

This letter was handed to the committee ten days before the AGM which took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2010. Some points were vaguely answered during general discussions or points raised by other members. This letter was not even mentioned, in fact it was censored and kept in total secrecy. Members of the committee were not even handed a copy.

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Dear committee

In this letter we are presenting various issues, comments and problems within the club.

Here we present constructive criticism with suggestions and guides as well as requests for clarification on various matters. Do not take this as an attack against the committee or committee members personally, we as members, are simply exercising our right to be heard by the committee and all members during the AGM. These points have been built up upon many suggestions and complaints by many MARL members and we have felt it is in the interest of MARL and its members to present them to the committee for this AGM.

We allow the committee right of reply during the AGM. This letter is requested to be read in its entirety, including this introduction, point by point followed by the committee's answers for each point. Points on which the committee does not agree should be voted upon by the members. We request that any points that are suggestions be seriously taken into consideration for the benefit of MARL and we suggest that members' vote on these recommendations if need be. Kindly also allow time for comments on these points by present members in a decent and organised fashion, if any point is in doubt.

As members of MARL, we would like an explanation as to why are MARL activities such as that of the 10th February not advertised on:

1. Notice Board/s
2. Email
3. Website
4. MARL Yahoo group
5. Newsletter

It has been stated on many previous occasions, including statute amendments during an AGM such as this, that the above methods of communication are endorsed as acceptable by the committee and MARL members. These have been failed upon, time and time again.

To add insult to injury, the vice-secretary requested information via the MARL Yahoo email group about this activity so he can include it in the newsletter. This information was requested the day after the event, and only because a member had sent photos via the Yahoo group ! Do you think this is right?

Of course membership is dwindling and members do not frequent the club as often, especially when these unacceptable things are allow to happen by the committee? Members are human and do get offended and hurt. Is there not committee members responsible for organising these events and seeing that everyone is cordially advised and invited?

It seems MARL activities are being organised "between friends and friends of friends" with invitations going out to select members, sometimes these are organised just days before the event and it is kept quite with select people being advised.

These events are being organised within "groups" which prefers certain people not to attend, this is absolutely unacceptable, and totally discriminatory and illegal, all members of any MARL activity should be properly informed of such events, especially when MARL property is being used.

To add further insult the 10th February activity took place at the MARL HQ which is supposed to be open only on Sundays from 10am to noon and Tuesdays / Thursdays from 6pm to 8pm. These times are not officially endorsed in the statute.

It seems that these times are for 'normal' members, but committee members can come and go as they please as they have some "special status".

We would like a clarification as to why are MARL members literally thrown out of the club at exactly closing time, and not allowed to stay until the majority of members present feel it is time to leave, especially when the reason of staying a little later is some interesting technical subject. When committee members decide to stay 'overtime' or even open on non-opening days, chatting and cooking, they do so without having to answer to anyone. This is not fair and members should be allowed to stay at MARL within reasonable times, if the majority of present members are comfortable with staying. Why can't members stay in the yard or kitchen when a committee member has already left? No keys are needed to lock up, just switch off the lights and pull the main door behind you. Does the committee not find members to be responsible or trustworthy enough? This has only been happening since the tenure of the present committee and members would like clarification as to why such drastic decisions are being taken without the general agreement of the members.

Other items which we would like to raise in point form:

- We would like the committee to explain to the members what is going on with the RAE lessons and why there has been a reshuffle with the tutors. Extra courses have not been in the agenda this year, such as the electronics course which was so successful last year. No other curricular activities have been taking place or seem to be envisaged for the immediate future. Is this the educational stance of the committee?
- Accountability of the drinks and coffee in the kitchen, no one knows what is going on with the money going in and out, there should be a clear indication of how this facility is being operated and clear pricing. Alcoholic beverages are not licensed to be sold in the club so why is wine and beer easily available especially with minors attending the club. These should not be on sale and only served free to adults in parties or get together. For the past year or so only low quality inferior soft drinks are available. Sugar free drinks are rarely available, which is an issue for diabetics. This also applies to the get together and small parties being organised at times. Access to these facilities is only available when certain members are present, we would like clarification of this. The statute clearly states in clause 5.3.1 *“Every member has the right to use all the facilities provided by the Society. “*
- A bottled water dispenser should be made available as members currently have to drink tap water which is not very hygienic. Even coffee is made with tap water which has rendered the kettle full of calcium build up and rust. This is very unhealthy. Why doesn't the committee try and obtain sponsorship or a good deal with an automated coffee machine vendor? This will save on water, electricity, coffee, dirty cups and missing donations towards coffee and it will render a much better service to members.
- Various 9H3 stations are coming to Malta and making a bad name for MARL due to the bureau charging them €0.07c per QSL card. We suggest some agreement or package is offered to these stations/operators. This can be put on the website and can serve as good promotion. Reference should be made to the MARL statute clause 2.0.0.f. *“ To provide facilities for those who are not M.A.R.L. members but who may wish to receive and send QSL cards in the MARL Bureau, as long as the rules for this service are observed. “* What are these rules and were are they clearly stated? They are not found in the MARL statute or website. Clarify this and provide foreigners a decent service which will make a good name for MARL and Malta. Discuss the matter with the Tourism Authority for some form of sponsorship as other local amateurs and amateur radio and scouts groups have already done and obtained on various occasions.
- Some local stations are asking for contribution and saying on-air and/or publishing on websites that if QSL cards are sent via MARL bureau they will be destroyed and not be replied to. This should clearly not be allowed to be done by MARL members unless it is some special activity / activation which would hinder the MARL bureau operations. This should be made clear in the MARL statute.
- Why is MARL not registered officially with the government as a club or NGO and not receiving benefits?
- Why is MARL registered as a commercial entity vis-à-vis water and electricity?

- IARU donated a radio to MARL, this was never presented and we understand that the radio that eventually made it to MARL was not the actual radio donated. The committee should investigate this, we request to know what the actual radio donated by IARU was and to what monetary value, what was the actual radio presented to MARL and to what monetary value and where is this radio now ?
- A couple of years ago, under another committee, a member obtained a MARL letter head, on which a request was made to the Civil Aviation Department for a donation of obsolete (for professional use) radios. The existing committee was aware of this, in fact they had contacted the C.A. Dept and were informed that the foresaid member had already contacted them (representing MARL) and had just collected lots of radios and equipment just days before. Years have now passed and no committee has pursued the matter to start a dialogue with this member to return the items which are legally MARL's property. An inventory should be obtained from the C.A. Dept and this matter should be sorted immediately with everything returned to MARL. We understand that the equipment involved included high end professional grade Harris transceivers ect.
- The MARL website is no longer maintained as it once was, no new articles are ever added (apart from newsletters) and the formatting for committee announcements is terribly presented and sometimes late or missing. The statute was available in both Maltese and English. The English version has not been available for over a year now. Also a membership application and renewal form should be setup and payments via PayPal/Credit card accepted via the website/email. This would make it easier for many local members and also ensures that foreign members can easily renew their membership. All foreign radio clubs and groups have had this system for years and it does not cost anything.
- While the newsletter is a fantastic effort, we feel that the dual languages is a waste of energy and resources, we suggest that the English version only be retained as everyone locally and internationally can understand this, it will also be presented with less mistakes and misprints "lost in translation". We also suggest to the committee to encourage more members to contribute to the newsletter as its an excellent job, however it seems all the effort is done by one person with no assistance. We suggest a small group of people should participate in the publication of the newsletter to enhance the quality and quantity of the publication, if need be, change the issuance to quarterly instead of monthly. Why not form a publications sub committee responsible for the newsletters, website and party invitations?
- Quite a few years ago a software program for membership management was developed for free by a member. Many hours were spent on this, adding features for printing address labels ect. It seems this program has been put to dis-use and the committee seems to be comfortable with its way of doing things their own way, this is not right when a perfectly suitable standardised application was developed. What is the committee's position on this?
- We would like a detailed explanation of how the examinations are organised and RAE certificates are awarded. How is the exam paper created and by whom? Who is executing the examination procedures such as pass marks, paper corrections ect ? Is there a sub committee

responsible for the RAE? And if so how are they being appointed and audited?

- Why is the Morse examination still being performed when the requirement for Morse to access the HF bands has been removed? Is it just there for MARL to make more money on exams? The point of requiring a 9H1 licence to use Morse does not make sense and the licence does not limit mode of operation. Nowadays Morse is considered a digital mode which can easily be generated and received with a computer or even most modern radios' built in software. Also this "no Morse" seems to only pertain to HF use ironically Morse code is used widely by most operators on 6m and 2m due to adverse conditions. All new licensees should be issued with a 9H1 as it is discriminatory. We do however agree that although the Morse code has been abolished, lessons and practice tests should still be performed at the club.
- Why does MARL not enter into dialogue with MCA and create a novice licence system such as that in most other countries. This will surely bring more people into the hobby and will help people that find the full RAE too much of an immediate challenge. It will enable people to gradually improve on their hobby by experience as we are getting many new licensees with not much experience and total disregard for amateur etiquette on the air.
- The committee has not been organising any radio related or technical activities and/or speeches related to our hobby. Many people are getting the impression that this is becoming more of a social club, a 'kazin', with not much activities related to amateur radio taking place. More focus is placed on eating and drinking, talking about politics and sports, fighting about petty matters and back stabbing hearsays. Many people do not attend or renew membership because of this. The primary aim, as stated in the statute clause 2.0.0.0. is "To collect within it persons with the aim of increasing interest in Amateur Radio, and in the diverse aspects of electronics." And "To provide those facilities for members in the fields of teaching and practice in radio and electronics." These activities seem to have taken the back burner in recent years with no new activities or speeches taking place and the committee not making any effort to sort the matter. We are lucky to have a very vast and diverse hobby, with new technologies and topics available for every person's appetite and able to fill any meeting with interesting discussions ranging from homebrew projects to DStar, APRS to DX Contests, Computers to Antennas, Microwaves and ATV to group build projects and fox hunts just to name a few and scratch the surface of our hobby. This is amateur radio ! , not pasta, spaghetti and patata l-forn ! We feel this will be the down fall and ruin of our club. We are not against social gathering, it is a good thing to meet, eat and drink and have fun, but it should not be the primary aim of MARL to promote these activities and even worse make financial profit from them ! What does the committee propose to do about this?
- With reference to the MARL statute, clauses 2.0.0.b *"To advise and discuss with the authorities, subjects connected with Amateur Radio and electronics."* And 2.0.0.g *"To provide facilities and take part in activities and requirements of national emergencies."* We understand that under these clauses MARL has setup the emergency sub committee referred to as the "CPD Group". This was setup in November 2007, with an official email dated 12/11/2007 from the secretary clearly stating that MARL is the official body representing the group. We would like clarification as to how this group was formed and how are members admitted to this group. Is the

group open to all members and all radio amateurs and is it open to new recruits? Who heads and organises this group and by whom where they appointed? Are they appointed for life and is there any conflict of interest between being member of the MARL committee and this group? What system is in place for auditing this group? What are the rules and regulations of this group and where are they stated? The statute and/or website mention nothing of this. Actually all group activities are somewhat secretive with an occasional photograph of some activity appearing on the internet. No notice is sent to all members, if not inviting attendance, at least saying that an activity is taking place, maybe all amateurs can participate from home via radio or internet? Further clarification we demand is about the goings on of this group related to sponsorship. This is not happening transparently and we believe this is incorrect. We understand that a caravan was donated to MARL for emergency training use, with the understanding that this caravan will be equipped and manned by MARL members and that the caravan will be stored by the CPD government garages. Photos of MARL members with MARL banners have been posted onto the internet on various occasions. Who gets access to use this caravan? Can it be used for MARL general activities? Has the caravan been officially presented to MARL and has it been listed in the MARL property inventory? What funds and equipment has the committee approved for use in this caravan? We also understand that MARL has contacted many suppliers for sponsorship of equipment for use in this caravan. If this sponsorship was requested using MARL representation, therefore, the supplied equipment must be made available to all MARL members as per statute clause 5.3.1 *“Every member has the right to use all the facilities provided by the Society.”* This should also apply to the caravan. To date what items have been presented as sponsorship and to what monetary value? Were are these items currently held/being used?

- Why are the MARL committee meetings minutes, motions and decisions not published and made easily available to members? These are a legal right for every member not a secret book kept by the secretary.
- A new ATV repeater has been setup, we would like an explanation of the expenses spent on this. What happened to the various components of the old repeater which were donated by a MARL member? A new video test card generator was also donated for the new repeater but apparently not used, what has happened with this? We request that all parts of the old ATV repeater be placed in the display showcase with a history of it being the first ATV repeater in Malta with credit to the persons involved in developing it.
- Why are new members not given a package with information about MARL, a copy of the statute, a free lapel badge and a free set of 9H1MRL QSL cards ect? Joining most international clubs such as RSGB and ARRL provide much more to members upon joining, but this should be a basic pack for MARL. It gives a much better service and image, especially to visiting foreigners who may become members. This only costs MARL a few cents but obtains a new member who would probably remain for much longer improving on the current drop out rate of new members.
- Why are not club accounts, memberships and current events no longer posted on the notice board? The notice board is full of hand written papers and also adverts by non members, who is responsible for keeping these boards organised?

- Why is the radio shack not properly manned by various individuals, but only the responsibility of just one person, which when not available, the shack remains closed, this is not fair both on this person as well as on all other members. The statute clearly states in clause 5.3.1 *“Every member has the right to use all the facilities provided by the Society. “*
- Why is the 6m beacon still active at the club? It is causing interference to the shack operations and doesn't allow the ability for operation on 6m and 2m. The antenna pole is also wasted for the beacon which should be used for further antennas for use in the shack. This beacon should be relocated to some better location and alternate green power sources investigated such as solar panels ect.
- A state of the art radio is available but the antenna setup is shameful with no rotator for the YAGI and no decent antennas for bands above HF. Sponsorship should be obtained from the various amateur radio dealers. No satellite and microwave equipment is available, and no ATV equipment is setup for access/monitoring of the club's own ATV repeater! A separate modern 2m VHF radio should also be available for use with the 2m repeater.
- Why has the tower been removed from the roof? This was ideal for mounting of antennas for various bands, especially VHF and up.
- Does the shack PC have a licensed operating system? Why is Linux not endorsed, used and promoted by MARL? Especially when it is so amateur radio friendly and totally free. What is the official log book on the shack PC? And where are the shack operating procedures and rules clearly stated? Is a shack inventory kept?
- The R4 repeater licensing is not totally clear, with hearsay of the license still being for the old R7 frequency. This should be sorted immediately as anyone could obtain a license for the R4 allocation. Also the repeater keeper is a sole individual which has total command on both maintenance and technical affairs related to the repeater. This is treated as if the repeater was of this individual with no one able to comment on its maintenance or operation. This is not right and the committee should assign a technical sub committee responsible for such affairs headed by a rotating liaison to the committee.
- A while ago some members suggested internet access at the club for use in the office and shack and also as a wireless access point. This did not seem to be accepted by the committee. Today cheap internet access is easily obtainable and can also be sponsored by the main internet providers, one of which is already listed as a MARL sponsor. Why has this sponsorship not been pursued?
- The statute clause 6.2.1.7 states that MARL should provide a library. Where is this library? What titles are carried and how is it managed?
- Why does the statute not clearly indicate the official artwork for MARL logos? and protect their intellectual property and use.

- Why has the small room on the right hand side from the entrance been demolished and never re-erected? Was planning permission obtained from the authorities? Now this area is full of rubbish and discarded parts of antennas ect. Sometimes garbage bags are left for weeks on end in this area, causing terrible smells especially during the warmer months. This is totally shameful and unhygienic.
- The MARL main door was once painted with the supposed MARL logo. This was not maintained and instead of being redone or repaired it has now been painted on with plain yellow paint. Why is this?
- Why has MARL not implemented any aids for the less-abled, such as wheelchair access ect , we understand this is a legal requirement in a public place.
- Why has MARL not got fire extinguishers especially in the radio shack and kitchen, we understand this is also a legal requirement.
- During last year's practical electronics course, 16 students contributed to the purchase of a new Multifunction Laser Printer and Copier which was to be made available for use by all members. It was to be kept placed in the classroom with network connectivity to the other computers. This printer was recently removed from the classroom and put in the committee office, where full access is denied for members. Most probably the office printer failed and the committee found it easier to expropriate this printer and deny its proper intentional use to all members! Why is this?
- With reference to the statute clause 10.1.0 *"The interpretation of this statute shall be as understood by the Committee"* What does this mean? Does it mean that the committee may interpret the clauses not as they are meant but as it deems fit for that situation especially in biased situations? We believe this to have been the case on some occasions. If this clause means this, we request it is removed from the statute as to avoid any abuses of the clause by any committee or committee member.