN candidate Alan Deidun, who yesterday declared at a meeting in Fgura that “Simon and his team” had placed their time and expertise at the candidates' disposal, and even briefed them about EU issues.

This in turn raises a number of uncomfortable questions for the PN. If Simon Busuttil “and his team” are running the election campaign... where exactly does this leave general

secretary Paul Borg Olivier? Regarding the expenses themselves: on what grounds does the PN's unofficial campaign manager, Stefano Mallia, justify issuing a gagging order on candidates? And why all the secrecy in the first place?

On all fronts – the silencing of candidates, as well as the apparent internal divisions within the PN camp – the episode further illustrates that when it comes to matters of transparency and accountability, the Nationalist Party appears to have become a prisoner of its own paranoia.

If Lawrence Gonzi wishes to reverse this trend, he would do well to introduce a long overdue policy of openness and transparency at the Dar Centrali Nazzjonalista.

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