



ANDREW ON WEDNESDAY

Spitballing at Piano's pigsty

I was really starting to believe as true that the new Parliament building would usher in a new way of doing politics in this country. However, never more did the famous Italian saying make so much sense, 'l'abito non fa il monaco'.

so wanted to accept as true that even though they were the same cluster of politicians adorning the new Parliament chamber they would realise that the €80 million or so gift that the Maltese people have so generously granted to our Representatives should go beyond providing for an improved setting and was intended to marshal in a novel political climate.

I was wrong. The incongruity in all of this is that the more resources we are throwing into this institution the bigger the anti-climax we get.

I wanted to believe that our MPs would remain focused on the countless issues that are important to the people.

However, the message that keeps coming back to me is that the trustworthiness and credibility of this institution appears to be hitting a brick wall. This is deeply disturbing because the decisions that need to be taken are fundamental to the community's well-being.

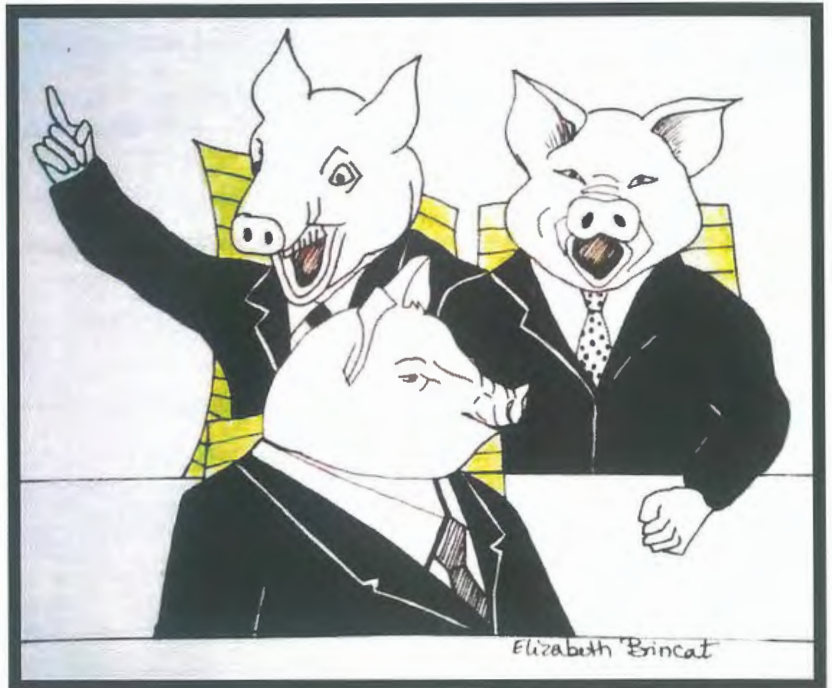
Let's not be misled.

The importance of this institution is immense. It is one of the kingpins in our democratic tapestry, if not the most vital.

Former MP Franco Debono, the Speaker of the House, Anglu Farrugia, and a few others have been harping on this fundamental issue namely that this foremost institution is crucial and vital to ensure that our country is being steered well. That is why the responsibility we have when asked to take part in a ballot remains so critical.

The remarkable matter is that whilst we accuse our citizens that they are captured in a post colonial mentality, that they hardly have any sense of civic empathy, that they are disinterested in our communities and what happens outside their footpath – paradoxically still engage in the most important exercise of all, that of voting in droves whenever called to. This happens especially when it comes to the general elections. There may be a multitude of reasons why this might be the case but the crucial issue here is that we are keen on participating, in making sure that the people representing us are doing so because we voted them in.

These last weeks I have followed the parliamentary debate a number of times (yes, agreed, I need a life!) and I must say that I was intent by the arguments of Minister Helena Dalli and Parliamentary Secretary Justyne Caruana who were making a case for the proposed amendments to the Equal Opportunities Law proposed by the National



Commission Persons with Disability.

Beyond the issue whether one agrees or not on the content, in all honesty they were well prepared, had a clear line of argument and made their point strongly and convincingly in rebutting their counterparts. This is a good example of how dialectics work. The same can also be said on the parliamentary debate dealing with the environment and once again the Members of Parliament Marthese Portelli and Ryan Callus from the Opposition pushed forward the counter-arguments made by the government.

This is the level of debate we expect, nothing less, opinions, point of views and counter arguments and all of this after consulting and getting advice from the experts and the grassroots.

When I 'listen' to Parliament I am interested in understanding the issues at hand and how the debate will lead towards the best possible decisions for the people and with the people. Let it be said that this institution is not there for the elected ones to act out and trim their egos but to take the necessary conclusions.

Now all of the efforts that a number of MPs are doing to improve our communities seem to go wasted the moment credibility starts drifting away. Trustworthiness, integrity and standing are not qualities one is born with but one has to acquire

as they get on with life.

The behaviour we witnessed last week of Joe Debono Grech directed towards Marlene Farrugia is intimidating, browbeat and verges on the sexist. The tone of voice and the aggression are compounded by what he said. Mind you, this is not a unique situation. We've had these situations in the past but at a time when the political climate almost justified such a behaviour. At the time this attitude was starting to get socially acceptable where it not for the change of government whereby Eddie Fenech Adami ushered in a new way of doing politics later on consolidated by Alfred Sant's outlook.

This incident last week has taken us back in time unfortunately.

Debono Grech's shenanigans need to be sanctioned by his Parliamentary Group. I also find it quite disturbing the way the 'ruling' took place with the two MPs compelled to withdraw what they said as if they were children (much as I understand this procedure was led by the ailing Standing Orders we have to abide by).

My God, it reminded me of the innumerable times I was called at the Headmaster's Office and made to admit my wrong doings. Maybe that was fine with an 11 and a 12-year-old but it really doesn't fit the way I frame Parliament.

You know what? Deep down I was almost waiting for that

sweet moment when the two MPs touch each other's pinkie, kiss it and hug! Bless them!

Whilst what motivated the Opposition to leave the House is not too clear I would have done the same thing not wanting to stand in front of the 'Headmaster' having to admit to my colleagues that I called him names after a verbal diarrhoea I got thrown at me. No way. This is not the Parliament I want. This sounds more like a kickboxing ring where rational, well-intentioned debates are being sacrificed and occurred by rudeness. The respectable behaviour is now dwindling to an all-time low.

Even the Speaker of the House, Anglu Farrugia, said that 'we' risk turning our Parliament into a pigsty with the attitude shown by some of the MPs.

Belligerence has no place in Parliament, whatever the reasons, whatever the argument and whatever the characters. I am worried that what is happening is symptomatic of the way some MPs see their role in Parliament – an outlandish theatrical performance.

We've had our own share of throwing punches at each other in the past. If this will be triggered again it will not only look bad (thanks to High Definition streaming!) but it is also going back in time at the speed of a boxer's punch.

Farewell until we meet to discuss the first fist-fight at Piano's ring!

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