

ARTICLE 33

Date of Publication : 5TH October 2006

THE TIMES OF MALTA

DEMOCRACY'S CURIOSITY SHOP (III)
The will of the people

The last two articles rightfully called Democracy's Curiosity Shop (I) and (II) have focused upon 'politically irrelevant' determining factors in today's local implementation of the single transferable vote system. Other flaws could be highlighted as to how parochial and hereditary claims to parliamentary seats are but not to be ignored. However, having a parliament full of the same surnames or products of the same place of origin as it developed along the years may well be declared a clear demonstration of the 'will of the people'.

Although it might still be debatable whether the people themselves are willing anything as brainwashed by so many sources of information and affording a vision usually limited to the size of a television set screen, the end result of democracy's and/or the single transferable vote system never fails to surprise us especially when we have a look at political leaders rather than parliamentary members.

Although parliamentarians seem to be of the kind to be elected through a coincidence of favourable circumstances and good luck boosted by some work, political leaders do not seem to have shared the same route. The last four Prime Ministers have not been elected

by the people. They have stepped into parliament for the first time through quite a coincidental hap or mishap.

While Fenech Adami, Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici, Alfred Sant got into Parliament after the demise of a former parliamentarian, the present Premier Lawrence Gonzi started off his successful political career as a Speaker of the House. This shows that leaders tend to enter the House through the back door rather than the front one.

Whether the will of the people is respected or should be could be another bone of contention. However, leaders seem to a very indirect result of the electorate's choice. Like anyone else they have to guard their leadership at all times and usually have quite a hard job to outshine all the rest.

John Dalli said in this same paper that leaders "... feel threatened by intelligent, decisive people who have an independent spirit." However, another way of expressing Dalli's thought could be that of saying that one could rest assured that a leader usually breathes easy surrounded by a number of tabula rasas, as blank as chalk-overwritten school blackboards ready to be filled by the leader's own ideas. They usually prefer reporters to commentators and might even arrive at a point as to oust everyone out.

However, inspite of Dalli's stump, purges might well be part and parcel with leadership and be proof of the leader's own strength. Although the ex-Minister is awfully right, not all leaders are made up of the same fabric. Some leaders are tabula rasas themselves

and it is in the interest of those around them for them to stay in the position they occupy. Ministers and stakeholders at times tend to favour having an official scapegoat who's ready to face any shame or defeat publicly and who is weak enough not to correct anyone's deplorable behaviour. A leader around whom Ministers act in mayhem to which mayhem he continually turns a blind eye may be proof through the test of time of long-lived abuse rather than long-lived loyalty by the encircling sycophants.

That stated, however, the culture of resignations brushed off completely, the country may well be undergoing a well-buffered political quake as triggered, first and foremost, by a leadership crisis. Leaders can be leaders de facto or de jure. And not all de jure leaders have control of their Cabinet. With the Ministers at the forefront at breaking the very rules they're intended to implement the Prime Minister would better give himself some time to revise his role as laid down by the very Constitution.