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The case of Victor Vella

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This week a chorus of voices condemned the General Workers Union for the suspension of Victor Vella from editor of its L-Orizzont and it-Torca newspapers.

If reports were correct, Mr Vella was suspended because of his editorial stance, where he allegedly refused to abide by pressure to adjust his leftist emphasis on issues such as precarious work, poverty and migration. In response, the General Workers said that his suspension was not because open s, and that in any case, it was the Union’s own Union Print which suspended him. A GWU

situation.

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Perhaps the Union Print, or its owner, the GWU, could clarify on what the suspension deals with, and hopefully Mr Vella would be in a situation to explain better after the proceedings he referred to are concluded. As far as I am concerned, I do not know Mr Vella personally, but I have long been admiring his courage to consistently speak up for the less fortunate amongst us, particularly in his position. I also would disagree with the suspension if it is for the reason being alleged. In this case, I express my solidarity with Mr Vella.

At the same time, I must admit that I would not be surprised with such a suspension if it were as alleged. I would also note that this type of action is quite common within different types of organisation. Still, this does not mean that it should be condoned.

The General Workers Union itself and its historic ally, namely the Labour Party have quite a history of being uncomfortable with dissent which goes public, especially from their within their own ranks. This is not to say that these organisations have monolithic voices. I am quite sure that within their respective structures, contention exists. Of course, some voices are more powerful than others.

Hand on heart, can we say that such behaviour does not happen elsewhere? Very often, the identity of organisations – whether in politics, civil society and the media is defined not only by what it is, but, also by what it is not. For every ‘us’ there is a ‘them’, and for every in group, there are outgroups. There are also different shades of pluralism. For example, within some media houses, one finds columnists with different opinions, which can hardly be said of some others.

open is’ may in turn be characterised by one or more of various factors. These may include ide

Here one may ask if it may actually be justified to exclude 'outsiders' from an organisation. For example, let us look at Universities. I for one disagree that Universities, Faculties, Departments and other academic institutions should have ideological credos, but then, I would expect the same organisations to define their 'us' through academic ethos.

Going back to Victor Vella's case, it would obviously be ironic, if not tragic, that an organisation associated with the left of centre would not accept leftist discourse within its official mouthpieces. But then again, one may ask whether labels such as 'leftist' actually matter in the context of a Union whose main interests include to safeguard its members' employment matters and, I would imagine, to help Labour win national elections.

Not to mention that for every Victor Vella case which goes public, there are others which do not. Sometimes, employees, activists and volunteers are excluded from an organisation in eery silence. Sometimes, such exclusion is even framed as one's own 'choice' for 'personal reasons'....

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