

## OPINION

## I.M. Beck

quote unquote

## Work it up

**L**AST Sunday was May Day, apart from being 'Er Indoors' birthday, leading to us being up the Smoke for a rather enjoyable long weekend, of which more anon.

But back to the day that everyone and one's brother claims as one's very own, even more so now that it marks our commitment to being European.

This auspicious day gives the people that matter in the country the opportunity to laud the noble worker, pledging allegiance to his cause and undying fealty to the task of ensuring that said worker feels all nice and warm inside, because everyone loves him. Since the Russians decided that the weather was good enough to have a revolution and the Church-organised thought it had better have a counter-revolution (if you see what I mean) the worker, whatever that genus of the species (or species of the genus) may be, has been in clover, with everyone snuggling up to him to say how important he is and how the country revolves around him.

The thing is, I'm not too sure what manner of beast the worker is. Is an accountant a worker – the sort of chap who puts in a 12-hour day but calls no one boss? I suppose Doctor Alfred Sant classifies this guy as a small self-employed (it loses something in the translation) but I would be intrigued to find out at which point in the scale of things a small self-employed person becomes a bloated plutocrat. Would a senior partner in Pricedeloittes KPND, earning, say, 50 grand a year still remain a member of the working class?

And would Doctor Alfred Sant have as special a place in his heart for the senior partner as he would have for the senior partner's junior associate?

For that matter, would the senior partner's junior associate particularly like the idea that he is thought of as a rude mechanical by the saviour of the working class?

This segment of my weekly rant is inspired, incidentally, by a moderately triumphalist piece I glanced through in *It-Torcia*, which I read over the net. The author of the piece, of which I got not much further than the opening paragraph, I have to admit, was Mr Lino Cassar, who seems to have this obsession with trying to foment an "us and them siege mentality". According to this luminary of political thought, May Day is "Our" feast, not "Theirs", however much "They" try to make it "Theirs" and so on and so forth.

How unutterably boring all this posturing is. Who, apart from the people who have to try to seem as if they gave a monkey's, cares about glorifying the blasted "worker", whatever that concept is? Any worker worth his salt is more interested in the fact that he has a day off than in who said which nice things about what, after all.

## Not I

**M**ANY, many months ago, I was shown a picture that was going the rounds of the e-mail circuit that had me virtually rolling around in paroxysms of mirth.

The picture, of something of a pink hue, depicts two gentlemen of the portly persuasion, disported in a moderately cuddly pose, like a couple of particularly ugly (and large) kittens lounging around.

One of the two lads, I would have to say if I didn't know better, is me – I commend those of a nervous disposition not to seek out the picture, as the sight of "me-not-me" in the buff is one that is guaranteed to startle the horses and make small children run to seek the shelter of their mothers' skirts.

Those of you with a more hardy carapace to protect them can surf across to xarabank.com and search for the picture there. I'm not sure who runs this site, as it only seems to make a nodding acquaintance with the TV programme of the same name and while on the site you will probably come across exemplars of postings by people who also have their anonymous fun across on another site, which tends to idolise, for reasons known only to themselves, that chap Lowell.

Anyhow, I just wanted to make sure everyone knows that, in the first place, I've known about – and creamed myself laughing at – the picture under reference for many months now and that, in the second place, it ain't me.

So the smug posters who think that they're getting under my skin (in something of the same way I've obviously got under their skin, so vehement are they in calling me names on their rant-sites) can stick that in their pipes and smoke it.

## The gods giggled

**I**T WASN'T a goal, OK? Liverpool snuck one in and then withdrew into a cowardly shell, parking the team bus in front of their goal, frustrating the champions and proving, beyond reasonable doubt, that they are upstarts who lack the most basic respect for their betters.

As two committed (should that be committable?) Liverpoolians of my acquaintance lost no time in informing me, I sorely tried the gods of football last week when I predicted a Chelsea minor treble and, in evocation of the humility that Mr Mourinho routinely demonstrates, I have to admit that, verily, I asked for it. Have I used "verily" before this week? I suspect I have, but I'm darned, knackered as I am after getting in from London at the ungodly hour of and having to go to work, in an effort to replenish the plastic, if I'm going to schlepp back up the page to check.

The gods' extension of their two fingers at me inspired some lowlife from Canada to express himself in a particularly strong tone towards me. When I say that he is from Canada, I am relying on the information I got from his IP address, with which anyone with a bit of net nous can fiddle around, but I suspect that the dear fellow, who calls himself Cornelius Reddick, is a denizen of North America, all-knowing as his language makes him out to be. I'm not sure what it is about me that tees this gentleman off, but it seems to be most things.

Oh well, I'm sure he's glad that he can mouth off at me anonymously – it's a habit that is catching.

As I write these few words, PSV are battering at Milan's door and I hope to have finished by the time they do, so I'll

close about footy at this juncture by saying, sporting chap that I am, that I will be supporting Liverpool against whoever it is that wins.

I hope it's Milan, because it's such fun to watch an English team beat an Italian one, any time.

## Toiling in Brussels

**M**Y eye was caught, as it were, by a story last week marking the first anniversary of our coming to adulthood as a state.

According to MEP Joe Muscat's PA, they actually do some work up in Brussels and, in proof of this rather surprising assertion, the dear chap pointed, his chest swelling with figurative pride, at the reversal the government took over the satellite dish tax last year.

I have to ask: Is that what passes for work in Brussels? Saving a few folk who have enough money to waste on a state-of-the-art satellite system 25 whole liri per year?

Forgive me if I am not rendered speechless with unbounded admiration.

## Up the Smoke

**S**O, AS I mentioned up there somewhere, last weekend, the IMB Family took itself up the Smoke for a break, the excuse being (like I ever need an excuse to go to London) the need to be celebrating the Trouble's birthday.

As one does, if one has any sense when in London, one didn't go foraging for sustenance with the eye to delectation that one would have in Rome or Paris. The food wasn't bad, to be sure, except for some nondescript pub in the wilds of Kent where we stopped for human fuel and in fact we partook of one of the best steaks ever in an Italian joint in Soho the name of which I forget (even assuming I knew it in the first place).

No, what one does in London is go to the theatre and this trip wasn't an exception, with three events being attended.

I won't recommend any of them to you, though. This is because the first night was a one-off, as stand-up comedy tends to be, so you can't go, so there. Which is not to be taken as me telling you not to go to the Comedy Store if you're in the Leicester Square area: it's great.

The second thing we saw was *Whose Life Is It Anyway?*, which was on its last night, so you can't go.

So there! It was, just to make you all green, really good, too. And the third thing we saw was not worth going to, so I won't suggest you do. In fact, it is to my regret we didn't do a runner in the interval, though the son and heir proved he has taste by sloping off to roam around the area in preference to wasting his time. The play was *The Russian Cosmonaut's Last Message To His Lover In The Former Soviet Union* or something like that (yes, I know, we asked for it) but the Sunday Times had classified it as a "not to be missed", so we didn't.

I wish we had.

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# Communications in the inner harbour area

The other day, Angelo Xuereb made a presentation on his ideas for a transport communication system to service Sliema, Valletta and the three cities. I have since gone into his ideas very deeply and I feel the scheme deserves a very close scrutiny by the authorities.

The local councils should be very pleased because there will be much more activity in all areas and less traffic and the Valletta rehabilitation group should be ecstatic as this will help the eventual justification and enjoyment of our true and deserving World Heritage Sites.

Why am I so sure? I'll tell you. Because there is a dire need to get people from A to B and C without creating excessive city parking and congestion. There is a dire need to get people into Valletta and the three cities in the most attractive and efficient way possible.

There is a dire need to get cruise liner passengers up to Valletta and the three cities with the least discomfort.

There is a dire need to get commuters into Valletta from the parking spaces outside the city in the shortest time and at the least cost possible. Need I go on?



Frank Salt

**'There is a dire need to get commuters into Valletta... at the least cost possible.'**

I strongly feel that the scheme deserves a very close look by the authorities so that a final transport system can be organised in as little time as possible. We have already waited too long and absolutely nothing has happened to solve the problem. We just have a concentrated mess.

If there is a similar scheme in the pipeline that is on the verge of being implemented,

then I sincerely apologise for the last statement and I will be very pleased to see the results very soon.

The scheme presented by Mr Xuereb involved the creation of a short tunnel and a small bridge and the utilisation of the existing old railway tunnels. It also envisages the use of real ferries and the installation of two lifts. (Imagine Hong Kong

without its ferry system and tunnels.) The cost will not be exorbitant and, if carried out by private enterprise, which it definitely should, the authorities could offer incentives for the project to become economically viable. A real private-public arrangement.

Without such a transport communication scheme, the new and proposed developments in the Vittoriosa and Cottonera areas will find it very hard to succeed. In fact such a communication system will be essential, if they are to succeed.

Like him or not, it is people like Mr Xuereb who, through their foresight and energy to carry out what they envisage, get countries developed, functioning and moving.

Can you imagine what was said to the person who suggested that there should and could be an underground communication system under a historical city like London? It was done, and today, what would London do without it?

Let us make a decision to do something about the communication system in the inner harbour area that we all know is very necessary and let us start by looking at this realistic plan.