

Party funding: Publish those names!

Local political establishments should take the cue from the William J. Clinton Foundation which, after a decade of resistance to disclosure, finally lifted the lid on the list of its staggering 205,000 donors, who managed to cobble up an impressive \$496 million.

Apart from the John Citizens on the list (who forked out less than \$250 dollars and who constituted 90 per cent of all donors), who would not be expected to cause a stir, there were some eyebrow-raising names on the list, including the Saudi government, Indian politicians, the Blackwater security firm, besmirched due to its Iraq operations, and Jerry Yang, co-founder of Yahoo, who was bashed for keeling over and passing e-mails sent through his network to the Chinese government, eventually resulting in the arrest of two notorious dissidents.

Local parties have been solicited to publish the names of their financiers for donkey's years now, to no avail.

A threshold could be introduced to weed out from the list the non-commercial entities contributing insignificant financial sums, to avoid disclosing the identity of all the John Citizens out there and thus maintain the popular party-funding mechanisms.

The Clinton Foundation affirmed that almost no donor objected to its name being published and none asked for its donation to be refunded in the aftermath of the disclosure. Would the same apply to the dozens of construction and commercial gurus propping our political parties if their names were to be published in a future wishful scenario?

Bill Clinton also committed himself to subjecting paid speeches and details of future activities of his foundation to an ethics review, and to inform the State Department of new sources of income and revenue. How's that for unfettered transparency?

All political parties should implement the recommendations of the Galdes Commission, concerning political party financing, so that Maltese citizens can get to know where loyalties actually lie. Codes of conduct and guidelines on ethical behaviour have been issued for candidates contesting the impending European Parliament elections - it's high time that the same guidelines are issued for the political parties themselves.

It's been often mooted that the construction industry is the real kitty behind both parties - the time is ripe to confirm or dispel such a hypothesis.