

private property was repealed in 1996 along with the liberalisation of the rent laws. The subject was discussed by the Cabinet last Monday when a paper analysing the rent laws was presented by Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity Dolores Cristina.

Dr Mangion yesterday said the opposition had received no detailed communication about the Cabinet's proposal so far and that an official stand would be taken by the MLP parlia-

ment said.

Alternattiva Demokratika chairman Harry Vassallo called the proposal "political science fiction" and said it reflected the government's lack of political maturity.

"This is part of the government's chess game. If the MLP says that it does not agree with this stupid proposal, the government could blame the opposition for not going ahead with reforming the rent regulations," Dr Vassallo said.

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Dr Vassallo said Malta was a member of the European Union where there were enough channels to redress any requisition abuse by a government, which is why there was no need to entrench the repeal in the Constitution.

Such a move could prevent the government from using its prerogative to requisition property if Malta were hit by an earthquake, for example, Dr Vassallo said.

at a trial and the trial could be drawn.

The inspector replied that there was other circumstantial evidence that linked Mr Farrugia to the crime. He also said that Mr Farrugia denied any connection with the drugs or driving the trailer that day.

TALKING POINT

The first hundred days

Fr Hector Scerri

In my opinion, many prophets of doom, last spring, have already been proved wrong. In the first days since accepting office, Benedict XVI has shown what direction his pontificate is taking. He has been as clear as a bell.

For a variety of reasons, Cardinal Ratzinger had been previously depicted as a cold man, an inquisitor intent on quashing opponents. Perhaps even as a result of the dubious agenda of many opinion-makers who preferred to depict the high-ranking prelate in a bad light. That could have suited certain audiences.

The new Pope, a shy and unassuming man, has shown himself to be very amiable. Observing him at close quarters, whether addressing the crowds, or greeting individuals, it is evident that gentleness shines through him.

The first hundred days of his pontificate which are marked today have been marked by simplicity. The German journalist Crista Krämer, a specialised Church watcher, puts it in a nutshell: "Benedict XVI is a humble man, very normal, and does not require any kind of regal aura about him."

He has an eye for detail. He stops to caress children. He blesses the sick brought before him. Not out of formality. To each he has a personal word of comfort. Those who knew him or worked with him before April 19 attest that a deep sensitivity was always part of the man. It has now been brought into the limelight. It is now for the entire world to see. And to judge. Though an optimum theologian in his own right, his

speeches come from a shepherd's heart. They have a shepherd's tone of voice. He is gently persuasive, yet sturdy as an oak.

Experienced long-time observers remark that the congregations listening to his homilies and addresses are very attentive. Both his tone of voice, as well as the content of his speeches, has mesmerised listeners.

The fortnight he has spent at Les Combes, in the Alps, has continued to show other, previously concealed features of Benedict's character; his closeness to nature, his ease at dialogue with the young, his ability to rest without being idle, his love of music.

The first hundred days of his pontificate have not been uneventful. He

has responded to the "*sensus fidelium*" with regard to the transparent sanctity of his suffering predecessor. This sense of faith gave rise to and manifested itself in the "*consensus fidelium*".

Furthermore, from the very beginning of his mission, he has given the olive branch to Jews and to other Christians, notably the Orthodox. A thaw in relations with the latter is in the air.

The first hundred days for any leader, whether religious or not, possess an imprinting effect. They set the tone for what is to follow. So far, we have already seen many encouraging gestures by Pope Benedict. I am sure many more will follow in the coming months.

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini!

Fr Scerri is vice-rector of the Archbishop's Seminary and head of the Department of Dogmatic Theology at the University of Malta.