Programm Uffiċjali u

Diskors mill-Onorevoli Anġlu Farrugia

Speaker tal-Kamra tad-Deputati

Parlament ta' Malta

fl-okkażjoni tat-tifkira

tas-SETTE GIUGNO

Is-Sibt, 6 ta' Ġunju 2020

Programm Uffiċjali

9.30 am Diskors fl-okkażjoni tat-tifkira tas-Sette Giugno mill-Onorevoli Anġlu Farrugia, Speaker tal-Kamra tad-Deputati, Parlament ta' Malta, imxandar fuq l-Istazzjon Televiżiv tal-Parlament.

9.53 am Wasla tal-Onorevoli Anġlu Farrugia M.P., Speaker tal-Kamra tad-Deputati fi Pjazza San Ġorġ, il-Belt Valletta.

9.55 am L-Ispeaker jilqa' lill-Onorevoli Adrian Delia M.P., Kap tal-Oppożizzjoni, mal-wasla tiegħu fi Pjazza San Ġorġ.

9.57 am L-Ispeaker jilqa' lill-Onor. Robert Abela M.P., Prim Ministru ta' Malta, mal-wasla tiegħu fi Pjazza San Ġorġ

10.00 am L-Ispeaker tal-Kamra tad-Deputati, flimkien mal-Prim Ministru u l-Kap tal-Oppożizzjoni, jieħdu posthom quddiem il-Monument tas-Sette Giugno.

10.02 am Tindaqq il-Last Post.

Tiġi osservata minuta silenzju.

Tindaqq ir-Reveille.

L-Ispeaker iqiegħed kuruna f'riġlejn il-Monument tas-Sette Giugno.

Tqegħid ta' kuruni mill-Prim Ministru segwit mill-Kap tal-Oppożizzjoni u mis-Sindku tal-Belt Valletta.

Jindaqq l-Innu Nazzjonali.

Din is-sena ċ-ċerimonja saret fuq skala ridotta biex tiġi osservata d-distanza soċjali fid-dawl tal-imxija tal-COVID-19.

DISKORS FL-OKKAŻJONI TAS-SETTE GIUGNO 2020

Bħalma nagħmlu ta' kull sena, illum qed nikkommemoraw il-jum storiku tas-Sette Giugno 1919. Sfortunatament, din is-sena qegħdin infakkruh b'mod differenti minħabba li qed niffaċċjaw flimkien u b'kuraġġ, bħala poplu wieħed, il-pandemija tal-COVID-19. Imma dan ma jfissirx li aħna m'għandniex infakkru dak li għadda minnu l-poplu Malti u Għawdxi fil-ġrajjiet tas-Sette Giugno u wkoll nixtarru minn xiex għaddejna minn dak iż-żmien sabiex qatt ma ninsew minn fejn tlaqna u nieħdu direzzjoni aħjar għall-futur ta' pajjiżna.

Dan qed ngħidu għaliex tajjeb li wieħed jara l-komportament u l-mod li kienu jaħdmu bih il-persuni li kienu protagonisti qabel u waqt l-irvellijiet, kif ukoll fid-diskussjonijiet li seħħew wara l-avvenimenti tas-Sette Giugno. Insemmi, fost oħrajn, lil Manwel Dimech u lil Nerik Mizzi, li kienu żewġ persunaġġi li ċertament ma kienu jaqblu xejn f'dak li huwa twemmin politiku, imma li kellhom direzzjoni waħda. Tant hu hekk, li naraw lil dawk li kienu jsegwu lil Manwel Dimech, magħrufin aħjar bħala d-Dimechjani, u li kienu qed jaraw illi l-ideoloġiji tagħhom kienu qed jiġu mfixkla mill-amministrazzjoni Ingliża, u dawk li kienu segwaċi ta' Nerik Mizzi, jimxu f'direzzjoni waħda kontra l-poter Brittanniku. Dan joħroġ ċar minn diversi dokumenti ta' dak iż-żmien.

Nerik Mizzi – li ċertament kellu simpatija kbira lejn l-Italja u kien jemmen li Malta kellha tingħaqad mal-Italja u mhux mar-Renju Unit – kien jieħu sehem f'kull attività ta' dak iż-żmien. Huwa kien ukoll maħbub bħala patrijott, iżda ma kellux biżżejjed appoġġ għall-ideat pro-Italjani tiegħu peress li minn ħafna dawn kienu meqjusa bħala ideat estremi. Fil-ġlieda kontra l-Gvern Ingliż biex Malta tingħata l-ewwel Kostituzzjoni ta' self-government tagħha, lil Nerik Mizzi

narawh jiġġieled bil-qawwa kollha u mingħajr biża' kontra l-Gvern Ingliż. Fil-fatt, meta ta x-xhieda tiegħu fit-tħejjija tar-rapport li sar wara l-irvellijiet tal-1919, huwa ma qagħadx jomgħodha u tefa' t-tort tal-ħsarat fuq il-Kummissjoni tal-Qamħ Ingliża għaliex kien jikkontendi li din kienet titlob prezzijiet esaġerati mill-Maltin apposta biex inaqqsu mill-konsum tal-ħobż. Tant kienet ir-rabja tiegħu għall-ħakma Ingliża, li kien jirreferi għaliha bħala 'Reġim Aħrax Militari'.

Dan jikkomplimenta l-atteġġjament ta' Manwel Dimech li bl-ideat u l-kitbiet tiegħu dwar id-drittijiet tal-ħaddiema, ir-riformi soċjali, id-dritt tal-edukazzjoni għal kulħadd u l-importanza tal-lingwa Maltija, kien jispira lill-poplu. Għal dak iż-żmien, dawn kienu ideat progressivi ħafna illi litteralment kienu qed jiskussjaw lill-awtorità tal-Imperu Ingliż. Manwel Dimech li spiċċa eżiljat minn Malta fuq ordni tal-Gvern Ingliż fl-1914, insibuh deskritt f'kitba tal-Fondazzjoni Manwel Dimech bħala l-personifikazzjoni tal-mottivi kollha psikoloġiċi, soċjali u ideoloġiċi tal-Maltin fil-bidu tas-seklu għoxrin. Narawh ukoll jibda jikteb, jistampa u jbigħ gazzetta ta' erba' paġni kbar kull ġimgħa *Il-Bandiera tal-Maltin* sa mill-1898, u narawh ukoll iwaqqaf ix-Xirka tal-Imdawlin fl-1911, li wara bidlet isimha għal Xirka Maltija, li ħadmet favur il-ħelsien u l-indipendenza kostituzzjonali ta' Malta. Dimech kien jemmen fl-għaqda nazzjonali speċjalment fid-dritt u d-dover ta' kull ċittadin li jieħu interess attiv f'dak li qed jiġri madwaru. Huwa wkoll meqjus bħal wieħed mill-ġganti tal-istorja Maltija, persuna b'viżjoni politika li ħadmet bla heda favur l-interessi ta' Malta u li emmnet li ċ-ċittadini tagħha setgħu jimxu 'l quddiem bħala poplu sovran mingħajr indħil minn potenzi barranin. Huwa għalhekk kien jisħaq li f'Malta la għandu jkun hawn influwenza Taljana – kontra dak li kien jemmen Nerik Mizzi – u lanqas influwenza Ingliża.

Fil-fatt fil-perjodu li wassal għal dak li ġara fis-Sette Giugno, naraw lil dawn iż-żewġ protagonisti tal-istorja jimxu f'direzzjoni waħda kontra l-ħakma kolonjalista Ingliża u favur il-poplu Malti. Naraw illi f'dawk iż-żmenijiet l-interess nazzjonali kien dejjem qed ikun fuq quddiem, irrispettivament mit-twemmin politiku li wieħed kien iħaddan.

Nafu wkoll li wara l-irvellijiet tas-Sette Giugno, il-Gvernatur ta' dak iż-żmien Lord Plumer, kien talab lill-Kummissarju tal-Pulizija biex jagħtih il-lista tal-persuni li ġew arrestati, li ġew akkużati u li ġew sentenzjati. Fil-fatt, nafu li kien hemm mal-114-il persuna li ġew mogħtija sentenzi ta' ħabs, li 24 minnhom kienu baqgħu miżmuma l-ħabs għal xi żmien wara, u li kien hemm mad-90 persuna, fosthom 42 mara, illi kienu ġew akkużati li serqu xi affarijiet waqt li kienu qed iseħħu l-irvellijiet fis-Sette Giugno kif ukoll fil-ġranet ta' wara. Nafu wkoll li l-Gvernatur Plumer kien kostrett, għaliex kien hemm ċertu biża' li seta' jkun hemm irvellijiet oħrajn, joħroġ ordni biex ħafna minn dawn is-sentenzi jiġu maħfura. Dan huwa kollu dokumentat, u permezz tiegħu wieħed jista' jifhem kemm kienet twila l-battalja tal-Maltin għad-drittijiet tagħhom.

Wara l-irvellijiet tas-Sette Giugno, proprju fl-20 ta' Novembru 1919, jirriżulta li l-istess Gvernatur Plumer sejjaħ b'urġenza l-Kunsill tal-Gvern biex jinforma 'l-membri li huwa kien irċieva telegramma mis-Segretarju tal-Istat tal-Kolonji fejn informah illi l-Gvern Ingliż kien iddeċieda li wasal iż-żmien biex jafda 'l-poplu Malti bir-responsabbiltà li jikkontrolla l-affarijiet interni ta' pajjiżu, u li allura kien wasal iż-żmien illi jsiru l-preparamenti biex fl-1921 jidħol is-self-government. Interessanti li disat ijiem wara li l-Gvernatur Plumer ta din l-aħbar, kien l-istess Nerik Mizzi li pubblikament

irringrazzja lill-istess Gvernatur għall-fatt illi Malta kienet se tingħata s-self-government.

Hawn nagħmel referenza għall-Kostituzzjoni li ngħatat lil pajjiżna fl-4 ta' Mejju 1921, u allura wara li s-Segretarju tal-Istat Amery kiteb lill-Gvernatur Plumer dwar l-għoti ta' din il-Kostituzzjoni, u naqra mill-artikolu 30 tagħha li jitkellem b'mod ċar dwar il-kunċett ta' responsible government:

> "... Malta will elect and which they can change, responsible to that Legislature and to their fellow citizens. If the Government makes mistakes in administration or legislation, there is no outside authority to which the blame for these mistakes can be imputed. The responsibility for those mistakes and for correcting them by bringing about a change of government will rest with the people themselves. That is the whole meaning of Responsible Government."

Din il-parti tal-Kostituzzjoni tal-1921 tgħid ċar li min qiegħed imexxi irid jirrispondi għal għemilu quddiem il-poplu u li l-istess poplu għandu r-responsabbiltà li jekk jidhirlu li hemm bżonn, jikkoreġi tali għemil f'elezzjoni ġenerali b'bidla f'min ikun qed imexxih. Minkejja li l-Kostituzzjoni ta' Malta nbidlet diversi drabi minn meta ngħatat il-Kostituzzjoni Amery-Milner, dan il-prinċipju baqa' sagrosant mill-1921, u allura dan juri kemm il-forzi politiċi kollha minn dak iż-żmien dejjem ħadmu biex il-poplu Malti jkollu rajh f'idejh.

Ta' min wieħed issa jsemmi li ftit qabel ma ngħatat il-Kostituzzjoni tal-1921, kien jeżisti kumitat nazzjonali magħruf bħala Comitato Nazionale pro Maltesi morti e feriti il 7 e 8 Giugno, li fost il-membri tiegħu kien hemm Nerik Mizzi u ċertu Edoardo Borg, illi lkoll ftiehmu

li jixtru qabar fiċ-Ċimiterju tal-Addolorata biex l-erba' vittmi tas-Sette Giugno, li sa dakinhar kienu midfuna f'oqbra u f'lokalitajiet differenti, jinġabru flimkien u jitpoġġew f'post wieħed; hawn qed nirreferi għall-qabar li għadna naraw illum u li fuqu ta' kull sena jitqiegħdu l-kuruni b'sinjal ta' rispett, ringrazzjament u rikonoxximent. Minn dan nixtieq nieħu spunt u ngħid li fl-opinjoni tiegħi x-xiri ta' dan il-qabar kienet turija oħra li kien hemm ħsieb komuni fl-interess nazzjonali fejn mingħajr ħafna xinxilli, il-forzi politiċi ta' dak iż-żmien kienu qed jiftiehmu u jaħdmu flimkien għall-ġid tal-poplu. Minn din l-imġiba anke aħna llum għandna x'nitgħallmu.

Matul is-sena li għaddiet mill-aħħar diskors tiegħi tas-Sette Giugno fl-2019, il-Parlament Malti diġà ltaqa' 94 darba u kien hemm aktar minn 100 laqgħa tal-kumitati parlamentari, li llum jammontaw għal 15. Ġew ukoll mgħoddija 39 liġi, li fuq tlieta minnhom biss saret talba għal division fl-istadju tat-Tielet Qari. Huwa veru li s-Sedja ġiet mitluba 13-il darba sabiex tagħti deċiżjoni fuq punti ta' proċedura, imma jkolli ngħid li fl-opinjoni tiegħi wħud minn dawn it-talbiet għal rulings setgħu ġew evitati kieku kien hemm aktar koperazzjoni bejn iż-żewġ naħat tal-Kamra. Dan qed ngħidu sabiex nuri li fil-maġġoranza kważi assoluta tax-xogħol li sar fil-Parlament, dejjem kien hemm ftehim fuq dak li kien qed isir fl-interess nazzjonali.

Is-Sedja però hawnhekk tħoss li għandha tirrimarka li seta' kien hemm komportament aktar matur meta fix-xhur ta' Novembru u Diċembru li għadda, kien hemm numru ta' protesti u dimostrazzjonijiet organizzati minn gruppi ta' nies ħdejn il-bini tal-Parlament. Ngħid mingħajr tlaqliq li dawn il-persuni kellhom kull dritt li jagħmlu dawn il-protesti, però bl-istess konvinċiment nisħaq li ħadd m'għandu d-dritt li waqt li qiegħed jipprotesta, huwa stess jikser il-liġi fil-konfront tal-istituzzjoni tad-demokrazija parlamentari. Kif kulħadd jaf,

il-Membri Parlamentari, ir-rappreżentanti tal-poplu tagħna, li ġew eletti demokratikament mill-istess poplu, għandhom jiġu protetti fil-qadi ta' dmirijiethom; allura kien għalhekk li s-Sedja f'diversi okkażjonijiet ħasset il-ħtieġa li tieħu dawk il-miżuri li jidhrilha opportuni biex tipproteġi lid-Deputati kollha taż-żewġ naħat tal-Kamra. Is-Sedja dan kollu għamlitu bis-setgħa, kif ukoll fl-osservanza, tal-Ordinanza dwar il-Privileġġi u s-Setgħat tal-Kamra u tal-Ordnijiet Permanenti tal-Kamra tad-Deputati, u skont iċ-ċirkostanzi aġixxiet biex tħares id-drittijiet u s-sigurtà tal-Membri Parlamentari waqt il-qadi tal-mandat tagħhom li jirrappreżentaw lill-kostitwenti li eleġġewhom biex jirrappreżentawhom u jaħdmu fl-interess tagħhom fl-ogħla istituzzjoni tal-pajjiż.

Kien hemm okkażjonijiet fejn persuni, waqt li kienu qed jipprotestaw quddiem il-Parlament, wettqu reati fil-konfront ta' Membri Parlamentari u anke kkawżaw ħsara fuq il-vetturi ta' diversi minn dawn il-Membri. Kien għalhekk li s-Sedja kienet kostretta tieħu dawk il-miżuri neċessarji madwar il-bini tal-Parlament biex tipproteġi u tiggarantixxi aċċess bla tfixkil lill-Membri Parlamentari u dan kif hi mitluba tagħmel bil-liġi. Kien hemm okkażjonijiet ukoll fejn kienet kostretta li ma tħallix persuni jidħlu fil-bini tal-Parlament u dan biex tikkontrolla t-tensjoni u tassigura li x-xogħol fil-Kamra jkompli għaddej mingħajr xkiel. Nistqarr illi dawn mhux dejjem kienu deċiżjonijiet faċli, iżda nemmen li ċ-ċirkostanzi nneċessitaw it-teħid ta' tali deċiżjonijiet.

F'dan ir-rigward nemmen ukoll li kellu jkun hemm iktar ftehim bejn iż-żewġ naħat biex flimkien nieħdu l-prekawzjonijiet kollha neċessarji fl-interess tal-Istituzzjoni, xi ħaġa li s-Sedja tirrimarka li sfortunatament ma saritx; anzi kien hemm min ipprova jagħti interpretazzjoni u jattribwixxi mottivi differenti lill-miżuri li s-Sedja

kienet kostretta li tieħu għall-protezzjoni tal-istess Membri. Naħseb li hawnhekk ma konniex ta' eżempju u allura nara li din hija xi ħaġa li għandna nitgħallmu minnha, u li anke għandha twassalna sabiex nikkonsidraw li nsaħħu l-Ordnijiet Permanenti tal-Kamra f'dan ir-rigward.

Madankollu ma nistax ngħid li matul is-sena li għaddiet ma kienx hemm mumenti fejn irrenja l-buon sens, fejn flimkien anke ħadna deċiżjonijiet importanti sabiex il-ħidma tal-Parlament ma taqtax. Fatt li jmur lura biss ftit ġimgħat u li huwa xhieda ta' dan, hija l-koperazzjoni sħiħa li sabet is-Sedja meta fl-20 ta' April ta' din is-sena ntlaħaq ftehim dwar il-parteċipazzjoni b'mod elettroniku tal-Membri kif ukoll tax-xhieda li jkunu msejħa jidhru quddiem il-kumitati parlamentari, u dan fid-dawl tal-applikazzjoni ta' diversi regoli u direttivi mill-awtoritajiet tas-saħħa b'rabta mal-pandemija tal-COVID-19. Bis-saħħa ta' dan il-ftehim persuni, kemm Membri Parlamentari li jikkwalifikaw bħala persuni vulnerabbli kif ukoll dawk il-persuni li jiġu mitluba jagħtu x-xhieda tagħhom jew jagħmlu preżentazzjonijiet quddiem kumitat tal-Kamra, jistgħu llum jagħżlu li jipparteċipaw f'dawn il-kumitati permezz ta' faċilitajiet ta' video conference minflok ma jkunu preżenti fiżikament għal-laqgħat. Irrid ngħid li din hija proposta li saret mill-Uffiċċju tiegħi u li dwarha kien hemm is-sapport taż-żewġ naħat tal-Kamra. Dan bħalma kien hemm qbil unanimu u koperazzjoni assoluta bejn id-Deputati tal-Gvern u tal-Oppożizzjoni dwar numru ta' liġijiet u riżoluzzjonijiet li tressqu b'urġenza biex jiġu indirizzati numru ta' materji fit-tmexxija tal-pajjiż konnessi mal-imxija tal-COVD-19. Fost dawn il-liġijiet insemmi l-Att Nru X tal-2020 li jemenda l-Att dwar is-Saħħa Pubblika li jitkellem dwar il-poteri u l-awtorità mogħtija lis-Suprintendent tas-Saħħa Pubblika; l-Att Nru XII tal-2020 li jemenda l-Att li jimpllmenta Miżuri tal-Estimi li jipprovdi għall-ħruġ ta' fondi addizzjonali li jista'

jkun hemm bżonn b'konsegwenza diretta għall-miżuri meħuda mill-awtoritajiet tas-saħħa pubblika; u l-Att Nru XIII tal-2020 dwar is-Sospensjoni u l-Interruzzjoni ta' Perjodi ta' Żminijiet Legali u Oħrajn li ta s-setgħa speċifika lill-Ministru tal-Ġustizzja biex joħroġ regolamenti relatati ma' dawn it-termini legali meta s-Suprintendent tas-Saħħa Pubblika toħroġ ordni għall-għeluq ta' ċerti postijiet taħt l-Att dwar is-Saħħa Pubblika. Dan kollu kien possibbli għaliex kien hemm mhux biss ir-rieda iżda wkoll l-impenn li naħdmu lkoll flimkien fl-interess nazzjonali.

Għamilna aktar minn hekk. Fil-fatt, fi tmiem Jannar ta' din is-sena l-Parlament Malti organizza workshop interparlamentari tal-Fergħat iż-Żgħar tal-Commonwealth li fiha ġie diskuss kif nistgħu nagħtu spinta lill-ekonomiji tal-pajjiżi ż-żgħar b'mod sostenibbli. F'dan il-workshop ħadu sehem aktar minn 20 Membru Parlamentari minn madwar id-dinja. F'dan il-kuntest nixtieq insemmi wkoll ix-xogħol li għamlet is-Sedja matul it-tliet snin li ppresediet il-Fergħat iż-Żgħar tal-Assoċjazzjoni Parlamentari tal-Commonwealth, liema tliet snin ġew fi tmiemhom f'Settembru tal-2019. Matul dan it-terminu s-Sedja rnexxielha tara li jiġi addottat dokument bl-isem CPA Small Branches Climate Change Toolkit for Parliamentarians intiż biex jiggwida lill-pajjiżi u b'mod speċjali lill-Membri Parlamentari fil-ġlieda kontra t-tibdil fil-klima. Dan id-dokument ġie fil-fatt ippreżentat fil-workshop li sar f'Jannar hawn Malta, u nixtieq nikkwota mir-rimarki konklussivi tiegħi f'din il-konferenza:

> "The idea of a workshop on sustainable economic development arose in early 2019, and I am delighted that this activity now comes to fruition. During my term of office, I focused on strategy and climate change, and I am pleased to see that this work has been carried forward feeding into this

> workshop. Also, I believe that my own country, Malta, has a lot to contribute to this topic in terms of economic activity, and I am pleased to see that many local resource persons have shared their knowledge to that effect."

Irrid ngħid ukoll li matul din is-sena beda x-xogħol fil-Livell -2 tal-binja tal-Parlament sabiex jissaħħu s-servizzi li tagħti l-Istituzzjoni f'dak li huwa aċċess għall-arkivji u aktar faċilitajiet għall-kumitati tal-Kamra. Sfortunatament, ir-ritmu li kien qabad dan ix-xogħol kellu jieqaf minħabba l-imxija tal-COVID-19, però nisperaw illi ma jdumx ma jkun jista' jitkompla. Nittamaw li sal-2021, jiġifieri f'għeluq il-100 sena minn meta l-Parlament beda jiffunzjona mill-1921, dan il-proġett ikun lest u li s-servizzi jkunu diġà għad-dispożizzjoni kemm tal-Parlamentari kif ukoll tal-pubbliku Malti biex dejjem jissaħħaħ l-għarfien tax-xogħol li jsir, u li sar fil-passat, mill-istess Parlamentari.

Nagħlaq billi nassigura lil kulħadd li dak li ħassejt li kelli ngħid f'dan id-diskors għidtu fl-interess ta' kull wieħed u waħda minna l-membri parlamentari, tal-poplu, u fuq kollox tal-Istituzzjoni. Għidtu għaliex nemmen li dan il-Parlament għandu jiffunzjona b'mod li jkun dejjem ta' eżempju għas-soċjetà u għandu jaspira biex anke jkun wieħed mill-parlamenti nazzjonali fl-Ewropa fuq quddiem nett f'dak li huwa t-tħaddim tad-demokrazija parlamentari.

Għaldaqstant wieħed għandu dejjem jara kif itejjeb il-proċeduri mhux biss b'rabta mal-effiċjenza tal-Parlament, imma wkoll għall-istess tħaddim ta' din id-demokrazija parlamentari li tant ħadmu għaliha l-antenati tagħna, u għalhekk nagħlaq dan id-diskors billi nerġa' nsellem lill-vittmi tas-Sette Giugno tal-1919.

Nirringrazzjakom

> that many local resource persons have shared their knowledge to that effect."

I would also like to add that works at Level -2 of the Parliament Building intended to strengthen the services provided by this Institution relating to the access to its archives and additional facilities for the committees of the House have started this year. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 outbreak these works were interrupted, however we hope that they will resume as soon as possible. We hope that this project will be completed by 2021, that is on the 100th anniversary from the first Parliament in 1921, and that these new services will, by that time, be available both to the Parliamentarians and to the Maltese public in order to raise the awareness about the present and past work of the same Parliamentarians.

I would like to conclude by assuring everyone that all I have said in this speech was said in the best interest of each and every Member of Parliament, of the people and especially of the Institution. What I have said reflects my belief that Parliament must lead by example and should also aspire to be one of the leading national Parliaments in Europe in the promotion and implementation of parliamentary democracy.

Therefore, we have to see how we can improve not only those procedures relating to the efficiency of Parliament, but also those relating to the implementation of parliamentary democracy that our forefathers have worked so hard for. I would therefore like to close this speech by saluting the victims of the Sette Giugno 1919.

Thank you.

conferring specific powers to the Minister for Justice to issue regulations related to the legal time frames when the Superintendent of Public Health issues an order for the closure of certain premises under the Public Health Act. All of this was possible not only because there was the will but also the commitment to work together in the national interest.

We have done more than this. In fact, towards the end of last January, the Maltese Parliament organised an inter-parliamentary workshop of the Small Branches of the Commonwealth that discussed how to provide for the necessary impetus in a sustainable manner, to the economies of small states. This workshop was attended by more than 20 Members of Parliament from around the world. In this context I would also like to mention the work carried out by the Chair during the three years it presided over the Small Branches of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, which came to an end in September 2019. During this term the Chair managed to conclude the CPA Small Branches Climate Change Toolkit for Parliamentarians aimed at guiding countries, and in particular the Members of Parliament, in the fight against climate change. This document was in fact presented at the workshop held in Malta last January, and I would like to quote from my concluding remarks at this conference:

> "The idea of a workshop on sustainable economic development arose in early 2019, and I am delighted that this activity now comes to fruition. During my term of office, I focussed on strategy and climate change, and I am pleased to see that this work has been carried forward feeding into this workshop. Also, I believe that my own country, Malta, has a lot to contribute to this topic in terms of economic activity, and I am pleased to see

that in so doing we were not leading by example and that therefore we should learn from this experience, possibly by considering strengthening the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives in this regard.

However, I cannot say that during the past year there were no instances where common sense prevailed, when together we took important decisions to allow Parliamentary work to carry on uninterrupted. In fact, just a few weeks ago the Chair found full cooperation when, on 20 April, agreement was reached to provide for the online participation of Members as well as of witnesses summoned before the parliamentary committees. This was in line with the various regulations and directives issued by the Health Authorities in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this agreement, those persons who qualify as vulnerable persons, together with persons who are requested to appear or give presentations before a committee of the House can now opt to participate in parliamentary committees by way of video conferencing instead of being physically present at the meetings. I have to add that this proposal was submitted by my Office and found the support of both sides of the House. The same unanimous agreement and full cooperation between the Government and Opposition Members also characterised the discussions on a number of laws and resolutions that were presented urgently in order to address a number of matters related to the administration of the country arising from the COVID-19 outbreak. The laws include Act No. X of 2020 which amends the Public Health Act that lays down the powers and authority given to the Superintendent of Public Health; Act No. XII of 2020 that amends the Budget Measures Implementation Act to allocate additional funds required as a direct consequence of the measures implemented by the public health aAuthorities; and Act No. XIII of 2020 related to the Suspension and Interruption of Legal and Other Time Periods,

when carrying out their duties; this is the reason why the Chair felt, on a number of occasions, that it had to take those measures it considered necessary to protect all the Members from both sides of the House. In so doing, the Chair acted within the powers and in observance of the House of Representatives (Privileges and Powers) Ordinance and the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives, and according to the circumstances acted to protect the rights and provide for the safety of the Members of Parliament who have been mandated by their constituents to represent them and to work in their best interest in the country's highest institution.

There were instances in which some individuals, who were protesting in front of Parliament, carried out offences against Members of Parliament and also caused damages to their vehicles. It is for these reasons that the Chair was compelled to take the necessary measures in the precincts of the Parliament building in order to protect and guarantee unhindered access to the Members of Parliament, as it is legally required to do. There were also instances in which the Chair had no other choice but to limit public access to the Parliament building in order to diffuse tensions and to ensure that the work of the House of Representatives could carry on without interruptions. I have to confess that at times these were difficult decisions, but I believe that the circumstances required such decisions.

In this regard I believe that there should have been more cooperation between the two sides of the House so that all the necessary precautions in the Institution's best interest could have been taken together, something that regrettably did not occur. On the contrary, there were those who tried to give a different interpretation to these action and attribute ulterior motives to the measures that the Chair was compelled to take in order to protect the same Members of Parliament. I believe

victims of the Sette Giugno, who up till then were buried in different graves and localities, could be buried together in one place; I am referring to the grave that we can still see to this very day and on which we lay wreaths as a sign of respect, gratitude and recognition. I would also like to add that I believe that the purchase of this grave further attests to the common yet humble collective efforts of the various political forces towards the national interest. Even today, there are lessons to be learnt from this behaviour.

During the past year, since my last Sette Giugno speech in 2019, the Maltese Parliament has already been convened 94 times, and there have been over 100 meetings of the parliamentary committees, which to date stand at 15. A division at Third Reading stage was called on three out of the 39 laws that were passed since. Although the Chair was called upon 13 times to rule on procedural matters, I must state that in my opinion some of these requests for rulings could have been avoided had there been more cooperation between the two sides of the House. I am stating this to show that in the vast majority of the work carried out in Parliament, there was always agreement that what was being done was in fact in the national interest.

However, at this point, the Chair feels that it should point out that there could have been more mature behaviour last November and December, when a number of protests and demonstrations were being organised by groups of people in the vicinity of the Parliament building. I would like to state, without any hesitation, that these persons had every right to protest, but with the same conviction I state that during such protests nobody has the right to break the law in respect of the institution embodying parliamentary democracy. Everybody acknowledges that the Members of Parliament, the representatives of our people, who are elected democratically by the same people, deserve to be protected

At this point I would like to make reference to the Constitution granted to our country on 4 May 1921, after the State Secretary Amery had written to Governor Plumer about the granting of this Constitution, and quote from its article 30 that clearly defines this concept of responsible government:

> "... Malta will elect and which they can change, responsible to that Legislature and to their fellow citizens. If the Government makes mistakes in administration or legislation, there is no outside authority to which the blame for these mistakes can be imputed. The responsibility for those mistakes and for correcting them by bringing about a change of government will rest with the people themselves. That is the whole meaning of Responsible Government."

This part of the 1921 Constitution clearly states that whoever is leading the country must be held accountable for its actions to the people and, if deemed necessary, the latter have the responsibility to address such actions during a general election by making the necessary changes in leadership. This sacrosanct principle remained intact notwithstanding the many changes made to the Constitution of Malta since the granting of the Amery-Milner Constitution in 1921; this shows that all the political forces since then have always worked in favour of the Maltese people controlling their own affairs.

It is worth mentioning that a national committee, the Comitato Nazionale pro Maltesi morti e feriti il 7 e 8 Giugno (pro-Maltese National Committee for the injured and deceased on the 7 and 8 June), which was in place before the 1921 Constitution was granted, and which included among its members Nerik Mizzi and Edoardo Borg, agreed to purchase a grave at the Addolorata Cemetery so that the four

In the period that led to the Sette Giugno events, we observe these two protagonists from our history move in the same direction against the British colonial rule and in favour of the Maltese people. In those times the national interest always prevailed, irrespective of any personal political belief.

We also know that the Governor at that time, Lord Plumer, had requested the Police Commissioner to provide him with the list of persons that had been arrested, accused and sentenced following the Sette Giugno riots. In fact, we know that there were some 114 individuals who had been handed down prison sentences, with 24 persons having been held in prison for some time and another 90 persons, including 42 women, who were indicted for of stealing a number of items during and in the days following the Sette Giugno riots. We also know that due to the impending threat of further riots, Governor Plumer was forced to issue revocation orders with respect to many of these sentences. All of this is documented and evidences how long the Maltese had to battle in order to win their rights.

Following the Sette Giugno riots, namely on 20 November 1919, it transpires that the aforementioned Governor Plumer had urgently convened the Council of Government in order to inform its members that he had received a telegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies informing him that the British Government had decided that the time had come to give the Maltese people the responsibility to manage the internal affairs of their country and to make the necessary preparations for the introduction of self-government in 1921. It is interesting to note that nine days later, Nerik Mizzi publicly thanked Governor Plumer for the move which would see Malta trusted with self-rule.

during his testimony before the Comission set upto prepare a report on the 1919 riots. We see him placing the blame for the damages that occurred during the riots squarely on the British Wheat Commission where he contended that the said Commission was endorsing higher prices purposely to decrease bread consumption. His anger was so acute that he referred to the British rule as a 'Harsh Military Regime'.

This complemented the position taken by Manwel Dimech who inspired the people with his ideas and writings on workers' rights, social reforms, right to education for all and the importance of the Maltese language. At that time, these were very progressive ideas, which literally rattled the authority of the British Empire. Manwel Dimech, who ended up being exiled from Malta by order of the British Government in 1914, is described, in the writings of the Manwel Dimech Foundation, as the personification of all the ideological, social and psychological aspirations of the Maltese people at the beginning of the twentieth century. He was responsible for contributing to, printing and distribution a four-page weekly newspaper *Il-Bandiera tal-Maltin* (The Flag of the Maltese) in 1898, as well as establishing the Xirka tal-Imdawlin (The League of the Enlightened) in 1911, which later changed its name to *Ix-Xirka Maltija* (the Maltese League), that strived for Malta's liberation and constitutional independence. Dimech believed in national unity, especially in the right and duty of every citizen to take an active interest in all events taking place in Malta at that time. He is considered as one of the most important persons in Maltese history, a person with a political vision who worked tirelessly in favour of Malta's interests and who believed in the right of the people to move ahead as a sovereign state without any foreign interference. It is for this reason that he argued against both the Italian influence – contrary to Nerik Mizzi's beliefs – and to British influence.

SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF SETTE GIUGNO 2020

We are today remembering the historical day of the Sette Giugno 1919. Regrettably this year the commemoration has had to take on a different format due to the particular challenges brought upon us by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are currently facing together as one. However, we should not allow these particular circumstances to hinder us from recalling the challenging circumstances our forefathers had to endure throughout the Sette Giugno events, so that on the basis of the lessons learnt from the past we can forge a better future for our country.

I am making this statement because it is important to look at how the protagonists of the 1919 events behaved before and after the Sette Giugno riots, as well as during the discussions that followed the Sette Giugno events. I would like to mention, amongst others, Manwel Dimech and Nerik Mizzi, who in spite of surely not sharing the same political belief, were in agreement on the direction Malta was to take. So much so, that we note that both the followers of Manwel Dimech, better known as the Dimechjani and whose ideology was continually being obstructed by the British administration, and those of Nerik Mizzi, moving forward in unison against the British rule. Various historical documents attest to this.

Nerik Mizzi, who believed that Malta should foster close links with Italy and not with the United Kingdom, and who actively participated and took every opportunity to push forward his ideals, lacked the necessary support because his pro-Italian sympathies were deemed by many as being too extreme. In the struggle against the British Government for Malta to be given its first self-government Constitution, we see Nerik Mizzi fighting with all his might and without fear; we see him not shying away from criticising the British authorities

Official Programme

9.30 am Speech on the occasion of the commemoration of Sette Giugno by the Honourable Anġlu Farrugia, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Parliament of Malta, broadcast on Parliament TV.

9.53 am Arrival of the Speaker of the House of Representatives in St George's Square, Valletta.

9.55 am The Speaker greets Honourable Adrian Delia M.P., Leader of the Opposition, upon his arrival in St George's Square.

9.57 am The Speaker greets Honourable Robert Abela M.P., Prime Minister of Malta, upon his arrival in St George's Square.

10.00 am The Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition take their places in front of the Sette Giugno Monument.

10.02 am The Last Post is sounded.

A minute of silence is observed.

The Reveille is sounded.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives lays a wreath at the foot of the Sette Giugno Monument.

Laying of wreaths by the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Mayor of Valletta.

The National Anthem is played.

This year the ceremony was scaled down in order to observe social distancing in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Official Programme and

Address by the Honourable Anġlu Farrugia

Speaker of the House of Representatives

Parliament of Malta

on the occasion of the commemoration of

SETTE GIUGNO

Saturday, 6 June 2020