on 1998) and by similar amounts of [illegible]

Letters to the Editor

"Malta Times" 18.1.2000

The Piper Lance stories

I refer to the article about the disappearance of the Piper Lance four years ago, in which my son Matthew was a passenger.

In general I appreciate the genuine interest of your staff reporter. In fact I am grateful to you and to him for bringing the matter to the public's attention.

Indeed, as reported, I too feel rather uncomfortable and unhappy about the delay in finalising the inquiry.

However, my public statements so far have been limited to a letter of thanks published in *The Sunday Times*, addressed to all those who in any way assisted in the air and sea rescue operation and to a very flat categorical statement of personal belief "that the accident was a genuine general aviation accident" in answer to a request for a position, asked of me by Mr Lou Bondi in his first live programme on the subject in the TV series *Piazza 3*.

I have never made any public statement regarding some of the details attributed to me in the article in question. Some I have not even said in private.

I am very disturbed, indeed very angry, at the public position assumed by lawyer Malcolm Pace, in your article. At the appropriate time and place, after the inquiry report is made public, I will answer Dr Pace in no uncertain terms on all of his "17 reasons" on his hypothesis of interception, hijacking and forced landings, and his 12 reasons for considering the possibility that the aircraft was sabotaged and exploded in mid-air.

In the meantime I will only remark that all these "reasons" coincidentally but remarkably are potentially very much in the business interest of the deceased pilot's estate. Incidentally, the inquiry could not start and many precious months were lost due to the fact that Dr Pace's clients had instituted action in court to challenge the validity of the nominations of the members of the commission. Now I read of a last-minute report.

Obviously this may yet further delay the publication of the inquiry findings.

For the moment I await in silence, but with anxiety, the publication of the inquiry commission's report.

I take the opportunity to express amazement at Dr Pace's blatant indiscretion in this case.

I expect Dr Pace to be well aware of the very valid principle that while a matter is still *sub judice*, one ought to refrain from making such public statements.

I have been taught that this principle seeks to establish a measure of decency with which an investigative procedure is to proceed and acting contrary to this same principle could be tantamount to sheer disrespect towards the very process.

J. R. AQUILINA,
Balzan.

Caravaggio's *St Jerome*

With regard to your centre-page feature about the Caravaggio's *St Jerome* (January 11) I want to voice an open opinion.

It is just plain common sense and one need not be a connoisseur to realise that *St Jerome* should be where it was meant to be: in the chapel of Italy at St John's. Not the oratory, where as the anonymous source says, it distracts attention from the same artist's *Beheading of St John*. Moreover, the smaller masterpiece is hiding from view a work by Preti.

Just as it would be senseless to have the *Beheading* anywhere else, the same applies to the smaller painting. For years, the wall space in the Italian chapel laid bare by the *St. Jerome's* removal has been a ghastly eyesore with that series of turquoise wooden slats clashing with the fine stucco. Even removing the painting to the Oratory if just for the duration of the larger painting's restoration in Florence, constituted an unwise step.

Whether in the museum or in the Oratory one wonders whether security considerations have had any weight in justifying the move.

In one case (e.g. 1984) it proved futile and staying in its rightful home should present no additional danger. Just to quote two examples in Rome, the two Caravaggio paintings in Santa Maria del Popolo and another three in San Luigi dei Francesi have always securely remained in their rightful abode.

Cannot the same be done here?

ALBERT G. STORACE,
St Julian's.

Simply scandalous

I read your front page coverage (January 11) on Vodafone's application for significant tariff reductions to the telecommunications regulator.

I find the contents simply scandalous.

After the attacks on the mobile tariffs by the prime minister and several of his ministers in chorus over the past months, I would have expected the regulator to simply say "yes" or even better – "Yes. thank you" – to Vodafone's application.

It would have been a nice Christmas present for us all. And certainly a more welcome present than the speeches that we were all regaled with over the millennium celebrations.

Perhaps they did not realise that this was the present we Maltese consumers deserved.

D. DARMANIN,
Balzan.