

The Gozitan Student in Malta

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He was wearing a Manchester United T-shirt which he seemed to have had on for a couple of days, maybe since the semi-final match between Manchester and Juventus. He was sitting on the back seat and had his satchel right next to him. The bus was full and the only vacant seat was taken up by the satchel. Half way to Cirkewwa he decided to offer me his satchel's seat. It had been one of those days when lectures start at 8.00am and finish at 5.00pm. His smell of sweat, the noise (the bus was the oldest one you can get) and the bumps my back (and *derriere*) had to take were not my idea of entertainment. The bus stopped at every stage. I don't know how many; it was too nauseating to count them all. Any way we ended up missing the ferry and having to wait for another lousy hour at Cirkewwa.

All this isn't new and the GUG would have liked to make our lives a bit easier. So together with the Gozo University Centre Board, we came up with the idea of having a direct bus on Friday afternoons. Brilliant idea! Everybody seemed to like it! So we formulated a questionnaire and sent one to every Gozitan student attending University. By the closing date, when these questionnaires were to be returned, I realized that the scenario I've just described wasn't as familiar as I thought. Out of around five hundred students, only ten percent seemed to be bothered by the system. However I really couldn't come to grips with this answer so I tried to find another one as to why so few of the questionnaires were sent back for the necessary analysis. The other possibility is that Gozitan students aren't really comfortable the way they are but they are not really ready to do anything about it. Well I can tell you, it is not that easy.

The GUG is made up of a small group of people who

are willing to make an effort and work to uphold the aims for which this organization was set up. But this is not a one way thing. The GUG need the support of a large majority, if not all, of the students which it represents. Many students view the GUG as a useless "thing", but that is what they want to think. All that these people expect from GUG is to find a way to raise their accommodation subsidy and to get the travel vouchers back. OK, considering our financial situation as students, every cent counts, and we do work to obtain such benefits for Gozitan students. In fact we have discussed such issues with the Minister for Gozo. However, the GUG is not just that.

Just as the travel vouchers were removed, a student phoned me up and asked me what was going to happen in the meantime. After assuring him that the travel vouchers were on our agenda, I asked him where he was when we had a Christmas Party and when we invited students to donate blood during the Christmas season. He just babbled some excuses and that was it.

The thing is that if students do not participate and support their organizations, our objectives cannot be achieved successfully. Notwithstanding all this, the GUG does not intend to give up. In fact this summer we will be organizing a half-day seminar which will be directed at second year post-secondary students, the theme being the integration of the Gozitan student in University and the so-called "new lifestyle".

It is necessary to understand the importance of a student body such as the GUG. We need someone who will be able to represent us before the necessary authorities and therefore we must be ready to support it all the way through.