

Lorna Vassallo

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Bicameralism : a solution

Last week PM Muscat mentioned the Second Republic again. This means a fundamental change in the Maltese Constitution to keep it abreast with modern times.

Malta's political future as perceived by the Prime Minister is characterized by more women in politics - an area in which we place the 144th out of 193 countries in the world.

And the idea of the second republic could be one of these solutions.

Two, not just one, revolutions took place in European history which enabled the lower classes to move forward and take the lead from the clergy and the rich which had earned their privileges through hereditary titles. The most popular one is the second one - the French. But there was another revolution which had taken place much earlier. This can hardly be called a revolution though not free from blood. A regicide rather than a popular uprising.

In England, in 1649, in addition to the beheading of King Edward the 1st, instead of the beheading of the rich who formed the English Parliament, there was the abolition of the institution of the House of Lords that didn't meet again until 1660. However, despite all these changes this second Parliamentary House still exists to this very day.

In other words, people who enjoy power shouldn't be expected to give it up and just vanish. And so, it is futile to hope that male politicians will work in the interest of political equality on behalf of women.

Women's stand and power when compared to men's today, isn't much better than the lower classes' power when compared to that of the nobility in these distant times, I dare to say. And the constitutional overhaul that can solve this enigma, which so far has never been solved more democratically, could be nothing but repeating the history of the House of Lords in England.

The crux of the problem of women in politics is, that it is only about 20% of parliamentary seats that are actually vacant every election. 80% of the incumbents will always be re-elected. And they are almost all men.

That is why our Parliament will remain a men's place. With the system as it stands today, any female politician running for election is just a 'beginner'. What can be duly called 'green' and unexperienced. She has to compete with male experienced politicians who have been in contact with the electorate for ages. Obviously this does not only affect new female politicians but also new male candidates – which makes the cause beneficial for newcomer men too!

And how can one convince heavy-weight politicians not to run for election once more after their campaigns have been done and dusted for a long time and their success is guaranteed?

By, as in the case of the House of Lords, creating a second parliamentary House (which exists in half of the world's parliaments).

By offering to MPs who have already served two legislatures, a secured seat in another Parliamentary House without even having the hassle to run for an election. By letting them scrutinize laws just like they've always done but without the power to totally reverse what was decided in the first House made up of democratically elected members.

In Malta, the change from a bicameral system to a unicameral system was one of the elements which characterized the beginning of the end of the colonial era. Likewise, the beginning of the second Republic should be characterised by an institutional quake powerful enough to obliterate any current electoral and democratic deficits at the same time creating new justices and equalities. In other words, just as much as the Maltese didn't remain second-class citizens in their own country after 1933, so should women not remain massively under-represented with the creation of the Second Republic.

We have to recognise the fact that an incumbent's life is too easy compared to that of a beginner. It is in this way that we can justify parliamentary appointments (versus elections) for people who have already given their due share to be democratically elected, at the same time making sure that incumbent men are not on the same ballot paper as beginner women – but only beginner men competing with beginner women according to their competencies on a level playing field.

Through a well-functioning bicameral system the country would be giving new opportunities to women in politics without throwing away the experience of incumbent male politicians. It's time to stop speaking about equality between the sexes, the rule of law and the Second Republic, and instead start implementing.