

THE GH.S.L. AND 1983

Joseph Ellis

The Ghaqda Studenti tal-Ligi, (Gh.S.L. or as it is known in some circles, the Law Society), has for decades formed an integral part of university life in Malta. The Law Society has contributed over the years through the organisation of extra-curricular activities, the publication of journals such as **ID-DRITT** and through its function as a law students' union. Several lawyers who are now leading members of the legal profession on the island, had worked hard in the Law Society and in the process acquired valuable experience. Indeed, the present committee's policy of keeping the student body sensitive to key issues, should be of help to students in finding their own way when they are absorbed into the profession.

It was therefore undoubtedly welcome news that the Gh.S.L. had been injected with new vigour and resumed its functions as the Law Student Association of the University of Malta, after a period of inactivity. Thus, in the latter half of 1982, after encouragement by Dr. Austin Bencini, Secretary of the Chamber of Advocates, an Extraordinary General Meeting was held, a number of amendments to the Statute considered and an Electoral Commissioner chosen. The present committee was subsequently installed.

A cornerstone of the committee's policy has been the organisation of seminars, the results of which have been satisfactory. The Gh.S.L. made such organisation one of its priorities for several reasons: firstly, in order to try and fill some of the intellectual void which is presently to be found at University; second, to make law students aware of key issues which tend to get ignored in the lecture room; and thirdly, to offer law students the opportunity to acquire organisational skills. Attendance of these seminars has always been satisfactory but it is indeed a pity that several law students do not appreciate the need of participating whole-heartedly and limit themselves to text-books and lecture-notes. These seminars should serve to get students out of the cocoon mentality which unfortunately our study load apparently tends to reinforce.

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The first of these seminars was held on January 15th 1983 on the theme of 'The Legal, Social and Moral Implications of Divorce'. The panel was composed of a law student, a lawyer, a representative of the Council of Women and a Jesuit priest. This seminar, which was chaired by the Head of the Department of Civil Law, Professor J.M. Ganado, attracted not only law students and the lecture theatre was nearly filled to capacity. Other than shedding new light on different aspects of this complex subject, the seminar also provided an opportunity to consider the legal aspects which shroud this delicate area of Family Law.

On the 16th April, another seminar was held, this time on 'The Rights of Arrested Persons and Prisoners in Malta'. The Dean of the Faculty of Law, Professor Edwin Busuttill chaired a panel composed of the Attorney-General of the Republic, a leading defence counsel, a social worker and the Director of Prisons. The discussion which followed the exposition of the rights (or the lack of them) of imprisoned and arrested persons by the panelists, was highly interesting. A number of ex-inmates present complained strongly of lack of facilities and ill treatment of prisoners at the Malta Prisons. The interest generated in this problem was high and it also filtered to the public through the media.

The next seminar was held on May 19th and a heated discussion this time centred on 'Law and Morals'. Professor Peter Serracino Inglott chaired a panel composed of a law student, the Lecturers in Philosophy of both the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Education as well as the Head of the Department of Civil Law.

Conscious of the immediacy with which prison reform ought to be implemented, especially after the seminar of April 16th, the Gh.S.L. organised another seminar to deal with 'Alternative forms of Penal Treatment' on September 24th. The panel this time, was made up of a law student, two lawyers and an ex-inmate. Again the contributions were important: the need for reform was emphasized; prison regulations need to be updated and the concept of rehabilitation firmly embedded in the minds of the authorities. The discussion which followed also dealt at length with the thorny question of the 48-hour detention period.

Seminars apart, the Gh.S.L. assisted in no small way in the organisation of the visit of Professor Fritz Fabricius of Ruhr University in Malta. Professor Fabricius was invited by Professor Micallef, Head of the Department of Commer-

cial Law to deliver several talks on Workers' Participation as evolving in Germany. The Gh.S.L., with the cooperation of the Workers' Participation Development Centre of the University of Malta hosted Professor Fabricius to a reception during which a memento to mark his visit to Malta was presented to Professor and Mrs. Fabricius.

The Gh.S.L. is striving hard to bring foreign guest lecturers to our university and though no details can be announced yet, it appears probable that such a visit will materialize January next. It might not be too inopportune to take this occasion to invite any of the foreign readers of this Journal, who might be interested in lecturing Maltese students, to contact the Secretary of the Gh.S.L. at the Faculty of Law.

Another important activity has been the preparation of a Memorandum in which proposals were made with a view towards reform in the Law course. Firstly, a working commission formulated this memorandum, then it was approved by the Committee over several sittings and finally, it was approved by the student body in an Extraordinary General Meeting on the 19th April. Since then it has been presented to the then Minister of Education, Dr. Philip Muscat who promised further discussion. It has also been discussed by the Advisory Committee for the Advancement of Legal Education in Malta which should present a report to the Rector. Several key suggestions found in the working-paper have been minuted but it is apparent that more lobbying needs to be done in this respect by the Gh.S.L.

The Gh.S.L. has also striven to act as a students' union and several student problems have been or are in the process of being considered by the authorities upon representation by the society. The Gh.S.L. has also published several study-notes, especially on Civil and Commercial Law, for sale to students. Although extremely useful, these notes require considerable effort to produce and point to the need of better work-coordination and the setting up of a Publications sub-committee.

An Editorial Board was appointed in order to continue the publication of ID-DRITT Law Journal. Obviously, the present volume would be a fitting tribute to the hard-working members of the Board. With the publication of Volume X of ID-DRITT, the wheel has turned a full circle and law students have again found their identity and become one of the most active student communities

in our university. Yet, we should not stop except for reflection on our past mistakes. The interlude, which witnessed the cessation of activity by the Gh.S.L. and the disappearance of ID-DRITT, should not be allowed to re-occur since the consequences would again be disastrous. What is needed is that more students shrug off their apathy and start contributing to student life. The things to be done are myriad but no one should be afraid to come forward since honest contributions eventually pay. The ball is definitely in our court.

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