

## Shameful pandering to the hunting lobby - EU alert spot



Since their recent inception, the Gozo offshoot of the ALE has been stretching every sinew to curb illegal hunting - one augurs that such efforts are mirrored in the future. Photo courtesy of Joseph Abela Medici.

In an interview in Malta Today (May 2) Michael Falzon, PN candidate for the European Parliament, stated: "The hunters' candidate only has a very remote chance of getting elected. But hunters have to be aware that it is in the interest of Nationalist MEPs to preserve the derogation obtained during negotiations for the retention of Spring hunting, contrary to Alternattiva Demokratika, which wants to remove the derogation.

"Hunters cannot kid themselves. With one MEP they will not be able to influence the situation. They will simply sit on the fringe. Hunters can get what they want only through the election of Nationalist MEPs."

If this isn't clientelism par excellence? The MLP-PN duet has treated us to such pandering on more than one occasion and, after AD's call to voters to embrace the PN in the EU referendum debate, one would have expected some degree of reciprocity.

But no, both big guns are trying to flounder AD's campaign, in spite of the public show of support in the local press for the green party, who is the only one to call for a removal of Malta's derogation on hunting. Such a derogation should be removed since its granting was tied to a reduction in hunting infringements, which obviously is not the case.

Rather than pandering cheaply to hunters so as to augment his election chances, Mr Falzon should urge changes in hunting regulations to make the operations of the ALE much more effective, a call which has been made by the ALE itself.

Two changes which have been proposed include that only one shotgun should be allowed per licensed hunter - many hunters out at sea carried more than one shotgun in their name while in the company of other non-registered hunters who would opt for the loophole of not paying the hunting license.

Also, one of the biggest hurdles faced by officers when stopping hunters on land resulted from the fact that the latter usually did not carry with them either their ID card or the hunting licence.

Thus, it would not be possible for the police to verify whether the hunters was licensed or not and neither their identity could be established. The carrying of these IDs by hunters should be enshrined in the law, especially to counter the problem of the use of stolen shotguns.

Heeding some of my warped nuances, I sometimes wish Lino Farrugia to be elected so that he could explain to the European Parliament misdemeanours like the following: Police officers were often finding plastic bags to which stones were tied on speedboats used by hunters.

These are used to hurriedly pack in them protected birds after being shot and then thrown at sea whenever police boats are sighted. In two recent cases, such bags were not weighted well enough and returned to the surface after taking in air. The police found a heron and a herring gull, both protected species, inside the bags!

Mr Farrugia, coming from a tourism background, should also take time to convince Mr G. Fink from Germany to visit Malta again after he explicitly stated in his letter of May 2 in The Sunday Times that he will not be recommending a visit to Malta to anyone in view of hunting excesses he witnessed himself!

It's certainly a case of "the hunters becoming the hunted" in CNN's denigrating report on primitive hunting practices in Malta carried on its Website in the first week of May.