

Sharon, Kevin and the Socialists

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Kevin Ellul Bonici, who is married to Sharon and who is mentioned in this article, had something to say about this in a comment beneath my previous post (The Wit and Wisdom of Louise Vella). Please keep posting your comments, but they won't be uploaded until tomorrow afternoon as I will be travelling.

The Times, Saturday, 7 February

Labour MEP candidate raises eyebrows in Brussels

Ivan Camilleri, Brussels

The candidature of self-confessed Eurosceptic Sharon Ellul Bonici on Labour's ticket for June's MEP elections is raising eyebrows in Brussels, particularly in the Socialist camp. Sources said Ms Ellul Bonici's candidacy for the Party of European Socialists (PES) group in the EP was "not at all welcomed" by senior members of the group's presidency, a message that has already been communicated to the Labour Party in Hamrun. "We are very surprised that Ms Ellul Bonici, who until a few weeks ago was working with the Eurosceptics in the EP, found herself on Labour's list of candidates. We can't understand how the party accepted her nomination in the first place," a senior PES official said.

Officially, the PES did not react to questions sent by The Times on this issue. Asked whether Ms Ellul Bonici's controversial candidacy was raised with Labour, the PES's chief spokesman Armin Machmer preferred not to comment. Ms Ellul Bonici's last employer, the Eurosceptic Independence/Demo- cracy group, which represents the most extreme

anti-EU MEPs, is trying to distance itself from her decision, saying she was only employed on contract and had stopped her services a few weeks ago.

Group spokesman Gawain Towler said his group used to employ the services of Ms Ellul Bonici as a political consultant, mainly on political campaigns. The group employs Ms Ellul Bonici's husband as part of its administration. Her decision comes in the wake of one of her latest campaigns, which she organised for the Eurosceptics against the Lisbon Treaty in Strasbourg.

Ms Ellul Bonici confirmed she had resigned as soon as she was confirmed as a PL candidate, although she added that she had some pending work she was concluding. When contacted, she said she was unaware that her decision to contest on the Labour ticket was unwelcome in Brussels. "The last time I met the PES Group's president, Martin Schultz, at the PES congress in Madrid, he said he was looking forward to working with me."

It seems Ms Ellul Bonici's candidature is also being criticised by some Labour delegates, especially those in the third district. Before the last general election, these delegates had officially written to the party's vigilance board to ensure Ms Ellul Bonici was not allowed to contest.

The same delegates complain that allowing Ms Ellul Bonici to contest as an MEP candidate would be sending the wrong message to the electorate, particularly in the light of Labour's new pro-EU stance.

"Joseph Muscat thinks he still needs to use Ms Ellul Bonici to get the votes of Labourites who are still against the EU," said a party official, who did not wish to be named.

Ms Ellul Bonici was the founder of the NO2EU campaign before Malta's EU referendum and has resided in Brussels for the past five years. Apart

from a short stint as a parliamentary assistant to Labour MEP John Attard Montalto, she has always worked for the Eurosceptic group. Asked whether she still considers herself to be a Eurosceptic, Ms Ellul Bonici said the word has different meanings to different people. “If you meant to ask whether I still view the EU with a critical eye, then yes, I still do, especially when we are treated differently from other countries,” she said.

Ms Ellul Bonici declined to say whether, if unelected, she would return to her consultancy job with the Eurosceptics in Brussels. “My focus is to be elected to work for the interests of the Maltese,” she said.

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