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Cover: First meeting of the Social Affairs Committee during the 7th Legislature on 2nd October 1995.

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DAĦLA

Foreword

Din il-ħarġa ta' *mill-Parlament* hija l-pubblikazzjoni li tkopri l-perjodu tal-btajjel tas-sajf. Għalkemm is-sajf kellu jservi ta' ffit mistrieħ għal kull wieħed u waħda minna, ix-xogħol fil-binja tal-Parlament baqa' għaddej b'ritmu tajjeb.

Fil-bidu ta' Awwissu giet inawgurata l-esebizzjoni mtellgħa mill-uffiċċju tal-Perit Renzo Piano dwar il-proġett tad-daħla tal-Belt Valletta inkluż il-binja tal-Parlament. Għall-inawgurazzjoni kien preżenti l-istess Perit Piano.

Għar-raba' sena konsekuttiva, ittellgħet ukoll fil-binja tal-Parlament l-esebizzjoni Science in the House, li hija vetrina ta' xogħol ta' riċerka li jsir f'Malta minn diversi xjentisti.

Matul is-sajf saru diversi sessjonijiet speċjali fis-sala tal-Parlament, fosthom il-Parlament Nazzjonali taż-Zgħażaġh u l-ewwel konferenza internazzjonali tas-Socjetà MALTMUN bħala simulazzjoni tax-xogħol li jsir fi ħdan in-Nazzjonijiet Uniti. Fl-aħħar gimgħa ta' Settembru gie organizzat ukoll forum dwar il-futur tas-setturi kulturali u kreattivi sas-sena 2020. Matul dan il-forum diversi artisti għamlu interventi interessanti dwar l-importanza tal-kultura f'pajjiżna u t-tifsira tagħha anke mill-aspett ta' demokrazija parlamentari.

Fost id-diversi impenji li kien hemm min-naħa tal-Parlament Malti, insemmi delegazzjoni li mexxejt jiena reċentement fi Brussell, fejn minbarra l-preżenza u l-attività ta' għaxar membri parlamentari min-naħa tal-Gvern u min-naħa tal-Oppożizzjoni, kien hemm ukoll numru sabiħ ta' membri tal-istaff tal-Parlament. L-għan ta' din iż-żjara kien li flimkien nieħdu esperjenza ta' kif jaħdmu l-istituzzjonijiet Ewropej u nagħrfu aħjar l-importanza tal-Parlament nazzjonali u ta' pajjiżna stess fil-futur tal-istituzzjonijiet Ewropej, għaliex jekk il-poter tal-Parlament nazzjonali ma jikbix aktar minn kif deskritt fit-Trattat ta' Liżbona, allura l-Ewropa se tiffaċċja problemi kif fil-fatt diġà qed tiffaċċja.

F'din il-ħarġa għandkom issibu artiklu interessanti ta' Dr George Cassar dwar żewġ politiċi Maltin, Camillo Scerberras u Giorgio Mitrovich, kif ukoll it-tieni parti ta' artiklu mill-Professor Godfrey Pirota dwar l-istorja tal-bini tal-Parlament matul iż-żmenijiet. Barra minn hekk, insibu wkoll artiklu interessanti miktub mill-eks Speaker u eks Prim Ministru Lawrence Gonzi, dwar kif daħlet fis-seħħ is-sistema tal-kumitati parlamentari li din is-sena qed infakkru l-għoxrin anniversarju mit-twaqqif tagħhom.

Żvilupp importanti li seħħ wara l-ftuħ tal-binja l-ġdida kien li daħħalna l-cameras tat-televiżjoni fil-Parlament. Minn hawn nista' nħabbar li dan l-aċċess issa se jitwessa' u jkun għal kulhadd għaliex għandna l-konferma li l-Parlament TV se jkun free-to-air bi dritt għal kulhadd.

Issa li dħalna lura għall-ħidma parlamentari wara l-waqfa tas-sajf, nixtieq nieħu din l-opportunità biex nenfasizza fuq l-importanza li l-ġurnalisti jkollhom l-informazzjoni eżatta dwar dak li qed isir fil-Parlament għax b'hekk tissaħħaħ it-trasparenza li aħna nemmu li hija parti mid-demokrazija.

This is the issue of *mill-Parlament* which covers the summer period. Although summer was intended to be a period of rest for each and every one of us, work within the Parliament building carried on at a steady pace.

The exhibition on the Valletta City Gate project including the new Parliament building organized by the office of the architect Renzo Piano was inaugurated at the beginning of August. Architect Piano was present for this inauguration.

For the fourth consecutive year, the Science in the House exhibition, which is a showcase of research work carried out in Malta by several scientists, was set up in the Parliament building.

During the summer several special sessions were held in the plenary hall, including the National Youth Parliament and the first international conference of the MALTMUN Society organised as simulations of the work of the United Nations. In the last week of September a forum on the future of the cultural and creative sectors by 2020 was also organized. During this forum many artists made interesting contributions on the importance of culture in our country and its meaning also from the parliamentary democracy aspect.

Other parliamentary work by the Maltese Parliament this summer included the delegation which I recently headed to Brussels, which comprised ten Members of Parliament from both sides of the House and a number of parliamentary officials. The purpose of this visit was for the delegation to observe the functions of the European institutions and to better appreciate the importance of the national Parliament and of our country in the future of the European institutions, because if the power of the national Parliament is not strengthened further than as provided for in the Lisbon Treaty, then Europe will face problems as it is indeed already facing.

In this issue you can also find an interesting article by Dr George Cassar on two Maltese politicians, Camillo Scerberras Giorgio Mitrovich, as well as the second part of an article by Professor Godfrey Pirota on the history of the Parliament premises over the years. Furthermore, you can also find an interesting article written by former Speaker and former Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, on the setting up of the parliamentary committees which this year coincides with the twentieth anniversary of their establishment.

An important development which took place with the opening of the new building was the introduction of television cameras in Parliament. I can now say that access will now be broadened to enable everyone to make use of this service because we now have confirmation that Parliament TV will be available to everyone free-to-air.

Now that we have returned to our parliamentary work from the summer break, I take this opportunity to emphasize the importance that journalists have accurate information about what is happening in Parliament because thereby transparency, which we believe is part of democracy, can be increased.

ŻEWĠ PIJUNIERI TAL-POLITIKA MALTIJA: CAMILLO SCEBERRAS U GIORGIO MITROVICH

Nistgħu ngħidu li l-politika attiva f'Malta għandha oriġini li jmorru lura għal aktar minn żewġ sekli. Matul dan iż-żmien, il-ħidma ta' għadd ta' Maltin li kellhom għarfien politiku, tħalliet b'wirt lilna u ħafna minn dak li stinkaw għalih qiegħed jtgawda mill-ġenerazzjonijiet preżenti f'Malta sovrana u indipendenti. Il-politiċi Maltin tal-bidu ma kellhom xejn fuq ijbnu ħlief l-ideali tagħhom stess u x-xewqa li jaraw lil Malta ssir aktar awtonoma billi jeqirdu l-ktajjen li kienu ħalqu u sostnew il-ħakkiema kolonjali. Minn fost dawn il-politiċi bikrija, f'dan l-artiklu ser nagħtu ħarsa ħafifa lejn tnejn minnhom li jistgħu jittqiesu bħala protagonisti fil-ġlieda ta' Malta għall-awtonomija politika bejn wieħed u ieħor fl-ewwel nofs seklu tal-ħakma Inġliża. Dawn kellhom ukoll l-okkażjoni sabiex jikkooperaw flimkien u jikkoordinaw l-azzjonijiet bil-għan li jkomplu jmxexxu 'l quddiem it-talbiet političi tal-Maltin.

L-ewwel wieħed minn dawn it-tnejn huwa Camillo Scerberras (1772-1855), ġentlom li kien ġew minn familja nobbli. Wieħed jista' jgħid li Scerberras kien leali lejn dak kollu li kien Franciż u li kien favur l-ideali rivoluzzjonarji tar-Revoluzzjoni Franciża tal-1789. Dan jindika fejn kienet qalbu – il-libertà, l-ugwaljanza u l-fraternità bħala l-pilastri tal-ispirtu rivoluzzjonarju kif propost mill-filosfi u l-mexxejja političi Franciżi. Bħala wieħed minn dawk il-Maltin li kienu qrib l-ideali rivoluzzjonarji Franciżi, wieħed jista' jifhem għaliex huwa dlonk kien integrat fil-gvern ta' Malta meta fl-1798 il-gżira tteħdet mill-forzi Franciżi mmexxija minn Napuljun Bonaparte, li f'dak iż-żmien kien diġà ffokat sew fuq ħidmietu minkejja li kien għadu żgħażaġh. Scerberras kien b'ruħu u b'ġismu kontra l-Ordni ta' San Gwann, li għalih kienet tissarraf f'sistema oppressiva li razżnet kull forma ta' libertà u ftuħ għall-aspirazzjonijiet političi Maltin. Għalhekk, Camillo Scerberras serva bħala membru tal-Municipalitá tal-Punent meta l-Franciżi stabbilixxew s-sistema governattiva ġdida tagħhom. Madankollu, huwa telaq lejn Franza fl-1799 u reġa' lura lejn Malta biss fl-1817, wara li kienet ġiet fi tmiemha l-era Napuljuniku.

Scerberras ma tilifx l-ispirtu kumbattiv tiegħu u meta reġa' lura biex jgħix f'art twelidu huwa beda jinvolvi ruħu fi kwistjonijiet soċjopolitiči, waqt li qasam l-ideat liberali tiegħu fi ħdan iċ-ċirku ta' ħbieb illi kellu fuq il-gżira. Huwa daħal f'diskussjonijiet u skambja opinjonijiet, aspirazzjonijiet u strategiji ma' dawk li kienu politikament attivi, fosthom ma' Giorgio Mitrovich. Dawn kienu rġiel b'rieda ċara li baġtu petizzjonijiet u rappreżentazzjonijiet lill-gvern Inġliż f'Londra f'isem il-poplu Malti. Wieħed jista' jgħid li f'dan iż-żmien, iċ-ċittadini Maltin, fil-maġġoranza tagħhom illitterati, ma kellhomx l-iċken idea x'kien qiegħed jigrri f'isimhom, filwaqt li fl-istess ħin la setgħu jifhmu u lanqas ma kienu jinteressawhom il-libertajiet političi – huma kellhom affarijiet aktar bażiċi fuq ijbinkwetaw, mhux l-inqas it-taqbida li riedu jissieltu biex jgħixu minn jum għal jum fuq pagi miżeri u prospetti incerti f'dak li għandu x'jaqsam max-xogħol.

Fl-1835 Scerberras kien strumentali fit-tiswir tal-Comitato di Petizione kompost minn għoxrin membru. Is-sena ta' wara ġiet iffinalizzata petizzjoni, li kienet lesta biex tiġi

ppreżentata lill-parlament Inġliż. L-attivizmu politiku wassal lil Camillo Scerberras biex iwaqqaf ukoll il-Comitato Generale Maltese. Dawn l-azzjonijiet ma naqasx li jkunu nnotati mill-mexxejja Inġliżi, tant li fl-1836 intbagħtet f'Malta l-Kummissjoni Rjali sabiex tistudja s-sitwazzjoni lokali u tagħti pariri dwar it-titjib u l-aġġustamenti meħtieġa, kif ukoll tieħu nota ta' dak li Scerberras u l-grupp politiku tiegħu kienu qegħdin jitolbu għall-Maltin. B'hekk, il-kummissarji rjali, John Austin u George Cornwall Lewis, kienu fundamentali sabiex Malta nġatat il-libertà tal-istampa – miżura li setgħet tiffacilita dibattitu estiż u aktar miftuħ dwar il-materji li kienu jikkonċernaw lill-Maltin.



Camillo Scerberras

Scerberras kien punt fiss tal-politika u l-affarijiet nazzjonali. Huwa kien jistmell il-politiċi kolonjali Inġliżi għax ma kinux jikkunsidraw l-ħtiġijiet u x-xewqat tal-Maltin. Huwa komplja jaħdem b'risq il-Maltin sabiex ikollhom sehem fil-gvern ta' pajjiżhom, xi ħaġa li nksibet parzjalment permezz tal-Kostituzzjoni tal-1849. Skont din il-kostituzzjoni, kellu jkun hemm tmien membri mhux uffiċjali eletti, li allura

ŻEWĠ PIJUNIERI TAL-POLITIKA MALTIJA: CAMILLO SCEBERRAS U GIORGIO MITROVICH (KONT.)

kien ifisser li, għalkemm dawn kienu f'minoranza meta mqabbla mad-disa' membri uffiċjali, kien żvilupp fuq ix-xejn li kien jeżisti sa dak iż-żmien. Sceberras ikkontesta l-ewwel elezzjoni taht din il-kostituzzjoni iżda, b'mod paradossali, l-għadd ta' voti li kiseb kien baxx ħafna. F'dan iż-żmien huwa diġà kellu 77 sena u għalhekk ma reġax ipparteċipa f'elezzjonijiet oħrajn. Huwa miet ftit snin wara imma ħalla warajh legat politiku.

Il-kompatrijott tiegħu, Giorgio Mitrovich (1795-1885), kien pjuttost iżgħar minn Sceberras, billi twieled 23 sena warajh, madankollu, huwa kien iħaddan l-istess spirtu politiku u heġġa għan-nazzjonalizmu. Mitrovich ħadem ferm favur il-ġid ekonomiku ta' Malta u l-introduzzjoni tal-libertà tal-istampa. Is-saħħa ta' Mitrovich kienet tinsab fil-pinna tiegħu u huwa kien jimpenja ruħu b'kitbiet u appelli sabiex il-Maltin iqumu u jiggieldu għad-drittijiet tagħhom. Huwa ssieheb fil-Comitato Generale Maltese, sabiex b'hekk beda jappoġġja lil Camillo Sceberras fl-ideali politiċi għal Malta li tkun politikament aktar awtonoma.

Giorgio Mitrovich ivvjagga lejn Londra, fejn huwa pprezenta t-talbiet tal-Maltin u kiseb l-appoġġ ta' bosta membri tal-parlament Inġliż, fosthom William Ewart, il-membri li kien jirrapprezenta lill-belt ta' Liverpool. Il-fuljett ta' Mitrovich intitolat *The Claims of the Maltese founded upon the Principles of Justice* tal-1835 kien segwit minn kitbiet oħrajn li ħargu fid-deher il-kawża Maltija, inkluż *Indirizzo ai Maltesi*. Mitrovich ibbaża t-talba tiegħu għal entità li tkun tirrapprezenta lill-poplu Malti billi argumenta li dan il-prinċipju diġà kien inkorporat fl-istruttura u fil-funzjonijiet tal-Consiglio Popolare, li huwa sostna li kien imur lura għall-1090. Skont l-argumentazzjoni tiegħu, kien il-Konti Ruggieru li stabbilixxa kunsill li kien jinkorpora fih rappreżentanti tal-kleru, tan-nobbiltà u tal-poplu. Barra minn hekk, Mitrovich sostna li, meta Alexander Ball waqqaf il-Congresso fl-1798 matul ir-rewwixta tal-Maltin kontra l-Franċiżi, dan ma kien xejn inqas minn rifondazzjoni tal-Consiglio Popolare. Hu sostna li ż-żewġ korpi kellhom setgħat legiſlattivi. Għalhekk, meta l-Inġliżi rażżnu l-Congresso huma kisru l-wegħda solenni li kienu għamlu lill-Maltin meta ħadu l-gżejjer f'idejhom fl-1800. Għalkemm ma hemm xejn li jista' jiġi pprovat b'mod definittiv fil-pretensjonijiet ta' Mitrovich, il-linja ta' argumentazzjoni tiegħu ntlagħet tajjeb u saret popolari tant li tabilhaqq setgħet influwenzat lill-Inġliżi biex jinkludu l-elementi rappreżentattivi misjuba fil-Kostituzzjoni tal-1849. Mitrovich ipprezenta l-kandidatura tiegħu għall-elezzjoni tal-1849 iżda, bħal Sceberras, ma giex elett. Madankollu, huwa gie elett fl-elezzjoni parzjali tal-1858 wara r-riżenja ta' Ignazio Bonavia.

Mitrovich miet raġel fqir fl-età ta' 90 sena. Il-gvern kolonjali ma kienx ta permess sabiex it-tebut tiegħu jitgħatta b'bandiera Maltija u lanqas sabiex iż-żewġ baned tal-Belt Valletta jakkumpanjaw il-korteo funebri, filwaqt li Dr Nicola Zammit ma tħallix jagħmel diskors waqt il-funeral. Hekk miet patrijott ieħor Malti li kien iddedika l-enerġija kollha tiegħu biex pajjiżu jsir post aħjar u aktar nieles biex tgħix fih.

Jista' jkun li Camillo Sceberras u Giorgio Mitrovich ma rawx wisq progress politiku matul ħajjithom, madankollu, l-ideali u l-aspirazzjonijiet tagħhom ġew imħaddna u nżammu ħajjin mill-politiċi li ġew warajhom, u r-riżultati ta' tali attivizmu politiku jidhru f'Malta tal-lum.



Comm. Dr George Cassar huwa Senior Lecturer fl-Istitut għat-Turiżmu, l-Ivvjaġġar u l-Kultura tal-Università ta' Malta. Huwa soċjologu storiku u pedagogista b'interessi ta' riċerka fl-Istorja u s-Soċjoloġija tal-Edukazzjoni; il-Pedagoġija tal-Patrimonju Kulturali, l-Istorja u l-Istudji Soċjali; l-Istorja tat-Tagħlim tal-Istorja; l-Istudju tal-Ordni ta' San Ġwann (SMOM); l-Istorja u l-Kultura ta' Malta; il-Patrimonju u l-Kultura; it-Turiżmu Kulturali; u s-Soċjoloġija tal-Ikel. Huwa l-awtur jew l-EDITOR ta' kotba u rivisti akkademici, u ppubblika għadd ta' studji fil-ġurnali u kapitli f'kotba relatati mal-l-oqsma ta' interess tiegħu.

TWO PIONEERS OF MALTESE POLITICS: CAMILLO SCEBERRAS AND GIORGIO MITROVICH

It can be claimed that active Maltese politics has a long lineage that goes back more than two centuries. Along this time a number of politically conscious Maltese have left their legacy and much of what they strived for is now being enjoyed by the present generations in an independent and sovereign Malta. The early Maltese politicians had nothing to build upon except their own ideals and their desire to see Malta becoming more autonomous by shedding the shackles created and maintained by the colonial overlords. From among these early politicians, in this article we will briefly mention two who may be considered protagonists in Malta's fight for political autonomy in the first half century or so of British rule. They also had occasion to cooperate and coordinate actions to further the political claims of the Maltese.

The first one of the two is Camillo Scerberras (1772-1855), a gentleman of noble stock. One can say that Scerberras was a staunch Francophile who supported the revolutionary ideals of the French Revolution of 1789. This indicates where his heart lay – liberty, equality and fraternity being the pillars of the revolutionary spirit as conceptualised by the French philosophers and political leaders. Being one of those Maltese who were close to the French revolutionary ideals, it stood to reason that he was at once integrated into the government of Malta when in 1798 the island was taken by the French forces led by a still young but already focused Napoleon Bonaparte. Scerberras was all out against the rule of the Order of St John which he identified with a despotic system that withheld any form of liberty and openness for Maltese political aspiration. Camillo Scerberras thus served as a member of the Municipality of the West when the French first established their new system of government. He, however, left for France in 1799 and only returned to Malta in 1817 after the Napoleonic era was over.

Scerberras did not lose his fighting spirit and when he resettled in his native land he began to involve himself in socio-political issues while announcing his liberal ideas within his circle of friends on the island. He joined in discussions and exchanged views, aspirations and strategies with the politically active, among whom there was Giorgio Mitrovich. These were men with a purpose who sent petitions and representations to the British government in London in the name of the Maltese people. One may state that at this time the Maltese people, illiterate in their majority, were not at all aware of what was being done in their name, while at the same time they did not particularly understand or care for political liberties – they had more basic things to worry about, not least the struggle to live from day to day on measly wages and uncertain employment prospects.

In 1835 Scerberras was instrumental in the formation of a Comitato di Petizione composed of twenty members. The following year a petition had been finalised ready to be presented to the British parliament. Political activism induced Camillo Scerberras to also found the Comitato Generale Maltese. Such actions did not go by unnoticed by

the British rulers. So much so that the Royal Commission that was sent to Malta in 1836 to study the local situation and give advice on improvements and adjustments, took note of what Scerberras and his political group had been requesting for the Maltese. Thus the royal commissioners, John Austin and George Cornwall Lewis, were for example pivotal in the granting to Malta of the liberty of the press – a measure which could facilitate a more open and wider debate on Maltese matters.

Scerberras was a mainstay of national politics and affairs. He detested British colonial policies which did not take into consideration the needs and wishes of the Maltese. He continued to work for the Maltese to have a share in the government of their country, something which was partially achieved through the Constitution of 1849. Under this constitution there were to be eight elected unofficial members and although a minority when compared to the nine official members, yet this was a development over the nothing that existed up till then. Scerberras stood for the first election under this constitution but, paradoxically, the number of votes he polled was very low. At this time he was already 77 years old and thus did not participate in further elections. He died a few years later but not without leaving a political legacy.



Giorgio Mitrovich

TWO PIONEERS OF MALTESE POLITICS: CAMILLO SCEBERRAS AND GIORGIO MITROVICH (CONT.)

His compatriot, Giorgio Mitrovich (1795-1885) was somewhat younger than Sceberras as he was born 23 years after him, yet he shared his political spirit and nationalistic fervour. Mitrovich championed Malta's economic well-being and the introduction of the liberty of the press. Mitrovich's forte was his pen and he engaged in writing and appealing for the Maltese to fight for their rights. He joined the Comitato Generale Maltese, thus supporting Camillo Sceberras in the political ideals for a more politically autonomous Malta.

Giorgio Mitrovich travelled to London where he presented the claims of the Maltese and enlisted the support of several members of the British parliament, one of whom was William Ewart, the member representing Liverpool. Mitrovich's pamphlet *The Claims of the Maltese founded upon the Principles of Justice of 1835* was followed by other writings emphasising the Maltese cause including the *Indirizzo ai Maltesi*. Mitrovich based his submissions for a body that represented the Maltese people on the argument that this principle had already been embodied in the structure and functions of the Consiglio Popolare which he claimed could be traced to 1090. According to his argumentation, it was Count Roger who had set up a body incorporating representatives of the clergy, the nobility and the people. Furthermore, Mitrovich held that, when Alexander Ball set up the Congresso in 1798 during the rising of the Maltese against the French, this was nothing less than a revival of the Consiglio Popolare. Both bodies, it was claimed, had legislative powers. When the British suppressed the Congresso they had thus broken their solemn pledge to the Maltese on taking over the islands in 1800. Though nothing could be definitely proven in Mitrovich's claims, his line of argumentation was picked up and became popular to the extent that it may have influenced the British to include the representative elements found in the Constitution of 1849. Mitrovich presented his candidature for the election of 1849 but, like Sceberras, was not returned. He was, however, elected in the partial election of 1858 following the resignation of Ignazio Bonavia.

Mitrovich died a poor man at the age of 90. The colonial government did not grant permission for his coffin to be covered by a Maltese flag nor for the two Valletta bands to accompany the funeral cortege, while Dr Nicola Zammit was not allowed to deliver a funeral oration. Thus died another of Malta's patriots who had devoted all his energy to see his country a better and freer place to live in.

Camillo Sceberras and Giorgio Mitrovich may have not seen much political progress during their lives, however their ideals and aspirations were taken up and kept alive by politicians that came after them, and the results of such political activism is seen in Malta of today.



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Nghodd lili nnifsi fost dawk li jemmnu li s-suċċess fit-tul ta' riforma għandu jitkejjel ukoll mill-mod kif tali riforma giet imħaddna mill-partijiet interessati, mill-mod bla xkiel tal-implimentazzjoni tagħha u mil-livell tal-kisbiet fl-effiċjenza miksuba b'riżultat tat-tranzizzjoni għal sistema ġdida. Riforma bħal din giet implimentata fil-Parlament Malti lura fl-1995 meta giet introdotta għall-ewwel darba s-sistema tal-Kumitati Permanenti fis-sistema parlamentari tagħna. Għoxrinsenawaranistgħunivvalutawil-livellgħolita'suċċess li nkiseb minn dawk il-bidliet estensivi li hejjew lill-Parlament tagħna għall-volum enormi ta' xogħol li eventwalment kellu jiffaccja ladarba Malta ssiehbet fl-Unjoni Ewropea.

L-ewwel, ejjew nifhmu l-isfond

Għal aktar minn sebgħin sena, il-Parlament tagħna ffunzjona bħala assemblea tal-membri kollha tagħha. Il-kuncett tal-kumitati permanenti qatt ma kien previst, forsi minħabba li nħass li d-daqs u l-volum ta' xogħol li sar matul is-snin ma kinux jiġġustifikaw l-introduzzjoni tagħhom fis-sistema parlamentari tagħna. Ovvjament, kien hemm ċirkostanzi meta ġew stabbiliti l-hekk imsejja "Kumitati Magħżula", iżda dawn kienu ftit u mbegħdin minn xulxin u – aktar importanti – kienu kumitati temporanji assenjati b'kompiti speċifiċi, li kien ifisser li dawn kienu jispiċċaw fix-xejn ladarba l-kompitu jitwettaq. Lejn tmiem is-snin tmenin u l-bidu tas-snin disgħin, il-volum ta' xogħol, il-komplexità tal-kwistjonijiet u għadd ta' ċirkostanzi oħrajn – inklużi l-implikazzjonijiet parlamentari tan-negojzjati ta' Malta għall-kisba ta' sħubija fl-UE – wassluna biex nirrealizzaw li kien hemm bżonn ta' bidla. Din ma kinitx ser tkun xi haġa faċli. Minbarra l-fatt li, f'dak iż-żmien, l-ambjent politiku kien ferm aktar imqanqal milli huwa illum, kien hemm ukoll il-fatt li l-Parlamentari tagħna (bħal dawk tal-biċċa l-kbira tad-demokrazija moderni l-oħrajn) addottaw atteggiament konservattiv ħafna (jew forsi għandi ngħid "kawt") kull meta tressqu għad-diskussjoni r-regoli u l-proċeduri tal-Parlament. Hemm ħafna raġunijiet għal dan. Aħna għandna Parlament li jiddikjara b'mod formali r-rabta tiegħu mar-regoli u l-proċeduri adottati mill-*House of Commons* tar-Renju Unit. L-Ordni Permanenti 197 eżistenti tagħna tgħid li:

*Fil-każijiet kollha mhux maħsub għalihom f'dawn l-Ordnijiet Permanenti, wieħed għandu jirrikorri għar-regoli, modi, użanzi u drawwiet tal-*House of Commons* tal-Parlament tar-Renju Unit, li għandhom jiġu segwiti safejn jistgħu jiġu applikati għall-proċeduri tal-Kamra b'konsiderazzjoni xierqa għan-natura speċjali tal-Kostituzzjoni.*

Barra minn hekk, nissuponi li xi qarreja jistgħu jkunu familjari mal-isem ta' Erskine May, li jibqa' l-punt ta' referenza ewlieni għall-*Speakers* Maltin kull meta jsibu ruħhom iffaccjati b'xi taħbila proċedurali. Iżda jien nissuspetta li, matul iż-żmien, il-maġġoranza tal-membri parlamentari tagħna għażlu li jadottaw atteggiament "kawt" lejn il-bidla, minħabba li ma ridux jirriskjaw li jimminaw il-qafas proprju li fuqu hija mibnija demokrazija parlamentari. Ma nagħtihomx tort. Wara kollox, il-proċeduri parlamentari kollha ma huma xejn inqas mir-regoli li jirregolaw l-arena fejn il-politika – xi drabi sħuna ħafna – tiżvolgi b'mod li tista'

tiddetermina b'mod drammatiku l-futur stess ta' pajjiżna. Ilkoll nafu li jekk nilagħbu ma' dawk ir-regoli ta' proċedura parlamentari jkun ifisser li qegħdin nilagħbu mad-demokrazija nnifisha. Dan l-isfond huwa importanti sabiex il-qarrej ikun jista' jifhem is-sens qawwi ta' nuqqas ta' fiduċja muri miż-żewġ naħat tal-Kamra kull meta xi ħadd issuggerixxa li jsiru xi bidliet fir-regoli tal-proċeduri eżistenti.

Il-Legizlatura tal-1992

Fil-bidu tal-Legizlatura tal-1992-1996, jien kelli l-privileġġ uniku li ntgħażilt b'mod unanimu mill-Membri tal-Kamra sabiex nokkupa s-siġġu bħala *Speaker* għat-tieni mandat wara li kont diġà servejt f'din il-pożizzjoni matul il-Legizlatura preċedenti bejn l-1988 u l-1992. Dak li għamel din il-ħatra bla preċedenti kien il-fatt li jien ma kontx ikkontestajt l-elezzjonijiet tal-1992. Irrid nispjega li, safejn naf jien, matul l-istorja relattivament żagħżuġha tiegħu, il-Parlament tagħna dejjem għażel l-*Speakers* tiegħu minn fost il-membri eletti tiegħu. Ovvjament, dan ma kienx possibbli meta kien hemm maġġoranza ta' siġġu wieħed biss, f'liema każ il-Kamra kellha tipproċedi biex tagħzel lil xi ħadd li ma kienx Membru Parlamentari elett, iżda li kien kandidat matul l-elezzjoni preċedenti. Il-logika wara dan kienet li l-persuna magħżula xorta waħda kienet ser tkun qed tirrappreżenta grupp ta' votanti li ppartecipaw fil-proċess elettoral li wassal għal dik il-Legizlatura. Fl-1992, din ir-"regola mhux miktuba" twarrbet b'mod temporanju. Qed insemmi dan biss biex nenfasizza l-livell ta' fiduċja u rispett reċiproku li ntweraw fil-konfront tiegħi miż-żewġ naħat tal-Kamra f'dak iż-żmien – definittivament komponent kruċjali tal-kunsens li eventwalment intlaħaq fost il-partijiet interessati kollha fl-1995. Dawk il-qarreja li għandhom il-ħin u l-paċenzja biex jirriċerkaw avvenimenti ta' ċerta importanza jistgħu jfittxu fir-rekords tad-dibattiti tal-Parlament tagħna, b'mod partikolari l-ewwel seduta tal-Legizlatura tal-1992, li saret fl-4 ta' April 1992. Hemmhekk jinnotaw li d-diskorsi li saru mill-Prim Ministru u mill-Mexxej tal-Oppożizzjoni waqt id-dibattitu tal-Mozzjoni għall-elezzjoni ta' *Speaker* ġdid, kienu jindikaw dispożizzjoni komuni li tiffavorixxi l-possibbiltà ta' bidliet fil-mod kif kien jopera l-Parlament:

"ONOR. ALFRED SANT (Kap tal-Oppożizzjoni): ... aħna naqblu li x-xogħol tal-Kamra għandu jkun maħdum b'mod serju, effiċjenti u kemm jista' jkun b'mod trasparenti. Aħna naqblu li min-naħa tagħna nisimgħu l-proposti kollha li jsiru f'din id-direzzjoni...."

*"ONOR. EDDIE FENECH ADAMI: ...Fil-fatt lill-Kap tal-Oppożizzjoni diġà għidtlu li hija x-xewqa tiegħi li kemm jista' jkun malajr, f'din il-Legizlatura nagħtu daqqa t'għajn sew lejn l-*Standing Orders* ta' dan il-Parlament u naraw x'hemm bżonn jinbidel fihom, b'mod partikolari dwar kif jaħdem il-Parlament, kemm għall-ekonomija taż-żmien, kif ukoll għall-effiċjenza ta' dak kollu li jsir hawn ..."*

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Il-bidu tal-proċess

Il-ħtieġa għal riforma estensiva kienet espressa lili mill-Prim Ministru Dr Fenech Adami waqt laqgħa li kelli miegħu ftit jiem wara l-Elezzjonijiet Ġenerali tal-1992, li kienu saru fit-22 ta' Frar 1992. Fir-rekords tiegħi għandi kopja ta' memorandum li kont hejjejt għall-Prim Ministru u li huwa datat id-9 ta' Marzu 1992. Il-kontenut janalizza r-raġunijiet għaliex kienet meħtieġa riforma tal-proċeduri parlamentari. F'dak il-memorandum nikkwota minn pubblikazzjoni tal-Unjoni Interparlamentari (Parliaments of the World ("Il-Parlamenti tad-Dinja")), li giet ippubblikata fl-1976 li kienet tgħid li Malta "hija l-uniku pajjiż fl-IPU li m'għandhiex kumitati permanenti (pġ 468-486)". Iżda jien għedt ukoll li "*sistema ta' kumitati hija meħtieġa sabiex tgħin lill-Parlament jgħolli l-istandard tal-analiżi u l-kritika tiegħu fir-rigward tal-Abbozzi ta' Liġijiet, il-mozzjonijiet, ir-riżoluzzjonijiet u, b'mod ġenerali, l-azzjonijiet tal-Eżekuttiv meta dawn jitressqu quddiem il-Kamra għall-kunsiderazzjoni u l-approvazzjoni tagħha. Din għandha tagħmel ukoll il-proċess legiżlattiv aktar effikaci billi tagħmel użu aħjar mill-ħin tagħha u mill-għarfien espert individwali tal-membri tagħha*". Imbagħad, il-memorandum jgħaddi biex jipproponi t-twaqqif ta' żewġ kumitati permanenti li indirizzaw l-approvazzjoni ta' abbozzi ta' liġijiet u materji li kienu jittrattaw ksur ta' privileġġi. F'dak l-istadju bikri, ma kien hemm ebda referenza għal kumitati "speċjalizzati" oħrajn – xi haġa li kellha tevolve waqt il-konsultazzjonijiet intensivi li kienu ser isiru bejn iż-żewġ naħat tal-Kamra matul ix-xhur u s-snin sussegwenti. Il-memorandum jikkonkludi billi jiġbed l-attenzjoni għall-impatt li dawn l-innovazzjonijiet kien ser ikollhom fuq l-istituzzjoni, inkluż il-fatt li l-facilitajiet parlamentari kellhom jiżdedu, is-salarji u l-onorarji parlamentari kellhom jiġu riveduti sabiex ikunu jirriflettu l-ħtieġa li l-Membri Parlamentari jiddedikaw aktar ħin għall-ħidma parlamentari, ir-rwol u l-istatus tal-Whips kellhom jiġu mtejbja u, fl-aħħar nett, jenfasizza l-bżonn ta' att tal-Parlament li jkun jirrikonoxxi l-istituzzjoni bħala waħda indipendenti mill-Eżekuttiv (u, għalhekk, ħielsa minn kull influwenza bla bżonn minnu). Nissuspetta li dawk il-qarrejja li huma familjari mal-iżviluppi politiċi reċenti f'Malta minnufih ser jirrikonoxxu wħud mill-kwistjonijiet politiċi jaħarqu ħafna li huma inklużi f'din il-"lista", anki jekk din tmur lura għall-1992. Dawn jinkludu materji kontenzjużi ħafna li, madwar għoxrin sena wara, kelli jien stess nindirizza – din id-darba bħala Prim Ministru ta' Malta – speċifikament il-kwistjoni tal-onorarja u l-bini tal-Parlament il-ġdid. Ftit jiem wara li pprezentajt dan il-memorandum, ġejt mgħarraf li l-kontenut tiegħi kien intlaqa' tajjeb mill-Prim Ministru. Ftit ġimgħat wara, id-diskorsi li saru fil-Parlament waqt l-ewwel seduta ta' dik il-Legiżlatura kkonfermaw li għall-ewwel darba f'numru twil ta' snin, kien jidher li hemm qbil bejn iż-żewġ partiti li tiġi esplorata l-possibbiltà ta' reviżjoni bla preċedenti tal-proċeduri, li seta' jkollha implikazzjonijiet estensivi għall-partijiet interessati kollha. Dak kien il-punt meta l-proċess beda jingħata spinta. Bħal dejjem, l-affarijiet ma kinux sempliċi daqskemm wieħed xtaq, u lanqas ma kienu mingħajr intoppi daqskemm wieħed kien jistenna. Kien tabilhaqq proċess li kellu jieħu erba' snin shaħ ta' laqgħat, diskussjonijiet, riċerka, żjarat barra l-pajjiż u – l-aktar

importanti – konvinzjoni u persważjoni politika minn uħud mill-politiċi ewlenin fuq iż-żewġ naħat tal-Kamra li kienu determinati li jmexxu l-affarijiet 'il quddiem.

Immexxu l-proċess 'il quddiem

Il-konsultazzjonijiet inizjali tiegħi maż-żewġ Whips, mal-Kap tal-Kamra u mal-kelliem tal-Oppożizzjoni għall-Affarijiet Parlamentari kkonfermaw li kien hemm kunsens ġenerali dwar il-ħtieġa għal riforma, għalkemm irrid nammetti li f'dak iż-żmien dan il-kunsens xorta kellu ċertu livell ta' xetticiżmu u dubju rigward ir-raġunijiet tan-"naħa l-oħra" għal din l-aġenda. Minkejja dan, jien kont privileġġat li stajt ingawdi l-appoġġ sħiħ u l-fiduċja bla limitu miż-żewġ pilastru parlamentari li – nassumi – kellhom ir-responsabbiltà biex jinfluwenzaw lill-gruppi parlamentari tagħhom fuq kwalunkwe materja relatata mal-Parlament. Qiegħed nirreferi għall-mibki l-Professor Dr Guido DeMarco, li kien il-Kap tal-Kamra u l-Viċi Prim Ministru matul dik il-Legiżlatura u l-Onor. Dr George Vella, li (fil-ħin li qed jinkiteb dan l-artiklu) huwa l-Ministru għall-Affarijiet Barranin ta' Malta, iżda li f'dak iż-żmien kien Shadow Minister tal-Oppożizzjoni għall-Affarijiet Barranin kif ukoll kelliem għall-Affarijiet Parlamentari. Niftakar b'mod ċar ħafna s-siġhat li qattajna flimkien fl-uffiċċju li kelli fil-Parlament niddiskutu l-aħjar mod kif stajna mmexxu d-diskussjoni 'l quddiem u l-għanijiet li kellna niprovaw nilhqu flimkien. Ovvjament, aċċettajna l-fatt li iż-żewġ naħat tal-Kamra kienu jinkludu membri li kienu pjuttost konservattivi fl-approċċ tagħhom u li, għalhekk, kellhom bżonn jiġu konvinti dwar il-ħtieġa għal riforma. Iżda konna wkoll ottimisti li l-maġġoranza tal-membri kienu jhossu huma wkoll il-ħtieġa għal bidla, sakemm il-bidliet jitfasslu b'tali mod li jindirizzaw l-isfidi inevitabbli li kien qed jiffaċċja l-Parlament tagħna f'dak iż-żmien. Kien jidher ċar mill-bidu nett li aħna ma kellniex nivvintaw ir-rota mill-ġdid – fi kliem ieħor, kien meħtieġ li aħna nitgħallmu mill-esperjenzi ta' Parlamenti zġhar oħrajn meta huma wkoll kellhom jindirizzaw dawn it-tipi ta' materji proċedurali. Għalhekk, kellna bżonn nirriċerkaw kif kienu qegħdin jiffunzjonaw l-istituzzjonijiet parlamentari kontinentali, Ewropej u tal-Commonwealth; kif il-membri jistgħu jlaħħqu maż-żieda fid-domandi tagħhom bil-ħin li jifdallohom jekk jiġu introdotti l-kumitati; kif kellhom jintgħazlu l-presidenti; kif għandhom jiġu kkompensati; kif nistgħu nibbilanċjaw ir-responsabbiltajiet tal-Ministri li kienu ser jintalbu jservu wkoll bħala membri tal-Kumitati Permanenti u għadd kbir ta' kwistjonijiet delikati oħrajn li impossibbli nelenkahom b'mod komprensiv. Qbilna li jien kelli nirriċerka dawn l-aspetti kollha u nipprezenta liż-żewġ naħat analiżi ġenerali tal-kwistjonijiet imqajma, flimkien ma' deskrizzjoni tal-bidliet ewlenin li setgħu jiġu rakkomandati għal kunsiderazzjoni miż-żewġ naħat tal-Kamra. Din ir-riċerka tlestiet f'perjodu ta' żmien relattivament qasir. F'mument partikolari sirt konxju ta' aspekk importanti ta' dan il-proċess li qajjem kwistjoni interessanti. Dan kien jittratta l-mistoqsija dwar jekk Malta kellhiex iżżomm is-sistema parlamentari tagħha marbuta mal-mudell tal-House of Commons tar-Renju Unit jew kienx aħjar jekk nimxu lejn il-mudell kontinentali, li kien

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jipprezentalna għadd ta' innovazzjonijiet interessanti, bħall-ħatra ta' Ministri li ma kinux Membri eletti tal-Kamra; ir-rwol tal-esperti, tas-socjetà civili u ta' partijiet interessati oħrajn matul il-proċess legiżlattiv, eċċ. Eventwalment ikkonkludejt li l-aħjar għażla kienet dik li nkomplu mexjin skont il-mudell tal-House of Commons tar-Renju Unit. Kien hemm bosta raġunijiet għal din l-għażla. L-ewwel u qabel kollox kien hemm il-fatt li Malta kienet tiffirma parti mill-Commonwealth u, għalhekk, setgħet taqsam l-esperjenza parlamentari tagħha mhux biss mal-mudell Brittaniku, iżda wkoll ma' grupp ferm akbar ta' pajjiżi li adottaw l-istess mudell. Dan il-fatt waħdu pprovdien sors ta' referenza ta' valur imprezzabbli li ma għandux jiġi sottovalutat. Il-fatt li stajna nħarsu lejn il-precedenti tal-Parlament Indjan, jew l-istrutturi stabbiliti tal-Parlament Awstraljan, jew saħansitra d-deċiżjonijiet tal-Ispeaker Kanadiż kien ifisser li kellna punt ta' referenza b'saħħtu ħafna li mmultiplika l-benefiċċji li nidentifikaw irwiehna mal-mudell Brittaniku. Jien nista' nikkonferma l-validità ta' dan l-argument. Bħala Speaker kelli sitwazzjonijiet meta rreferejt għall-Parlament Awstraljan, dak Kanadiż u dak Brittaniku sabiex insolvi kwistjonijiet li nqalgħu fir-rigward tal-proċeduri tagħna kontra ċ-ċittadini li kienu akkużati bi ksur tal-privileġġi tal-Kamra jew ta' Membru tal-Kamra. Ibbenifikajt mill-esperjenza vasta tal-Parlament Indjan meta konna ffaċċjati bi kwistjonijiet delikati ħafna li tqajmu matul il-proċess għal tneħħija ta' Mħallef u dawk ta' Magistrat. Ikkwotajt mir-regoli tal-House of Commons tar-Renju Unit meta tqajmet il-kwistjoni tas-*sine die* matul l-ewwel mandat tiegħi (din kienet talba minn Membru Parlamentari tal-Oppożizzjoni sabiex nemendaw il-mozzjoni ta' aġġornament u nittrasformawha f'mozzjoni li taggorna l-Kamra *sine die* – jiġifieri mingħajr ebda data stabbilita għas-seduta li jmiss – li b'hekk toħloq krizi kostituzzjonali). Id-deċiżjoni li nżommu r-rabta tagħna mal-mudell tal-House of Commons tar-Renju Unit kienet waħda għaqlija. Hija ma timminax id-dinjità tagħna bħala nazzjon indipendenti – għall-kuntrarju, hija tagħtina ċ-ċans li nsaħħu d-demokrazija parlamentari “zagħżuġha” tagħna billi nżommu l-għażla li nirreferu għal mudell li jgawdi minn seba' mitt sena ta' esperjenza fejn ir-regoli tagħna huma siekta jew neqsin. Dan ippermettieli nhejji l-ewwel abbozzi ta' riforma kbira li kellha tintroduci għadd ta' kumitati permanenti li jitttrattaw funzjonijiet speċifiċi.

Xi mument i helwin

Kif diġà għedt, il-proposti finali kienu r-riżultat ta' serje twila ħafna ta' laqgħat, sigħat ta' diskussjonijiet kunfidenzjali bejni, Dr De Marco, Dr Vella u ż-żewġ Whips, kif ukoll numru ta' żjarat barra l-pajjiż, li pprovdewlna esperjenzi ħelwin. F'okkażjoni bħal dawn, tlabt lill-Iskrivan tal-Kamra tagħna u lill-assistenti tiegħu biex jorganizzawlna żjara fil-House of Commons tar-Renju Unit. Din kienet saret neċessarja minħabba li f'dak l-istadju tad-diskussjonijiet tagħna konna bdejna nesploraw il-possibbiltà li nintroducu kumitat jixbah lill-Kumitat tal-Kontijiet Pubbliċi tar-Renju Unit. Ridna nsiru nafu kif l-Ispeaker tar-Renju Unit kien imexxi dan il-Kumitat speċjalizzat ħafna, kif kien jopera, min kien jippresedih, eċċ. Dan kien forsi l-aktar kumitat delikat u potenzjalment

kontenzjuż mil-lista kollha, minħabba li l-aġenda tipika tiegħu kienet tinkludi elementi ta' kontenut politiku mqanqal ħafna, apparti s-sorveljanza qawwiya li jeżercita fuq l-azzjonijiet tal-gvern. Barra minn hekk, il-mudell tar-Renju Unit kellu l-karatteristika li jqiegħed bħala president Membru tal-Parlament anzjan magħżul mill-gradi tal-Oppożizzjoni. Għal Malta, din kienet ser tkun innovazzjoni pjuttost avventuruża! Kif wieħed jista' jistenna, f'dak l-istadju bikri, id-dibattitu fostna kien jekk iż-żewġ naħat kinux lesti biex jadottaw dan il-mudell, inkluż li jaġġzlu president mill-Membri Parlamentari tal-Oppożizzjoni. Għaldaqstant, iż-żjara fir-Renju Unit kienet kruċjali. F'dak iż-żmien, kont bnejt ħbiberija mal-Ispeaker tar-Renju Unit Madam Betty Boothroyd, li kienet żaret il-gżira tagħna diversi drabi matul l-ewwel mandat tiegħi bħala Speaker tal-Parlament Malti. Hija minnufih tat struzzjonijiet lill-uffiċjali tagħha biex ihejju materjal ta' tagħrif dettaljat għal delegazzjoni li jien stess kont ser immexxi fir-Renju Unit. Id-delegazzjoni kienet tinkludi lili, Dr De Marco, Dr Vella u l-Iskrivan Assistent tal-Kamra, is-Sra Josanne Paris – waħda minn tim ta' uffiċjali abbli u kompetenti ħafna li taw kontribut kbir u li għamlu dan fis-silenzju u minn wara l-kwinti. Iż-żjara kienet suċċess straordinarju għajr għall-fatt li Madam Speaker stednitna l-koll għal pranzu speċjali fid-“Dar tal-Ispeaker”. Meta wasalna hemmhekk ġejna mistiedna nidhlu f'waħda mill-“kmamar tas-sodda”, fejn Madam Boothroyd għaddiet biex tispjegalna li l-kamra giet mgħammra b'mejda tal-pranzu, filwaqt li nżamm is-sinifikat storiku tagħha bħala l-kamra fejn raqdu l-Ispeakers precedenti lejliet l-elezzjoni tagħhom għall-kariga. Hija għamlet dan waqt li kompliet tispjega kif aħna konna sirna ħbieb sew matul is-snin li konna ilna nafu lil xulxin. Minn dakinhar 'il quddiem, Dr De Marco kien jieħu gost ifakkar lil kulhadd li l-Ispeaker Gonzi kellu relazzjoni tant mill-qrib mal-Ispeaker tar-Renju Unit li hija ospitatu għall-pranzu fil-“kamra tas-sodda tagħha”!!

Il-Proposti

Il-proposti li ħarġu mid-diskussjonijiet tagħna ssuġġerew il-ħolqien ta' erba' tipi ta' kumitati. L-ewwel tip kien jikkonsisti f'żewġ kumitati li kellhom jiffokaw fuq l-aspetti proċedurali. L-ewwel wieħed kien jitttratta l-organizzazzjoni tax-xogħol tal-Kamra u t-tieni kien jitttratta l-ilmenti li jallekaw ksur tal-privileġġi. Tal-ewwel kien maħsub biex jintroduci, għall-ewwel darba, struttura parlamentari li tippermetti li jsir ippanar aħjar tax-xogħol tal-Parlament – sabiex b'hekk jiġu evitati l-kontroversji bla bżonn u/jew it-tattiċi parlamentari ingusti li ta' spiss jgħarrqu d-dinjità ta' din l-istituzzjoni u ma jikkontribwixxu xejn kostruttiv għall-kredenzjali demokratiċi tagħna. Il-kumitat l-ieħor kien meħtieġ biex jindirizza d-difetti fil-proċeduri tagħna fir-rigward tar-rispett għall-kriterji tad-drittijiet fundamentali tal-bniedem meta jersaq każ ta' ksur ta' privileġġ minn persuna li mhijiex membru elett tal-Kamra. Dawk li huma familjari mal-hekk imsejjaħ każ “Demicoli” jiftakru li l-kwistjoni kienet ittieħdet quddiem il-Qorti Ewropea tad-Drittijiet tal-Bniedem u l-konkluzjoni kienet li, minkejja l-privileġġi tiegħu, il-Parlament ma jistax jaġixxi bħala Mħallef, Ġurat u Prosekutur meta jitttratta materji li jistgħu jwasslu għall-

NICĊELEBRAW L-20 SENA ANNIVERSARJU TAS-SISTEMA TAL-KUMITATI PARLAMENTARI TAGĦNA (KONT.)

prigunerija tal-akkużat. L-introduzzjoni tal-Kumitat dwar il-Privileġġi, flimkien ma' xi bidliet radikali fl-Ordinanza dwar il-Privileġġi, irrisolvew din il-kwistjoni, għalkemm jien nemmen li xorta għad hemm lok għal ftit aktar irfinar. It-tieni grupp ta' kumitati kienu maħsuba biex jiffaċilitaw il-proċess legiżlattiv billi jippermettu lill-Kamra tiddelega l-parti "teknika" ta' dan il-proċess ta' dibattitu lil kumitat kompost minn president u sitt membri li jintgħażlu b'mod proporzjonali għan-numri rrapprezentati fil-Kamra. Fis-sustanza, dan kien ifisser li l-Kamra setgħet tibgħat abbozz ta' liġi lil kumitat permanenti li jittratta dawn il-materji minflok tittratta l-abbozz ta' liġi f'Kumitat tal-Kamra kollha. Din l-innovazzjoni kienet t'fisser li ż-żmien disponibbli sabiex jiġi ttrattat ix-xogħol parlamentari issa kien ser jiġi mmultiplikati minhabba li l-Kamra issa setgħet tiltaqa' u waqt li tkun qiegħda tiddibatti kwistjoni, kumitat wieħed jew aktar ikunu qegħdin jittrattaw għadd ta' materji oħrajn, inkluż li jikkunsidraw abbozzi ta' liġijiet ta' natura teknika ħafna. Irrid nammetti li l-introduzzjoni ta' dan it-tieni grupp ta' kumitati ħolqot daqsxejn ta' taħwida fost uħud mill-Membri Parlamentari li kienu ilhom iservu fil-Kamra għal numru ta' snin. Dan għaliex huma ħassew li din il-proċedura ġdida kienet ser teskludihom milli jipparteċipaw fl-istadju tal-kumitat ta' dawn l-abbozzi ta' liġi – xi ħaġa li ma kenitx tiġri meta l-abbozz ta' liġi jkun eżaminat mill-Kumitat tal-Kamra kollha. Eventwalment, inkiseb kunsens kemmxejn riluttanti meta ż-żewġ naħat tal-Kamra qablu li jinkludu żewġ kundizzjonijiet ewlenin: l-ewwel waħda imponiet il-ħtieġa għal mozzjoni formali sabiex l-abbozz ta' liġi jkun iddelegat lill-kumitat permanenti, li kellha tiġi pprezentata u approvata mill-Kamra kollha hekk kif jiġi approvat it-Tieni Qari. It-tieni kundizzjoni eskludiet minn dan il-proċess l-abbozzi ta' liġijiet kollha li kellhom impatt finanzjarju potenzjali (OP 96: "ebda abbozz ta' liġi ma għandu jintbagħat quddiem kumitat permanenti jew kumitat magħżul kif imsemmi qabel, meta dak l-abbozz ta' liġi jkun jipprovi dwar l-approprijazzjoni ta' flus mill-Fond Konsolidat jew jekk ikun jipprovi li kull nefqa għandha tkun spiża fuq dak il-Fond mingħajr il-ħtieġa ta' xi approprjazzjoni oħra minbarra d-dispożizzjonijiet tiegħu"). F'dawn il-każijiet, l-abbozz ta' liġi jkun irid ikompli jiġi ttrattat mill-Kumitat tal-Kamra kollha. It-tielet grupp ta' kumitati kien jikkonsisti f'żewġ Kumitati b'funzjonijiet speċjalizzati ħafna. L-ewwel wieħed kien jittratta l-affarijiet barranin. Eventwalment, dan gie estiż sabiex jittratta wkoll l-affarijiet Ewropej. It-tieni kumitat kien ikopri l-firxa sħiħa tal-politika soċjali u, għall-ewwel darba, ipprova forum fejn is-soċjetà civili, il-korpi kostitwiti u esperti individwali setgħu jissottomettu l-opinjoni tagħhom lill-Parlament qabel jew waqt dibattitu fuq kwistjoni ta' rilevanza. Qatt ma jien ser ninsa l-benefiċċji enormi li ħadna minn dan il-forum meta, lejn l-aħħar tal-1999, konna ddibattejna l-liġi li tittratta l-ugwaljanza tad-drittijiet għall-persuni b'diżabilità. Lanqas ma jien ser ninsa l-esperjenza unika u s-sodisfazzjon universali li ksbna meta l-Kumitat approva l-Att ġdid dwar ir-Relazzjonijiet Industrijali u l-Impjiegi fl-2002. F'dak iż-żmien, bħala Ministru għall-Politika Soċjali, jien kelli l-privileġġ li mmexxi ż-żewġ biċċiet ta' legiżlazzjoni u, fiż-żewġ każijiet, il-proċess f'dan il-Kumitat intemm b'applaws mill-"gallarija" – ksur tal-prattika parlamentari li madankollu

ntlaqa' b'sodisfazzjon minn kulhadd. Il-Kumitat dwar il-Kontijiet Pubbliċi kien ir-raba' propošta, u dik finali. Diġà spjegajt aktar 'il fuq in-natura potenzjalment kontenzjuża ta' dan il-Kumitat. Sal-lum, inkompli nammira l-kuraġġ politiku muri minn dawk kollha kkonċernati meta ttieħdet deċiżjoni finali li dan il-Kumitat jiġi inkorporat fil-propošti, inkluża l-ħatra ta' president minn fost il-membri anzjani tal-Oppożizzjoni. Il-Kumitat kompli jissahħaħ billi poġġa għad-dispożizzjoni tiegħu l-kapaċità, l-għarfien espert u r-riżorsi sħaħ tal-Uffiċċju tal-Awditur Ġenerali li, sal-1997, kien sar istituzzjoni kostituzzjonalment indipendenti f'Malta. Eventwalment, is-sett sħiħ ta' emendi gie pprezentat lill-Parlament għall-approvazzjoni tiegħu fil-15 ta' Marzu 1995 (seduta numru 404). Il-qarrejja jistgħu jidhlu fuq is-sit elettroniku tal-Parlament u jniżżlu t-traskrizzjoni ta' dak id-dibattitu. Inhegġigkom biex tagħmlu dan għaliex dan ikisser waħda mill-miti madwar il-Parlament tagħna, jiġifieri li aħna dejjem negattivi; li dejjem lesti biex neħduha kontra xulxin; li dejjem infittxu kif ser nimminaw lil xulxin. It-traskrizzjoni turi li dan ċertament mhuwiex il-każ u fil-fatt jagħmel unur lil dawk il-politiċi li matul il-ħajja politika tagħhom dejjem fittxew li jitraduċu l-politika f'impenn sabiex itejbu l-"għid komuni" tas-soċjetà tagħna anki meta ffaċċjati bi kritika ingusta.

Il-preżent u l-gejjieni

Iż-żmien għadda u lllum aħna lkoll għandna l-benefiċċju li nistgħu nħarsu lura b'għaqal lejn l-avvenimenti li seħħew. B'dan il-benefiċċju nista' ngħid li l-bidliet li introduċejna għoxrin sena ilu ġabu magħhom trasformazzjoni eċitanti u pożittiva tal-mod kif jopera l-Parlament tagħna. Dan huwa pprovat mill-fatt li minn dak iż-żmien 'il hawn ġew introdotti tliet kumitati permanenti oħrajn ġodda: il-Kumitat Permanenti dwar l-Affarijiet tal-Familja (fl-2011), il-Kumitat Permanenti dwar l-Affarijiet Ekonomiki u Finanzjarji (fl-2013) u l-Kumitat Permanenti dwar is-Saħħa (fl-2014). Ovvjament, xorta għad hemm lok għal aktar titjib, iżda t-titjib li kien hemm huwa inkontestabbli. Jien wieħed minn dawk il-ftit persuni li għext matul il-proċess tal-bidla mhux biss bħala koawtur, iżda wkoll u speċjalment bħala partecipant u forsi bħala protagonist ta' deċiżjonijiet politiċi li kienu skrutinizzati mill-istess qafas istituzzjonali li huwa parti mil-legat li ntiret mill-ġenerazzjoni tal-membri parlamentari preżenti. Huwa b'dan il-ħsieb li nhegġeġ lill-Parlamentari tagħna jkomplu jiffokaw l-isforzi tagħhom fuq dawk l-inizjattivi li jtejbju d-dinjità tagħhom stess, kif ukoll dik tal-Istituzzjoni li huma jirrapprezentaw bħala grupp. Wasal iż-żmien għal stadju ieħor ta' riformi, din id-darba b'enfasi fuq l-etika, l-imġiba politika u l-kontabbiltà. Din mhijiex agenda partigjana. Hija waħda nazzjonali. Hija agenda kruċjali għall-istituzzjoni sabiex tkompli tiġbed lejha l-aqwa nies, dawk li huma ggwidati mill-principji u l-valuri li rabbew l-għeruf fil-kunċett tal-"għid komuni".



Dr. Lawrence Gonzi
Speaker tal-Kamra
bejn 1988 u l-1996

CELEBRATING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE SYSTEM

I count myself amongst those who believe that the long term success of a major reform should also be measured by the way it has been embraced by the stakeholders, by the smoothness of its implementation and by the level of efficiency gains that are achieved as a result of the transition to a new system. One such reform was implemented in the Maltese Parliament back in 1995 when the Standing Committee system was first introduced into our Parliamentary system. Twenty years later we can assess the high level of success achieved by those far reaching changes which prepared our Parliament for the enormous volume of work which it would eventually have to face once Malta joined the European Union.

First some background

For more than seventy years, our Parliament functioned as an assembly of all its members. The concept of standing (permanent) committees was never envisaged perhaps because it was felt that the size and the volume of work throughout the years did not justify their introduction into our parliamentary system. Of course there were circumstances when so called "Select Committees" were set up, but these were few and far between and – more importantly – they were temporary committees assigned with specific tasks which meant that they would be dissolved as soon as the task was completed. Towards the late eighties and the beginning of the nineties, the volume of work, the complexity of issues and a host of other circumstances – including the parliamentary implications of Malta's negotiations to achieve EU membership – brought the realisation that change was necessary. This was not going to be easy. Apart from the fact that the political environment at the time was a lot more charged than it is today, the fact of the matter was that our Parliamentarians, (like those of most other modern democracies), adopted a very conservative (or should I say "cautious") approach whenever Parliament's rules and procedures were brought up for discussion. There are a lot of reasons for this. We have a Parliament that formally declares its link to the rules and procedures adopted by the British House of Commons. Our existing Standing Order 197 states that: *In all cases not provided for by these Standing Orders, resort shall be had to the rules, forms, usages and practice of the Commons' House of Parliament of the United Kingdom, which shall be followed as far as they can be applied to the proceedings of the House, with due regard to the special nature of the Constitution.* Additionally, I suppose some readers may be familiar with the name of Erskine May who remains the key point of reference for Maltese Speakers whenever they find themselves lumped with some procedural conundrum. But I suspect that over time most of our parliamentarians chose to adopt a "cautious" approach towards change because they did not want to risk undermining the very framework on which a parliamentary democracy is built. I don't blame them. After all parliamentary procedures are nothing less than the rules regulating the arena where politics – sometimes high octane – unfolds in a manner that could determine in a dramatic fashion the very future of our country. We know very well that playing around with those parliamentary rules of procedure could mean

playing around with democracy itself. This background is important for the reader to understand the heightened sense of mistrust exhibited by both sides of the House whenever somebody suggested changes to existing rules of procedures.

The 1992 Legislature

At the beginning of the 1992-1996 Legislature I had the unique privilege of having been unanimously chosen by the Members of the House to occupy the chair as Speaker for a second term after having served in this position during the previous Legislature between 1988 and 1992. What made this appointment unprecedented was the fact that I had not contested the 1992 elections. I should explain that to my knowledge throughout its relatively young history, our Parliament chose its Speakers from amongst its elected Members. Of course this was not possible when there was only a one seat majority, in which case the House proceeded to choose someone who was not an elected MP but who was a candidate during the previous election. The logic behind this was that the person chosen would still be representing a group of voters who participated in the electoral process giving birth to that legislature. In 1992, this "unwritten rule" was temporarily shelved. I mention this only to emphasise the level of trust and mutual respect that was shown to me by both sides of the House at the time – definitely a crucial component of the consensus amongst all stakeholders which was eventually achieved in 1995. Those readers who have the time and patience to research events of some importance might wish to delve into the records of our Parliament's debates, particularly the first sitting of the 1992 Legislature held on the 4th of April 1992. Readers will note that the speeches delivered by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition during the debate of the Motion for the election of a new Speaker, indicated a common approach favouring the possibility of changes in the way Parliament operated:

"ONOR. ALFRED SANT (Kap ta' l-Oppożizzjoni): aħna naqblu li x-xogħol tal-Kamra għandu jkun maħdum b'mod serju, effiċjenti u kemm jista' jkun b'mod trasparenti. Aħna naqblu li min-naħa tagħna nisimgħu l-proposti kollha li jsiru f'din id-direzzjoni....."

"ONOR. EDDIE FENECH ADAMI:Fil-fatt lill-Kap ta' l-Oppożizzjoni diġa' għidtli li hija x-xewqa tiegħi li kemm jista' jkun malajr, f'din il-Legislatura nagħtu daqqa t'għajn sew lejn l-i-Standing Orders ta' dan il-Parlament u naraw x'hemm b'żonn jinbidel fihom, b'mod partikolari dwar kif jaħdem il-Parlament, kemm għall-ekonomija taż-żmien, kif ukoll għall-effiċjenza ta' dak kollu li jsir hawn....."

The start of the process

The need for a far reaching reform was expressed to me by Prime Minister Dr Fenech Adami during a meeting I had with him a few days after the 1992 General Elections which were held on the 22nd of February 1992. I have in my records a copy of a memorandum which I had prepared for the Prime Minister and which is dated

CELEBRATING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE SYSTEM (CONT.)

9th March 1992. The contents analyse the reasons why a reform of parliamentary procedures was necessary. In that Memorandum I quote from an Inter-Parliamentary Union publication (Parliaments of the World, published in 1976) stating that Malta *“is the only country in the IPU that does not have permanent committees (pg 468-486)”*. But I also state that *“a Committee system is necessary in order to help Parliament raise the standard of its analysis and critique of Bills, motions, resolutions and generally, the actions of the executive when these are brought before the House for its consideration and approval. It must also make the legislative process more efficient by making better use of its time and its members’ individual expertise”*. The Memorandum then proceeds to propose the setting up of two Standing Committees which dealt with the approval of Bills and with matters dealing with breaches of Privileges. At that early stage, there was no mention of any other “specialised” committees – something which would evolve during the intensive consultations that would be taking place between both sides of the House during the subsequent months and years. The Memorandum concludes by drawing the attention to the impact which these innovations would have on the institution including the fact that parliamentary facilities would have to be increased, parliamentary salaries and honoraria should be revised reflecting the need for Parliamentarians to dedicate more time to parliamentary work, the Whips’ role and status should be upgraded and finally it highlights the need for a Parliament Act which would recognise the institution as independent from (and therefore free from any undue influence by) the Executive. I suspect that readers who are familiar with political developments in Malta will immediately recognise some very hot political issues included in this “list” even though it dates back to 1992. These include some very contentious matters which some twenty years later, I had to deal with - this time as Prime Minister of Malta - specifically the honoraria issue and the new Parliament building. A few days after I submitted this Memorandum, I was informed that the contents had been well received by the Prime Minister. A few weeks later, the speeches delivered in Parliament during the first sitting of that Legislature confirmed that for the first time in a long number of years, there seemed to be a cross-party agreement to explore the possibility of an unprecedented revision of procedures which could have far reaching implications for all stakeholders. That was the point when the process started to gain ground. As always, matters were not as simple as one wished, neither were they as straightforward as one would have expected. It was a process that would take four whole years of meetings, discussions, research, visits abroad and – most importantly - political conviction and persuasion by some leading politicians sitting on both sides of the House who were determined to take things forward.

Taking the process forward

My initial soundings with both Whips, the Leader of the House and the Opposition’s spokesperson for Parliamentary Affairs indicated that there was a general consensus on the need for a reform, although I must admit

that at the time this consensus was somewhat dampened by a certain level of scepticism and doubt regarding the “other side’s” reasons for bringing up this agenda. This notwithstanding, I was privileged to enjoy the full support and unlimited trust from the two parliamentary stalwarts who – I suppose – had the task to influence their own parliamentary groups on any matter related to Parliament. I am referring to the late Professor Dr Guido DeMarco who was the Leader of the House and Deputy Prime Minister during that Legislature and the Hon. Dr George Vella who (at the time of writing) is Malta’s Minister for Foreign Affairs but who was the Opposition’s shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and also spokesperson for Parliamentary Affairs. I remember very clearly the hours we spent together in my office at Parliament discussing the best way we could take the discussion forward and the objectives which we should together try to achieve. Of course, we all accepted the fact that both sides of the House included members who were rather conservative in their approach and who would therefore need to be persuaded of the need for reform. But we were also confident that the majority of the members would embrace the need for change as long as the changes were designed to address inescapable challenges which our Parliament already faced at the time. It was clear from the outset that we should not re-invent the wheel – in other words, we needed to learn from the experiences gained by other small Parliaments when dealing with these type of procedural matters. We needed therefore to research how Continental, European and Commonwealth parliamentary institutions functioned; how could members cope with the increased demands on their time if committees were introduced; how were chairpersons chosen; how would they be compensated; how could we balance the responsibilities of Ministers who were also called to be members of Standing Committees and a myriad of other delicate issues which are impossible to list comprehensively. We agreed that I would research all these aspects and present both sides with a general overview on the issues raised together with a possible outline of the main changes that could be recommended for consideration by both sides of the House. This research was completed within a relatively short period of time. At a certain point I became conscious of a particular aspect of this process which raised an interesting issue: should Malta keep its parliamentary system linked to the British House of Commons model or should we lean towards the continental model which was somewhat less adversarial and which would present us with a number of interesting innovations such as the appointment of Ministers who were not elected Members of the House; the role of experts, civil society and other stakeholders during the legislative process, etc. Eventually I concluded that the safest and logical route would be the one that continued to interface with the British House of Commons model. There were several reasons for this choice. The first and foremost was the fact that Malta formed part of the Commonwealth and therefore shared its parliamentary experience not only with the British model, but also with a much larger group of countries that adopted the same model. This fact alone provided us with a reference source of inestimable value

CELEBRATING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE SYSTEM (CONT.)

which should not be underestimated. Being able to tap into the precedents of the Indian Parliament, or the proven structures of the Australian Parliament, or even the rulings of the Canadian Speaker meant that we had a rock solid point of reference which multiplied the benefits of tagging ourselves to the British model. I can vouch for the validity of this argument. As Speaker I tapped into the expertise of the Australian, Canadian and British Parliaments to address the challenges we faced regarding our procedures against citizens who were accused of a breach of the House or a Member's privileges. I benefitted from the wealth of the Indian Parliament's experience when faced with very delicate issues raised during the impeachment process of a judge and those of a Magistrate. I quoted from the UK House of Commons rules when the *sine die* issue was raised during my first term of office (this was a request by an Opposition MP to amend the adjournment motion and transform it into a motion to adjourn the House *sine die* – i.e. without a date set for the next sitting – thus creating a constitutional crisis). The decision to retain our link with the British House of Commons model was a wise one. It does not undermine our dignity as an independent nation – on the contrary it allows us to enhance our “young” parliamentary democracy by retaining an option to refer to a model that enjoys seven hundred years of experience when our own rules are silent or are incomplete. This allowed me to prepare the first drafts of a major reform which would introduce a number of Standing Committees dealing with specific functions.

Some light moments

As I have already stated the final proposals were the result of a very long series of meetings, hours of confidential discussions between myself, Dr DeMarco, Dr Vella and the two Whips, and also a number of visits abroad which provided us with some hilarious experiences. On one such occasion I had asked our Clerk of the House and his assistants to organise a visit to the British House of Commons. This had become necessary because at that stage of our discussions we had started to explore the possibility of introducing the Maltese equivalent of the UK Public Accounts Committee. We needed to find out how the UK Speaker managed this highly specialised Committee, how it operated, who chaired it etc. This was perhaps the most delicate and potentially contentious Committee of the whole list since its typical agenda would include items of highly charged political content apart from the powerful oversight it exercises over the government's actions. Additionally, the UK model had the fascinating feature of placing as chairperson a senior Member of Parliament chosen from the Opposition's ranks. For Malta this would be quite a leap into the unknown!. As one might expect, at that early stage the debate amongst us was whether both sides were prepared to adopt this model including choosing a Chairperson from the Opposition MPs. The visit to the UK was therefore crucial for all concerned. At the time, I had become quite friendly with the UK Speaker Madam Betty Boothroyd who was familiar with Malta, having visited the island a number of times during

my first term of office as Speaker of the Maltese Parliament. She immediately instructed her staff to prepare a detailed briefing for a delegation which I myself would lead to the UK. The delegation included myself, Dr DeMarco, Dr Vella and the Deputy Clerk of the House Ms Josanne Paris – one of a team of highly competent and capable officers who contributed so much and who did so silently and anonymously. The visit was an outstanding success except for the fact that Madam Speaker invited us all for a special dinner at “Speaker's House”. When we arrived there we were all ushered into one of the “Bedrooms” where Madam Boothroyd proceeded to explain to us that the room had been furnished with a dining table while keeping its historical significance as the room where previous Speakers slept on the eve of their election to the Chair. She did so whilst explaining how we both had become close friends over the years we had known each other. From that date onwards, Dr DeMarco used to enjoy reminding everyone that Speaker Gonzi had such a close relationship with the UK Speaker that she hosted him for dinner in “her bedroom”!!

The Proposals

The proposals which emerged from our discussions suggested the creation of four types of committees. The first type consisted of two Committees that would focus on procedural aspects. The first dealt with the organisation of the business of the House and the second dealt with complaints alleging breaches of Privileges. The former was intended to introduce, for the first time, a parliamentary structure that would allow for better planning of parliamentary business – thus avoiding unnecessary controversy and/or unfair parliamentary tactics which often demean the very dignity of this institution and do not contribute anything constructive to our democratic credentials. The latter committee became necessary in order to address the failure of our procedures to respect fundamental human rights criteria when dealing with an alleged breach of privilege by a person who is not an elected member of the House. Those who are familiar with the so called “Demicoli” case will remember that the matter was taken to the European Court of Human Rights and the conclusion was that notwithstanding its privileges Parliament could not act as Judge, Jury and Prosecutor when dealing with matters that could lead to the imprisonment of the accused. The introduction of the Committee on Privileges together with some radical changes in the Privileges Ordinance resolved this matter although I believe that there is still room for some further fine-tuning. The second group of committees were intended to facilitate the legislative process by allowing the House to delegate the “technical” part of its debating process to a Committee composed of a Chairman and six members who would be chosen in proportion to the numbers represented in the House. In essence this meant that the House could send a Bill to the Standing Committee dealing with these matters instead of dealing with the Bill in a Committee of the whole House. This innovation meant that the time available for dealing

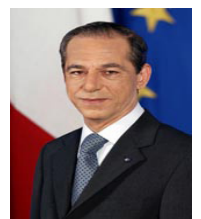
CELEBRATING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE SYSTEM (CONT.)

with Parliamentary business would now be multiplied because the House could now meet and whilst the Chamber was debating an issue, one or more Committees would be dealing with a host of other matters including considering Bills of a highly technical nature. I must admit that the introduction of this second group of committees created quite a stir amongst some of the MPs who had been serving in the House for a number of years. This was because they felt that this new procedure would exclude them from participating in the committee stage of these Bills – something which did not happen when the Bill was examined by the Committee of the Whole House. Eventually, a somewhat reluctant consensus was obtained when both sides of the House agreed to include two overriding conditions: the first imposed the need for a formal motion to delegate the Bill to the Standing Committee which had to be presented and approved by the Whole House as soon as the Second Reading was approved. The second condition excluded from this process all Bills that had a potential financial impact (*SO 96: “no bill shall be referred to a standing or select committee as aforesaid if that bill provides for the appropriation of funds from the Consolidated Fund or provides that any expenses shall be a charge on the said Fund without the need of any further appropriation other than the provisions thereof”*). In these cases, the Bill would have to continue to be handled by the Committee of the Whole House. The third group of Committees consisted of two Committees with highly specialised functions. The first one dealt with Foreign Affairs. This was eventually expanded to deal with European Affairs as well. The second Committee covered the whole gamut of Social Policy and for the first time ever, provided a forum where civil society, constituted bodies and individual experts could submit their opinions to Parliament prior to or during a debate on an issue of relevance. I will never forget the enormous benefits derived from this forum when – towards the end of 1999 we debated the law dealing with equality of rights for persons with disability. Neither will I forget the unique experience and universal satisfaction gained when the Committee approved the new Industrial and Employment Relations Act in 2002. At the time, as Minister for Social Policy, I had the privilege of piloting both pieces of legislation and in both cases, the process in this Committee ended with an applause from the “gallery” – a very welcome breach of parliamentary practice. The Public Accounts Committee was the fourth and final proposal. I have already explained above the potentially contentious nature of this Committee. To this day, I continue to admire the political courage demonstrated by all concerned when a final decision was taken to incorporate this Committee into the proposals, including the appointment of a Chairperson from amongst senior Opposition Members. The Committee was further strengthened by placing at its disposal the full weight, expertise and resources of the Auditor General’s Office who, by 1997, had become a constitutionally independent institution in Malta. The full set of amendments was eventually submitted to Parliament for its approval on the 15th of March 1995 (sitting number 404). Readers might wish to log on to Parliament’s website

and download the transcript of that debate. I urge you to do so because it debunks one of the myths surrounding our Parliament, namely that we are always negative; that we are always at each other’s throats; that we are always seeking to undermine one another. The transcript proves that this is certainly not the case and indeed it honours those politicians who throughout their political life sought to translate politics into a commitment to enhance the “common good” of our society even when faced with unfair criticism.

The present and the future

Time has passed and today we all have the benefit of hindsight. With this benefit I can say that the changes we introduced twenty years ago have brought about an exciting and positive transformation of the way our Parliament operates. This is proven by the fact that a further three new standing committees were introduced: the Standing Committee on Family Affairs (in 2011), the Standing Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs (in 2013) and the Standing Committee on Health (2014). Of course, there is still room for further improvement, but the improvement is undeniable. I am one of those very few people who has lived through the process of change not only as a co-author but also and especially as a participant and perhaps as a protagonist of some political decisions which were scrutinised by the same institutional framework that is part of the legacy inherited by the present generation of parliamentarians. It is with this in mind that I urge our Parliamentarians to continue to focus their efforts on those initiatives which will enhance their own dignity as well as that of the institution which they represent as a group. The time is ripe for another stage of reforms, this time focusing on ethics, political behaviour and accountability. This is not a partisan agenda. It is a national one. It is one which is crucial for the institution to continue to attract towards it the best of breed, the ones who are guided by principles and values ingrained in the concept of the “common good”.



**Dr Lawrence Gonzi,
served as Speaker of the House
between 1988 and 1996**

IT-TRIQ LEJN PARLAMENT ĠDID 1921-2015 - IT-TIENI PARTI

Tentattiv ieħor

Fl-elezzjonijiet tal-1927 il-partit fit-tmexxija gie megħlub u ħa l-poter gvern ta' koalizzjoni kompost mill-Partit Kostituzzjonali ta' Strickland u mill-Partit Laburista ta' Boffa. Sitt snin ta' dibattitu ma wasslux għal soluzzjoni u l-kwistjoni baqgħet wieqfa sal-1929. Din reġgħet ingiebet għall-attenzjoni tal-Parlament minn Ugo Mifsud, ex Kap tal-Ministeru, iżda issa Kap tal-Oppożizzjoni, waqt il-Ħin tal-Mistoqsijiet. Mifsud innota li kien ircieva ittra mingħand il-Logutenent Gvernatur fejn informah li ma kien hemm l-ebda pjan li l-Berġa ta' Kastilja tgħaddi f'idejn l-awtoritajiet civili sabiex tintuża bħala Parlament. Minkejja dan, malajr żied li ma xtaqx li jagħmel pressjoni fuq il-Gvern biex jizvela f'liema stadju kienu l-pjanijiet rigward din il-kwistjoni.

Strickland, madankollu, wieġeb illi l-kwistjoni kienet ta' interess pubbliku u hu informa lill-Kamra li billi l-proġett ta' Kastilja kien sfaxxa, il-Gvern tiegħu kien qiegħed jippjana li 'jieħu passi lejn it-twaqqif ta' Kmamar tal-Parlament fuq il-Casino San Giorgio, fuq wara tal-Main Guard u l-Garrison Library'.^{xxiii} Biex jipprova l-punt tiegħu poġġa fuq il-Mejda ittra li kienet intbagħtet lill-manager ta' Sciclunas Bank fejn kien infurmat bl-interess li l-Gvern kellu li jakkwista dik il-proprjetà u stiednu għal diskussjonijiet fuq din il-kwistjoni. Fl-ittra, il-Gvern ta' ħjiel tal-possibbiltà li l-proprjetà tkun esproprijata f'każ li ma jintlaħaqx ftehim.

Ugo Mifsud reġa' ddiskuta s-sugġett fil-31 ta' Jannar meta staqsa lill-Kap tal-Ministeru jekk jaqbilx li l-kwistjoni tal-għażla ta' sit għall-Parlament kienet waħda li tinvolvi esklussivament iż-żewġ Kmamar tal-Parlament aktar milli l-Eżekuttiv. Strickland qabel u ppropona n-nomina ta' Kumitat Magħżul tal-Kamra biex jikkunsidra l-kwistjoni u stieden lil Mifsud biex jinnomina l-membri tiegħu, iżda Mifsud irrifjuta l-offerta.^{xxiv} Għaldaqstant, għal darb'ohra l-kwistjoni waqgħet. Il-kwistjoni ta' Parlament ġdid imbagħad reġgħet kienet is-sugġett ta' mistoqsija parlamentari din id-darba minn Giovanni Adami. Huwa staqsa lill-Ministru tax-Xogħlijiet Pubbliċi jekk fil-ġudizzju tal-istaff tekniku l-ispazju fuq il-Main Guard kienx biżżejjed biex jakkomoda ż-żewġ Kmamar tal-Parlament, jekk is-sit kienx taħt il-ġurisdizzjoni tal-Gvernatur u jekk Garrison Library kienet proprjetà pubblika jew privata. Il-Ministru wieġeb li l-ispazju kien pjuttost adegwat għall-iskop iżda li kienet meħtieġa l-approvazzjoni tal-Gvernatur qabel il-proġett seta' jibda.^{xxx}

Fil-15 ta' Frar 1929, Strickland poġġa fuq il-Mejda tal-Kamra l-opinjoni tad-Dipartiment tax-Xogħlijiet Pubbliċi dwar il-proposta li jinbena Parlament fuq is-sit tal-Main Guard faċċata tal-Palazz. Iż-żewġ Kmamar tal-Parlament kellhom jiġu akkomodati fl-ewwel sular filwaqt li l-uffiċċji kellhom jitqiegħdu fl-ispazju bejn iż-żewġ kmamar u t-taraġ ta' taħt. Il-karti kienu jinkludu wkoll abbozzi li kienu juru kif il-bini eżistenti kellu jiġi inkorporat fl-iskema. Skont dawn il-karti l-istima tal-ispiza tal-bini kienet ta' £60,000.^{xxvi} Iżda kien f'April tal-1929 li fl-aħħar Strickland ressaq fl-Assemblea Legiżlattiva l-Mozzjoni li, 'fl-opinjoni ta' din il-Kamra s-sit faċċata tal-Palazz fi Pjazza San Ġorġ huwa

l-iktar wieħed adegwat għall-Parlament'.^{xxvii} Skont il-Kap tal-Ministeru dan is-sit kellu għadd ta' vantaġġi: kien qrib l-uffiċċji ewlenin tal-gvern; kien fiċ-ċentru tal-belt, u kien faċilment aċċessibbli mill-Berġa ta' Aragona. Waqt li ressaq ir-riżoluzzjoni, Strickland qal li xi nies ser jgħidu illi l-Gvern ma kellux il-flus meħtieġa għall-proġett iżda kien jaf mod kif il-proġett seta' jiġi ffinanzjat għalkemm ma kienx lest jidhol fid-dettall f'dan l-stadju.

L-Oppożizzjoni ma kienetx impressjonata b'din id-dikjarazzjoni hekk kif fakkret lill-Gvern fil-ħafna proġetti kapitali li kienu għaddejnin. Fakkret ukoll lill-Gvern li l-partijiet kollha kienu qablu li l-Kamra attwali tal-Kunsill kellha tibqa' f'idejn il-Parlament Malti. Ugo Mifsud stima li l-proġett kellu jiswa madwar £65,000 u ressaq emenda għall-Mozzjoni originali fejn reġa' ppropona li l-kwistjoni sħiħa tkun mgħoddija f'idejn Kumitat Magħżul. Il-kollega ta' Mifsud, Carlo Mallia, min-naħa tiegħu ried iwarrab din il-kwistjoni kompletament minħabba nuqqas ta' fondi, iżda waqt id-diskors tiegħu għamel sugġeriment li malajr inħataf minn Strickland. Dan kien li kellha tiġi esplorata l-idea li jinbena t-tieni sular fuq il-Berġa ta' Aragona.^{xxviii}

Iżda l-proġett kien lil hinn mill-mezzi tal-Gvern u meta ftit jiem wara Strickland talab li d-dibattitu fuq din il-Mozzjoni, li kien gie agġornat, jerga' jiġi pospost, gie milqugħ b'daħk mill-bankijiet tal-Oppożizzjoni.^{xxix} Għal darb'ohra l-proposta li jinbena Parlament ġdid kienet naqset milli tagħmel pass 'il quddiem u kien biss għexieren ta' snin wara t-Tieni Gwerra Dinjija li l-kwistjoni reġgħet tqajmet.

Parlament Ġdid

Tabilhaqq, wara l-1930 ma kienx hemm bżonn ta' Parlament ġdid billi nuqqas ta' qbil mal-Gran Brittanja, bejn il-Partit Nazzjonalista li kien għadu kemm gie elett fil-Gvern, partit li kien favur l-ilsien Taljan, u l-Uffiċċju Kolonjali, wassal għat-telfien tal-Kostituzzjoni ta' gvern awtonomu tal-1921 u r-ritorn lejn status ta' Kolonja għal Malta. Is-Sala tal-Arazzi kienet f'kull sens adegwata għax-xogħlijiet tal-Kunsill tal-Gvern li kien reġa' gie stabbilit filwaqt li t-theddida tal-gwerra għamlet superfluwu kull pjan għal Parlament ġdid. Meta l-gwerra fl-aħħar waslet f'Gunju tal-1940, il-ġlieda għas-sopravivenza kienet tiġi qabel kull ħaġa ohra u meta l-gwerra kienet għaddiet il-prijorità għall-gvernijiet Maltin kienet li jippruvaw jerggħu jqajmu lill-gżira mid-diffikultajiet ekonomiċi u soċjali li kienet qiegħda tiffaċċja. Il-gwerra kienet wasslet għal benefiċċju wieħed għal Malta jekk wieħed jista' jsejjaħ hekk, fis-sitwazzjoni li fiha kienet qiegħda l-gżira, il-koncessjoni ta' Kostituzzjoni ta' gvern awtonomu. Minn prospettiva logistika, madankollu, din il-Kostituzzjoni ġdida taffiet xi ftit il-problemi ta' akkomodazzjoni għall-parlamentari Maltin għaliex il-Kostituzzjoni l-ġdida kienet abolixxiet is-Senat.

Il-fatt li għal xi raġuni l-Membri tal-Parlament taħt il-Kostituzzjoni l-ġdida ma qisux urġenti l-bini jew l-akkwist ta' Parlament ġdid, jidher mill-fatt li l-kwistjoni baqgħet wieqfa sas-snin sebgħin tas-seklu li għadda. Ovjament, is-snin 1947-1964 kienu snin importanti għal Malta b'ħafna

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bidliet sostanzjali. Pereżempju, bejn l-1950 u l-1955 Malta kellha f'ames gvernijiet separati u wara t-talba ta' Malta għall-indipendenza, il-Gran Brittanja għal darb'oħra rtirat il-Kostituzzjoni ta' gvern awtonomu. Din tal-aħħar reggħet iddaħħlet fl-1962, iżda f'dak iż-żmien l-Indipendenza kienet il-kwistjoni dominanti u minkejja ż-żieda fin-numru ta' Membri Parlamentari taħt il-Kostituzzjoni l-ġdida, il-kwistjoni ta' parlament ġdid qatt ma reggħet tfaċċat sa 10 snin wara. Sa dak iż-żmien, b'riżultat ta' għadd ta' tbdiliet kostituzzjonali, in-numru ta' Membri Parlamentari kien tela' għal 65.

Tabilhaqq, din il-kwistjoni reggħet tqajmet waqt id-dibattitu dwar l-Estimu Ġenerali tal-1974/5 fejn kien qiegħed jiġi diskuss il-vot li kien jaqa' taħt l-Uffiċċju tal-Prim Ministru. F'dak il-jum il-Prim Ministru beda billi għibed l-attenzjoni tal-Membri għall-bidliet li kienu qegħdin isefħu għewwa l-Palazz bit-trasferiment ta' ċerti dipartimenti, bħall-Ministeru tal-Finanzi, lejn Beltisbeħ u l-koncentrazzjoni ta' oħrajn minflokhom. Hu qal lill-Kamra li t-tama tiegħu kienet li f'qasir żmien l-ewwel sular tal-Palazz kollu kemm hu jibda jintuża biex jilqa' l-uffiċċji kollha li kellhom x'jaqsmu mal-Parlament u dak tal-Gvernatur Ġenerali. Dan, qal, kien ser jippermetti lill-Gvern li jestendi l-facilitajiet disponibbli għall-Membri u li l-biblijoteka titjeb. Huwa qal li l-intenzjoni tal-Gvern kienet li l-Kamra tiġi ttrasferita mis-Sala tal-Arazzi għas-sala li dak iż-żmien kienet okkupata mill-Armerija, sabiex tal-ewwel tkun tista' tiġi ppreżervata.

Għal xi kummenti mill-Membri li dan kien ser jikser it-tradizzjoni, il-Prim Ministru wiegħeb li t-tradizzjoni kienet ser tinzamm minħabba l-fatt li l-Kamra kienet ser tibqa' fil-Palazz u s-Sala tal-Arazzi kienet ser tithares. Huwa qal li l-arazzi għandhom ikunu miftuħa għall-wiri għall-pubbliku minflok jitwarrbu. Huwa qal li s-Sala l-ġdida għandha tagħti iktar spazju lill-membri u jekk il-Kamra kienet taqbel, seta' jitlestha post adegwat fejn il-vizitaturi setgħu jiltaqgħu mal-Membri Parlamentari f'post li ma jtellifx lill-Kamra kollha.

L-Oppożizzjoni ma tantx qablet mat-trasferiment li ġie propost fejn il-Kap tal-Oppożizzjoni ddikjara li kienu lesti jibqgħu fis-Sala tal-Arazzi sabiex l-Armerija ma tiċċaqlaqx lejn post differenti fil-Palazz. Madankollu, il-Prim Ministru wiegħeb li fl-imġhoddi l-Oppożizzjoni kienet esprimiet l-oppożizzjoni tagħha għall-proposta li l-Kamra timxi lejn Kastilja billi riedet li l-Parlament jibqa' għewwa l-Palazz. Issa dak li kien qiegħed jipproponi l-Gvern kien li l-Kamra tiċċaqlaq iżda tibqa' għewwa l-Palazz. Wara dan il-Kap tal-Oppożizzjoni appella lill-Prim Ministru li jekk kellu jsir iċ-ċaqliq dan kellu jsir billi jitqiesu l-ħtiġijiet tal-Membri fid-dawl ta' ħtiġijiet simili f'Parlamenti barranin. Huwa ssuġġerixxa li għandha tingħata daqqa ta' għajn tajba biex wieħed jara kif Parlamenti Ewropej li jinsabu f'binjiet storici, immodernizzaw il-kmamar tagħhom u biex wieħed jara kif id-dwal, l-għamara, is-sistema ta' indirizz pubbliku u l-postijiet bilqiegħda jistgħu jitjebu. Huwa ċertament kien jittama li l-iskrivaniġi attwali, li fil-fehma tiegħu kienu ftit aħjar minn skrivaniġi tal-iskola, ma jiġux trasferiti lejn

il-Kamra l-ġdida. Il-Prim Ministru wiegħeb li ma kienet qiegħda ssir l-ebda allokkazzjoni taħt il-baġit kurrenti iżda appella lill-membri biex jagħmlu s-suġġerimenti tagħhom dwar dak li kien qiegħed jipproponi.

Il-kwistjoni reggħet tqajmet kważi sena wara meta għal darba oħra l-Kamra kienet marret f'Kumitat ta' Provista sabiex tiddiskuti l-Estimu Finanzjarji li kienu jaqgħu taħt il-Portafoll tal-Prim Ministru. Dr Albert Borg Olivier de Puget staqsa lill-Prim Ministru taħt liema punt tal-ispejjeż setgħu jintalbu l-ispejjeż li kienu saru sa dak il-mument fir-rigward tat-trasferiment tal-Kamra lejn is-sala tal-Armerija. Ried jaf ukoll meta l-Gvern kien ser jikkonsulta mal-Oppożizzjoni rigward dan it-trasferiment.^{xxx} Fit-twegiba tiegħu l-Prim Ministru informa lill-Kamra li l-Speaker kien infurmah li dakinhar stess filgħaxija, għalkemm iċ-ċifra kienet għadha mhux magħrufa, il-Gvern Żvediz kien ressaq Mozzjoni fil-Parlament tiegħu biex jipprovdi għall-ispejjeż tal-għamara l-ġdida għall-Kamra tad-Deputati l-ġdida f'Malta. Huwa ddikjara wkoll li kien kuntent li jikkonsulta mal-Oppożizzjoni iżda din tal-aħħar kienet konsistentement qalet li ma taqbilx, fil-principju, mat-trasferiment tal-Kamra lejn l-Armerija. Għaldaqstant, staqsa, fuqieq kien mistenni li jikkonsulta. Il-pjanijiet issa kienu ffinalizzati u ma kienu lest li jgħid lill-Gvern Żvediz li seta' jkun hemm bdil fil-pjanijiet. F'setturi oħra fejn l-arrangamenti kienu għadhom pendenti, hu kien lest jilqa' l-veduti tal-Oppożizzjoni billi kellu t-tama li l-facilitajiet il-ġodda setgħu jwasslu għal relazzjoni aħjar bejn iż-żewġ naħat u mal-pubbliku in ġenerali.

Il-Perit Richard England tqabba biex iħejji d-disinn u l-Perit Michael Ellul, Direttur tal-Antikitajiet sabiex jidderiġi u jissorvelja x-xogħlijiet. Kien fit-13 ta' Awwissu 1976, fl-aħħar jum tal-Parlament qabel dan ġie xolt u giet imsejja l-elezzjoni, li l-Kamra tal-Parlament il-ġdid giet inawgurata. Din infetħet minn Sir Anthony Mamo, President tar-Repubblika, f'dik li huwa stess sejjah 'ċerimonja solenni u qasira'.^{xxxi} Huwa qal ukoll illi l-Kamra l-ġdida kienet ser toffri lill-Membri, lill-istaff tal-Parlament, lill-istampa u lill-pubbliku iktar spazju biex jaqdu d-dmirijiet rispettivi tagħhom u ser tippermetti li jintużaw mezzi iktar moderni u effiċjenti biex jiġu rrekordjati d-dibattiti. Sir Mamo kkonkluda d-diskors tiegħu billi nnota li l-Kamra l-ġdida kienet warrbet f'post ieħor l-armi, 'li għalkemm qodma u ornamentalni jibqgħu simboli tal-gwerra u tal-kunflitti. L-għodda tal-Parlament', qal, 'huma l-argument, id-dibattitu u l-voti'.

Waqt iċ-ċerimonja tkellem ukoll is-Sur Belding, Chargé d'Affaires Żvediz fl-Ambaxxata Żvediza għewwa Ruma. Huwa esprima d-dispaċir tiegħu li l-Prim Ministru Żvediz ma setax ikun preżenti għall-inawgurazzjoni tal-Kamra. Huwa qal li kien unur kbir għal pajjiżu li jiġi assoċjat ma' dan il-proġett u qal li jittama li dan il-Kamra ġdida għall-Parlament isservi sabiex tfakkar fir-relazzjonijiet tajba bejn iż-żewġ pajjiżi. Minbarra li ta fondi għall-proġett, il-Gvern Żvediz kien baġat ukoll lejn Malta żewġ periti rinomati u żewġ *foremen* sabiex jispezzjonaw u jassistu fil-proġett.

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Mistieden distint ieħor kien Sig. Colombo, li dak iż-żmien kien President tas-Senat Taljan. Fid-diskors tiegħu hu rringrazzja lill-Gvern Malti tal-istedina u tax-xewqa li l-Gvern Taljan jiġi assoċjat ma' dan l-avveniment. Huwa qal li din l-istedina giet milqugħa bil-qalb għal ħafna raġunijiet: l-ewwel nett għaliex enfasizzat b'mod importanti l-ħbiberija bejn iż-żewġ pajjiżi fil-vokazzjoni komuni tagħhom favur il-paċi; it-tieni, għaliex iċ-ċerimonja offriet evidenza elokwenti tal-valuri tad-demokrazija, tal-libertà u tal-ġustizzja li jiffurmaw wirt komuni; u fl-aħħar għaliex fil-Kamra l-ġdida, il-legiżlaturi Maltin fil-ġejjieni kienu ser ikunu jistgħu jiddibattu l-kwistjonijiet il-kbar li jissawru mill-iżvilupp fil-paċi tan-nazzjon Malti.

Il-proċedimenti ġew xolti mis-Sur Attard Bezzina, Speaker tal-Kamra, li tkellem wara li l-mistiedna distinti kienu temmew id-diskorsi tagħhom. Fid-diskors tiegħu l-Ispeaker iddeskriva n-numru ta' drabi li l-Parlament kien iddiskuta l-kwistjoni ta' Kamra ġdida u kif, wara kważi sittin sena, kien ġie finalment deċiż li din għandha tkun flok l-Armerija. Hu rringrazzja lill-Gvern Żvediz kemm għall-kontribuzzjoni tiegħu kif ukoll tal-għajnuna professjonali għal dan il-proġett. Fil-konklużjoni tad-diskors tiegħu l-Ispeaker irringrazzja wkoll lis-Sig. Colombo u għadda biex innota li hu personalment kien ra li l-ebda persuna li ma kellhiex x'taqsam mal-aspett Prattiku tal-proġett ma tithalla tidhol fis-Sala qabel din tlestiet. Huwa qal li żewġ periti kienu iktar minn biżżejjed u ma kellu l-ebda intenzjoni li jkollu 55 oħra (in-numru tal-Membri Parlamentari dak iż-żmien) jindaħlu fil-proġett.

Madankollu, l-okkażjoni giet imtebbgħa mill-fatt li l-Oppożizzjoni kient baqgħet barra miċ-ċerimonja. Hija argumentat li billi din saret fl-aħħar seduta tal-Parlament qabel dan ġie xolt, iċ-ċerimonja ma kienet xejn ħlief att partigjan biex jinkiseb vantaġġ elettoral. Hija kkritikat ukoll dak li hi sejħet nuqqas ta' konsultazzjoni mill-Gvern fuq il-proġett.

L-Att Finali

Hekk kif fl-1976 is-Sala tal-Arazzi ċediet postha lill-Parlament, din tal-aħħar issa tteħdilha postha minn kumpless ġdid iddisinjat apposta mill-Perit Taljan Renzo Piano. Jinsab fid-dhul il-ġdid tal-Belt Valletta iddisinjat mill-istess Perit. Bħall-predeċessuri tiegħu, dan kien ir-riżultat ta' ħafna ħsieb u pjanijiet mhux mitmuma. L-idea li jinbena Parlament ġdid tqajmet fil-qosor mill-Partit Nazzjonalista wara li dan reġa' lura fil-poter fl-1987. Il-pjan kien li dan il-Parlament ġdid jinbena faċċata tal-Berġa ta' Kastilja. Filwaqt li nbriet blokka ġdida ta' uffiċċji fil-kantuniera ta' dan l-ispazju miftuħ, il-parti tal-pjan għal Parlament ġdid qatt ma twettqet.

Iżda fl-2004 l-idea reġgħet tfaċċat mill-ġdid meta l-Prim Ministru ta' dak iż-żmien, Dr Lawrence Gonzi, ippropona l-idea tal-Gvern li jinbena Parlament ġdid fil-fdalijiet tat-Teatru Rjal. Madankollu, din l-idea gabet magħha ħafna oppożizzjoni anke għaliex in-nies ta' Malta kienu għadhom jittamaw li xi darba dan it-Teatru seta' jerġa' jinbena.

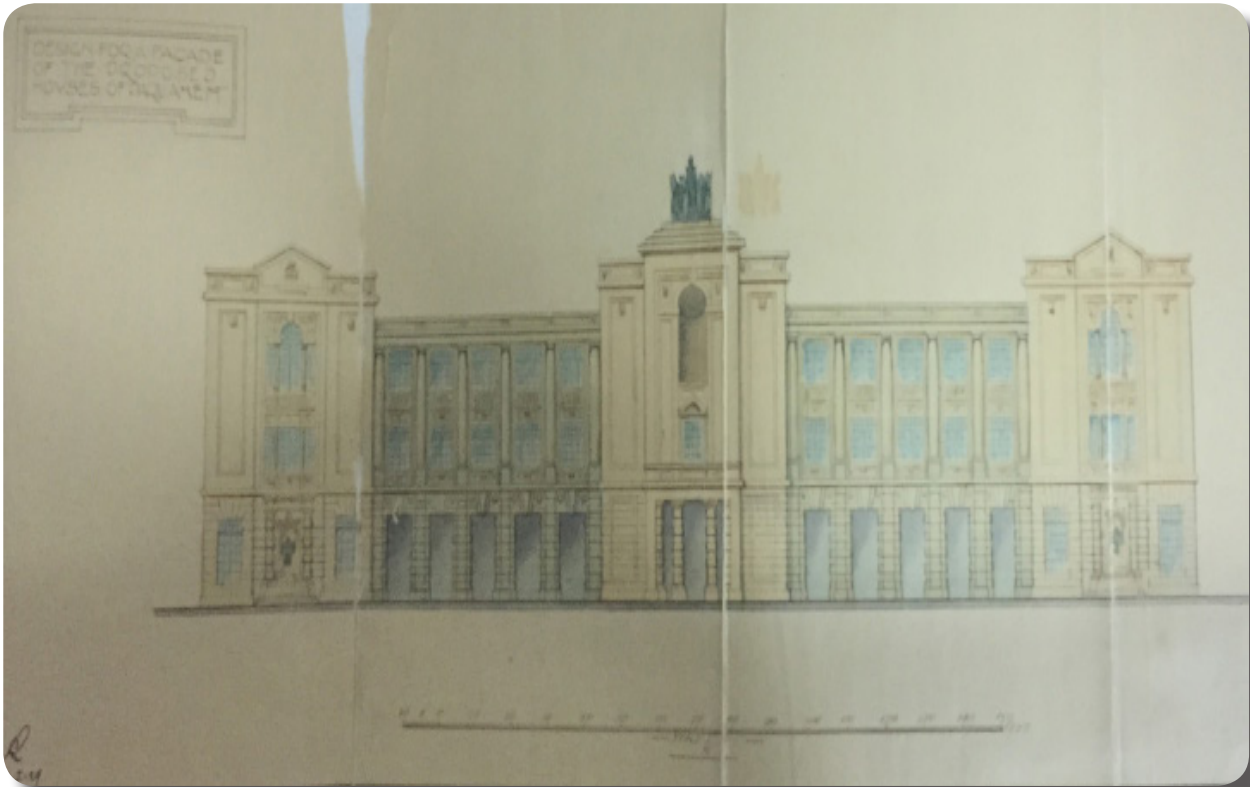
Fl-2011 l-idea kienet is-sugġett ta' diskors qawwi mill-Prim Ministru li kien donnu qiegħed jindika li l-Gvern fl-aħħar kien iddeċieda. Din kienet dikjarazzjoni kemmxejn konfuża billi f'Ġunju tal-2009 il-Gvern kien żvela l-pjanti mħejjijin minn Renzo Piano għar-riġenerazzjoni ta' Bieb il-Belt u tat-Teatru li kienu jinkludu wkoll il-pjanti għal Parlament ġdid. Għal darba oħra l-protesti kontra din l-idea kienu qawwija kif kien hemm ukoll protesti kontra d-disinn tal-Parlament il-ġdid li kien ippjanat li jinbena bejn Bieb il-Belt u l-fdalijiet tat-Teatru Rjal. Iżda din id-darba l-gvern baqa' għaddej bil-pjanijiet tiegħu u illum f'dan il-post insibu l-Parlament il-ġdid, ħolqien ta' Piano, li kien inawgurat fl-4 ta' Mejju 2015.

- xiii Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Legiżlattiva, 15 Diċ. 1925.
- xiv Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Legiżlattiva, 17 Frar 1926.
- xv Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Legiżlattiva, 23 Frar 1926.
- xvi Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Legiżlattiva, 16 Mar. 1926.
- xvii Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Legiżlattiva, 22 Mar. 1926.
- xviii Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Legiżlattiva, 25 Ott. 1926.
- xix Ibid.
- xx Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Legiżlattiva, 8 Nov. 1926.
- xxi Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Legiżlattiva, 6 Diċ. 1926.
- xxii Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Legiżlattiva, 12 Diċ. 1926.
- xxiii Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Legiżlattiva, 21 Jan. 1929.
- xiv Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Legiżlattiva, 31 Jan. 1929.
- xxv Ibid.
- xxvi Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Legiżlattiva, 15 Frar 1929.
- xxvii Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Legiżlattiva, 4 Apr. 1929.
- xxviii Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Legiżlattiva, 29 Apr. 1929.
- xxix Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Legiżlattiva, 16 Apr. 1929.
- xxx Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Legiżlattiva, 17 Mar. 1975.
- xxxi Dibattiti tal-Kamra tar-Rappreżentanti, 13 Aww. 1976.



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Wahda mill-proposti ta' disinni għal Parlament ġdid fis-sit tal-*Main Guard*.



Plakka kommemorativa mikxufa fl-inawgurazzjoni tas-Sala tal-Parlament fit-13 ta' Awwissu 1976.



Plakka kommemorativa mikxufa fl-inawgurazzjoni l-binja l-ġdida tal-Parlament fl-4 ta' Lulju 2015.

THE ROAD TO A NEW PARLIAMENT HOUSE 1921-2015 - PART 2

Another Attempt

In the 1927 elections the ruling party was defeated and a coalition government composed of Strickland's Constitutional Party and Boffa's Labour Party took power. Six years of debate had failed to bring about a resolution of the matter and the issue was to remain dormant until 1929. It was brought again to the attention of Parliament by Ugo Mifsud, former Head of Ministry but now Leader of the Opposition, during Question Time. Mifsud noted that he had received a letter from the Lieutenant Governor informing him that there was no prospect that the Auberge de Castille will be handed over to the civil authorities for its use as a Parliament House. Having done so, however, he quickly added that he did not wish to press the Government to reveal at what stage its plans were on this issue.

Strickland, however, replied that the matter was of public interest and he informed the House that as the Castille project had fallen through his Government was planning to 'take steps towards the establishment of Houses of Parliament over the Casino San Giorgio, the back of the Main Guard and the Garrison Library.'^{xxiii} To prove his point he laid on the Table of the House a letter which had been sent to the manager of Sciclunas Bank informing him of the interest that the Government had of acquiring the property and inviting him to discussions on the matter. In the letter the Government also hinted at the possibility that the property might be expropriated if an agreement could not be reached.

Ugo Mifsud returned to the subject on January 31 when he asked the Head of Ministry whether he would agree that the issue of choosing a site for a Parliament House was one which devolved exclusively on both Houses of Parliament rather than the Executive. Strickland agreed and proposed the appointment of yet another Select Committee of the House to consider the question and invited Mifsud to nominate its members. But Mifsud declined the offer.^{xxiv} Consequently, once again the matter was dropped. But yet again the matter of a Parliament House became the subject of a Parliamentary question, this time by Giovanni Adami. He asked the Minister of Public Works whether in the judgment of his Department's technical staff the space over the Main Guard was sufficient to accommodate the two Houses of Parliament, whether the site was under the jurisdiction of the Governor and whether the Garrison Library was publicly or privately owned? The Minister replied that the space was quite adequate for the purpose but that the approval of the Governor was required before the project could be embarked upon.^{xxv}

On February 15, 1929, Strickland laid on the Table of the House the opinion of the Public Works Department on the proposed building of a Parliament House on the Main Guard site across from the Palace. The two Houses of Parliament were to be accommodated on the first floor while the offices were to be fitted in the space between the two Houses and the staircase below. The papers also included

'rough sketches' showing how the existing buildings were to be incorporated into the scheme. According to these papers the estimated cost of the building was £60,000.^{xxvi} But it was in April 1929 that Strickland finally moved, in the Legislative Assembly, the Motion that 'in the opinion of this House the site opposite the Palace in St George's Square is the most suitable for a Parliament House.'^{xxvii} According to the Head of Ministry this site had a number of advantages: it was near the main offices of government; it was in the centre of town; and it was easily accessible from the Auberge D'Aragon. In moving the resolution Strickland said that some people will say that the Government did not have the money needed for the project but he knew of a way how the project could be financed although he was not prepared to go into any detail at this stage.

The Opposition was not impressed with this statement reminding the Government of the many capital projects that were already in hand. It also reminded the Government that all parties were agreed on the notion that the present Council Chamber should remain in the hands of the Maltese Parliament. Ugo Mifsud estimated that the project would cost about £65,000 and moved an amendment to the original Motion in which he proposed, once again, that the whole question be referred to a Select Committee. Mifsud's colleague, Carlo Mallia, for his part wanted the whole matter thrown out on the basis of lack of funds but during his speech made a suggestion which was quickly grasped by Strickland. This was that one should explore the idea of building a second floor on the Auberge de Aragon.^{xxviii}

But the project was financially beyond the means of the Government and when a few days later Strickland asked that the debate on his Motion, which had been adjourned, be postponed again he was greeted with laughter from the Opposition benches.^{xxix} Once again the proposal to build a new Parliament House had failed to make any headway and the issue was not to be brought up again until a number of decades after the Second World War.

A New Parliament Hall

Indeed, after 1930 there was no need for a new parliament Hall or House as disagreements with Britain, between the newly elected Nationalist Party government, a pro-Italian language party, and the Colonial Office resulted in the loss of the 1921 self-government Constitution and a return to Crown Colony status for Malta. The Tapestry Chamber was in every sense adequate for the work of the re-instated Council of Government and the increasing threat of war made redundant any plans for a new Parliament House. When the war did finally come, in June 1940, the struggle for survival took precedence over every other consideration and when the war was over the priority for Maltese governments was to try and raise their devastated island from the economic and social difficulties that it faced. The war had one benefit for Malta if one can, in the situation facing the island, call the grant of a new self-government Constitution a benefit. From a logistical

THE ROAD TO A NEW PARLIAMENT HOUSE 1921-2015 - PART 2 (CONT.)

point of view, however, this new Constitution somewhat mitigated the accommodation problems being faced by Malta's parliamentarians mainly on the ground that under the new Constitution the Senate had been abolished.

That for some reason Members of Parliament under the new Constitution did not find the building or acquiring of a new Parliament House as urgent can be seen from the fact that the issue remained dormant until the 1970s. Of course, the years 1947-1964 were momentous years for Malta with many landmark changes. For example, between 1950 and 1955 Malta had five separate governments and following Malta's demand for independence Britain once again withdrew Malta's self-governing Constitution. The latter was re-introduced in 1962 but Independence was the overriding issue at this time and despite an increase in the number of MPs under the new Constitution the issue of a new Parliament House never re-surfaced again for another 10 years. By now, as a result of several Constitutional changes, the number of sitting MPs had risen to 65.

Indeed, it was during the debate on the 1974/5 General Estimates when the votes falling under the Office of the Prime Minister were being discussed that the issue was debated again. On that day the Prime Minister began by drawing the attention of Members to the changes taking place within the precincts of the Palace with the migration of some Departments, such as the Ministry of Finance, to Beltissebħ and the concentration of others in their place. He told the House that it was his hope that within a short period of time the entire First Floor of the Palace will be used to House all the offices connected with Parliament and those of the Governor-General. This, he said, would allow the Government to extend the facilities available to Members and to improve the library. The government's intention, he said, was to transfer the Chamber from the Tapestry Chamber to the hall currently occupied by the Armoury so that the former may be preserved.

To some comments from Members that this would break with tradition, the PM replied that tradition will be maintained by the fact that the Chamber will remain within the Palace and that the Tapestry Chamber will be protected. The tapestries, he said, should be open for viewing by the public rather than locked away. The new Chamber, he said, should allow members more space and, if the House agreed, a proper lobby for strangers to meet with their MPs would be established somewhere where they would not intrude or disturb the whole House.

The Opposition did not quite agree with the proposed move with the Leader of the Opposition stating that they would rather remain in the Tapestry Chamber than see the Armoury moved to a different place within the Palace. The Prime Minister replied, however, that the Opposition had in the past expressed its opposition to the House moving to Castille as it wanted Parliament to remain within the Palace. Now what the Government was proposing was that the House does remain in the Palace but moves to a new hall. Following this the Leader of the Opposition appealed

to the Prime Minister that if a move is to be effected than the Government should consider the needs of Members in the light of similar needs in other foreign Parliaments. He suggested that a good look should be paid as to how some European Parliaments, housed within historic buildings, had gone about modernising their chambers and to see how the lighting, furniture, public address system and seating should be improved. He certainly hoped that their present desks, which in his view were little better than school desks, would not be transferred to a new Chamber. The Prime Minister replied that no allocation was being made under the current budget but appealed to all members to make suggestions on what he was proposing.

The matter came up again for discussion almost a year later when once again the House had resolved itself into a Committee of Supply to discuss the financial votes falling under the Prime Minister's portfolio. Dr Albert Borg Olivier de Puget asked the Prime Minister under which item the expenses incurred so far on the proposed transfer of the House to the hall of the Armoury could be found. He also wanted to know when the Government intended consulting the Opposition on the proposed transfer.^{xxx} In his reply the Prime Minister informed the House that the Speaker had informed him that very same evening that, although the amount was not yet known, the Swedish Government had tabled a Motion in its own Parliament to provide for the cost of the new furniture for the new House of Representatives in Malta. He also stated that he would be very happy to consult with the Opposition but the latter had consistently maintained that it did not agree, in principle, with the transfer of the House to the Armoury. So what was he expected to consult on, he asked? The plans had now been finalised and he was not prepared to tell the Swedish Government that there might be a change in plans. In other areas where the arrangements were still pending he would welcome the views of the Opposition as he hoped the new facilities would serve to bring about a better relationship between the two sides and with the public in general.

Architect Richard England was engaged to prepare the design and Architect Michael Ellul, Head of Antiquities to direct and supervise the work and on August 13, 1976, on the very last day that Parliament was to sit before it was dissolved and elections called, the new Parliament Chamber was inaugurated. It was opened by Sir Anthony Mamo, President of the Republic, in what he himself described as a 'short and solemn ceremony.'^{xxxi} He also said that the new Chamber would allow Members, Parliament staff, the press and the public more space to carry out their respective duties and would also allow for a more modern and efficient means of recording debates. Sir Mamo concluded his speech by noting that the new Chamber had banished to another place arms and weapons, 'which even though old and ornamental remained nonetheless symbols of war and conflict. The tools of Parliament,' he said, 'are argument, debate and the votes.'

Mr Belding, Swedish Chargé d'Affaires at the Swedish

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Embassy in Rome, also spoke during the ceremony. He expressed his regret that the Swedish Prime Minister could not be present for the inauguration of the Chamber. He said that it was a great honour for his country to be associated with this project and he hoped that this new Parliament Hall would serve as a reminder of the good relations existing between the two countries. In addition to providing the funds for the project the Swedish Government had also sent to Malta two renowned architects and two foremen to oversee and assist with the project.

Another distinguished guest was Sig. Colombo, at the time President of the Italian Senate. In his speech he thanked the Maltese Government for inviting him and for its earnest desire to associate the Italian Government with this event. This invitation, he said, had been gladly accepted for many reasons: firstly, because it underlined in a significant way the ties of friendship binding the two countries in a common vocation for peace; secondly, because the ceremony also provided eloquent evidence of the values of democracy, freedom and justice which formed a common heritage; and finally, because in the new Chamber future Maltese legislatures will be debating the great problems arising from the future peaceful development of the Maltese nation.

The proceedings were wound up by Mr Attard Bezzina, Speaker of the House, who spoke after the distinguished guests had finished their speeches. In his own speech the Speaker outlined the number of times Parliament had discussed the issue of a new Chamber and how, after nearly six decades, it had been finally decided this should be established in place of the Armoury. He thanked the Swedish Government both for its contribution and for providing professional assistance for the project. Concluding his speech the Speaker also thanked Sig. Colombo and went on to note that he had personally ensured that no one unconnected with the physical side of the project be allowed to enter the Hall before it was completed. He said that two architects were more than enough and he had no desire to have another 55 (the number of MPs at the time) interfere with the project.

The occasion was soured, however, by the fact that the Opposition had stayed away from the ceremony. It claimed that coming as it did on the very last sitting of Parliament before dissolution the ceremony was nothing but a partisan act to gain electoral advantage. It also criticized what it called lack of consultation by the Government over the project.

Final Act

As in 1976 the Tapestry Chamber gave way to the House of Parliament, as the new Chamber was to be called, the latter has now given way to a completely new complex designed for the purpose by Italian architect Piano. It stands at the new entrance to Valletta designed by the same architect. Like its predecessors it was the outcome

of a great deal of soul searching and unfinished plans. The idea of building a new Parliament House was briefly raised after the Nationalist Party was returned to office in 1987. The plan was to build this new Parliament House at Castille Place just across the street from the Office of the Prime Minister at the Auberge de Castille. While a new block of offices were built on the corner of this small open area, the part of the plan for a new Parliament was never implemented.

But in 2004 the idea surfaced again when the Prime Minister of the time, Dr Lawrence Gonzi, floated the government's idea to build a new Parliament House on the ruins of the Opera House. This, however, provoked a great deal of opposition not least because the people of Malta still harbour the hope that this Opera House will one day rise from the ashes. In 2011 this idea was the subject of a powerful speech by the Prime Minister who seemed to indicate that the government had finally decided. This was a rather confusing declaration as in June 2009 the government had unveiled the architectural plans prepared by Renzo Piano for the regeneration of City Gate and the Opera and which also included plans for a new Parliament House. Once again the protests against this idea were loud as were the protests against the design of the new Parliament House planned to rise between the entrance to Valletta and the ruins of the Opera House. But this time the government pressed on with its plans and Piano's creation now stands on this location. The new Parliament House was inaugurated on 4 May 2015.

^{xiii} *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 15 Dec. 1925.*

^{xiv} *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 17 Feb. 1926.*

^{xv} *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 23 Feb. 1926.*

^{xvi} *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 16 Mar. 1926.*

^{xvii} *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 22 Mar. 1926.*

^{xviii} *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 25 Oct. 1926.*

^{xix} *Ibid.*

^{xx} *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 8 Nov. 1926.*

^{xxi} *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 6 Dec. 1926.*

^{xxii} *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 12 Dec. 1926.*

^{xxiii} *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 21 Jan. 1929.*

^{xxiv} *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 31 Jan. 1929.*

^{xxv} *Ibid.*

^{xxvi} *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 15 Feb. 1929.*

^{xxvii} *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 4 Apr. 1929.*

^{xxviii} *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 29 Apr. 1929.*

^{xxix} *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 16 Apr. 1929.*

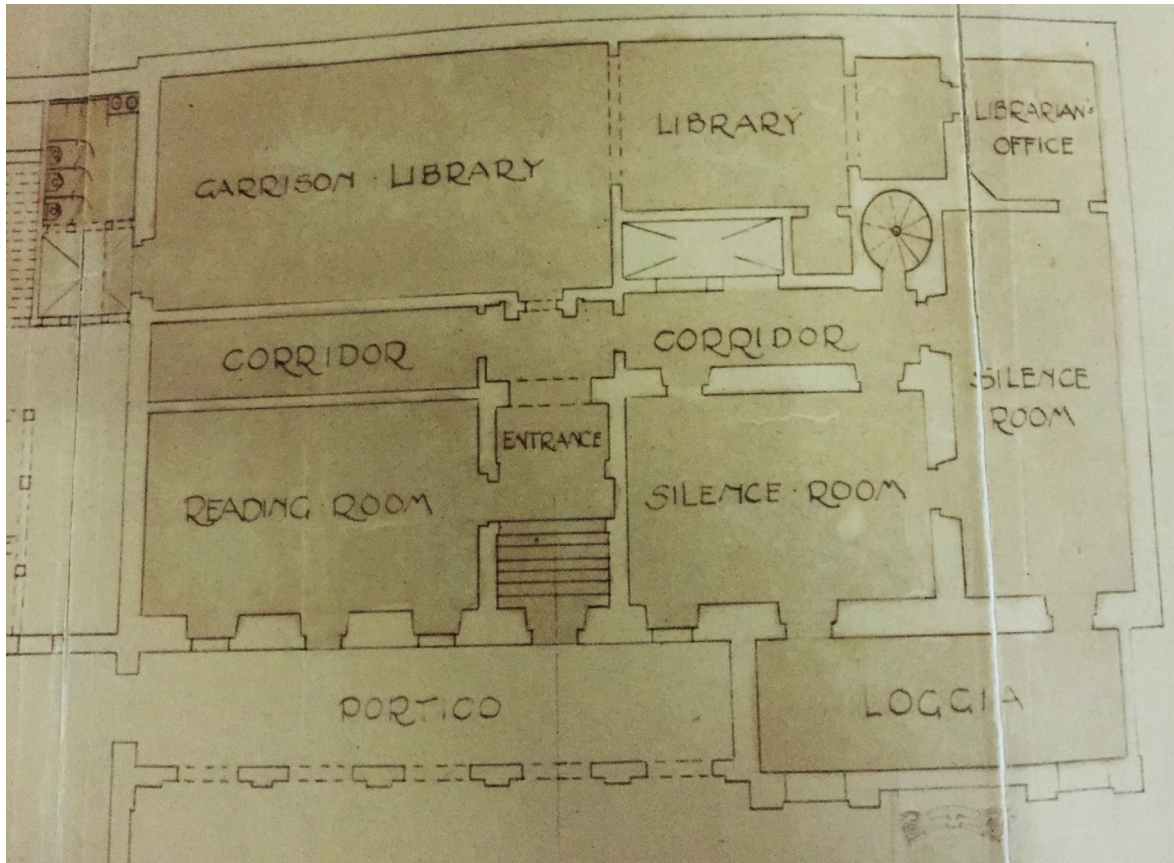
^{xxx} *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 17 Mar. 1975.*

^{xxxi} *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 13 Aug. 1976.*



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THE ROAD TO A NEW PARLIAMENT HOUSE 1921-2015 - PART 2(CONT.)



Part of the floor plan in one of the proposals for a new Parliament building at the Main Guard site.



The former Armoury in the Grand Masters' Palace used as the parliamentary chamber between August 1976 and April 2015.

ATTIVITAJIET TAL-PARLAMENT

Laqgħa mal-Konsli Onorarji

L-Ispeaker tal-Kamra tad-Deputati Itaqa' mal-konsli onorarji ta' Malta. Fl-intervent li għamel, huwa rringrazzja lill-konsli tax-xogħol prezzjuż li jwettqu madwar id-dinja, liema xogħol jagħmlu bil-qalb u fl-aħjar interess ta' Malta. Matul il-laqgħa, l-Ispeaker għamel enfasi dwar l-importanza li huwa jagħti lid-diplomazija parlamentari, li kull ma jmur dejjem qed jikber ir-rwol tagħha. Huwa għamel referenza għad-diversi laqgħat li jkun mistieden jattendi u jindirizza barra l-pajjiż, kif ukoll għal-laqgħat li jkollhom il-Membri Parlamentari Maltin barra l-pajjiż fuq bażi regolari. L-Ispeaker żied jgħid li l-importanza tal-preżenza ta' konsli onorarji tinħass aktar f'żoni jew pajjiżi fejn ma hemmx ambaxxata Maltija permanenti. Għalhekk, għal pajjiż żgħir bħal mhu Malta, fejn in-numru tal-ambaxxati huwa limitat, il-preżenza u x-xogħol tal-konsli onorarji huwa aktar neċessarju.



Laqgħa mal-komunitajiet ta' San Lawrenz, La Balme-de-Sillingy u Colle Umberto

L-Ispeaker tal-Kamra tad-Deputati indirizza l-komunitajiet ta' San Lawrenz (Għawdex), La Balme-de-Sillingy (Franza) u Colle Umberto (l-Italja) f'konferenza li saret ġewwa l-bini tal-Parlament, dwar ir-rwol tal-Mediterran fl-iżvilupp globali. Fl-intervent tiegħu l-Ispeaker stqarr li din hija l-ewwel darba fejn il-bini tal-Parlament qiegħed jospita komunitajiet ġejjin minn pajjiżi differenti sabiex jiddiskutu tema ta' rilevanza attwali u importanti. Huwa saħaq li pass importanti sabiex titrażżan il-mewġa kbira ta' nies, fosthom tfal, li jirriskjaw ħajjithom billi jaqsmu l-baħar Mediterran bil-għan li jkollhom ħajja dinjituża, huwa li l-pajjiżi fejn hemm il-faqar u l-miżerja jqumu fuq saqajhom u jibdeu bi proċess ta' żvilupp. Għalhekk, il-Mediterran għandu jservi ta' pont bejn l-Ewropa u l-Afrika, sabiex il-kontinent Afrikan jissaħħaħ u l-persuni Afrikani jibda jkollhom ħajja b'dinjità ġewwa pajjiżhom. Din il-konferenza saret bħala parti mill-attivitajiet ta' ġemellaġġ bejn il-komunitajiet ta' San Lawrenz, La Balme-de-Sillingy u Colle Umberto, u r-rappreżentanti kienu mmexxija mis-Sindki ta' dawn it-tliet komunitajiet.

PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES

Meeting with the communities of San Lawrenz, La Balme-de-Sillingy and Colle Umberto

The Speaker of the House of Representatives addressed the communities of San Lawrenz (Gozo), La Balme-de-Sillingy (France) and Colle Umberto (Italy) on the role of the Mediterranean in global development during a conference held in the Parliament building. In his address the Speaker stated that this is the first time the Parliament building is hosting communities from different countries to discuss a subject of current relevance and importance. He stressed that an important step to address the huge wave of people, including children, who risk their life by crossing the Mediterranean Sea in search of a more dignified life, is for the poor and conflict-stricken countries to regain stability and start a process of development. Therefore, the Mediterranean should serve as a bridge between Europe and Africa, so that the African continent regains its strength and the African people can start living a dignified life in their own countries. This conference was organised as part of the twinning activities between the communities of San Lawrenz, La Balme-de-Sillingy and Colle Umberto, whose representatives were led by the mayors of these three communities.



Meeting with the Honorary Consuls

The Speaker of the House of Representatives met with the honorary consuls of Malta. In his address, the Speaker thanked the consuls for the invaluable work they perform around the world; work which they carry out with dedication and in the best interests of Malta. During the meeting, the Speaker emphasised the importance he attaches to parliamentary diplomacy, with its constantly increasing role. He referred to the various meetings abroad he is invited to attend and address, as well as to the meetings abroad in which the Maltese Members of Parliament participate in on a regular basis. The Speaker added that the importance of the consuls' presence is felt mostly in those countries or zones where there is no permanent Maltese embassy. Thus, for a small country like Malta, where the number of embassies is limited, the presence and work of the honorary consuls is all the more necessary.

ATTIVITAJIET TAL-PARLAMENT (KONT.)

Wirja dwar l-40 sena anniversarju tal-ftehim ta' Helsinki

L-Ispeaker tal-Kamra tad-Deputati Anglu Farrugia inawgura wirja li tfakkar l-40 sena mid-dikjarazzjoni ta' Helsinki, li minnha nholqot l-Organizzazzjoni għas-Sigurtà u l-Kooperazzjoni fl-Ewropa. Fid-diskors tiegħu l-Ispeaker saħaq dwar l-importanza tar-rwol li kellha Malta sabiex pajjiżi fil-Mediterran jinghataw il-vuċi mistħoqqa f'din l-organizzazzjoni. L-Ispeaker għamel referenza wkoll għad-diskors tal-Perit Duminku Mintoff bħala Prim Ministru ta' Malta li għamel 40 sena ilu propju waqt il-laqgħa ta' Helsinki, liema diskors iddeskriva bħala li għadu rilevanti u importanti sal-gurnata tal-lum.



Wirja dwar il-proġett tad-daħla tal-Belt Valletta

Nhar l-1 ta' Awwissu l-Ispeaker fetaħ wirja dwar il-proġett tad-daħla tal-Belt Valletta mtellgħa mill-uffiċċju tal-Perit Renzo Piano, li kien responsabbli mid-disinn tal-binja l-ġdida tal-Parlament. Għall-ftuħ ta' din il-wirja kien hawn preżenti l-istess Renzo Piano kif ukoll it-tim tiegħu li ħadem fuq dan il-proġett. Din kienet l-ewwel okkażjoni għall-Perit Renzo Piano li jżur il-binja tal-Parlament minn meta giet inawgurata uffiċjalment fl-4 ta' Mejju ta' din is-sena. Fl-indirizz tiegħu, l-Ispeaker stqarr li t-tibdil li għab dan il-proġett fid-daħla tal-Belt kapitali huwa wiehed sinifikanti. Għall-ewwel darba fl-istorja tiegħu l-Parlament għandu binja riservata biss għax-xogħol parlamentari u ma hu maqsum ma' ebda entità oħra, u għalhekk huwa pass fid-direzzjoni t-tajba sabiex il-Parlament Malti jsir tassew awtonomu. Il-wirja baqgħet miftuħa sal-aħħar ta' Settembru.

PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES (CONT.)

Exhibition on the Valletta City Gate Project

On 1 August the Speaker inaugurated an exhibition about the Valletta City Gate Project, organised by the office of Architect Renzo Piano, who was responsible for the design of the new Parliament building. Renzo Piano himself was present for the inauguration of the exhibition, together with the team that worked on the project. This was the first occasion during which Architect Renzo Piano was able to visit the Parliament building since it was officially inaugurated on 4 May of this year. In his address, the Speaker states that the changes to the capital city's entrance brought about by the project are significant. For the first time in its history Parliament has a building reserved exclusively for parliamentary work, and which is not shared with any other entity; this is therefore an important step in the right direction for the Maltese Parliament in becoming truly autonomous. The exhibition remained open until the end of September.



Exhibition commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the Helsinki Accord

The Speaker of the House of Representatives Anġlu Farrugia inaugurated an exhibition commemorating the 40 years since the Declaration of Helsinki, which served as the groundwork for the setting up of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In his speech the Speaker stressed the importance of Malta's role in giving Mediterranean countries the voice they deserve within the organisation. The Speaker also referred to the speech given by the Maltese Prime Minister Duminku Mintoff 40 years ago during the meeting in Helsinki, a speech he described as still being relevant and important to this day.

ATTIVITAJIET TAL-PARLAMENT (KONT.)

Żjara ta' Delegazzjoni mill-Kungress Popolari Ċiniż

L-Ispeaker irċieva delegazzjoni mill-Kungress Popolari Ċiniż (NPC), li kienet immexxija mill-Viċi President tal-Kumitat tal-Affarijiet Barranin u l-President tal-Grupp ta' Hbiberija bejn il-Kungress u l-Parlament Ewropew (NPC-EP). Fil-laqgħa li saret għewwa l-bini tal-Parlament, għew diskussi r-relazzjonijiet tajba li jeżistu bejn iż-żewġ pajjiżi li jmorru lura sa-1972. Iż-żewġ naħat iddiskutew ukoll temi ta' interess komuni għaż-żewġ pajjiżi, fosthom il-Pjan ta' Kooperazzjoni kif ukoll tiżni fil-kooperazzjoni bejn il-parlamenti taż-żewġ pajjiżi. L-istess delegazzjoni ltaqgħet ukoll mad-Deputy Speaker tal-Kamra, l-Onor. Ċensu Galea li kien akkumpanjat mid-Deputy Whip tal-Gvern l-Onor. Deborah Schembri u mill-Iskrivan tal-Kamra s-Sur Raymond Scicluna.



Laqgħa mal-Viċi President tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea Jyrki Katainen

Nhar l-4 ta' Settembru il-Viċi President tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea Jyrki Katainen, responsabbli mill-Impjiegi, Tkabbir, Investiment u Kompetittività ltaqa' b'mod kongunt mal-Kumitati Permanenti dwar l-Affarijiet Barranin u Ewropej u mal-Kumitat dwar l-Affarijiet Ekonomiċi u Finanzjarji. Il-laqgħa ffukat fuq il-pjan tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea sabiex jiġi introdott il-Fond Ewropew għall-Investiment Strateġiku. Il-Kummissarju spjega kif dan il-Fond ser ikun qed jiffunzjona waqt li ta numru ta' eżempji ta' kif pajjiżi oħra fl-Unjoni Ewropea qegħdin ifasslu proġetti oħra. Huwa stqarr li jinsab sodisfatt li f'Malta wkoll dalwaqt ser ikun hawn Bank Nazzjonali għall-Iżvilupp. Dan il-bank ser jgħin sabiex Malta wkoll tkun tista' tfassal proġetti li jkunu jistgħu jitwettqu bl-għajnuna ta' dan il-Fond.

PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES (CONT.)

Meeting with the Vice-President of the European Commission Jyrki Katainen

On 4 September, the European Commission Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness Jyrki Katainen, addressed a joint meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs and of the Standing Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs. The meeting focused on the plan of the European Commission to introduce the European Fund for Strategic Investment. The Vice President explained how this Fund will function and gave various examples of how other countries of the European Union are designing other projects. He declared his satisfaction that Malta will soon also have a National Development Bank. By way of this bank, Malta will also be able to plan projects that could be implemented with the help of this Fund.

Visit from a delegation of the National People's Congress of China

The Speaker welcomed a delegation from the National People's Congress (NPC) of China, led by the Vice President of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the President of the NPC China-European Parliament Friendship Group (NPC-EP). During the meeting, which was held in the Parliament building, those present discussed the good relations that exist between the two countries, which go back to 1972. Both sides also discussed issues of mutual interest, including the Cooperation Plan as well as strengthening the cooperation between the parliaments of the two countries. The same delegation also met with the Deputy Speaker of the House, Hon. Ċensu Galea, who was accompanied by the Deputy Whip for the Government, Hon. Deborah Schembri, and the Clerk of the House, Mr Raymond Scicluna.



ATTIVITAJIET TAL-PARLAMENT (KONT.)

Konferenza tal-MALTMUN 2015

Bejn it-18 u l-20 ta' Settembru nżammet f'Malta l-ewwel konferenza internazzjonali tas-Socjetà MALTMUN. L-iskop tal-MALTMUN huwa li torganizza simulazzjonijiet tal-laqgħat tan-Nazzjonijiet Uniti u fiha jieħdu sehem studenti f'livell universitarju. Il-Konferenza ttrattat it-temi tal-problemi li jiffaċċjaw l-immigranti, id-dilemmi tal-mexxejja, u l-bini ta' pontijiet bejn delegati differenti. Il-laqgħat tal-kumitati ta' din il-Konferenza nżammu fil-binja tal-Parlament. L-Ispeaker indirizza l-partecipanti ta' din il-konferenza waqt iċ-ċerimonja tal-għeluq fejn għamel referenza għall-principji li jhaddnu n-Nazzjonijiet Uniti. L-Ispeaker tkellem dwar il-problema tal-immigrazzjoni fejn saħaq dwar l-importanza tar-rwol tal-Kummissarju Għoli għar-Refuġjati. Wara d-diskors tal-Ispeaker, id-delegati pprezentawlu r-riżoluzzjonijiet li ġew adottati fiż-żewġ kumitati. Min-naħa tiegħu l-Ispeaker qal illi huwa kien ser jgħaddi dawn ir-riżoluzzjonijiet lill-Membri Parlamentari.

Il-Parlament Nazzjonali taż-Żgħażaġh

Fit-22 ta' Settembru giet organizzata l-edizzjoni tal-2015 tal-Parlament Nazzjonali taż-Żgħażaġh. Din hija attività organizzata mill-Kunsill Nazzjonali taż-Żgħażaġh li issa għandha post fil-kalendarju tal-Parlament fejn żgħażaġh ta' bejn it-13 u l-35 sena jkollhom l-opportunità li jipparteċipaw f'seduti fejn jiddibattu numru ta' temi magħzula mill-partecipanti stess. It-temi li ġew magħzula għal din is-sena għall-partecipanti li għandhom bejn it-13 u t-18-il sena huma l-ugwaljanza, Viżjoni Għawdex u mezzi alternattivi ta' trasport, filwaqt li t-temi magħzula għall-partecipanti li għandhom bejn id-19 u l-35 sena huma l-immigrazzjoni, l-apatija fost iż-żgħażaġh u d-dritt tal-ħajja. Is-sessjoni tal-2015 tal-Parlament taż-Żgħażaġh kienet l-ewwel waħda li nżammet fil-binja l-għdida tal-Parlament u kienet ippreseduta mid-Deputy Speaker, l-Onor. Ċensu Galea. Diversi Membri Parlamentari miż-żewġ naħat tal-Kamra ħadu sehem f'din l-attività.



PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES (CONT.)

The National Youth Parliament

The 2015 edition of the National Youth Parliament was held on 22 September. This activity is organised by the Kunsill Nazzjonali taż-Żgħażaġh (National Youth Council) and is now an annual appointment in the Parliament's calendar during which young people between the ages of 13 and 35 have the opportunity to participate in sessions and debate a number of themes selected by the participants themselves. The themes chosen for this year for young people between the ages of 13 and 18 were equality, Vision Gozo and alternative means of transport, whereas immigration, apathy among youths and the right for life were chosen for the participants aged between 19 and 35 years. The 2015 Youth Parliament session was the first to be held in the new Parliament building and was presided over by the Deputy Speaker, Hon. Ċensu Galea. Members of Parliament from both sides of the House also took part in this activity.



MALTMUN Conference 2015

The first international conference of the MALTMUN Society was held in Malta between 18 and 20 September. The aim of MALTMUN is to organise simulations of the meetings of the United Nations, open to university students. The Conference discussed themes such as the plight of the immigrants, the dilemmas of statesmen, and the building of bridges between different delegates. The Conference committee meetings were held in the Parliament building. The Speaker addressed the participants of this conference during the closing ceremony where he referred to the principles fostered by the United Nations. The Speaker spoke about the problem of immigration and stressed the importance of the role of the High Commissioner for Refugees. After the Speaker's address, the delegates presented him with the resolutions adopted by the two committees. The Speaker in turn said that he would be forwarding these resolutions to the Members of Parliament.

ATTIVITAJIET TAL-PARLAMENT (KONT.)

Ftuħ tal-Esebizzjoni 'Science in the House'

Fil-25 ta' Settembru id-Deputat Whip tal-Gvern, l-Onor. Deborah Schembri, fetxet l-esebizzjoni mtellgħa fil-binja tal-Parlament bħala parti mill-attivitajiet Science in the City. Il-wirja 'Science in the House' għandha l-għan illi sservi ta' pont bejn ir-riċerkaturi u l-Membri Parlamentari, u din is-sena tinsab fir-raba' edizzjoni tagħha. L-attività hija organizzata b'mod kongunt bejn il-Kamra Maltija tax-Xjentisti, ir-Research Innovation and Development Trust (RIDT) tal-Università ta' Malta u l-konsorzju Science in the City, Researchers' Night, b'kollaborazzjoni mal-Parlament ta' Malta. L-esebizzjoni ta' din is-sena tiġbor 12-il studju li saru Malta u huma pprezentati f'forma ta' posters b'temi li jinkludu fosthom il-bini ta' teleskopji bil-għan li jiġu solvuti problemi astrofiżiċi, radars bi frekwenza għolja sabiex ikunu protetti r-rizorsi kostali Maltin, l-ewwel sekwenzar tal-ġenoma ta' mikroorganizmu Malti u strategiji godda sabiex tiġi trattata l-epilessija.

Taħdita dwar il-futur tas-setturi kulturali u kreattivi

Nhar it-28 ta' Settembru gie organizzat l-ewwel forum kulturali mill-Kunsill Malti għall-Arti u li nżamm fil-binja tal-Parlament. Wara li saret sejha pubblika, 13-il organizzazzjoni laqgħu l-istedina tal-Kunsill Malti għall-Arti biex jittkellmu dwar il-viżjoni tagħhom għas-setturi kulturali u kreattivi sas-sena 2020. Dan il-Forum kien ippresedut mill-Ispeaker tal-Kamra tad-Deputati, l-Onor. Anġlu Farrugia u hađu sehem fih ukoll Membri miż-żewġ naħat tal-Kamra. Għal dan il-forum attendew l-għaqdiet u l-assoċjazzjonijiet li jirrappreżentaw setturi differenti fl-oqsma tal-wirt kulturali, l-arti, il-midja u s-servizzi kreattivi, bħad-disinn u l-arkitettura. Il-forum iddiskuta erba' temi li permezz tagħhom l-għaqdiet magħżula ngħataw l-opportunità li jipprezentaw il-ħsibijiet u l-viżjoni tagħhom dwarhom. It-temi li ġew diskussi kienu: il-kultura fil-qalba tal-komunità, id-diversità u l-aċċess kulturali, l-edukazzjoni kreattiva u l-professionalizzazzjoni fl-oqsma kulturali u kreattivi. Fid-diskors tal-għeluq tiegħu l-Ispeaker Farrugia tkellem dwar iċ-ċentralità tal-attivitajiet kulturali u kreattivi fil-ħajjiet tagħna ta' kuljum u l-importanza li għandhom ukoll għall-ekonomija ta' Malta. Huwa tkellem ukoll dwar il-Kapitali Ewropea tal-Kultura 2018 li għandha sservi bħala espressjoni għolja ta' dak li jagħmel parti mill-kultura Maltija.



PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES (CONT.)

Discussion on the future of Malta's cultural and creative sectors

The first cultural forum, organised by the Malta Arts Council, was held on 28 September in the Parliament building. Following a public call, 13 organisations accepted the invitation of the Malta Arts Council to discuss their vision for the cultural and creative sectors until 2020. The Forum was chaired by the Speaker of the House, Hon. Anġlu Farrugia, with the participation of Members of Parliament from both sides of the House. Organisations and associations representing different sectors in the fields of cultural heritage, art, the media, and creative business services, such as design and architecture, participated in this cultural forum. The forum discussed four themes about which selected entities were given the opportunity to present their thoughts and visions. These were: culture at the heart of the community; diversity and cultural access; creative education and the professionalisation of the cultural and creative sectors. In his closing speech Speaker Farrugia spoke about the centrality of cultural and creative activities in our daily life and their importance for the Maltese economy. He also spoke about the European Capital of Culture 2018 which should serve as a visible expression of what constitutes Maltese culture.

Inauguration of the 'Science in the House' Exhibition

On 25 September Government Deputy Whip Hon Deborah Schembri inaugurated an exhibition held in the Parliament building as part of the Science in the City activities. The 'Science in the House' exhibition aims to act as a bridge between researchers and Members of Parliament and this year is in its fourth edition. The activity is jointly hosted by the Malta Chamber of Scientists, the University of Malta Research Innovation and Development Trust (RIDT) and the Science in the City, Researchers' Night consortium, in collaboration with the Maltese Parliament. This year's edition comprises 12 studies carried out in Malta presented as informative posters with topics including building telescopes for solving astrophysical problems, high-frequency radars for protecting the coastal resources of Malta, the first genome sequencing of a Maltese microorganism and new strategies for treating epilepsy.



ATTIVITAJIET INTERNAZZJONALI

II-45 Konferenza Annwali tal-BIMR tas-CPA

Delegazzjoni tal-Parlament Malti, magħmula mis-Segretarju Parlamentari għad-Drittijiet ta' Persuni b'Dizabilità u Anzjanità Attiva, l-Onor. Justyne Caruana, il-Ministru għall-Intern u s-Sigurtà Nazzjonali, l-Onor. Carmelo Abela, l-Onor. David Agius, l-Onor. Anthony Bezzina u l-Onor. Silvio Parnis, attendiet għall-45 Konferenza Annwali tar-Regjun tal-Gzejjer Brittanniċi u r-Regjun tal-Mediterran (BIMR) tal-Assoċjazzjoni Parlamentari tal-Commonwealth (CPA) li nżammet bejn il-25 u s-27 ta' Mejju għewwa Limassol, Ċipru. Matul il-Konferenza bit-tema 'Il-Parlamenti quddiem Sfidi Kontemporanji' għew diskussi bosta aspetti fosthom ir-rwol tal-parlamenti fil-ġlieda kontra l-qgħad, b'mod partikolari l-qgħad fost iż-żgħażaġh u kategoriji oħrajn ta' persuni meqjusa vulnerabbli, kif ukoll l-iskrutinju parlamentari tal-politiki dwar ix-xogħol. Malta għiet imfaħħra bħala eżempju tajjeb ta' kif l-edukazzjoni u l-iżvilupp għenu sabiex jonqos il-qgħad fil-pajjiż. L-Onor. Parnis tkellem dwar kif it-tibdil li sar fl-Ordnijiet Permanenti tal-Kamra fl-1995 sabiex jitwaqqfu numru ta' kumitati permanenti ppermetta li l-iskrutinju parlamentari jsir b'mod aktar effiċjenti. L-Onor. Caruana ppartecipat fil-laqqgħa tal-Kumitat Permanenti tal-Commonwealth tal-Membri Parlamentari Nisa fejn għew diskussi l-isfidi moderni li jħabbtu wiċċhom magħhom membri parlamentari nisa. Il-Ministru Carmelo Abela ppartecipat fil-Laqqgħa Ġenerali Annwali tal-BIMR bħala membru eżekuttiv tal-Kumitat fejn tkellem dwar il-migrazzjoni u l-impatt dirett fuq Malta. Huwa tkellem ukoll dwar kif l-UE u l-Ġnus Magħquda qed jippruvaw jiehdu azzjoni kemm biex jitnaqqsu l-piżijiet fuq ċerti pajjiżi kif ukoll biex jibda jonqos dan il-fenomeno li tant qed iħalli vittmi innocenti. Matul it-tieni jum tal-Konferenza għew diskussi l-vantaġġi u l-iżvantaġġi tax-xandir parlamentari kif ukoll l-importanza li l-membri parlamentari jaġixxu skont l-etika professjonali u li jkunu dejjem kontabbli lejn iċ-ċittadini li jirrapprezentaw.

IT-LIII COSAC

Bejn il-31 ta' Mejju u t-2 ta' Ġunju nżammet il-Plenarja tat-LIII COSAC organizzata mill-Parlament tal-Latvja fil-qafas tad-dimensjoni interparlamentari tal-Presidenza tal-Kunsill tal-Latvja. Id-delegazzjoni Maltija għal din il-laqqgħa kienet magħmula mill-Onor. Luciano Busuttil u mill-Onor. Francis Zammit Dimech. Il-Plenarja indirizzat għadd ta' kwistjonijiet fosthom il-progress li nkiseb mill-Presidenza tal-Latvja, il-Politika tal-Unjoni Ewropea dwar l-enerġija, b'mod partikolari l-isfidi u l-opportunitajiet f'dan il-qasam, is-sigurtà fil-Lvant Nofsani u l-Afrika ta' Fuq, il-Politika tal-Unjoni Ewropea dwar il-Kummerċ, fejn saret enfasi fuq in-negozjati dwar il-ftehim tat-TTIP mal-Istati Uniti, il-proposta tal-Unjoni Ewropea dwar ir-Registru tal-Ismijiet tal-Passiġġieri (PNR), kif ukoll il-gejjieni tal-iskrutinju parlamentari, b'mod partikolari l-possibbiltà li tiġi introdotta 'karta ħadra' li permezz tagħha l-parlamenti nazzjonali jkollhom rwol aktar attiv fil-ħidma tal-istituzzjonijiet Ewropej. Fis-sessjoni tal-ftuħ dwar il-Prijoritajiet tal-Presidenza tal-Latvja, l-Onor. Busuttil intervjena sabiex jgħid illi kellu jkun hemm aktar enfasi matul il-Presidenza tal-Latvja fuq l-immigrazzjoni irregolari u l-qsim tal-piż għust bejn l-Istati Membri, l-aktar fid-dawl tal-pjan il-ġdid dwar il-migrazzjoni tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea. Min-naħa l-oħra, l-Onor. Zammit Dimech saħaq illi l-proposta dwar il-karta l-ħadra tista' mhux biss issaħħaħ il-prinċipji tas-sussidjarjetà u proporzjonalità iżda wkoll iżżid il-koordinament bejn il-parlamenti nazzjonali. Huw stqarr illi l-Parlament Ewropew u l-parlamenti nazzjonali għandhom jagħmlu kull sforz neċessarju sabiex din il-proposta tkun ta' suċċess.



INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The 45th CPA BIMR Annual Conference

A Maltese delegation comprising Hon. Justyne Caruana, Parliamentary Secretary for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing, Hon. Carmelo Abela, Minister for Home Affairs and National Security, Hon. David Agius, Hon. Anthony Bezzina and Hon. Silvio Parnis, attended the 45th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) British Isles and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) Annual Conference which was held in Limassol, Cyprus between 25 and 27 May. Throughout the Conference with the theme 'Parliaments in the Face of Contemporary Challenges' delegates discussed a number of issues including the role of parliaments in tackling unemployment, particularly unemployment amongst young people and other categories of people considered vulnerable, as well as the parliamentary scrutiny of employment policies. Malta was lauded as a good example of the way education and development has helped to reduce unemployment in the country. Hon. Parnis explained how the amendments which had been made to the Standing Orders of the House in 1995 to set up a number of parliamentary standing committees have increased the efficiency of the parliamentary scrutiny functions. Hon. Caruana took part in the Standing Committee meeting of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians which discussed the challenges faced by female members of parliament. Minister Carmelo Abela participated in the Annual General Meeting of the BIMR as an Executive Committee member where he discussed the migration issue and the direct impact on Malta. He also spoke about the ways in which the

EU and the United Nations are trying to take action both to reduce the burdens on certain countries and to start decreasing this phenomenon which is claiming the lives of so many innocent victims. During the second day of the Conference the participants discussed the advantages and disadvantages of parliamentary broadcasting, the importance that members of parliament respect their professional ethics, and their accountability towards the citizens they represent.



LIII COSAC

The Plenary meeting of the LIII COSAC, organised by Latvian Presidency was held between 31 May and 2 June within the framework of the interparliamentary dimension of the Presidency of the Council of Latvia. The Maltese delegation participating in this meeting was made up of Hon. Luciano Busuttil and Hon. Francis Zammit Dimech. Amongst the issues addressed during the Plenary meeting were the progress achieved by Latvian Presidency, the European Union's policy on energy, in particular the challenges and opportunities in this area, security concerns in the Middle East and in North Africa, the European Union's Trade Policy, with emphasis with regards to the TTIP agreement with the United States, the European Union's proposal regarding the Passenger Name Record (PNR), as well as the future of parliamentary scrutiny, in particular the possibility of introducing the 'green card' which would encourage national parliaments to take a more active role in the work of the European institutions. During the opening session which dealt with the Priorities of the Latvian Presidency, Hon. Busuttil stressed that during the Latvian Presidency more emphasis should be placed on irregular immigration and the fair burden sharing between Member States, especially in view of the European Commission's new plan with regard to immigration. On the other hand, Hon. Zammit Dimech stressed that the proposal regarding the green card will not only strengthen the subsidiarity and proportionality principles, but will also increase the coordination between national parliaments. He stated that the European Parliament and national parliaments should make every possible effort to render this proposal a success.

ATTIVITAJIET INTERNAZZJONALI (KONT.)

Laqgħa tal-Kumitat Speċjali dwar id-Deciżjonijiet tat-Taxxa u Miżuri Oħrajn li huma Simili fin-Natura jew fl-Effett Tagħhom

Nhar is-17 ta' Ġunju 2015 l-Onor. Tonio Fenech ħa sehem fil-laqgħa parlamentari tal-Kumitat Speċjali dwar id-Deciżjonijiet tat-Taxxa u Miżuri Oħrajn li huma Simili fin-Natura jew fl-Effett Tagħhom bl-isem ta' 'Aggressive Tax Planning and Democratic Control – Role of Parliaments' li nżammet fil-bini tal-Parlament Ewropew ġewwa Brussell. Matul din il-laqgħa ġew diskussi għadd ta' kwistjonijiet fosthom l-evaljazzjoni kif ukoll l-evitar tat-taxxa, pjanifikazzjoni fiskali aggressiva permezz ta' ċaqliq tal-profitti minn pajjiż għall-ieħor u n-nuqqas ta' trasparenza rigward it-*tax dealings*. Saret referenza għall-każ imsejjaħ Luxleaks fejn instab li xi tax rulings fil-Lussemburgu kienu qed jippromwovu prattiċi ingusti għall-benefiċċju ta' xi kumpaniji kbar multinazzjonali li kienu qed igawdu minn arrangamenti speċjali biex iħallsu anqas taxxi jew saħansitra ma jħallsu xejn taxxi (treaty shopping). Sar l-argument li l-armonizzazzjoni tar-rati ta' taxxa, rati ta' taxxi minimi, il-Baži għat-Taxxa Korporattiva Konsolidata Komuni (CCCTB) u miżuri sabiex tiġi evitata taxxa doppja fost oħrajn, kollha jistgħu jaffettwaw l-awtonomija u l-flessibilità li l-parlamenti nazzjonali jgawdu minnhom sabiex jimmaniġġjaw il-kwistjonijiet finanzjarji tagħhom; iżda min-naħa l-oħra huwa importanti li ċerti prattiċi ingusti jjeqfu. Issemma li min-naħa tagħha l-Unjoni Ewropea, permezz tas-CCCTB, qed tipproma ssib mod ta' kif tittratta d-deciżjonijiet tat-



taxxa fuq livell supranazzjonali mingħajr ma toħloq qafas legiżlattiv. Matul il-laqgħa kien hemm min saħaġ illi mhux kull kompetizzjoni fiskali hija ta' dannu u li jkollok l-istess strutturi ta' taxxi għall-pajjiżi kollha minkejja d-differenzi fl-ekonomiji tagħhom jista' jpoġġi lil uħud minnhom fi żvantagġ ekonomiku.

It-Tielet Parti tal-Assemblea Parlamentari tal-Kunsill tal-Ewropa tas-Sessjoni tal-2015

Delegazzjoni parlamentari magħmula mill-Onor. Joe Debono Grech, l-Onor. Charlò Bonnici u l-Onor. Beppe Fenech Adami attendiet għat-Tielet Sessjoni tal-Assemblea Parlamentari tal-Kunsill tal-Ewropa tal-2015 li nżammet ġewwa Strażburgu bejn it-22 u s-26 ta' Ġunju. Matul din is-sessjoni Malta fakkret il-ħamsin anniversarju minn meta saret membru tal-Kunsill tal-Ewropa u tal-Assemblea tal-istess Kunsill fl-1965. Bħala parti miċ-ċelebrazzjonijiet tal-ħamsin anniversarju, il-President ta' Malta l-ET Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca indirizzat l-Assemblea fejn semmiet kwistjonijiet importanti għal pajjiżna u għall-kontinent Ewropew fosthom l-immigrazzjoni, it-terroriżmu, il-faqar fl-Ewropa, il-vjolenza domestika u l-ugwaljanza. Il-President inawgurat wirja ta' ritratti fil-binja tal-Assemblea bl-isem ta' 'Isle Landers' meħuda minn Darrin Zammit Lupi fl-okkażjoni tal-anniversarju tas-sħubija. Barra minn dan, parti mix-xatt tax-xmara fil-belt ta' Strażburgu ġie msemmi Quai de Malte. Matul dan l-avveniment, il-President ta' Malta tkellmet dwar ir-rabtiet sodi bejn Malta u Franza li jmorru lura ħafna snin. Il-President semmiet bħala eżempju l-Ordni ta' San Ġwann li stabbilixxa ruħu fi gżiritna bosta sekli ilu, kif ukoll ir-rwol importanti li kellu l-Gran Mastru Franciż Jean de La Vallette fil-bini tal-belt kapitali preżenti. Id-delegazzjoni Maltija attendiet għal-laqgħat fil-plenarja tal-Assemblea Parlamentari, li ġiet indirizzata fost oħrajn mis-Segretarju Ġenerali tal-Ġnus Magħquda Ban Ki-moon u ċ-Chairman tal-Presidenza tal-Bosnja Herzegovina Mladen Ivanic, fejn fost it-temi diskussi kien hemm il-protezzjoni tal-*whistleblowers*, iż-żieda fit-trasparenza tal-*media ownership*, ir-responsabbiltà u l-etika tax-xandir f'ambjent li dejjem jevolvi, it-twaqqif tal-Mudell Soċjali Ewropew, persuni mitlufin fl-Ukraina, it-tiŝiħ tal-kooperazzjoni fil-ġlieda kontra t-terroriżmu fuq l-internet u attakki ċibernetiċi oħrajn ta' skala kbira, u l-identifikazzjoni u l-prevenzjoni tan-neorazziżmu. Apparti l-laqgħat fil-plenarja, id-delegati pparteċipaw ukoll fil-laqgħat tal-gruppi politiċi rispettivi tagħhom u ta' wħud mill-kumitati tal-Assemblea.

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES (CONT.)

Special Committee Meeting on Tax Rulings and Other Measures Similar in Nature or Effect

On 17 June 2015 Hon. Tonio Fenech took part in the parliamentary meeting of the Special Committee Meeting on Tax Rulings and Other Measures Similar in Nature or Effect titled 'Aggressive Tax Planning and Democratic Control – Role of Parliaments' which was held in the European Parliament's premises in Brussels. A number of issues were discussed during this meeting including tax evasion and tax avoidance, aggressive tax planning through multinational profit shifting and the lack of transparency in tax dealings. Reference was made to the LuxLeaks case where it transpired that some tax rulings in Luxembourg were promoting unfair practices which were benefitting some large multinationals that were benefitting from special arrangements to pay lower taxes or even avoid paying taxes altogether (treaty shopping). It was argued that the harmonization of tax rates, minimum tax rates, the Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB) and measures to curtail double taxation among others, can all impinge on the autonomy and flexibility enjoyed by national parliaments in managing their financial affairs; but it was also argued that it is important that certain unfair practices end. It was noted that on its part the European Union, through the CCCTB, is trying to find a way of dealing with tax rulings on a supranational level without creating a legislative framework. During the meeting some participants claimed that not all tax competition is harmful and having the same tax structures for all countries despite differences in their economies can put some at an economic disadvantage.

The Third Part of the 2015 Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

A parliamentary delegation made up of Hon. Joe Debono Grech, Hon. Charlò Bonnici and Hon. Beppe Fenech Adami participated in the Third Part of the 2015 Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe held in Strasbourg between 22 and 26 June. During this session Malta commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of its membership in the Council of Europe and in the Assembly of the same Council in 1965. As part of the fiftieth anniversary celebrations, the President of Malta HE Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca addressed the Assembly mentioning a number of important issues for our country and for the European continent including immigration, terrorism, poverty in Europe, domestic violence and equality. The President inaugurated a photographic exhibition in the Assembly's premises titled 'Isle Landers' by Darrin Zammit Lupi on the occasion of the membership anniversary. Furthermore, part of the city of Strasbourg's river bank was named Quai de Malte. During this event, the President of Malta spoke about the strong links between Malta and France that go back many years. The President mentioned, as an example, the Order of St John that established itself in our country many centuries ago, as well as the important role played by the French Grandmaster Jean de La Vallette in building the present-day capital city. The Maltese delegation attended the plenary sessions of the Parliamentary Assembly, which, amongst others, was addressed by the Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon and the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Mladen Ivanic, where topics discussed included the protection of whistleblowers, increased transparency of media ownership, media responsibility and ethics in a changing media environment, the founding of the European Social Model, missing persons in Ukraine, increasing the cooperation against cyber-terrorism and other large scale attacks on the Internet, and the identification of prevention of neo-racism. In addition to plenary session meetings, the delegates also participated in meetings held by their respective political groups and in meetings organised by the Assembly committees.



ATTIVITAJIET INTERNAZZJONALI (KONT.)

Kommemorazzjoni tal-41 anniversarju mill-Kolp ta' Stat f'Ċipru ta' Lulju tal-1974

L-Ispeaker tal-Kamra tad-Deputati, l-Onor. Anġlu Farrugia, flimkien ma' delegazzjoni parlamentari Maltija magħmula mill-Onor. Joseph Sammut u mill-Onor. David Agius, żaru l-gżira ta' Ċipru bejn it-13 u s-16 ta' Lulju fejn ipparteċipaw fil-kommemorazzjoni tal-41 anniversarju mill-kolp ta' stat ta' Lulju tal-1974. Nhar l-14 ta' Lulju, l-Ispeaker u d-delegati għamlu żjara ta' korteżija lill-Arċisqof ta' Nova Justiniana u ta' Ċipru kollha, il-Qdusija Tiegħu Monsinjur Chrysostomos II. L-Ispeaker u l-bqija tad-delegazzjoni Itaqgħu wkoll mal-President tal-Kamra tar-Rappreżentanti ta' Ċipru, l-ET Yiannakis L. Omirou, mal-Ministru tal-Affarijiet Barranin ta' Ċipru, l-ET Ioannis Kasoulides, u mal-President tar-Repubblika ta' Ċipru, l-ET Nicos Anastasiades, fejn is-sugġetti diskussi kienu jinkludu n-nuqqas ta' sigurtà fir-reġjun tal-Mediterran u l-impatt ta' dan fuq iż-żewġ stati, ir-riunifikazzjoni paċifika ta' Ċipru, kif ukoll interessi komuni bħat-tfittxija għaž-żejt, it-telekommunikazzjonijiet u l-kummerċ bilaterali li jista' jittjieb. Nhar il-15 ta' Lulju, l-Ispeaker indirizza s-sessjoni tal-plenarja tal-Kamra tar-Rappreżentanti. Matul id-diskors tiegħu semma l-għajnuna li l-Arċisqof Makarios, il-mexxej tal-gżira fl-1974, kien ingħata mill-Gvernatur Ġenerali Anthony Mamo u l-Prim Ministru Dom Mintoff meta t-Torok invadew

lil Ċipru. Wara dan, l-Ispeaker, flimkien mal-membri parlamentari, attendew ċerimonja ta' tifkira tal-vittmi tal-kolp ta' stat fil-Knisja ta' Theou Sofia. Wara din iċ-ċerimonja, id-delegazzjoni parlamentari Maltija żaret stazzjon tar-radju li jismu Radju Hieles ta' Ċipru. Lejn it-tmiem taż-żjara, huma attendew funzjoni ta' tqegħid ta' fjuri fuq monument li jismu Reżistenza Makarios III li jinsab f'Paphos.



Laqgħa Annwali tal-OSCE PA

Id-delegazzjoni Maltija tal-Assemblea Parlamentari tal-Organizzazzjoni tas-Sigurtà u l-Koperazzjoni fl-Ewropa (OSCE PA), magħmula mill-Onor. Godfrey Farrugia, l-Onor. Anthony Agius Decelis u l-Onor. Frederick Azzopardi, attendiet għall-laqgħa annwali tal-OSCE PA li nżammet fil-belt ta' Helsinki bejn il-5 u d-9 ta' Lulju. Il-membri parlamentari attendew u pparteċipaw fil-laqgħat tal-Plenarja tal-OSCE PA u tat-tliet kumitati ġenerali. Id-diskussjonijiet koprew firxa wiesgħa ta' sugġetti fosthom il-ġlieda kontra t-terroriżmu, il-kriżi fil-Lvant tal-Ukraina u l-Krimea, id-djalogu bejn il-Lvant u l-Punent u l-importanza li l-membri jirrispettaw il-prinċipji li fuqhom hija msejsa l-organizzazzjoni. Dawn ġew diskussi fil-Kumitat Ġenerali dwar il-Kwistjonijiet Politiċi u s-Sigurtà. Min-naħa l-oħra, il-Kumitat Ġenerali dwar il-Kwistjonijiet Ekonomiċi, ix-Xjenza, it-Teknoloġija u l-Ambjent ittratta sugġetti bħat-tkabbir ekonomiku li jħares l-ambjent, il-ġlieda kontra t-tibdil klimatiku u s-sigurtà fil-qasam tal-enerġija, fost oħrajn. Il-Kumitat Ġenerali dwar id-Demokrazija, id-Drittijiet tal-Bniedem u l-Kwistjonijiet Umanitarji ddiskuta sugġetti bħall-imwiet fil-baħar Mediterranju ta' persuni li jfittxu l-ażil, l-ugwaljanza bejn is-sessi u l-ħelsien fl-għażla tar-religjon. Hawnhekk giet diskussa u appoġġjata emenda dwar id-drittijiet u l-interessi ta' tfal li jfittxu l-ażil fl-Ewropa li kienet tressqet mill-Onor. Farrugia. Fit-tmiem tal-laqgħa annwali ġie adottat l-abbozz tad-Dikjarazzjoni ta' Helsinki li fih il-pożizzjonijiet u r-rakkomandazzjonijiet politiċi tal-Assemblea li ser jiġi diskuss fil-Kunsill Ministerjali tal-Organizzazzjoni aktar tard matul l-2015.

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES (CONT.)

Commemoration of the 41st anniversary of the coup d'état in Cyprus of July 1974

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Anġlu Farrugia, led a delegation comprising Hon. Joseph Sammut and Hon. David Agius, to the island of Cyprus between 13 and 16 July to participate in the commemoration of the 41st anniversary of the coup d'état in July 1974. On 14 July, the delegation paid a courtesy visit to the Archbishop of Nova Justiniana and all Cyprus, His Holiness Monsignor Chrysostomos II. The Speaker and the members of parliament also met the President of the House of Representatives of Cyprus, HE Yiannakis L. Omirou, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus, HE Ioannis Kasoulides, and the President of the Republic of Cyprus, HE Nicos Anastasiades. The topics discussed included the lack of security in the Mediterranean region and its impact on both states, the peaceful reunification of Cyprus, as well as common interests such as oil exploration, telecommunications and bilateral trade in areas where there is still room for improvement. On 15 July, the Speaker addressed the plenary session of the House of Representatives. During his speech he mentioned the assistance that Archbishop Makarios, the island's leader in 1974, had been given by the Governor General Anthony Mamo and the Prime Minister Dom Mintoff during the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. Following this, the Speaker together with the rest of the Maltese delegation attended a memorial Service for the victims of the coup d'état at Theou Sofia Church. After the ceremony, the Maltese delegation visited the Free Radio Station of Cyprus. Towards the end of the visit, they attended a wreath laying ceremony at the Makarios III Resistance monument in Paphos.

OSCE PA Annual Meeting

The Maltese delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE PA), led by Hon. Godfrey Farrugia and comprising Hon. Anthony Agius Decelis and Hon. Frederick Azzopardi, took part in the OSCE PA annual meeting which was held in the city of Helsinki between 5 and 9 July. The members of parliament attended and participated in the Plenary session meetings and in meetings held by the three general committees of the OSCE PA. The discussions covered a wide range of topics including the fight against terrorism, the crisis in eastern Ukraine and Crimea, the dialogue between the East and the West and the importance that members respect the principles underlying the organization. These were discussed in the General Committees on Political Affairs and Security. On the other hand, the General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment dealt with issues such as economic growth that protects the environment, the fight against climate change and security within the energy sector. The General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions discussed topics such as the deaths of asylum seekers in the Mediterranean Sea, gender equality and religious freedom. The amendment which had been raised by Hon. Farrugia regarding the rights and interests of children asylum seekers in Europe, was discussed and approved. The draft of the Helsinki Declaration, which contains the Assembly's policy recommendations and pronouncements and which shall be discussed during the Ministerial Council later on in 2015, was adopted at the end of the meeting.



ATTIVITAJIET INTERNAZZJONALI (KONT.)

It-Tmien Konferenza Ministerjali tal-Komunità tad-Demokraziji

L-Ispeaker tal-Parlament, l-Onor. Anġlu Farrugia, ipparteċipa fit-Tmien Konferenza Ministerjali tal-Komunità tad-Demokraziji li nżammet fil-belt ta' San Salvador, f'El Salvador, bejn it-22 u l-24 ta' Lulju. Matul l-ewwel jum tal-Konferenza ġew organizzati tliet fora: il-Forum taż-Żgħażaġħ li ttratta kif tista' tissaħħaħ il-parteeipazzjoni taż-żgħażaġħ f'dawk il-pajjiżi li jhaddnu d-demokrazija, il-Forum tas-Settur Privat li ddiskuta s-sħubijiet bejn is-settur pubbliku u s-settur privat sabiex jiżdied u jissaħħaħ l-iżvilupp sostenibbli, l-irwol tas-settur privat fl-implimentazzjoni tal-ghanijiet dwar l-iżvilupp sostenibbli, kif ukoll il-ħolqien ta' impjegi ta' kwalità li jippromwovu d-drittijiet tal-bniedem u l-inklużjoni soċjali, u l-Forum tas-Soċjetà Ċivili li fost suġġetti oħrajn iddiskuta t-trasparenza u l-monitoraġġ soċjali f'soċjetajiet demokratiċi kif ukoll l-inklużjoni ta' gruppi vulnerabbli. Barra minn dawn it-tliet fora nżammet ukoll laqgħa Parlamentari dwar id-demokrazija u l-iżvilupp fejn l-Ispeaker Farrugia għamel intervent li fih stqarr illi l-aħjar mod ta' kif jissaħħu l-istituzzjonijiet u l-prinċipji demokratiċi huwa permezz ta' djalogu onest, skambju ta' esperjenzi u identifikazzjoni tal-aħjar prassi. L-Onor. Farrugia semma wkoll id-Dikjarazzjoni ta' Varsavja li għandha sservi bħala linja gwida għall-Komunità tad-Demokraziji. Huwa argumenta wkoll illi demokrazija ma tistax tiġi importata jew imposta minn barra għaliex għandu jkun il-poplu li jissielet għaliha u s-soċjetà ċivili li tħarisha u ssaħħaħha. Fid-diskors tiegħu l-Ispeaker semma kif kemm il-Parlamenti u l-parlamentari kif ukoll iċ-ċittadini għandu jkollhom rwol attiv sabiex jippreservaw u jkattu d-demokrazija. Semma kif il-Parlament Malti beda jxandar is-sessjonijiet tal-plenarja tiegħu kemm fuq it-televiżjoni kif ukoll permezz tal-internet. Huwa qal ukoll li hemm aktar xi jrid isir, fosthom illi l-Parlament ikollu l-istazzjon tiegħu free-to-air, fejn l-utent ma jkunx jiddependi fuq kumpanija tax-xandir sabiex ikollu s-servizz, kif ukoll l-importanza li tiġi kompletata l-awtonomija amministrattiva tal-Parlament. Dwar ir-rwol taċ-ċittadini, l-Ispeaker semma l-importanza li ċ-ċittadini jivvutaw fl-elezzjonijiet tal-pajjiż u apparti dan, li jkunu parteċipi fid-deliberazzjonijiet dwar deċiżjonijiet pubbliċi. Fit-23 ta' Lulju, ġew organizzati żewġ djalogi paralleli: wieħed dwar l-Aġenda Demokratika fil-Kuntest Globali u ieħor dwar l-Għodod Innovattivi għat-Tiŝiħ tad-Demokrazija. Wara dawn, kien hemm numru ta' sessjonijiet tal-plenarja fejn ġew diskussi bosta temi fosthom demokrazija inklussiva u l-istadju li waslet fih id-demokrazija fil-kuntest global tal-lum. Fl-24 ta' Lulju, fil-Jum Ministerjali, kien hemm diskussjoni fil-plenarja dwar id-demokrazija, l-iżvilupp u l-kultura ta' paċi. Fi tmiem il-laqgħa ġiet adottata d-Dikjarazzjoni Ministerjali ta' San Salvador.



INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES (CONT.)

The Eighth Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies



Speaker Anglu Farrugia participated in the Eighth Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies which was held in the city of San Salvador, El Salvador, between 22 and 24 July. Three forums were held during the first day of the Conference: the Youth Forum which dealt with ways of strengthening the participation of young people in democratic countries, the Private Sector Forum which discussed public-private partnerships as a means of increasing and strengthening sustainable development, the private sector's role in the implementation of sustainable development goals, as well as the creation of quality jobs that promote human rights and social inclusion, and the Civil Society Forum which among other matters discussed transparency and social auditing in democratic societies as well as the inclusion of vulnerable groups. In addition to the three forums a parliamentary meeting on democracy and development was held during which Speaker Farrugia made an address where he declared that the best way to strengthen institutions and democratic principles is through honest dialogue, the exchange of experiences and the identification of best practices. Hon. Farrugia also referred to the Warsaw Declaration which should serve as a guideline for the Community of Democracies. He also argued that democracy cannot be exported or imposed from the outside but has to be something the people strive for and it is up to civil society to protect and strengthen it. In his speech the Speaker mentioned the fact that both parliaments and parliamentarians as well as citizens should have an active role in preserving and furthering democracy. He mentioned the broadcasting of the plenary sessions of the Maltese Parliament, both on television and via the internet. He also stated that further action is needed, including the need for Parliament to have its own free-to-air station, which will allow users who do not have a subscription with a private TV service provider to access the service, as well as the importance that the move towards parliament's administrative autonomy be completed. With regard to the role of citizens, the Speaker mentioned the importance that citizens vote in the elections and furthermore that they participate in deliberations with regard to public decisions. On 23 of July, two parallel dialogues were organised: one concerning the Democratic Agenda in the Global Context and the other concerning Innovative Tools to Strengthen Democracy. A number of plenary sessions followed, during which several issues including inclusive democracy and the current stage of democracy in today's global contest were discussed. On the Ministerial Day on 24 July, a debate in plenary discussed democracy, development and the culture of peace. The Ministerial Declaration of San Salvador was adopted at the end of the meeting.

ATTIVITAJIET INTERNAZZJONALI (KONT.)

Ir-Raba' Konferenza tal-Ispeakers

Il-President tal-Kamra tad-Deputati, l-Onor. Anġlu Farrugia mexxa delegazzjoni Maltija komposta mid-Deputy Speaker l-Onor. Ċensu Galea, l-Onor. David Agius l-Onor. Deo Debattista u l-Onor. Deborah Schembri, ġewwa New York għar-Raba' Konferenza Dinjija tal-Ispeakers organizzata kull tliet snin mill-Inter-Parliamentary Union. Il-Konferenza ttrattat temi bbażati fuq l-Għanijiet ta' Żvilupp Sostenibbli (Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs) maqbuli min-Nazzjonijiet Uniti u kif ir-rwol tal-Membri Parlamentari jista' jissaħħaħ f'dan ir-rigward. Is-sessjonijiet iffukaw fuq id-demokrazzi għas-servizz tal-paċi, l-involviment parlamentari f'dawk li għandhom x'jaqsmu l-SDGs, l-isfidi u l-opportunitajiet tas-sorveljanza parlamentari, u sessjoni fuq kif l-SDGs għandhom jiġu msarrfa f'azzjonijiet. L-Ispeaker kien mistieden jindirizza l-ewwel sessjoni tal-konferenza: 'Placing Democracy at the Service of Peace and Sustainable Development, building the world people want'. Hu rrefera għall-kunċett tat-tibdil fil-klima u hegġeġ il-gvernijiet nazzjonali madwar id-dinja sabiex jikkollaboraw u jikkoordinaw sforzi kongunti sabiex jingħelbu l-isfidi relatati ma' dan is-sugġett. Sussegwentement, l-Ispeaker saħaq fuq il-kwistjoni tal-immigrazzjoni irregolari fil-Mediterran. Hu argumenta li dan is-sugġett għandu jiġi indirizzat b'mod ħolistiku u b'komunikazzjoni regolari mal-pajjiżi tal-orijini, prinċipalment l-Afrika. F'dan ir-rigward hu semma s-Summit dwar l-immigrazzjoni li hu mistenni jsir ġewwa Malta aktar tard din is-sena. Din se tkun opportunità sabiex jiġu indirizzati l-isfidi fuq il-flussi migratorji ġewwa l-Ewropa. L-Ispeaker tal-Kamra kkonkluda l-indirizz tiegħu billi laqa' l-aġenda l-ġdida tal-iżvilupp u saħaq fuq ir-responsabbiltà strateġika li l-uffiċjali eletti għandhom sabiex jippromwovu dan il-progress.



Żjara ta' familjarizzazzjoni fl-istituzzjonijiet Ewropej ġewwa Brussell

Delegazzjoni parlamentari mmexxija mill-Ispeaker tal-Kamra tad-Deputati żaret l-istituzzjonijiet Ewropej ġewwa Brussell f'żjara ta' informazzjoni bejn l-24 u l-25 ta' Settembru, organizzata mir-Rappreżentanza tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea ġewwa Malta. Id-delegazzjoni kienet magħmula mill-Onor. David Agius, l-Onor. Anthony Agius Decelis, l-Onor. Frederick Azzopardi, l-Onor. Antoine Borg, l-Onor. Ryan Callus, l-Onor. Joseph Cassar, l-Onor. Etienne Grech, l-Onor. Silvio Parnis u l-Onor. Clyde Puli. Tmien uffiċjali tal-Parlament ipparteċipaw ukoll f'din iż-żjara ta' informazzjoni. Matul l-ewwel ġurnata d-delegazzjoni kellha laqgħat u diskussjonijiet ma' rappreżentanti tal-Kummissjoni fuq kwistjonijiet relatati mar-rwol tal-Membri Parlamentari vis-à-vis l-istess Kummissjoni. Giet organizzata wkoll laqgħa mal-Kummissarju Malti, Karmenu Vella, responsabbli għall-ambjent, affarijiet marittimi, u sajd, fejn id-diskussjoni ffukat dwar kwistjonijiet relatati mal-portafoll tiegħu, inkluż il-governanza tal-oċeani. Fit-tieni ġurnata, id-delegazzjoni żaret il-Kunsill tal-Unjoni Ewropea, kif ukoll il-Parlament Ewropew. Id-delegazzjoni attendiet laqgħat informattivi dwar ir-rwoli differenti ta' dawn l-istituzzjonijiet. Matul iż-żjara l-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia saħaq fuq l-urgenza biex il-parlamenti nazzjonali jingħataw rwol aktar ċentrali fit-tfassil tal-politika Ewropea u l-proċess ta' teħid ta' deċiżjonijiet. Permezz ta' involviment aktar attiv, jiġi żgurati li jitjieb il-proċess demokratiku fi ħdan l-Unjoni, biex b'hekk ikun hemm lok għal rappreżentanza aħjar. Id-diskussjoni ttrattat ukoll it-tema tal-Presidenza tal-Kunsill tal-Unjoni Ewropea ta' Malta fl-2017. Filwaqt li l-aġenda għadha ma gietx iffinalizzata, il-preparamenti u x-xogħol relatat beda, u l-aġenda mistennija tirrefletti l-kwistjonijiet li ser ikunu l-aktar relevanti fl-ewwel nofs tal-2017.



INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES (CONT.)

4th World Conference of Speakers

The Speaker of the House, Anglu Farrugia, led a delegation of the Maltese Parliament, composed of Deputy Speaker Hon. Ċensu Galea, Hon. David Agius, Hon. Deo Debattista and Hon. Deborah Schembri, to New York where the delegation participated in the 4th World Conference of Speakers organised every five years by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The Conference focused on a number of themes based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the way in which the role of parliamentarians can be enhanced in this regard. The sessions focused on democracy at the service of peace, parliamentary involvement in relation to SDGs, the challenges and opportunities of parliamentary oversight, and a session focusing on translating SDGs into action. The Speaker was invited to address the first session of the Conference and spoke about the theme 'Placing Democracy at the Service of Peace and Sustainable Development, building the world people want'. He referred to climate change and urged national governments worldwide to collaborate and coordinate concerted efforts towards overcoming the challenges posed by climate change. The Speaker also delved into the issue of irregular migration in the Mediterranean and argued that the matter should be addressed in a holistic manner and with a constant communication with countries of origin, mainly Africa. In this regard, he mentioned the Valletta Summit on Migration which will be held later on this year in Malta. This will be an opportunity to address the challenges of migration flows into Europe. The Speaker of the House concluded his address by welcoming the new development agenda, including the 17 SDGs and stressed the strategic responsibility that elected officials hold in pushing for progress.



Familiarisation visit to the European Institutions in Brussels

A parliamentary delegation led by the Speaker of the Maltese House of Representatives participated in an information visit to the European Institutions in Brussels between the 24 and 25 September, organised by the European Commission Representation in Malta. The delegation was composed of Hon. David Agius, Hon. Anthony Agius Decelis, Hon. Frederick Azzopardi, Hon. Antoine Borg, Hon. Ryan Callus, Hon. Joseph Cassar, Hon. Kristy Debono, Hon. Etienne Grech, Hon. Silvio Parnis and Hon. Clyde Puli. Eight members of staff also participated in this information visit. During the first day, the Maltese delegation had meetings at the European Commission, where issues related to the role of parliamentarians vis-à-vis the Commission were discussed. A meeting was also held with EU Commissioner Karmenu Vella, responsible for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, where an extensive discussion was held on issues related to his portfolio, including ocean governance. The second day consisted in a visit to the Council of the European Union, as well as the European Parliament. The delegation attended sessions in which the role of each institution was introduced and explained. Throughout the visit, the Speaker expressed the pressing need for the greater role of national parliaments in the policy and decision-making processes, so as to ensure improved democratic practices within the Union, resulting in a more representative outcome. The discussion also touched upon the upcoming Malta's EU Council Presidency in 2017. The Speaker remarked that although the agenda has not yet been finalised, preparations are well underway and will undoubtedly reflect the issues which will be most relevant during the first half of 2017.



Hidma Parlamentari

April 2013 – Settembru 2015

Parliamentary Work

April 2013 – September 2015

Seduti fil-Plenarja	295	Plenary Sitzings
Laqgħat tal-Kumitati Permanenti	308	Meetings of Standing Committees
Stqarrijiet Ministerjali	43	Ministerial Statements
Mozzjonijiet	264	Motions
Mozzjonijiet Privati	27	Private Members' Motions
Mozzjonijiet għall-Ewwel Qari ta' Abbozzi ta' Ligi	120	Motions for First Reading of Bills
Ligijiet mgħoddija mill-Parlament	90	Acts enacted by Parliament
Ligijiet approvati b'votazzjoni	14	Acts approved upon division
Mistoqsijiet Parlamentari	19,762	Parliamentary Questions
Dokumenti mqiegħda fuq il-Mejda tal-Kamra	5,450	Documents laid on the Table of the House
Diskorsi tal-Aggornament	217	Adjournment Speeches
Deciżjonijiet tas-Sedja	51	Rulings by the Chair
Membri Parlamentari li siefru fuq xogħol parlamentari	344	Members of Parliament on parliamentary duties abroad
Delegazzjonijiet parlamentari barra minn Malta	170	Parliamentary delegations abroad
Delegazzjonijiet immexxija mill-Ispeaker/Deputy Speaker	45	Delegations led by the Speaker/ Deputy Speaker