



LABOUR RETAINS LEAD GREENS EDGE FORWARD

Which candidate will you be giving your first preference?

Only respondents who expressed preference
Candidates with ratings less than margin of error of 3.7% are indicative; candidates with less than 2% are not included

Which party will you vote for?

(Declared voters' results excluding from the sample respondents who do not intend to vote or who are still undecided)

24.5%
+0.8

6.2%
+0.9

6%
-1.2

5.6%
+3.4

4.9%
+0.6

3.8%
+0.8

3.1%
+1.2

2.4%
+0.2

51.2%
-0.5%
PL

42.1%
-0.3%
PN

5.5%
+1.4%
AD

0.6%
-0.4%
AN

0.6%
-0.4%
OTHERS



FULL SURVEY RESULTS PAGES 8-9

Labour MEP's transparency pledge:
Attard-Montalto reveals partial accounts → [page 14](#)

PN candidate vents frustration
Sliema local councillor - 'Robert Arrigo is not against Gonzi' → [page 22](#)

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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ON THE RECORD

Compiled by James Debono

Alan Deidun Nationalist Party

On rationalisation of building schemes:

"One slight consolation offered by the pro-scheme extension camp was that no more ODZ developments would be condoned and that a minimal 0.4% increase was being proposed - if the Hondoq ir-Rummien, Ta' Cenc, Hal Ferh, Smart City and any other developments still in the pipeline do materialise, the 0.4% figure would have to be revised and any comfort it offered would have petered out."

September 2006, *The Sunday Times*

On GonziPN's promise to sanction Armier boathouses:

"Even more galling (since public land is involved here) are the overtures by both political parties to the squatters at L-Ahrax, which straddles over all the bay from Marfa to White Tower Bay, for a total of 1,200 'units', made on the eve of the last election in an archetypal case of political clientelism... One may feel snug in the conviction that public uproar against such proposals will probably scupper the unabashed proposals, as they did way back in 2001. However, the groundwork is already being laid by statements to the tune of "it is difficult to speak of illegality when some of the owners are paying rent to the Lands Department, and when government authorities have supplied the owners with electricity and water" by the Office of the Prime Minister. This could effectively become a rubber stamp of the misdemeanours carried out by the notorious Labour administration of the early 1980s."

May 2008, *The Sunday Times*

On Armier:

Parliamentary Secretary Jason Azzopardi has bitten the bullet and is seeking to move squatters from public land. While such a stance deserves praise, Azzopardi should go all the way and unravel several other contentious public land issues, besides those relating to billboards and tourist zones.

Such a sentiment was also elaborately expressed in the *The Times'* online forum, with various readers asking about

whether any action is going to be taken on the blatant squatting at Baħar iċ-Ċaġħaq and Ghajn Tuffieħa barracks, and the 'boathouse villages' at Ġnejna, Armier and St Thomas Bay. These issues may exceed the remit of any politician - maybe Azzopardi will prove me wrong and break the mould.

September 2008, *The Sunday Times*

On divorce:

"I am personally against divorce since I believe in respecting commitments made. However, I am also conscious of the hardships some people are facing as a result of wedlock - I am thus receptive to analysing individual cases where genuine hardships are being faced by any of the two partners and considering granting divorce in such cases only."

March 2009, *Alan Deidun blogspot*

On campaign spending by other candidates:

"What happened to the financial limits imposed on candidates during their campaigns? Do these apply only to local elections? Are the MEP elections simply a contest of who speaks and shouts loudest? Is the electorate being given the chance to see through the rhetoric being thrown at them? I trust in the discerning abilities of the Maltese electorate who, come June the 6th, will let arguments put forward to prevail, rather than the hollow posturing and vote-raking publicity stunts. Needless to say, the next few months will see so many of these stunts."

March 2009 *Alan Deidun blogspot*

On Simon Busuttill:

"There are elements present who will be around for another four years, and others like Simon Busuttill, who - naturally, after the Prime Minister has won many more elections - I see as the next leader of the PN."

May 2009, *addressing PN general council*

Marlene Mizzi Partit Laburista

On working under Austin Gatt:

"I also told him (The Prime Minister) I was fed up of working with Austin Gatt, that he is not a people's man, that he treats people like obsolete computers."

July 2005, *MaltaToday*

On partisan politics:

"I have no interest in partisan politics. I really dislike this petty Maltese mentality where one is branded red or blue as soon as one shows an opinion. I am born a Maltese citizen. I am not born red or blue. I have also been born with a mind, and I like to use my own not somebody else's."

June 2005, *MaltaToday*

After being cleared of any wrong doing in an enquiry on Sea Malta:

"I have no doubt that, he would have loved to crucify me if even the slightest peccadillo were to be found... Evidently, my not having been publicly hung, drawn, and quartered by Austin Gatt is certainly not for lack of his trying."

May 2007, *MaltaToday*

On voting Labour after voting yes in the referendum:

"Where's the inconsistency?" she instantly replies. "Bear in mind at the time I was a private citizen, not a public figure, and really and truly how I voted is my own affair. In any case, I used my vote to get what I felt

was the best for my country. Five years ago, I wanted Malta to join the EU, but I also wanted a change in government..."

May 2009, *MaltaToday*

On EU commission proposal to extend maternity leave to 20 weeks:

"Such changes in working conditions affect both the employee and the employer. The state of the economy must be taken into account at the time such proposals are made because increasing maternity leave has a financial impact on the employer and this may place financial pressure on the firm which may not be sustainable. However, having said so, I think it is about time we make things easier for working women who are trying to raise a family."

May 2009, *Pink Magazine*



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their guns on Muscat

Triccas said: "My message to Joseph Muscat is that whenever people try scoring with political footballs, all we can get is auto-goals, to the detriment of our children."

"We will be insisting to be heard in the European Parliament," she continued. "PL MEPs either do not know where they have to sit, or do not know what they're voting for."

On employment, the PN frontrunner said that this is "Malta's biggest challenge."

"We confront this challenge instead of embarking on a mudslinging campaign," she charged. "The PN was always the party for both the employer and the employee, because its policies have always sought to reach the balance between the two."

Tedesco Triccas went on to say: "Joseph Muscat should be ashamed of himself for arriving 30 minutes late for a televised debate without apologising to the Prime Minister, or even worse, to the PBS crew whom he left waiting. The message is that the PL is always late. It was late in recognising that democracy is the way forward for Malta, it was late in recognising that the EU is the way forward for Malta, it was late in recognising that

pluralism is the way forward for Malta and it is now late in seeing how the European Parliament works."

Star candidate Simon Busuttil urged greater voter participation on Saturday.

"It is important for people to vote, and to vote for PN candidates, because it is the PN candidates who know how to best use the membership tool in the EU," he said.

"We mentioned the example of Iceland today, and it is important for us to remember that it was Joseph Muscat himself who gave the wrong advice to the Icelandic government in 2002. Thankfully, Malta did not take Joseph Muscat's advice. The PL wanted to make an Iceland in the Mediterranean rather than a Switzerland in the Mediterranean."

"But this time round, the Icelandic government took advice from Lawrence Gonzi and not from Joseph Muscat. Tools must be entrusted to those who know how to use them. So here I am appealing not just to Nationalists, but also to Labourites and those who voted AD four years ago, to see that the PN MEPs worked for them too. People staying home will let others vote for them."



Concluding the event was PN general secretary Paul Borg Olivier, whose speech was characterised by eulogies to Gonzi.

"Only 28 hours are left until the campaign ends, and I am here thanking all local council and MEP candidates.

I must also send my regards to one of the youngest Sliema people here – Thomas Gonzi (the Prime Minister's grandson), three months old, who is a symbol of the wealth we are generating for the future.

"The Prime Minister 20 years ago said that the test of human

beings comes when times are most difficult," he said. "Now the country is going through difficult times, and this is when we are being tested. Remember that the Icelandic Minister did not go to France, or Spain, or Italy or any other country. He came to Malta."



PN candidates turn t

Muscat's advice to Iceland, Mangion's DNA comment last year, and endless quips on the PL leader's unpunctuality... yes, it's open season on Labour. DAVID DARMANIN reports



JUST over 24 hours before the end of the campaign, the PN yesterday held its last in a series of public dialogues, this time in the Nationalist heartland of Sliema.

Characterised by repeated barbs about PL leader Joseph Muscat's tardiness, the event was attended predominantly by elderly supporters residing in Sliema or St Julian's.

The event preceded the timely inauguration of St Anne's Square that evening, where the Magic Kiosk formerly stood. In his opening speech, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi described the refurbishment of the square as "a small but strong symbol of what we are giving back to Sliema."

"You suffered for so many years with construction, noise and building debris, and we understand this," he said.

"The message I delivered at a business breakfast this morning is that we are going through a storm," he said. "So this is not business as usual. Just like in other countries around the world, there have been victims of the global re-

cession in Malta. Overtime decreased, people lost their part-time job and others previously working a five-day week roster are now working on a four-day week. But this country is still moving forward. I visited the Toly Products plant yesterday – which committed itself to invest €13 million in a new plant.

"I arrived 30 minutes late there because Joseph Muscat had left me waiting for the debate held before my appointment at Toly," he remarked.

The Prime Minister himself arrived 20 minutes late for yesterday's public dialogue, while MEP candidate Alex Perici Calascione was 40 minutes late.

The visit of the Icelandic foreign minister to Malta was mentioned repeatedly throughout the event – with the Prime Minister claiming that when he heard the story of how the Icelandic economy collapsed recently, he "froze".

"Because Iceland did not enter the EU and because it does not use the Euro as its currency, the Kroner collapsed.

People are now getting half the value of their pensions; depositors cannot withdraw their money from banks. The Icelandic minister told me that Malta's EU membership saved us. When, one and a half years ago, we said that 'together everything is possible', we meant it. And it is in this togetherness that we joined the EU and got the Euro in our country."

Among the other speakers was environmentalist MEP candidate Alan Deidun, who came dressed in an unusual turquoise T-shirt bearing the words "I have European DNA" on one side, and "I don't burn EU flags" on the other.

"The environment is central to PN strategy, and the PN will bring more investment in the environment thanks to the EU," he began. "A particular PL candidate did not even know how many environmental funds are allocated to Malta. So far we have spent €30 million. From 2007 to 2012, €300 million have been allocated. When the PL said they were going to get Lm1 million in all from the EU, they

were wrong. It is actually €1 million every week for the environment only."

Deidun went on to defend Gonzi's delay in announcing measures for the much-awaited MEPA reform, saying it was "a good thing because the Prime Minister did not want to make a political football out of MEPA."

Turning his guns on the PL, Deidun accused Joseph Muscat for flaunting his efforts "in trying to make Malta miss out on €17 million for the Sant'Antnina recycling plant."

Deidun pointed out that the PN does not "wave flags at such events, we leave our flags home."

Perhaps because this last statement was misinterpreted by some members of the crowd, a dozen supporters quickly produced EU flags and started waving them.

In a feeble attempt to make up for the gaffe, Deidun said: "We don't distribute flags to supporters here."

"The message on my T-Shirt may be provocative," he continued. "But this is because

someone once said that we have something strange in our DNA. Of course we do. We have Europe in our DNA."

In his final remarks, Deidun said: "It was a good thing that the PN government decided to leave Labourites occupying public positions. But this now seems to be working against us because some people are trying to put spokes in the wheels (ifixxkluna)."

On her part, MEP candidate Roberta Metsola Tedesco Triccas was the first speaker to acknowledge the Sliema Local Council candidates present and wish them luck.

On immigration, Metsola Tedesco Triccas said that this "requires a European solution."

"As EU citizens we have the right to ask the EU to help us out with immigration," she said. "Had it been up to Joseph Muscat, we would have been left out of Europe and we would have had to fight the problem alone."

Accusing the PL of making "a political football out of immigration", Metsola Tedesco

14 MONTHS AGO **AZZJONI NAZZJONALI** SPOKE ABOUT:

- THE HUGE ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION PROBLEM
- ENEMALTA'S DEEP FINANCIAL CRISIS FOR WHICH YOU HAVE TO PAY
 - THE DIRE LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY
- THE LACK OF DETAILED ACCOUNTS VIS-À-VIS PUBLIC FUNDS EXPENDITURE
 - NOW WE LEARN THAT SOME OF OUR EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARIANS ARE EITHER ABSENT, ASLEEP OR NOT AWARE OF WHAT'S HAPPENING.

VOTE INTO EUROPE PEOPLE WHO HAVE **ALWAYS BEEN SINCERE AND TRUE TO YOU.**



MUSCAT JOSEPH



SEYCHELL MALCOLM



SPITERI GINGELL JOHN

YOUR OBVIOUS CHOICE!



Labour retains a

One week is a long time in politics – Joseph Cuschieri now emerges as Labour’s third most popular candidate

JAMES DEBONO

TWO days before next Saturday’s election, MaltaToday’s latest opinion poll predicts an absolute majority for Labour with 51.2% of declared voters, leading the PN by nine percentage points.

Alternattiva Demokratika has seen its percentage rise from 4.1% to 5.5%, while the major parties have seen a slight drop in support.

The survey has a margin of error of 3.65% and was conducted among 700 respondents contacted in the past week.

Labour incumbent Louis Grech has slightly surpassed Edward Scicluna as PL front-runner, but it was former Labour MP Joseph Cuschieri who made the most remarkable advance, to emerge as Labour’s third most popular candidate.

Cuschieri’s campaign has emphasised his humble origins and his role in enthroning Joseph Muscat as party leader by giving up his parliamentary seat.

Nationalist incumbent David Casa, also popular with PN grassroots, made significant inroads by clinching the second place in the Nationalist camp, surpassing Roberta Metsola Tedesco Triccas.

The poll reveals 7.8% will not be voting in this election, and 27.3% are either undecided or would not reveal their intentions.

Nearly two-thirds (64.9%) expressed a preference for a particular party. Among this category Labour enjoys a majority of 51.2%.

When all respondents are taken into account, even those who intend to abstain or who are still undecided, both major par-

ties saw their support decrease slightly since the last MaltaToday survey was held last week. At 33.3%, Labour saw support decrease by 2.1%; the PN saw support decrease by 1.6 percentage points.

But AD saw support increase from 2.8% to 3.6% – significantly AD saw support among respondents aged 18 to 34 double from 3.1% to 6.8%.

29% of PN voters undecided

A significant 28.9% of respondents who said they voted PN in 2008, are now undecided on what to do next Saturday – an increase of 7.4 points over the previous survey.

On the other hand, the number of former PN voters who won’t vote decreased from 10% last week to 7.2%.

Only 16% of Labour voters remain undecided – 13% less than the number of undecided PN voters. This indicates that the PN has a greater potential pool of voters to persuade in the last days of the campaign.

But the PN is also losing more votes to AD: over the past week, the number of former PN votes who will vote for AD has increased from 3% to 4%.

On the other hand, Labour is still more successful in mobilising its core support. 76% of those who voted Labour in 2008 are sure to vote again for the PL, as against to the 54% of 2008 PN voters who will do the same.

But the number of former Labour voters who would not vote in next week’s election has also increased from 3% to 4.7% – an indication that overconfidence could be taking its toll on Labour supporters.

Significantly, while 4.8% of

Frontrunners (according to PL/PN declared voters) (%)

| | PL declared voters | PN declared voters |
|----------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Louis Grech | 12.1 | Simon Busuttil 53.1 |
| Edward Scicluna | 11.7 | David Casa 7.1 |
| Joseph Cuschieri | 10.8 | R. Tedesco Triccas 4.1 |
| Marlene Mizzi | 9.5 | Alan Deidun 2 |
| John Attard-Montalto | 4.8 | Edward Demicoli 2 |
| Steve Borg | 2.6 | Frank Portelli 2 |
| C. Abela Baldacchino | 2.2 | Marthese Portelli 2 |
| | | Vince Farrugia 2 |
| Others | 4.1 | Others 2.8 |
| Undecided | 42.4 | Undecided 30.7 |

Figures of candidates with less than +/-3.7% margin of error are only indicative. Candidates with less than 2% are not included.

Which party will you vote for?

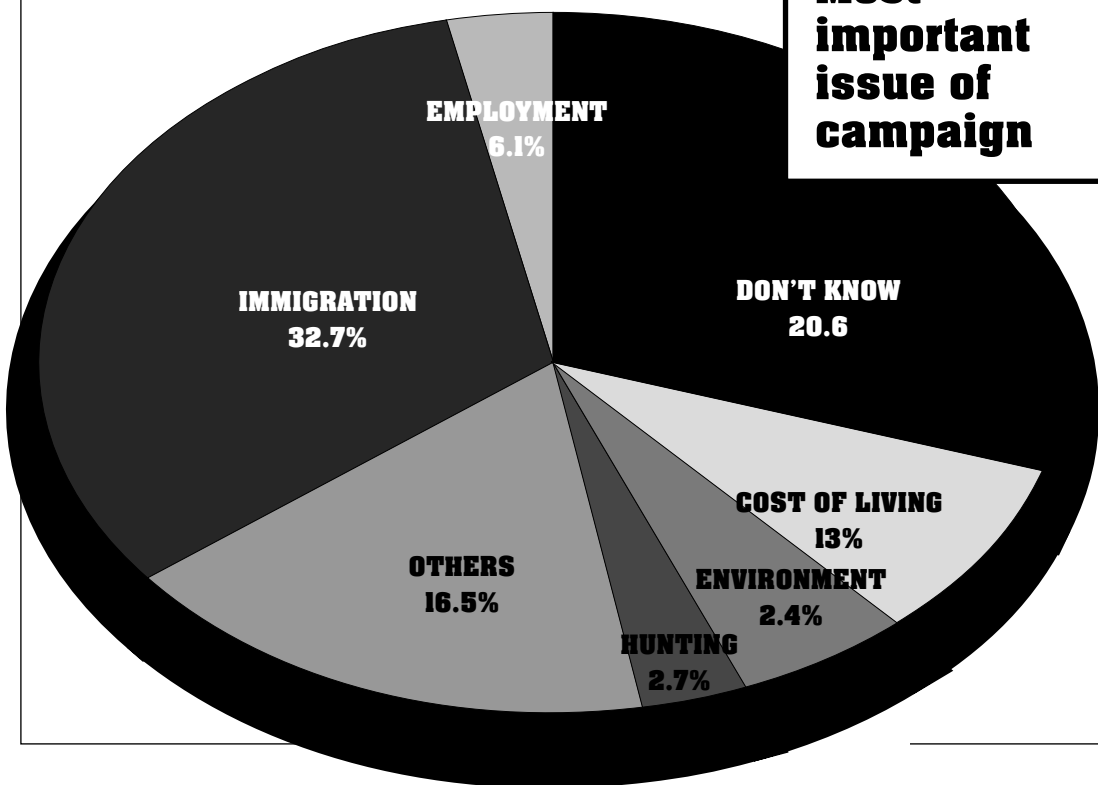
| | Declared Voters | Change | All respondents |
|------------|-----------------|--------|-----------------|
| PL | 51.2% | -0.5 | 33.3 |
| PN | 42.1% | -0.3 | 27.4 |
| AD | 5.5% | +1.4 | 3.6 |
| AN | 0.5% | -0.4 | 0.3 |
| Others | 0.5% | -0.4 | 0.3 |
| No answer | - | - | 27.3 |
| Not voting | - | - | 7.8 |

(Declared voters’ results excluding from the sample respondents who do not intend to vote or who are still undecided)

Voting intentions according to age bracket (%)

| | PL | PN | AD | AN | Others | Not Voting | No Answer |
|-------|------|------|-----|-----|--------|------------|-----------|
| 18-34 | 30.5 | 22.9 | 6.8 | 0 | 0 | 9.3 | 30.5 |
| 35-54 | 33.9 | 23.2 | 1.5 | 0.6 | 0.6 | 10.2 | 30 |
| 55+ | 35 | 33.8 | 2 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 3.5 | 25.1 |

Most important issue of campaign



Which party did you vote for in the 2008 general election? (%)

| | |
|--------------|------|
| PN | 41.7 |
| PL | 36.7 |
| AD | 0.8 |
| AN | 0.3 |
| No answer | 13.3 |
| Was under 18 | 2.2 |
| Did not vote | 5 |

Voting intentions according to 2008 voters (%)

| | Voted PN in 2008 | Voted PL in 2008 |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Will vote PL | 4.8 | 76.6 |
| Will vote PN | 54.2 | 2 |
| Will vote AD | 4 | 0.4 |
| Will vote AN | 0.6 | 0 |
| Will vote N. Lowell | 0.3 | 0.4 |
| Will vote for others | 0.3 | 0 |
| No answer | 28.9 | 16 |
| Not Voting | 7.2 | 4.7 |

f statesmanship



panies. "Now tell me where would we be today if Labour was not progressive?" Joseph Muscat asked.

Social justice is the tool which was and will continue to be the PL's main axis, he

said, adding that the future still holds a place for all to have free access to healthcare, decent retirement pensions and most of all, a sense that the State exists to regulate and create the opportunity for the advancement of all those who wish to make a success out of their lives.

He reached out to investors and employees, to be complementary to each other's success, and for social jealousy to be eradicated once and for all.

"Let us move on in this country," Joseph Muscat said passionately, receiving a loud applause of approval, and more when he spoke about Church-State relations.

"I respect the Church as an authority, and I respect the State. We are friends, but they are two separate entities. I believe in a secular society," he stressed.

At times pausing, and looking straight into the TV cameras, Joseph Muscat explained that the PL stands for access for all children to the tools that will lead them towards successful lives, the value of equality, solidarity and social justice.

He criticised the lack of debate in Malta about the causes of the current global economic crisis, and pledged that the PL believes in a state that does not tolerate market abuses or the dominance of the market over workers.

He closed his speech by appealing to the undecided voter to stop and think: "Come next Saturday, I ask you all to look into your drawers and pull out your water and electricity bill, open it, read

“

I am not a politician who likes flag waving. I hate the political divide.



it and then send a clear message back to who sent you that," he said while he waved a utility bill in his hand.

Joseph Muscat was then escorted out of the square amid loud applause and tears from some supporters who saluted him with chants of "Joseph, Joseph!"

Behind the campaign tent was a flurry of parked SUV's that were later seen transporting MP's, candidates and activists back home.

to be what the PL has been desperately yearning for after last year's shock defeat at the polls.

Eloquent in his delivery, Joseph Muscat took centre stage, and excusing himself for diverting from the issues that characterised the campaign, he stressed: "Here I am, a believer in this country, and a believer in you. I am not a politician who likes flag waving. I hate the political divide. I am here to build bridges, preserve a free mind, to uphold the strong values that have built this nation, and most of all, to change Malta."

Joseph Muscat insisted that he and his party are standing before a nation in a bid to build what he defined as a brand new "political project," adding that this project enhances all those who believe that a brand new dawn is breaking for the country.

Beyond the usual political rhetoric, Joseph Muscat sent a clear message to disgruntled Nationalist supporters. "The PL is also their 'common home'", and appealed to supporters to fling their doors wide open to all who have never voted for the PL before.

"We are a new coalition, bringing together all Maltese from all walks of life, with different aspirations, and who are eager to start hoping again. We will

make that change happen," he stressed.

In his few political digs, amid applause and acknowledgement, Joseph Muscat explained that his party welcomes those thousands of workers from all sectors who have been taken for a ride by Lawrence Gonzi's administration before last year's general election.

"Those of you out there, hunters and trappers, Go employees, dockyard workers, teachers, nurses, nursing aides, doctors, bus and taxi drivers, architects and engineers: they promised you everything just to get your vote last year, and they betrayed you. Now they are trying to lure you back into the trap because it is time again to vote..."

"Let me tell you this: they lied to you, and now I will tell you, that we won't lie, nor will we take you for a ride. This is your chance to send the message to those who deceived you and your families, and are now threatening your families' future," he said, while waving a series of personalised letters and emails that were sent to various sectors a year ago on the eve of the general election.

The atmosphere in and around the campaign tent was rife with optimism, and perhaps for the first time in years, the PL grass root support appears to have

started to believe in its promising young leader, who carefully explained the meaning of being part of a "progressive" party.

A cross between former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and US President Barack Obama, Joseph Muscat dwelt on bringing out the inner pride of a nation that has risen to be the what it is today from the humble origins of a dependent colony.

Joseph Muscat admitted that he himself hails from a "mixed" family that votes both Labour and Nationalist, but he chose to militate within the PL for the reason that he believed in the "progressive" ideas that, during the 1970s and the 1980s, put Malta a notch ahead of other European states.

He explained that the decriminalisation of homosexuality back then by a Labour administration was a progressive idea; as were the enfranchisement of women the lowering of the voting age to 18, the national minimum wage, maternity leave, pensions and the widening of the middle class.

But Maltese pride is also reflected in the progressive attitude borne out of a strong belief in the nation, mentioning the establishment of Air Malta, strong banks, as well as a number of solid parastatal com-





MSIDA
Labour Candidates
for Local Council Elections - 06.06.09



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06.06.09 >>> LABOUR

Chelsea deny £73.5m Kaka bid

CHELSEA dismissed as "totally untrue" reports that they have tabled a world transfer record offer of £73.5million for AC Milan's Brazilian superstar Kaka.

Kaka has been strongly linked with a move to Real Madrid following Florentino Perez's return as president.

Chelsea, who have just appointed former AC Milan boss Carlo Ancelotti as their new manager, insisted that they have not tabled any offer for Kaka.

A statement on the club's official website read: "We have

never made an offer to AC Milan for Kaka and therefore not one at this extraordinary level.

"As a consequence we have not discussed a salary with the player either. Any reports to the contrary are totally untrue."

Meanwhile AC Milan denied that general manager Adriano Galliani was negotiating the sale of Kaka to Real Madrid during a visit to Spain.

Speculation has been mounting that the Brazilian playmaker will swap the San Siro for the Bernabeu following Florentino Perez's return as Real Madrid

president, and reports on Tuesday evening in Spain claimed a deal had been agreed between the clubs during talks in the Spanish capital.

But in a statement released on the club's official website, Milan insisted Galliani had only travelled to Madrid to attend a dinner for Perez.

The statement read: "The general manager of the Rossoneri, Adriano Galliani, is in the city of Madrid exclusively for the investiture dinner of Florentino Perez, the new president of Real Madrid."



Kaka - Chelsea are not interested



Brabham could return to Formula One

THE famous Formula 1 team Brabham could make its return to the Formula One grid next season. German business man Franz Hilmer has submitted an entry for the 2010 F1 season according to German magazine Motorsport Aktuell.

The Brabham Formula 1 team completed its last race

back in 1992. The team won the Formula 1 championship four times with its drivers and won the constructors' championship twice.

Franz Hilmer has owned the Brabham brand for a while and bought up Super Aguri's assets when the team went bankrupt one year ago.

Brabham isn't the only team that wants to join Formula 1. Prodrive, Superfund, USF1 and Campos also confirmed their entries

The current 10 Formula 1 teams also submitted their entries which means there are a total of 15 entries known so far while there is space for just 13 teams.

Federer sweeps into French semifinals



Roger Federer of Switzerland plays a shot during his quarter-final match against Gael Monfils

ROGER Federer remains on course to complete his set of Grand Slam titles after a superb win over Gael Monfils in the French Open quarter-finals.

The Swiss, 27, saw off home favourite Monfils 7-6 (8-6) 6-2 6-4 to reach his 20th consecu-

tive Grand Slam semi-final.

After saving a set point, Federer edged the opening tie-break and went on to dominate the 11th seed.

He will next face fifth seed Juan Martin del Potro after the Argentine beat Spain's Tommy Robredo 6-3 6-4 6-2.

Injury halts Haye title challenge

DAVID Haye's world heavyweight title fight against Wladimir Klitschko in Germany on 20 June has been called off.

The decision to postpone the IBF, WBO and IBO title contest was taken after Londoner Haye, 28, suffered an injury in training at his base in Cyprus.

The pair were due to meet in front of a 60,000 sell-out crowd at Schalke 04 FC's Veltins Arena.

Haye was hoping to become Britain's first heavyweight world champion since Lennox Lewis retired in 2003.

A short postponement may allow the fight to be re-scheduled but Klitschko's camp appears keen to fight on the allotted date.

"I'm speechless. We will have to get someone else in. I will take who ever it is," said Klitschko.

The Ukrainian's manager, Bernd Bonte, added: "They haven't given any detail on the

injury but say Haye can't train. We will get someone else but I can't say yet who it will be.

"Ninety five percent of the fans who bought tickets did so because of Klitschko."

A possible alternative opponent for Klitschko could be WBA champion Nicolai Valuev, the 7ft Russian whose fight against Ruslan Chagaev on Saturday was cancelled when Chagaev failed a medical.

The build-up to the Haye-Klitschko bout had been mired in controversy over Haye's controversial behaviour when promoting the fight.

He attended media events wearing a T-shirt depicting him proudly holding aloft the decapitated heads of Wladimir and his elder brother Vitali.

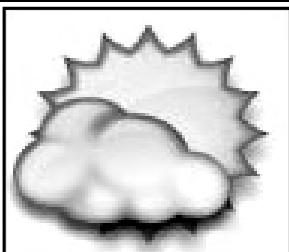
Renaming Klitschko as "Bitchko", he also derided him as an embarrassment to boxing and rubbished his record.

The Melita Malta Football Awards 2008/09 winners

- Best Goalkeeper:** Anthony Curmi (Tarxien R.)
- Best Defender:** Luke Dimech (Valletta)
- Best Midfielder:** Clayton Failla (Hibernians)
- Best Forward:** Terrence Scerri (Hibernians)
- Best Coach:** Mark Miller (Hibernians)
- Most Promising Youngster:** Jean Paul Farrugia (Hibernians)
- Best Local Player:** Clayton Failla (Hibernians)
- Best Foreign Player:** Daniel Mariano Bueno (Tarxien)
- Best Veteran Player:** Gilbert Agius (Valletta)
- Best Goal of the Season:** Adrian Pulis (Hibernians vs Birkirkara 18-May)
- Best Female Player:** Rachel Cuschieri (Birkirkara)
- Best Futsal First Division Player:** Alexander Ribic (White Eagles)
- Best GFA First Division Player:** John Camilleri (Sannat)
- Best First Division Player:** Anthony Eviparker (Vittoriosa)
- Best Second Division Player:** Matthew Borg (Melita)
- Best Third Division Player:** Ayrton Buhagiar (Mdina)
- Career Award:** Joe Cini
- Public's Favourite Player:** Mario Muscat (Hibernians)
- Special Awards:** Malta Football Coaches Association and Malta Football Referees Association



Today's Weather



PARTLY CLOUDY
29 °C / 17 °C
UV INDEX: 8

WARNINGS: Nil

WEATHER: Mainly fine.

VISIBILITY: Good locally moderate to good at first

WIND: Light to moderate West to Northwest (force 3 to 4) locally moderate (force 4).

SEA: Slight locally slight to moderate.

SWELL: Low Northwest.



Alternattiva Demokratika say the sixth seat will be won with just 8% of the vote

AD writes to Dimas over Mistra party

CHARLOT ZAHRA

ALTERNATTIVA Demokratika (AD) chairperson Arnold Cassola yesterday made public a letter sent by the party's environment spokesman Carmel Cacopardo to EU Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas, asking the Commission to investigate the "general mismanagement" by MEPA of the Natura 2000 Sites in Malta, as well as their use as open-air discos.

The sites in question were ix-Xaghra tal-Kortin, Buskett and Girgenti, and the part of the Malta coastal cliffs in the Qammiegh Area.

In his letter to Dimas, Cacopardo said that "of particular concern to Alternattiva Demokratika is the organisation of open-air discos in the following sites – at Mistra within ix-Xaghra tal-Kortin, Buskett and Girgenti, and at Paradise Bay."

In fact, a party was organised by Nationalist MP Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando on his land in Mistra last Saturday evening, in support of Nationalist MEP hopeful Alex Perici Calascione.

"The use of high-powered laser beams and/or high-tech sound equipment in the open air, together with the trampling by large numbers of people, is surely not conducive to proper management of these Natura 2000 sites which Malta is internationally obliged to manage on behalf of future generations," Cacopardo said in his letter to Dimas.

"Alternattiva Demokratika believes that permitting these activities, especially without any appropriate assessment by the competent national authority – the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) – is a further infringement of the obligations of this Directive, considering that no management plans are presently being considered for such sites," the AD spokesperson for Sustainable Development added.

Cassola made this revelation as he was addressing the final rally for AD activists which packed a hall in the Juliani Hotel in St. Julian's yesterday night.

"When we see you here so numerous – there are around 60-70 people here – it gives us hope that we are indeed representing somebody; that there are people behind us, and we hope that on Saturday there will be more votes than the number of people present here," the AD chairperson told the activists present.

Cassola rubbished the poll published in The Sunday Times, which had forecast a poor showing for AD in the 6 June elections.

"I hope there we obtain more than the 50 votes that the poll in the Sunday Times of Malta has forecast for us on Sunday with 0.25 per cent," Cassola remarked.

"I think that this is really something that will not be occurring on Sunday. I think that we will faring much better than that, but we have to fight till

the last minute – until the last minute of 10 pm on Saturday," the AD leader told the activists present.

"Tomorrow there is a poll in MaltaToday, and I hope that like we did last time, when we increased our share a bit, we will continue increasing our share," Cassola added.

Cassola explained how this time, AD "can really make it because we will be voting for six seats in the EP – five will be elected immediately, while the sixth one will wait till September or October. However the votes that will be cast on Saturday will count for the sixth seat."

Under the Maltese electoral system, where a quota of 16.6 per cent is needed to elect an MEP, the last two MEPs will be elected without a quota.

"If AD obtains 7% at the first count, then it would have obtained a seat because whoever obtains the largest leftover will get elected," Cassola told his activists.

Cassola explained that as the counts progressed, the share of the bigger parties would decrease, while the share of AD would increase.

"Sixteen per cent might seem too huge a percentage for AD to obtain in the first, the second, the third and the fourth seat,

however the fifth seat is won with 10-11%, while the sixth seat will be won with 7-8%," he insisted.

At the end of the rally, the banner "Yes We Can", which was AD's final electoral campaign slogan during the EP elections, was unfurled in the presence of MEP election candidate Yvonne Arqueros Ebejer, and AD candidates Michael Brigugilio and Mario Mallia, who will be contesting the local council elections in Sliema and Birkirkara alongside Victor Galea, who is contesting for the Gharb local council.

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EP elections 'a phantom national election' - Muscat



Josie Muscat - "This election should not be a political football"

CHARLOT ZAHRA

AZZJONI Nazzjonali (AN) leader Josie Muscat has lambasted the way in which the two major political parties have treated this election as if it were a general election, when there were more important issues at stake.

Addressing a press conference yesterday morning at the party's headquarters in Sliema, Muscat said: "Unfortunately, the PL/PN leaders have decided to treat this election as a nationwide election. In fact they are treating it as a phantom national election."

Muscat remarked that "as usual, the two main parties were arousing partisan sentiments to get people out to vote, not so

much to elect five MEPs to the European Parliament but more to claim that one of them has won."

Muscat contended that the main parties were distorting the purpose of the elections. "It looks as if one of them is going to be elected Prime Minister and the other one is thinking that something will change.

"In reality, things will remain the same – the government will remain in place while the Opposition would stay where it is now."

The only thing that will change, according to Muscat, "will be the five MEPs that are attending in Brussels. This is a pity, because we consider it as a very serious election, and not simply a political

football."

He accused political parties of preferring to do this, "because the people do not know how the EP works and the importance of the EP today and how it is already affecting and will continue to affect our daily lives in this country."

Over half (57%) the laws enacted by the Maltese Parliament were directives and laws emanating from the EP.

"If the Lisbon Treaty is ratified, then almost all the most important laws that affect our daily lives will originate from the EU," the AN leader insisted.

The truth was, Muscat said, "that the PL/PN have no criticism of the European Union, but only praise. They have no reservations whatsoever and there are no things they wish to change in the EU."

Muscat claimed that the main political parties have "shamed the EP" with the type of campaign that they had conducted.

"They are telling the people that the most important thing is whoever wins in partisan terms, rather than the capabilities of those people that we need to send to the EP," he insisted.

He called on the Maltese people to put the national interest before partisan considerations in the 6 June elections.

"They should look at electing

those people who are capable and have a vision," Muscat insisted. "They should look at the track record of these people and elect MEPs who are able to stand up in the EP to the other 739 members to get the best deal for Malta," he added.

Malta should elect people "who are capable of telling Europe that what is good for large EU Member States might not necessarily fit for Malta, a small island in the Mediterranean," the AN leader charged.

"If the EU feels that it needs a lot of migrants to take the jobs nobody else wants, it might not necessarily mean that we need the same amount or proportion of them," Muscat claimed.

"Our problems are different and we should have the courage to stand up and declare what is in the national interest," he added.

"We have to elect people who stop 'shooting' at each other; insulting each other as to how many EP sessions they attended and how many they failed to attend, how much they slept, how often they were absent, how often they failed to press the right buttons, and their voting inconsistencies," Muscat said.

"We hope that the Maltese people have learnt their lesson and five years from now, we do not have the same accusations which we have seen in the past

few days and weeks in the media and in the papers," the AN leader added.

AN had always been consistent in its statements, both during the electoral campaign as well as before it started.

"We have never danced to the tune of the moment," Muscat concluded.

Muscat complained about how the local council elections had "completely disappeared" from the 6 June 2008 electoral campaign. "We pay a lot of lip service to the importance of local councils, however in reality the big parties have diluted their importance," he insisted.

He accused the main political parties of amalgamating the EP elections with the local council elections "to force people to go out and vote for the local councils as well. We will see what the people will say about this," the AN leader declared.

AN was against the participation of political parties in local councils, and that was the reason why AN did not field any candidates for these elections.

"My personal experience is that as they stand now, local councils are a huge waste of money," Muscat, an outgoing Marsasclia independent councillor, charged. "AN has proposed the aggregation of local councils into Regional Councils.



AD slams transport tender for opting for polluting buses

CHARLOT ZAHRA

ALTERNATIVA Demokratika (AD) chairperson Arnold Cassola has slammed the tender for the proposed national transport service under the public transport reform for opting for buses which are more polluting.

"Why has Austin Gatt issued a tender for public transport reform that will be tendering only for Euro 3 buses?" Cassola

asked during a press conference in Marsa yesterday afternoon to discuss AD's proposals on transport.

"Euro 3 is an obsolete technology – we can expect the arrival of Euro 5 in the next few months," Cassola insisted.

Cassola explained that the buses that were imported from China a few years ago were already Euro 3 buses. "Bus drivers who imported those buses will

have to remove them, and instead we are issuing a tender to issue Euro 3 buses!" he insisted.

If Malta introduced Euro 5 buses, they could stay on the road for 15 years. "If we introduced Euro 3 buses, we would have to change them after a few years," Cassola warned.

In 2012, the Euro 7 standard would be introduced.

"It is important that the current bus drivers become stake-



AD candidate Arnold Cassola, left, says new buses fall below European standards

holders in this reform," the AD chairperson insisted.

Cassola explained that these people had forked out an enormous sum of money, two to three years ago, when they were told that it would have been the final public transport reform, they bought the buses imported from China.

"Now they will have to sell them, therefore a solution that is fair should be found for these bus drivers," the AD chairperson insisted. "It would be important for the existing bus drivers to be introduced as part of the national transport system that is introduced," he added.

The AD chairperson explained how the Nationalist Government had been announcing public transport reform for the past 22 years. "We hope that this reform is the right one at last," Cassola added.

He explained that public transport should be an investment for the benefit of the community, therefore it should not be considered exclusively as a for profit concern.

Public transport, Cassola said, should also be considered as a social service which satisfied the needs of society and the community. "Therefore we need public transport that reduces emissions, rather than increasing them," he added.

Moreover, if we had a public transport service which was regular, efficient and trustworthy which ran for an extensive number of hours, then "we can start removing congestion from our roads," Cassola said.

A study that AD had conducted showed that to keep a private car and maintain it, one needed eight euros a day. "We are not saying to ban private cars, however one should balance their use with public transport," Cassola added.

"We are happy with the public transport reform, but we want buses that use clean fuel," the AD chairperson insisted. "We want buses that work on gas, hydrogen and electricity."

AD also believed that trams should be introduced together with the underground in certain areas of the islands.

Moreover, Cassola said that AD welcomed the introduction of the ferry service between Valletta and the other ports in the area, which will ease the burden of traffic from the roads. He said that the EU had specific funds earmarked for shifting short-sea shipping from the roads to the ports. For instance, the port of Hamburg reduced pollution last year by 9%, Cassola said.



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PHOTOGRAPHY BY DENISE SCICLUNA

Joseph Muscat yesterday delivered the best speech of his campaign to date. **KARL STAGNO-NAVARRA** detects a change in stature in the PL leader

“LET there be no mistake. Malta’s place is in Europe. The feudal days of conflict between the yes and no camps, or red or blue tribes, are history. This is the

time to move on and aspire for brighter days, where all Maltese can come together and start changing this country’s political direction...”

In Fgura last night, Opposition and PL Leader Joseph Muscat delivered a clear and impassioned speech that reached out beyond the large crowd gath-

ered before him for the last public meeting before this evening’s formal close to the European Parliament election campaign. Clad in a dark suit, white shirt

and red tie, Joseph spoke in a declamatory tone, and gesticulated accurately. For the crowd in the Labour stronghold of Fgura, Joseph Muscat appeared

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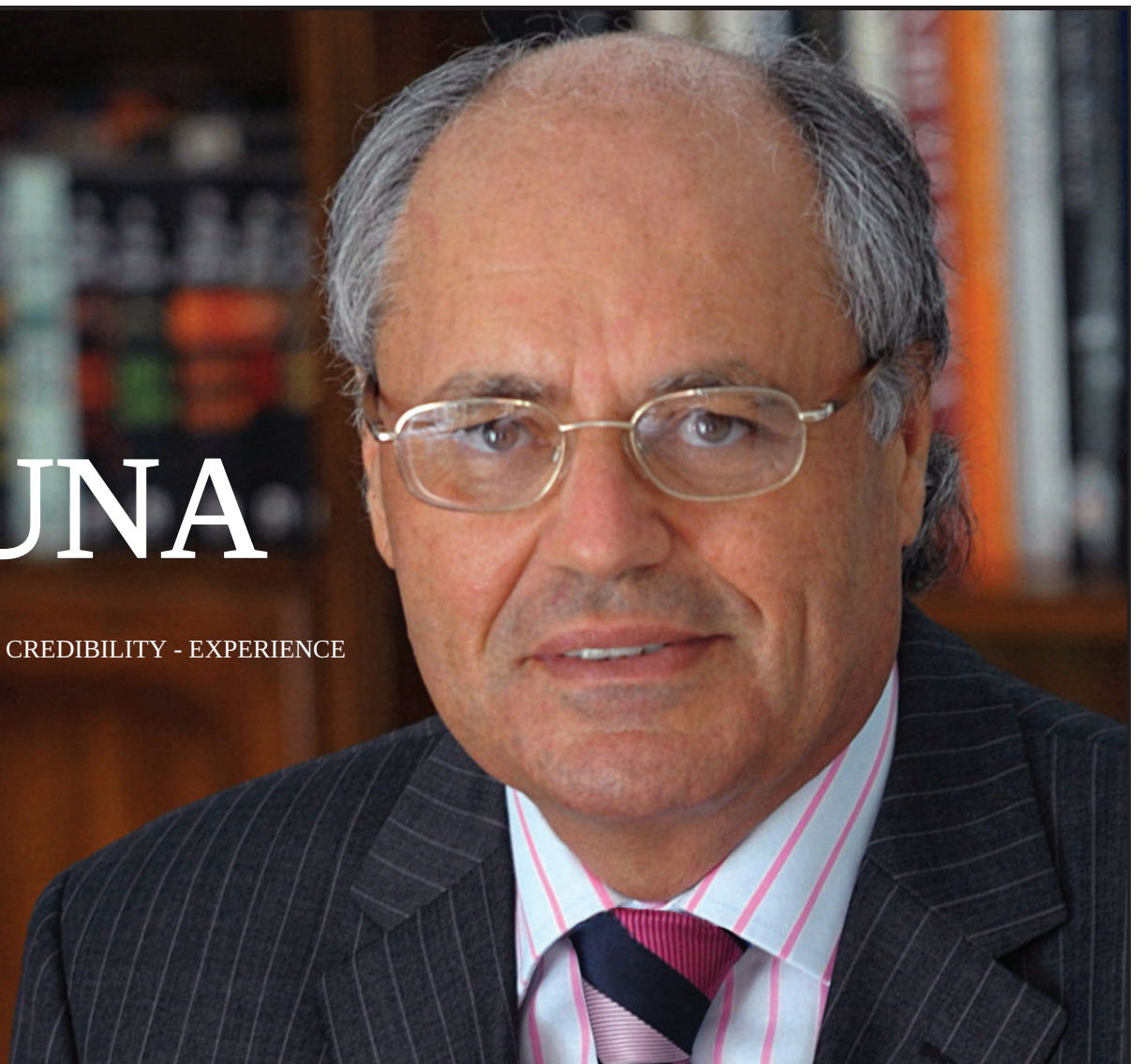
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'Arrigo's like my second dad. Maybe that's why I'm finding obstacles in the party'

MARK ATTARD

SLIEMA'S Nationalist councillor Nikki Dimech revealed all in a candid interview for sister newspaper Illum – to be published this Sunday – over his dissatisfaction at his mentor Robert Arrigo being left out of the Cabinet after being elected from two districts in 2008.

Dimech, who is seeking re-election on the Sliema council, is the treasurer of Sliema Wanderers FC, of which Arrigo was

formerly president.

Dimech however confides that his bid for re-election – possibly eyeing the mayorship left vacant by Marina Arrigo, Robert's wife – has not been easy.

"I can see it from the manoeuvres being orchestrated against me. I was only invited to a Net TV programme recently, after a four-week boycott," Dimech said.

"I was one of the last candidates to be invited on to the party media. They just asked me a senseless question such as: 'Is

Sliema a one-stop shop?' It was something we never discussed in the electoral programme. I froze. I'm not saying anything about the party media, but these things hurt me."

Expressing deep admiration for his mentor Robert Arrigo, Dimech says many in Sliema still remain baffled at the prime minister's decision to leave Arrigo out of the Cabinet.

"I don't know why he was never made a minister. It's something many people ask to this day. Certainly there must be some-

one who wanted to eliminate him... Some people wanted to depict Arrigo as being against Lawrence Gonzi, but it's untrue."

Dimech said Arrigo had been crucial for the PN to retain the elusive Sliema vote in the last general election, and that the MP was hurt at having been left out of the new Cabinet.

"I never saw him cry as much as he did that day," referring to the day Gonzi chose his new Cabinet. "And he had all reason to, since he was elected on two districts. Labourites actually voted for him out of respect for what he did for Sliema Wanderers."

Calling him his "second father", Dimech said that – "like Arrigo" – he put the party before anything else.

"In 2006 the Prime Minister told me to make way for Marina, Robert's wife, who was contesting the Sliema council elections. I moved out of the way, for the party. Today the

Prime Minister is seeing it differently – maybe he has recognised my qualities. I appreciate this."

Dimech also took umbrage at the leak to Labour organ Kull-Hadd of a confidential email he sent to a member of the Sliema sectional committee, of which he is president, apparently bragging that Gonzi had "recognised his capabilities" at an event he organised for the PM.

As things stand, the committee is evenly divided between two factions supporting Dimech, for his allegiance to Arrigo; and newcomer Cyrus Engerer, who enjoys the support of the party machinery.

"I am still stunned at how Labour got to know of this email. I get serious doubts whether the party wants me or not. Maybe the Prime Minister does not know of these things."

Dimech said he will only contest the next general elections if Arrigo decides to back out of the running. "I am loyal towards Robert – he guided me, he's always been honest with me and I want to be honest in everything with him. We're united. If he doesn't contest the next election, I will contest."



Hurt - Roberto Arrigo



Sliema's PN councillor Nikki Dimech hints that his re-election bid may not have been welcomed by everyone in the party.

European Parliament Elections - 6th June 2009

MEP Candidate - P.N



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A day in the life

Saviour Balzan takes a fictitious trip around the political meanderings of MEP candidates Alan Deidun and Sharon Ellul Bonici

IT all starts with a telephone call.

"Hello, is that Alan?"
"Yes, I am Alan Deidun. Who is it?"

"This is from the Office of the Prime Minister. Dr Gonzi would like to talk to you. Can you find the time on Wednesday at 11am?"

"Of course, of course."
Alan hangs up and wonders what it's all about.

On Wednesday, he wakes up with a queasy stomach. It must be the excitement, he says to himself. He then drives to the PN HQ, walks in staring at the opulence around him, wondering how much was donated by which big contractor or businessman to allow for this extravagance.

Does it really matter, he tells himself? Seated on the big black leather sofas, he waits patiently. He looks at the abstract paintings on the wall. He wonders why the same artist never changes his style, and still gets exhibited in every government building or agency.

Then suddenly, the door opens and the Prime Minister walks in, his smile filling the room. Behind him; Paul Borg Olivier, followed by the pint-sized persona of Simon Busuttill.

"Alan, kif ahna?"
"Very well. Mr Prime Minister."

"Still writing about MEPA... heh-heh... and all those questionable permits... heh, heh, heh, heh..."

And Simon and Paul go, "Heh, heh, heh, heh, heh..." and after 10 minutes of absolute codswallop, the PM turns to Alan and informs him that the party would like him to stand as a PN candidate for the European elections.

Alan is shell-shocked and starts to cry with joy.

"I am honoured, but please allow me to consult with my family before giving you a definitive answer."

"Yes, yes, of course, but remember Alan: the country

needs you."

Paul Borg Olivier peeps at Simon. They both know that the Prime Minister repeats the same thing to each and every potential candidate.

"Bye, bye, Alan."
The Prime Minister turns to Paul and Simon after Alan leaves, and tells them that this one is definitely in.

Simon asks: "What if he says something stupid?"

"It doesn't really matter, does it? After all he has little or no chance of getting elected!"

And all of them break into a giggle, "Heh, heh, heh.... tee-hee, zee, heh, heh..."

Two weeks later Alan Deidun is an official candidate of the Nationalist Party. He launches his campaign by organising a press conference at the proposed Ghadira road. One passer-by asks the journalists present, "Is this guy from the Greens?"

"No, he is a Nationalist candidate."

"What? Doesn't he know that his party wants the road, *mela dan m'ahniex jew?*"

In another part of Malta, far away, far away, there is a grey building with red aluminium pillars. Another candidate is waiting for a meeting with the Leader.

But this time her name is Sharon Ellul Bonici. Sharon, the great eurosceptic.

Sharon is, as usual, gracefully dressed. She waits on the pink plastic chairs in the waiting room. She looks at the decor in the room and wonders what it could take to make the HQ at Mile End a wee bit more welcoming.

Muscat walks by and asks her to follow him. He is accompanied by James Piscopo, the Labour party's CEO.

"Come in Sharon."
"Thanks for having me."
"So what can I do for you?"

"I would like to see what you really think about my candidature for the European elections."



SAVIOUR BALZAN

"Very good," Joseph replies, hoping that his tone will not give him away.

"Really? I am pleased to hear that. Because you know I have quite a budget for this campaign..."

"Good."
"Will there be any budget restrictions for any of the candidates?"

"No, not at all..."

"So, I can do as I please."

"Yes, you may."
"Thank you, Joseph, thanks so much."

Joseph closes the door and then talks to himself, as he looks out of his massive window onto the Nationalist HQ some 400 metres away.

"I only wish I had the balls to tell her what I really think. *Nahseb blajna z*** kbir.* James."

James looks on, not knowing what to say.

Thirty days later

We are in a radio station in Marsa, Sharon has hardly woken up. It's her turn to review the newspapers on Super One.

She reads something from a newspaper heading but then suddenly forgets about the subject and calls on hunters and trappers to remember that it was Gonzi who did not keep his word.

"Don't trust him. Trust me, I will fight to get you back hunting, yes hunting for birds in spring. And if anyone needs to contact me you may do so on this mobile number *****"

The incredulous technician behind the window screen looks at her and signals to her that mobile numbers cannot be given over the airwaves.

As soon as the programme finishes, her mobile starts to ring. The ringtone is the same, overplayed song by Coldplay.

"Hello."

"Ello, is that Sharon?"

"Iva."

"SHARR, can you explain to me how the **** you will bring back spring hunting?"

"Because I know that in Europe it is all a question

of what you do and you do not do."

"Yes, but what will you do?"
"Eh, I will do what I have to do to allow you to practise your hobby."

"Prosit, but can you tell me what exactly you will be doing?"

"Eh, I will be doing what the others have not done."

"Which is?"

"Now please, you have to believe that I am capable of convincing the European Commission to bring back hunting to Malta."

"I see, tridix thallina Sharon. When you get me back my gamiema and summiena in Spring give me a ring. My number is *****"

Sharon is shocked.

Meanwhile, in another radio station, Alan is taking part in a studio discussion with two other guests. It is Radio 101. All participants are agreeing with each other, arguing that Gonzi is their man.

Alan interrupts.
"Let me tell you why I think the PN campaign is a success. First of all, our billboards light up at night and their billboards do not."

The other two guests look at him in disbelief. One of them makes a sign with his finger, tapping his temple to indicate that he is mad.

Alan tries to patch it up.
"No, that was a joke," and then goes on to say in Monty Python style.

"Just look at our billboards. In our billboards we are walking in one direction. We know where our direction is, and what success is all about. On the other hand Labour's candidates are simply posing on the lawn and going nowhere."

There is a pause and silence on the airwaves and one of the people in the studio lands his forehead on the table, and raises his hands over his bald patch.

We are completely f****, he says to himself.

EXCLUSIVE

Saviour Balzan interviews Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando

THIS SUNDAY in MALTATODAY



Louis Grech fil-Parlament Ewropew

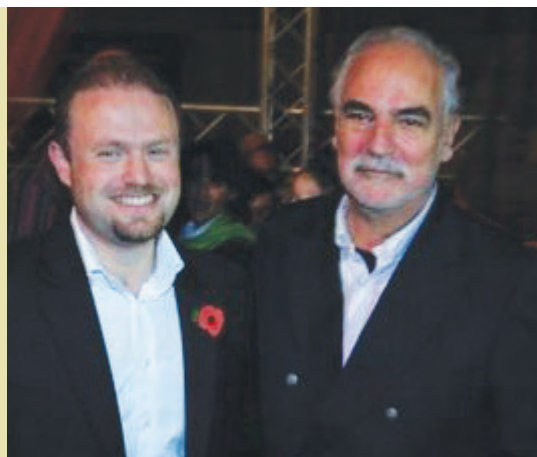
"Jien ma Louis kelli x-xorti li niltaqa' ħames snin ilu. Ftit li xejn konna nafu lil xulxin. Nistqarr bla l-edba kundizzjoni ta' xejn li minn dan ir-raġel tgħallimt u tgħallimt ħafna. Għallimni li meta bniedem jagħti kelma, dik il-kelma jrid iżommha sa l-aħħar. Louis huwa bniedem li jekk iwegħdek ħaġa, dik il-ħaġa jagħmilha u ħa jagħmilha jigrri x'jigrri.

"Mhux qed nittkelmu fuq bniedem li ser nippruvah jew irriduh jagħti prova x'jiswa. Louis, bhala Kap tad-Delegazzjoni tal-Partit Laburista fl-Ewropa, diġa tagħna prova ta' dak li jiswa."

Onor. Karmenu Vella MP

"Li nemmen li l-ewwel għażla għandha tkun għall-kontinwità; għandu jkollna Kap tad-Delegazzjoni bħal m'hemm illum... Louis Grech. Louis akkwista ċerta esperjenza li, jien inħoss, u ngħidha b'responsabbiltà, ma nistgħux nitilfuh mit-team li ser ikollna wara din l-elezzjoni."

Onor. George Vella MP



Għalih l-irgūlija tigi u l-ewwel u qabel kollox. Lil Louis rajtu jaħdem. Lil Louis rajtu jiddeliverja. Lil Louis rajt kemm hu kapaċi jigrbed rispettu u jien inħalli kull wieħed u waħda minnkomm jiddeciedi, biss ngħidilkomm ħaġa. Daqs kemm hu rispettat fil-PE, tant kemm kiseb affarijiet mill-grupp soċjalista, tant kemm il-kelma tiegħu hija kelma ta' l-azzar, meta ġejt biex insir il-kap tad-delegazzjoni l-aħjar ħaġa għal pajjiżna u għall-Partit Laburista kien illi Louis jibqa l-kap f'dak il-ħin u dak il-mument. U ma jiddispjaċini xejn."

Onor. Joseph Muscat,
Kap tal-Partit Laburista

"Noħorgu nivvotaw għall-kandidati kollha u nibdew b'Louis Grech. Louis ta biżżejjed prova li għandna bżonn li jibqa hemm ħalli nkomplu naħdmu u nagħmlu l-gid. Hemm min jiftaħar b'li ma jagħmilx, Louis jagħmel ħafna u bil-ftit li xejn jiftaħar. Bil-ħiliet tiegħu ħadem mhux biss biex jipprezenta lill-Ewropa f'Malta imma lil Malta fl-Ewropa."

Onor. Evarist Bartolo MP

"When mentioning the present Leader of the delegation, Louis Grech, I want to make a special tribute to him and the work he did in the last years in the EU. A few years ago he was one of two rapporteurs of the budget of the EU which was one of the most important jobs you can get in this Parliament."

Jan Marinus Wiersma, Vici-President PSE

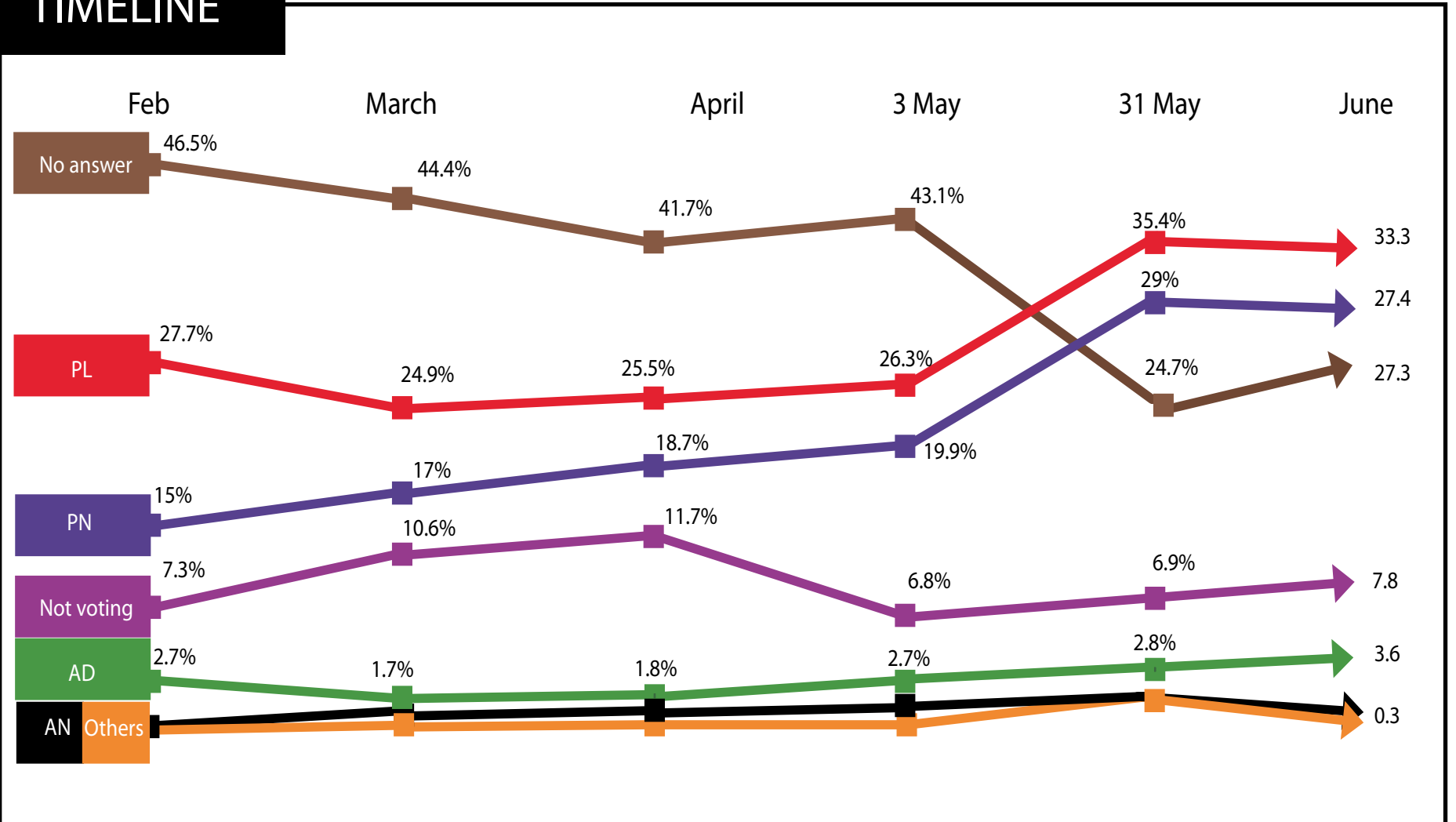
"Louis Grech is a very reliable person who is well known for his accomplishments and a person that Malta can be proud of."

Ralph Walter, Vici President
tal-Kumitat tal-Budget, PE

il-ħidma tkompli

absolute majority

TIMELINE



former PN voters will be voting for the PL this time around, 2% of former Labour voters will switch sides to PN.

This is an indication that Labour is not only benefiting from apathy among Nationalist voters, but has also made small inroads among PN voters. Former Nationalist voters constitute 72.2% of AD's current level of support – a clear indication that the green vote contributed to the GonziPN electoral victory in 2008.

Although the vote was evenly split in the last general election, 42% of the MaltaToday sample was made up of people who

vote PN in 2008, and 37% who voted Labour.

Casa and Cuschieri make inroads

Nationalist incumbent David Casa has seen his support increase from 2.8% to 7.1% of declared PN voters in the last week of the campaign, surpassing Roberta Metsola Tedesco Triccas who follows at 4.1%.

But with the support of 53.1% of declared PN voters, front-runner and campaign architect Simon Busuttill remains by far the most popular candidate. His second preferences are likely to determine which other PN can-

didate will be elected.

Former Labour MP Joseph Cuschieri has seen his support increase from 4% to 11% of declared Labour voters, edging closer to frontrunners Louis Grech and star candidate Edward Scicluna, and slightly ahead of newcomer Marlene Mizzi.

While Scicluna has seen a slight drop in support since last week, incumbent Louis Grech has increased support from 10% to 12%. The other incumbent, John Attard-Montalto, has fallen to fifth place among Labour's contenders.

mt survey

Methodology

A total of 1127 respondents were randomly selected. Of these 720 accepted to be interviewed. The results were weighted 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 20th May and Wednesday 27th May.



**Some
Mothers do
have 'em**



IT IS YOUR DUTY TO VOTE IN THE EUROPEAN ELECTION

- **BECAUSE** over 80% of our laws come from the EU and we all pay contributions to the EU budget
- **BECAUSE** the European Parliament is the only EU institution that directly represents you
- **BECAUSE** if you don't stand up and be counted you will be ignored
- **BECAUSE** you need someone who can safeguard your interests at a European level

This Saturday Vote for ACTION

Sharon Ellul Bonici

www.sharon4malta.com

"Naf lil Louis Grech f'diversi karigi fuq livell eżekuttiv tal-pajjiż. Rajniġ jaħdem tajjeb ħafna fuq diversi issues għal pajjiżna, fosthom, il-kwistjoni ta' l-immigrazzjoni illegali, il-VAT tal-karozzi u anke il-kwistjoni li tolqot fil-qrib in-nisa, dik tal-*maternity leave*."

Onor. Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, MP

"Lil Louis nipparagunah ma' arloġġ Rolex ta' veru, jaħdem il-ħin kollu, ma jieqaf qatt, ma tisimgħux jaħdem, u jtik rizultati kontinwi. Louis għamel ħafna kisbiet fil-Parlament Ewropew. Minkejja li għandna team kbir, l-istess bħall-inbid, inħarsu lejn Louis u mmorru għall-aħjar fost l-aqwa."

Onor. Leo Brincat MP

"Louis Grech huwa wieħed mil l-aqwa esponenti li għana fil-parlament ewropew. Jien nixtieq li din il ħbiberija li għandu Louis lejn il-poplu laburista u l-poplu Malti nirripagawha billi natuħ vot tajjeb, vot b'saħħtu, vot li tagħmlu ċert li Louis ikun wieħed mill-membri parlamentari."

Onor. Owen Bonnici MP



"Ta kontribut qawwi, tant li l-kuntatti li għandi jien għadhom isemmuh sal-lum. Louis kien wieħed fost dawk li dejjem ix-xogħol li għamel, għamlu tajjeb. Persważ illi jekk jerga jitla, kif nawgurulu u naħseb li se jerga jitla, jagħti kontribut lil Malta u jagħmel gieh lil Malta."

Lino Spiteri, ex-ministru tal-finanzi

"Jiena naħseb li fuq Louis Grech m'hemm x'tgħid xejn għaliex ir-rizultati jitekellmu weħidhom. F'kull qasam li kien fih Louis Grech kien suċċess."

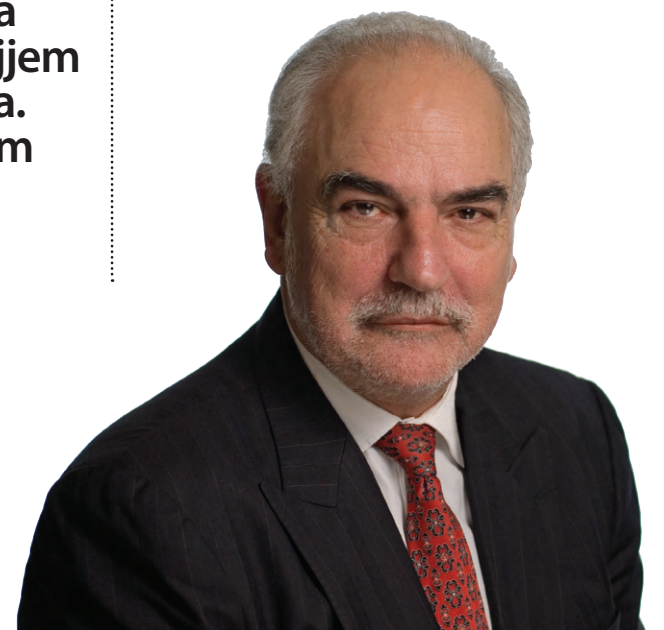
Onor. Helena Dalli MP

"Kellu vizjoni, dejjem jaf fejn u kif irid jasal, dejjem wettqu, qatt ma qatgħa qalbu mill-ostakoli. Dejjem kien leader tajjeb ħafna. Decizzjonijiet jeħodhom u jeħodhom sew."

Haddiema ta' l-Airmalta

"Nafuh għall-kontribut importanti li ta f'dak li għandu x'jaqsam mar-refund tal-vat fuq ir-registrazzjoni tal-vetturi. Aħna nafu li b'inizjattiva tiegħu fil-Parlament Ewropew kienu ħargu ċerti fatti li ma konniex nafu."

Onor. Gavin Gulia MP



LOUIS GRECH
KAP TAD-DELEGAZZJONI LABURISTA FIL-PARLAMENT EWROPEW

Transcript from a European election debate

Gonzi dahak bik!
 - U intom x'ghamiltu, ma dhaktux bin-nies intom?
 - Nerga' nirrepeti, Gonzi dahak bil-poplu Malti u Ghawdx!
 - Ghalqu dawn il-hotels: A, B, C u D.
 - Iss, iva, imma trid tghidilna kemm fethu in the meantime.
 - Ghandek il-figuri, Chris?
 - Staqsi lil Vince, dak jafhom il-figuri.
 - Lilek qed nistaqsi, wegibni!
 - Jien ghidtlek ghalqu l-hotels taht GonziPN.
 - Wegibni!
 - Xoghol!
 - Mhux vera.
 - Ambjent!
 - Immigrazzjoni!
 - Sahha!
 - Pawza qasira ghar-riklami. Niringrazzjaw lil W, X, Y, Z...
 - Ergajna lura fl-istudjo.
 - Gonzi dahak bin-nies...
 - Il-Laburisti lanqas jafu jag-hfsu l-buttni. Inkonsistenti.
 - (Dahka ironika)
 - Nista' nurik dar-rapport, ha arah.
 - Mhux dak ir-rapport trid turihom lin-nies, dan trid turihom.
 - GonziPN ghadu jidhak bin-nies, ehe. Arroganti.
 - Ha nggidlek minn dahak bin-nies. Kieku kien ghalikom lan-



David Friggieri

qas dhalna fl-EU
 - Ippermettili, jien ma nterrompejtekx. Mela...
 - L-Ewropa rridu nibghatu nies kapaci...
 - Jekk joghobok, tinterrampinix...
 - (NB: angry, tense faces throughout)

Five years after Malta reluctantly squeezed into the European Union, it should have become amply clear that all those fears about losing our identity to some hegemonistic monster

were at best paranoid, at worst completely misguided. And if there is one factor which proves that Europe hasn't had the slightest effect on Malta's way of doing things – on its identity – then that must be the way guests (even some of its supposedly illustrious ones) behave on talk shows on local television.

The discussion may be tackling European Parliament elections with a selection of MEP hopefuls, but the whole business has a ring to it which is miles away from anything remotely European. It's still all intom and ahna, mhux vera and u zgur li vera, gdibtu and ghidna l-verità. When the discussion moves away from the usual cheap insults and actually manages to engage with a couple of token issues, it does so in a superficial way: ahna vvutajna b'mod konsistenti, ktibna rapport, nwieghdu li nressqu mozzjoni.

There are, thank God, one or two exceptions. Simon Busuttil is a convincing orator who has an unparalleled knowledge of his directives, facts and figures. But by and large, he too has had to keep afloat in a sea of incoherent thoughts, mindless

clichés and cheap jibes, so he too has given into the temptation to play the simplistic game being played all around him. Arnold Cassola, who is cogent and clear, has done his best to get his message across without falling into the simplistic or populist trap.

Europe is about so much more than what this disappointing electoral campaign has made it out to be. It is about so much more than ahna and intom, than pressing the right buttons and 'defending Malta's interests at all costs'. It is certainly about more than the infantile 'ibghatu messagg lil Gonzi'. One only needed to tune into Rai's European election debates to see what Europe is also about. Old battle horse Marco Pannella, was yesterday engaging with secularism, Immanuel Kant, Europe's roots, Altiero Spinelli's legacy, political theory, xenophobia and immigration.

But Malta's writers, truly independent journalists, researchers, intellectuals and artists must decide to engage in order to stop the rot. Leaving Europe to career politicians and chancers was always going to yield us diminishing returns.



Leaving Europe to career politicians and chancers was always going to yield us diminishing returns

The book trade, Malta and the EU

During a PBS televised during this European Parliament electoral campaign, when representing the Labour Party, I mentioned how the government had lost all its willpower in ensuring that Malta was represented in the European fora of the cultural industry where important decisions were being taken. In the debate I referred to the publishing trade, a massive economic sector that generates around €23 billion in annual sales. The European industry revolves on three entities – the European Writers' Congress (EWC), the Federation of European Booksellers (FEP) and the European Booksellers Federation (EBF). Most EU27 countries are members in all three, including Cyprus, Estonia and Slovenia that all gained EU membership with the Malta group. The only Member State absent from all fora is Malta. This is an unacceptable situation, especially when one remembers that Malta has the highest illiteracy rate within the EU.

On state and Nationalist party television, we are given the impression that, thanks to this government, Malta quite naturally utilizes the most competent human resources available that shall help advance this industry by attracting a market



Steve Borg

segment to our shores. Eurostat statistics, however, expose our sad reality.

An excellent Maltese language publication – and they are more numerous than one may think – may have a run of two thousand copies, that could possibly be sold within two years. I shudder when I realise that Malta is losing the opportunity, through being absent from the major European book expositions, of exhibiting literary works by local writers, photographers and graphic designers, that may be translated in other European Union languages. This would help disseminate their works into new territories and also increase their meagre local royalties.

Meanwhile, while Malta is being flooded by books arriving from overseas, at times bought by the cubic metre, from warehouses in the United Kingdom, Maltese writers, publishers and booksellers have to strive through their own efforts to remain active since their limited run of copies printed keeps their price per unit relatively much more expensive.

This government, despite its false pretences that it is an internationalist approach, remains cooed with an insular approach since the key players in these fora do not seem able to think outside the box. Let us take, for example, the Finnish writer Arto Tapio Paasilinna, whose works have been translated into eighteen languages. Or the Slovene playwright Ivan Cankar, translated into seventeen languages. We all have a right to enquire the role of the government's contact points doing in this regard.

In my profession as a librarian, I have met many a decision-taking government-appointed bureaucrat, who seem to be unable to distinguish a clay brick from a hardbound book. The Castle may be the name of a pub in Paceville and not one of Kafka's masterpieces, and what a pity about Virgil and Schopenhauer. Do they play for Milan or Inter?

In an interview published on The Guardian (8 Dec 2008) the

current Nobel Prize laureate, Jean-Marie Gustave le Clézio spoke clearly about information poverty:

"Joint publication with developing countries, the establishment of funds for lending libraries and mobile libraries, and, overall, greater attention to requests from and works in so-called minority languages – which are often clearly in the majority – would enable literature to continue to be this wonderful tool for self-knowledge, for the discovery of others, and for listening to the concert of humankind, in all the rich variety of its themes and modulations."

He could have easily been speaking about Malta. The apologists, even though deep down they are aware that this is actual reality, would definitely state that I am exaggerating. However, following a number of parliamentary questions, it is now public knowledge that the Government's voted expenditure for books for 2008 includes the purchase of ten books for Senglea, nine for St. Julians and six for Cospicua, amongst other shameful data. This attitude taken into context would then qualify when the Maltese book trade is simply absent from the European fora. Our key players are simply disinterested or oblique to this market.

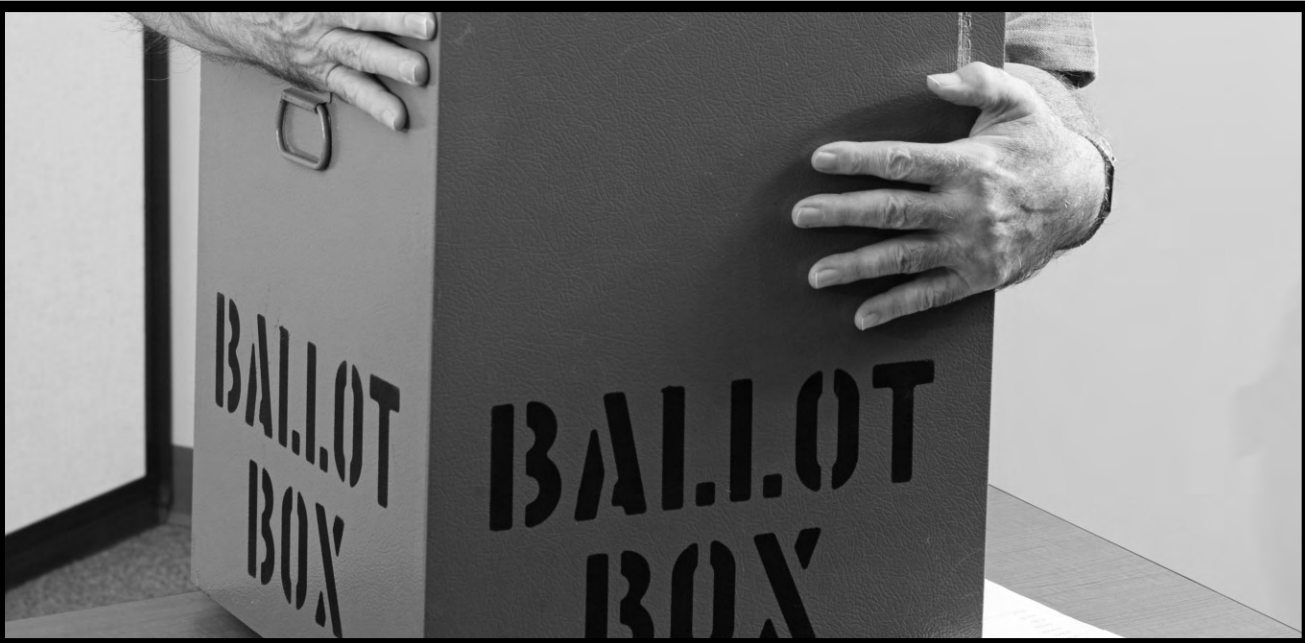
Maltese publishers who have managed to improve their product content and presentation by great personal efforts remarkably, are absent from meetings when purchasing orders are taken. Any student of the science of librarianship would know that publications regarding Maltese literature, archaeology, ethnography, culture and history are of European, and not only local, interest. Rather than proposing a reading culture, Malta under the Gonzi administration is being inundated by gaming and gambling centres that seemed to be sprouting everywhere. You can witness these sad developments even in the remote villages away from the tourist resorts.

The local situation is pitiful and undermines the spirit of the Treaty of Lisbon that aims to further disseminate literary works from all over Europe throughout the EU27. As a prospective Labour MEP, I shall strive to see that Malta becomes a member of these entities, since this proactive approach would result in more royalties, book orders for exportation, help disseminate our people's intellectual prowess and naturally generate more employment in the local publishing industry.

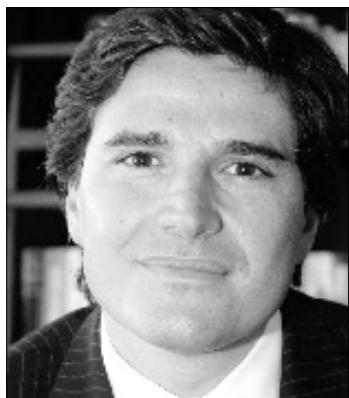
Steve Borg is a PL candidate for MEP

POINTS OF VIEW

MaltaToday asks prominent personalities and opinion formers to comment on the campaign themes



Julian Vassallo European Parliament office, Malta



PEOPLE may have their legitimate reasons to stay home on June 6th but the idea that it will not make a difference either way cannot be one of them. Who we choose to represent us will make a difference, and here is why:

1. There is no doubt that all the candidates do not share the same policies and qualities. Staying home means that your neighbour gets to choose what policies and qualities your representatives will have.

2. Being an effective MEP is not an easy job. If you want people able to put Malta's concerns on the table and convince their political groups to heed them, their Committees to endorse their proposals and the EP as a whole to include them, choose carefully. Not everybody is up to it.

3. The EP Election is not another version of "who wants to be a millionaire", but our MEPs will have the funds and facilities to hire staff and run Offices in Malta and Brussels. We need to choose candidates that will place those facilities at our service as citizens – to answer our queries and obtain solutions to those

problems that have a European solution.

4. EU citizenship bestows numerous economic, political and social rights upon us that government is obliged to guarantee. It may well be that not all of those rights have been fully and correctly implemented in Maltese law and practice. Our MEPs can play a central role in ensuring that we enjoy all the protection, benefits and opportunities that EU citizenship bestows. Not all candidates will be equally effective at playing that role.

5. Yes, the laws and regulations that seem to have the most direct and immediate impact on our lives seem to emanate from national authorities and not from the European Parliament. But this is often misleading because depending on how you calculate it, more or less half all the legisla-

tion adopted by the Maltese Parliament is simply implementing EU law which has been adopted in the European Parliament. So we need MEPs who can shape EU legislation to Malta's advantage in the EP before it is passed down for implementation when it is too late.

6. The EP has important budgetary powers, which will cover the whole of the EU budget including structural funds if the Lisbon treaty comes into force. In the years when Malta moves closer to the average EU income and its right to large-scale funding becomes less obvious Malta will need representatives that ensure that we get all that it is due and not a penny less.

7. Even five years after membership there is still more work to be done to familiarise all EU institutions with the needs and aspirations of the Maltese; with the strengths and vulnerabilities of our economy; with the peculiarity of our culture and the fibre of our society. But you cannot defend the interests and aspirations of a country and a people you do not know well. Not every candidate will have the same ability to see the implications for Malta in each new piece of legislation, and more importantly, the ability to turn them into opportunities for Malta.

8. We live in uncertain times. Our economies are under heavy



It will make a difference whether or not we vote because if we do not there will be no one to voice our concerns

strain and our current usage of this planet's resources is no longer considered sustainable. The next five years are likely to see bold action in the EP and elsewhere addressing these challenges. Maltese MEPs capable of getting down to the nitty-gritty of things can ensure that the solutions chosen match our particular needs. If new burdens are

introduced it will be partly up to our MEPs to reduce them or seek support or compensation.

9. They will be considered the MEPs representing us, the Maltese people, whether we vote for them or not. We owe it to ourselves and we owe it to Europe to send people who can represent us with dignity and with energy. They will be charged to fight our corner but also to contribute to the construction of Europe. We might have joined the project late in the day but we have the same opportunity to forge its future with our own ideas and initiatives. Is it not time for us to make our mark? Surely, whether and how we do so will depend on the calibre of whom we choose to represent us.

10. Finally, it will make a difference whether or not we vote because if we do not there will be no one to voice the concerns and air the disgruntlement that might be tempting us to abstain. There will be no one to voice our aspirations and our vision of where we want more Europe and where we might want less. It makes a difference because if we do not vote our interests will be defended by precisely nobody.

Dr Vassallo is head of the European Parliament representation in Malta

Astrid Vella Flimkien ghal Ambjent Ajhar



AS our MEPs fight it out at the polls, many of their voters feel that their work at a European level has little relevance to our lives if local politicians are unable or unwilling to have Malta conform to European standards on a number of basic and very important issues that are crucial to the well-being of the citizens of the Maltese islands, such as pollution and water as well as clean and affordable energy.

The latest data on air pollution shows that Malta is in breach of EU regulations and the situation on certain pollutants is deteriorating instead of improving. Studies have shown that much of this is traffic-related and yet calls for decisive action to clamp down on offenders have for years gone unheeded, while the population continues to inhale toxic emissions which contribute to

our high levels of asthma, heart disease and cancer.

As regards noise pollution, if we can't even regulate noise abatement in the construction site regulations, how can we expect to dictate such matters to our European counterparts.

Management plans are still missing in a number of important sectors, notably water, where Malta ranked no 172 in a UN rating of water resources in 180 countries. Even countries bordering the Sahara have been more successful in water con-

servation than Malta, where we dispose of treated sewage and storm water into the sea. Abusive borehole pumping has been rampant for years, with the result that the aquifer has been depleted and, in certain areas, polluted.

In spite of Malta's much-publicised lead in climate change years ago, we have wasted years before beginning to tackle the matter, which is still not being handled in a holistic manner by ensuring energy stability and security through the tapping of a number of different sources of alternative energy. What's more, we are being presented with a series of energy-related reports which are not only late in their preparation but also sometimes conflicting (MRA Energy Policy, CCC Strategy, MRRA Wind Farm reports, Enemalta Power Station contract).

Similarly, EU Minimum Energy Efficiency Regulations which became law in January 2007 are still not being enforced, condemning

future generations to unsustainable buildings as well as more energy and water problems.

Environment NGOs have repeatedly raised the issue of the damaging revision of the Environment Impact Assessment local regulations which allow the approval of large and potentially damaging projects in Malta. This reflects the fact that all governments for the last fifty years have viewed the building industry as a main economic driver and the protection of developers' interests has always come before that of residents and the environment, as well as seriously damaging our tourist industry. In fact, the recent revamp of the MEPA website is yet again tailored to suit developers and not the public.

The EU is beginning to tackle issues of over-development and even locally it has been recognised that by continuing to increase the supply of residential properties on our small overbuilt island, we are inevitably damaging the natural environment,

tourism and the very same property industry. Still both of the large parties have failed to commit themselves to anything on issues of over-development, stating that they will rely on MEPA guidelines which have proven to be extremely weak up to now.

Much of the problem boils down to the funding of the political parties which are bankrolled by the large developers. This is another issue which our MEPs should press their respective parties to conform to EU political party regulation, making full declaration mandatory over €500 and no donations allowed over €12,000. Until full accountability and transparency is established in party funding, the issue of over-development will remain unresolved, with the attendant deterioration in the quality of life of the Maltese population.

Astrid Vella is a spokesperson for Flimkien ghal Ambjent Ajhar

Attard-Montalto gives partial disclosure of MEP salary

MATTHEW VELLA

LABOUR MEP John Attard Montalto yesterday presented MaltaToday with a partial breakdown of his earnings in the last five years, the first Maltese MEP to offer a glimpse into his lucrative earnings.

He announced he would submit his yearly MEPs accounts for audit, and would publish them in MaltaToday – two weeks before publishing them on his website.

He is the only Labour MEP to have made this pledge, while Nationalist MEP Simon Busut-

til was the first Maltese MEP to successfully push through a party motion that will bind Nationalist MEPs to audit their accounts and publish them on their website.

"I'm ready, along with the support of one of my colleagues, to present a parliamentary motion to bind all MEPs to publicise their earnings. I think we are obliged to show what we earn, and we are in a position to set an example," Attard Montalto told MaltaToday.

Extrapolations from the MEP's partial disclosure shows Malta's MEPs can earn up to €100,000 in annual salaries, apart from having travel, offices and assistants' salaries fully subsidised.

According to the information supplied by Attard-Montalto, over the past five years he was paid an average annual salary – equivalent to that of a Maltese MP – of some €17,500. In total, he accumulated €87,850 over the past five years. Un-

der the 2009 reforms, all MEPs will now receive the same salary of €7,000 every month.

However, he did not indicate the total of daily allowances he received, which have ranged from €262 per sitting in 2004, to €298 in 2008. To qualify for these allowances, an MEP must sign the register for a committee, delegation or group meeting; and in the case of the plenary, sign-in and vote in at least 50% of the roll-call votes.

MEPs usually can earn up to an additional €60,000 annually by claiming most of these allowances.

Attard Montalto gave no totals for his taxi usage, subsidised by the EP at €50 per trip. "I have not been able to acquire the total amount of taxis but I hardly used the service to and from the airport as I do not usually travel on Sunday, when the parliamentary service is not available. This also applies for travel to the parliament as I almost always use parliamentary services.

"On the other hand, I usually use a taxi service (which is reimbursed) from parliament to the hotel when I used to reside in Sheraton Place Rogier, since I usually prefer to continue working late whilst the service closes down at 9:30pm. Regarding the use of taxis to other destinations I doubt whether I have made use of this service more than three to four times a year."

The MEP said most MEPs choose to rent or buy apartments and use the daily allowance to pay the mortgage. "In my case I have chosen to live in hotels. I was able to get favourable rates because I undertook to stay for minimum terms."

Attard-Montalto said he paid €130-140 per night to stay the Brussels' Sheraton, and then €169 per night since March 2009 to stay in the Radisson SAS. He paid €179 to stay in the Holiday Inn Strasbourg.

He added that the rate does not include breakfast.

"I do not normally eat lunch, perhaps a

small snack and I almost always eat at the hotel, usually in my room. The cost depends on what one orders but a three-course meal consisting of pasta, steak or fish, fruit and a carafe equivalent to two glasses of local wine amounts to €60."

Travel

MEPs are also given a lump-sum, equivalent to the highest economy fare, together with a "distance allowance" for travelling. Distance allowance is based on the distance in km from Malta International Airport to Brussels/Strasbourg – which stands at 4314/3532 km correspondingly for a return trip. Payments are only made upon the presentation of the original boarding passes by MEPs.

Attard-Montalto said MEPs had an agreement with Air Malta for a club-class seat, "provided that we book in advance" at the rate of €544, taxes and charges included. He only paid more than this amount on three occasions.

Attard-Montalto said he claimed a distance allowance from Brussels that ranged from €510 per return flight in 2004, up to €559 in 2008. Considering that MEPs make at least one return trip a week during the greater part of the year, except in summer, Malta's MEPs can earn anything up to €21,200 every year just for a "distance allowance" – apart from all travel costs being subsidised.

"As can be established the lump-sum is higher than the actual cost, mostly due to the distance allowance," Attard-Montalto said.

But in the next legislature, payment will be made on the actual cost of the ticket. Attard-Montalto also claimed €3,736 for travel abroad to attend conferences and seminars in 2005 (the full entitlement), €3,555 in 2006 (from a maximum of €3,826), just €920 in 2007 (from a maximum of €3,895), and €2,575 out of a maximum entitlement of €4,000 in 2008.

He made no claims on the computer and language learning funds available to MEPs to enhance computer literacy and language skills.

Pension cash

Attard-Montalto is also a member of the European Parliament's extremely lucrative pension fund.

Each monthly contribution is directly deducted from the office allowance paid to MEPs by the Parliament, and the EP also matches their contribution by twice the amount. The cash goes into a pension fund registered in Luxembourg.

Attard-

Montalto said he requested to pay his pension contribution separately from his salary but the EP turned down the request due to administrative procedures.

He operated five offices in Malta and Gozo over the past decade, which are now down to three. He received a monthly allowance since 2004 that ranged from €3,700 to €4,202 to pay for rent, maintenance, telecommunications, cleaning, and transport.

Attard-Montalto rightly described the pension fund as a "very good opportunity" – undoubtedly given the generous payout it guarantees MEPs well after the end of their parliamentary career.

"Because of the recent financial crisis Parliament itself has had to guarantee the fund and change certain conditions. The age of entitlement has been raised and the procedure whereby members can take the opportunity of a lump-sum has been abolished. Technically the portion which is paid by the MEP and which used to be deducted from the allowance known as the office expenditure had to be reimbursed by the Member for use in office expenditure to be used in accordance with the allowance above-referred to as office expenditure."

Employees

Attard-Montalto received a monthly allowance ranging from €12,576 to €17,540 between 2004-2009 to pay staff salaries. His staff complement in 2008 consisted of 11 personnel, comprising a full-time assistant and consultant in Brussels, eight assistants in Malta, and a service provider to ensure compliance of employees and consultants.

He only provided a breakdown of income and expenditure for the months of January, July and December 2008 – for example, in January, he received €15,496 which he used to pay salaries and consultancies (€13,743); €1,602 in social security and tax; €732 for staff travel.

Visitors' programme

The MEP also made use of a €535 per person allowance paid by the EP to invite 100 visitors every year to Brussels. This is usually used to fund flights and hotels for constituents to tour the European Parliament and pay them a trip to Brussels for three nights.

"The programme we prepare for the group consists of information visits to EU institutions as well as a visit outside Brussels, usually to Bruges. On most occasions the visitors are activists who have either helped me in my political campaign and/or delegates selected by their respective committees. In addition I have taken the opportunity to offer band clubs, sports clubs etc. to select visitors."



Labour MEP John Attard-Montalto said he will submit his accounts for audit and publish them in MaltaToday and on his website every year

Concerned stakeholders confront PM

DAVID DARMANIN

EXPLOITING a face-to-face opportunity with the Prime Minister at a business breakfast yesterday at Villa Arrigo in San Pawl Tat-Targa, social partners and prominent members of the business community vented their frustrations with Lawrence Gonzi, in a bid to send government a message days before the impending EP elections.

PN candidate Frank Portelli himself intervened with a long list of complaints on MEPA received from constituents, calling on the Prime Minister to bring about an "earthquake" rather than the overdue promise of a reform at the authority.

"Some businesses in Malta depend on the construction industry to survive, and as you know, construction depends on that blessed MEPA which you are responsible for," Portelli said. "Mr Prime Minister, we don't need a reform at MEPA. We need an earthquake. You must set deadlines for applications, because it is not acceptable that goalposts keep changing before permits are granted, causing serious delays in application processes."

After quoting an application number of an aggrieved appli-

cant awaiting MEPA permits, Portelli said when it comes to granting of change of use permits, "MEPA takes longer to issue permits than the gestation period of a mare."

Replying to Portelli's complaints, Gonzi agreed and said he was "waiting for EP elections to be over before I announce the measures earmarked for the MEPA reform."

On his part, Public Transport Association president Victor Spiteri solicited Gonzi's intervention because of the manner Transport Minister Austin Gatt is handling the ongoing transport reform.

"Thousands of workers depend on public transport," Spiteri said. "While we were consulted on the reform with the preceding minister (Jesmond Mugliett), we are now being left out of discussions. As you know, we met this particular Minister yesterday but the only thing he was interested in was to negotiate a package to get us out of his way. I am asking for your intervention in this matter because neither the thousands of people employed in the sector, nor the rest of the population deserve a repeat story of what we went through last July."

Gonzi disagreed with Spiteri about the Association not being consulted.

"Victor," the Prime Minis-



Tell me what's nagging you - Gonzi gets an early morning earful. Also in the picture are, from left, GWU secretary-general Tony Zarb, Forestals Group chairman Tancred Tabone and PN candidate Edward Demicoli

ter replied, "You are doing the right thing in expressing the concerns of your members because you are doing your duty, but then I must do mine. Although there is space for more discussion, I don't agree with you that there is no consultation. Our challenge is to abide by European rules, and although we tried avoiding issuing a tender, the EU did not allow us. It is within your rights to ask for my intervention but then it is also within my rights to ask you to provide a good

service."

Some members in attendance broke into applause upon hearing Gonzi's last remark.

It was MHRA President Kevin de Cesare's turn to address the Prime Minister with his grievances.

"The problems facing the tourism industry cannot all be attributed to government, but the situation is dire," he said. "We are now faced with flawed information being used to indicate that hotels and restaurants in Malta are raising their

prices."

De Cesare was alluding to an NSO statistic showing that hotels and catering establishments in Malta witnessed an 11% price hike – a datum the MHRA publicly rubbished shortly after it was released by the NSO.

But when Gonzi launched the PN manifesto a couple of weeks ago, he mentioned in passing that restaurant prices in Malta remain unacceptable. "This information is not true," de Cesare said, "and our members feel very hurt by such remarks. We stand accused of inflation and this warrants a clarification from your end."

In reaction, Gonzi said he was surprised when he saw the report published by the NSO, "but I must bow my head to whatever the NSO publishes."

Gonzi however suggested an impending reform in the NSO's data-compiling methodology, attributing the results being off the mark to the NSO reading "rack rates – the prices quoted by the hotels, and not those charged."

"Maybe the method needs to be refined," Gonzi said. "And the NSO will be proposing new methodologies to the MCESD. If these are accepted we'll go ahead with them. But I agree with Kevin de Cesare."

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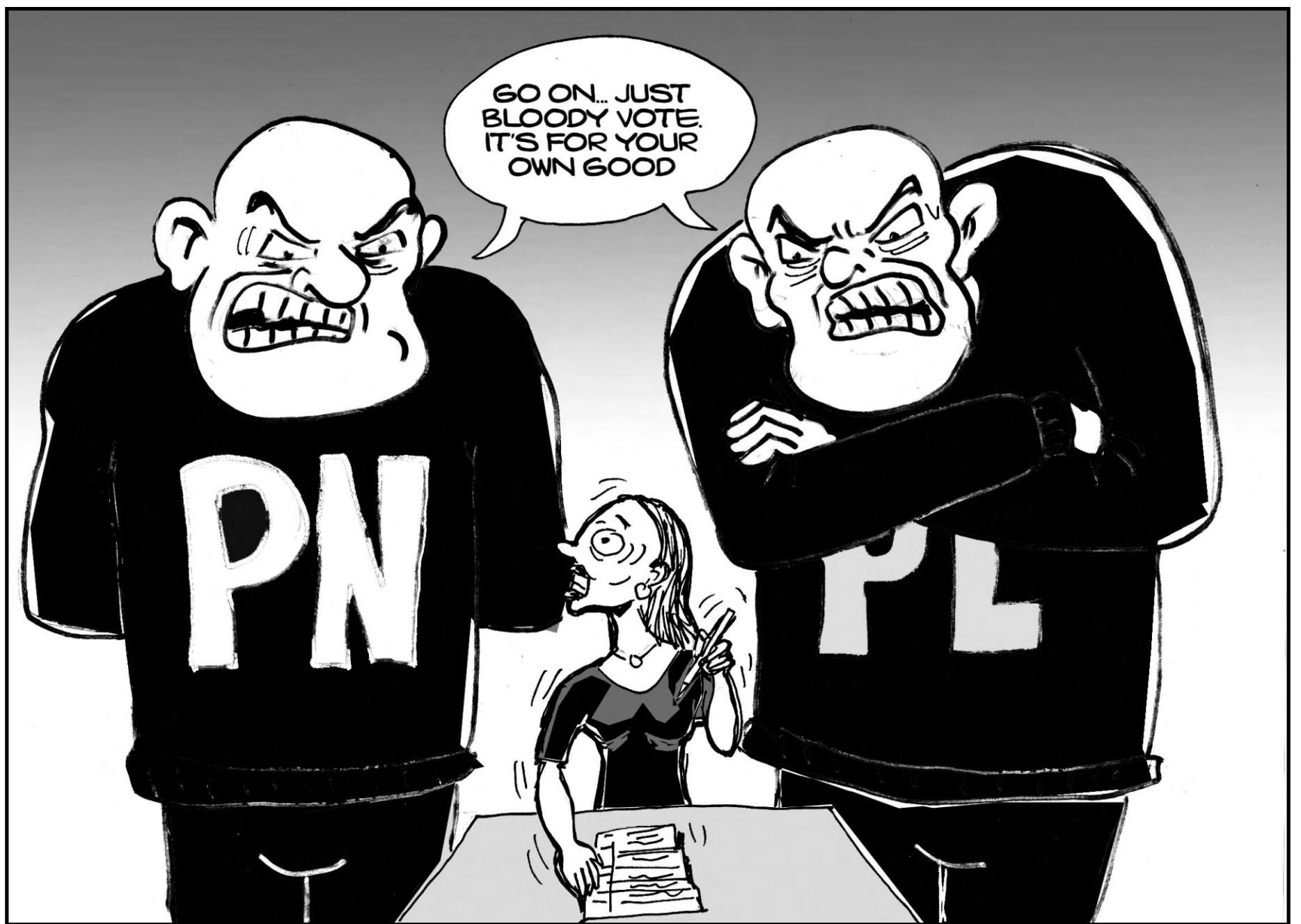
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An election without oomph

IT may not have been a memorable campaign, but by all accounts it was unusual. If nothing else, because one essential ingredient has to date been missing: election fever.

Unlike last year's general election – and arguably every other election before that – there was no discernable surge of popular enthusiasm in the dying days of the campaign. Events have on the whole been low-key: small corner meetings in Gozo, *"taht it-tinda"* discussions here and there... no major mass meetings of the kind we normally associate with election campaigns, although Labour came close with its "mass rally" at Ta' Qali last Sunday.

In fact, what emerges at a cursory glance is that the PL took this election considerably more seriously than the PN. This is entirely understandable: it is after all the first major electoral challenge for incoming leader Joseph Muscat, less than 18 months after his predecessor lost a general election by a whisker. Muscat therefore has a point to prove: anything less than an absolute majority of first-count votes can arguably be described as a defeat for La-

bour, even if the party wins a majority of seats.

For this reason, Muscat has approached this election as though it were his own be-all and end-all. European issues have been largely absent from the Labour campaign, which instead has focused on matters of purely popular concern. In a reversal of roles from March 2008 – when the Nationalist Party had pinned all its hopes on the persona of its leader – the Labour Party has left no stone unturned to discredit the "GonziPN" motif, with a billboard campaign almost exclusively targeting the Prime Minister in person, as a man who has "lost control" of the country.

Irrelevant to the European theme, perhaps; but clearly the stakes for Labour are higher than a majority of seats in Brussels and Strasbourg.

Over to the PN side of things, and by the same token, an absolute majority for Labour will certainly be interpreted as a massive defeat for the party in government. This in turn may help to explain Gonzi's curiously ambivalent approach to this election: on the one hand,

he has repeatedly sought to downplay the implications of Saturday's result for the local political scenario. But at the same time, he cannot afford to be entirely dismissive, as a perceived lack of interest on his part may serve to diminish the importance of the European Parliament in the eyes of the electorate.

As the party that took Malta into Europe in the first place, and which still accuses the PL of harbouring an anti-EU stance, the Nationalist Party cannot realistically depreciate the EU, without also undermining its own credibility in the process.

These two opposing forces have therefore combined to make the PN's campaign a somewhat half-hearted affair, conspicuously less punchy and effective than Labour's. All things told, a far cry from the PN's usual approach to general elections, which are traditionally fought on a "winner takes all" basis. So in a sense, one can hardly be surprised that the electorate appears to have lost interest this time round.

Indeed, indications point heavily towards a decline in voter participation since 2004,

though it remains to be seen by what precise margin. Our poll today suggests an abstention rate of around 7.8%, but in practice it is likely to be considerably higher, given the amount of voters who are still undecided.

A clearer indication is provided by the sheer quantity of uncollected voting documents. At the time of writing, this stood at over 19,000: almost double the corresponding statistic for the 2004 election. Barring a last-minute change of heart by around 10,000 voters, (the deadline is midnight tonight), the number of uncollected documents will almost certainly be much, much higher than usual. Nowhere is this shortfall more keenly felt than in the north of the island – a fact which strongly suggests that the PN will suffer the most on account of voter abstention.

Ironically, then, it seems that former Prime Minister Eddie Fenech Adami is slowly being proved right in his prediction, some years back, that Maltese politics would "calm down" after EU accession.

The architect of Malta's EU bid had even predicted an eventual drop in voter turnout, as

elections became less visceral and divisive in the new context of EU membership. Of course, it is debatable whether he will relish being vindicated, at the expense of his own party's standing. Nor can this particular campaign be taken as a precursor to the next general election, where the stakes will no doubt be higher.

But the indications nonetheless point towards a gradual decrease in political hysteria in the years to come, and maybe even the beginning of a slow tailing off in the otherwise complete dominance of political parties in our daily lives.

And when all is said and done, that may not be such a bad thing after all.

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