

Malta Labour Party Manifesto, 1996

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Modern Plan for Malta's Future

We are approaching a new century. The beginning of a century that is also the beginning of a millenium. This brings with it new challenges for all Maltese and Gozitans.

They are challenges that will affect us closely. They are challenges that will have a substantial effect on all citizens. They are challenges that offer us the best of opportunities if we know how to tackle them.

The Labour Party has prepared itself to meet these new challenges by updating its policies in various areas. We planned this new policy to reflect, in every area, the citizens' wishes and aspirations. Out of every challenge, we wanted to create the best opportunity for all Maltese and Gozitans.

We wanted the New Labour Policy to put the citizen first.

We wanted the new Labour Policy to offer modern and efficient answers to the problems of our times.

We wanted the New Labour Policy to strengthen the foundations that would make our country a true focal point in the Mediterrean... in deep friendship with all countries of Europe and the Mediterranean....whilst at the same time affirming and strengthening the best values of our national identity.

We wanted the new Labour Policy to give priority to social justice, by ensuring a truly free and just choice to the citizen in education, health and other social areas.

We wanted the New Labour Policy to protect the vital interests of all working people whoever they may be: workers and employees, the small self-employed, pensionsers and their families.

In the same way, in the economic sector, we wanted the New Labour Policy to offer and sustain a free and just choice for the citizen and protect him from monopolies. We will protect the citizen from monopolies and restrictive practices that inhibit a true choice.

We wanted that both in the economic, and in the social and cultural sectors, the New Labour Policy would uphold the initiative of the individual.

We wanted the Maltese to experience the New Labour Policy as one with a clear vision, that could and would be used for the well-being of all citizens.

With this Electoral Manifesto we bring to the people our vision for the future - as a PROJECT OF MODERN LEADERSHIP for our country, based completely on the main principles of the New Labour Policy.

The proposals of modern government contained in this programme will be of great interest to all citizens and their families. With these proposals Labour Party is preparing to lead our country with a clear vision towards the new century. The time has come for the Labour Party slogan 'The Citizen First' to be put into practice, by providing the country with of a dynamic, serious and committed leadership.

Modern Plan For Malta's Future

1. A Switzerland in the Mediterreanean
2. A Sense of National Identity
3. Towards Honest and Responsible Government
4. The Environment: Priority, Prevention and Responsibility
5. New Life for Education
6. University
7. Social Security and Solidarity
8. New Social Proposals
9. Housing
10. A Better Deal in Health Care for the Citizen
11. Care of the Elderly
12. Women's Rights: Full and Effective Equality Between Women and Men
13. Young People in the Development of a Youthful Society
14. Full Security for the Citizen
15. Efficiency and Tranparency in the Administration of Justice
16. Towards a Modern Civil Service
17. The Army - Security and Confidence for All
18. New Horizons For Gozo
19. Local Councils: Strengthening Community Values
20. A Modern Setup for Broadcasting
21. Economic and Financial Policy
22. Taxes

23. Protection of Citizen's Rights in the Provision of Essential Services
 24. VAT must be repealed
 25. Anti-inflation measures a priority
 26. Trade Liberalisation and the Initiative of Small Self-Employed Sector Must be Sustained
 27. Tourism: Towards a Higher Recognition; Recognition of its value to the Economy
 28. Industry as a Chief Pillar to the Economy
 29. The Protection of Agriculture and Fisheries
 30. The Infrastructure
- Conclusion
-

1. A SWITZERLAND IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Within a framework of Maltese constitutional neutrality, there must be two basic orientations for Malta's foreign policy: the European and Mediterranean directions.

The former arises from the deep political, commercial and cultural ties we have with Europe.

The latter results from our geographic position and the common interests we share with our Mediterranean neighbours on such issues as the environment, security, trade and economic development.

Within this context, and in our common interest for peace, Malta should establish the closest possible relations with the European Union, compatible with Maltese and European interests.

A Labour government will target a contractual arrangement with the European Union that would envisage the setting up of an industrial free trade zone within a reasonable time scale. Coupled with this there would be bilateral agreements in foreign policy, security and co-operation in the technical, economic, financial and social fields.

Labour believes that Malta should refrain from seeking full membership of the European Union, which would entail the adoption by Malta of all the Union's policies. Many of these have been designed for big European countries and do not suit the specific economic and social characteristics of small islands like Malta and Gozo. Besides, membership of the E.U. would also undermine Malta's neutrality.

On the Mediterranean front, Labour proposes an active endeavour for peace and friendship between Mediterranean countries and fosters encouraging wider co-operation between Mediterranean states covering the political, economic, social and environmental sectors. A Labour government promotes the setting up of a regional Mediterranean organisation leading to greater co-operation between neighbouring people, and will endeavour to achieve bilateral and multilateral agreements in these sectors.

An essential premise of Labour's foreign policy is that neutrality is a meaningful and valid option for Malta. Indeed, Maltese neutrality will enable us to widen and deepen our relations with a larger number of countries possible, both from neighbouring and more distant regions. This should allow us to intensify our

contribution to the United Nations. Neutrality also implies that Malta has no role to play in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme, from which Labour is pledged to withdraw.

2. A SENSE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

In line with an active foreign policy, there must be positive action to promote a sense of national identity, while encouraging all forms of economic, social, cultural and technical contacts with the outside world. Living on an island should mean neither isolation nor the loss of our national identity, whether it be in normal times or in times of rapid social and technological change.

Labour therefore aims to give recognition to the Maltese communities established abroad (Australia, Canada, USA, UK etc). An official foundation would be set up to promote initiatives and research that would help enhance the ties between the Maltese living abroad and those in Malta.

The enhancement of our culture built on the Maltese language and our people's talents, together with sport are of paramount importance in the creation of a modern sense of national identity. The new Labour policy proposes modern initiatives to encourage Maltese artists, writers, linguists and musicians to promote their skills and widen their audience. For example, 0.5 per cent of the capital outlay on new public buildings would be allocated for the purchase of local works of art to be exhibited there.

A Council of the Arts and of Culture will be set up to co-ordinate cultural policy and programmes, with the direct participation of artists and cultural animators. Long term strategies would be devised, in co-ordination with local councils and voluntary organisations, to safeguard Malta's artistic, archaeological and other heritage.

In the sports sector, Labour believes that voluntary organisations should have the initiative and the lead in organising their activities. The state should give its support, by providing facilities and backing on the basis of the requests made by such organisations. This could include water and electricity rates that are cheaper than those for commercial companies. Sports should be an integral part of educational curricula. Labour would take steps to advance the greater participation of women in sport and to provide opportunities in sport for people with special needs.

3. TOWARDS HONEST AND RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

Labour does not agree that government should take important decisions behind closed doors and in secret, nor should it refuse to explain dubious decisions and suspicious choices regarding persons and public expenditure.

Big contracts have been awarded to favoured friends even when there were more seemingly advantageous offers. Corruption has become rampant and is covered up by dubious investigations devised to hide and cover up the truly responsible.

All this has strengthened and diffused a climate where waste and the squandering of public money have become accepted practice.

Labour believes modern Malta deserves much better. It deserves a serious leadership which is truly efficient and free of corruption. This cannot come about if the political leadership and administration of our country is not transparent and correct, both on a personal and on an institutional level.

In order to achieve a climate of correct and serious government the new Labour policy bases its proposition on three principles : transparency, accountability and justice. These principles must apply both to political parties and to the running of the state. Concerning running of parties, we propose:

- party finances will be made be made public. If the parties are given public funding, expenditure must be checked by the public auditor.
- the political parties, especially during an electoral campaign, must on solemn oath behave in a way that protects the citizen from misinformation, provocation to every type of physical and moral violence, and the vulgarity of personal attacks.

Regarding government decisions and those in the public sector, the new Labour policy will introduce the following measures:

- the presence of the public auditor or his representatives on every board discussing the awarding of contracts. The auditor will not actually participate in the discussions or decisions, but will observe proceedings and will have to certify publicly that the work of the board had been done in a transparent manner.
- every contract awarded by government will include a clause granting government the right to withhold payment due, in cases where serious allegations of corruption or abuse of power in the awarding of contracts are made;
- the Public Accounts Committee will be given access and all necessary information on every aspect of public expenditure while the auditor will not only be a parliamentary official together with his colleagues, but he will have the necessary resources to do his work effectively.
- this parliamentary committee will be assisted by a more independent and strengthened Office of the Director of Verification and by independent experts where their presence is felt to be necessary.
- the magistrature will be strengthened with the granting of investigative powers, amongst them total access to government records and the necessary resources to allow them independently of the police department, to investigate accusations of corruption and of abuse of power.

4. THE ENVIRONMENT- PRIORITY, PREVENTION AND RESPONSIBILITY

Labour feels the protection of the environment will be one of the greatest - if not the greatest - national challenges in the next century. The citizen cannot come first if his or her natural surroundings, historical and man made are ruined or destroyed in the interest of financial speculation. Our country is so small that we soon reach the point beyond which the harm we do to our environment becomes irreversible.

In a civilised and planned manner, we must find solutions to the big environmental problems that arise in an island such as ours, where the citizens , quite rightly work hard to satisfy their aspirations for a better and more modern life. These aspirations, if they are legitimate must be dealt with in a socially just manner, and in a way that neither causes harm to and much less destroys some part of the country's natural or human heritage. In the interests of environmental protection, we need to use the most modern forms of research and damage prevention available, especially in the fields of science and information.

Three principles underpin the New Labour Policy on the environment:

1. Environmental protection will be given top priority in each local national project.
2. It is better to prevent environmental damage from happening rather than to try to undo it later.
3. Whoever is responsible for environmental pollution, must pay for it.

4.1 Building development

Relative to building development, Labour proposes to amend the Structural Plan in order to ensure that all development is sustainable and that the Plan fully takes into account existing social realities.

The enforcement powers of the Planning Authority will be enhanced. Its procedures to vet development applications must be streamlined. The Authority's members will be more representative.

An Agency of Environment Wardens will be set up to make sure laws are followed.

4.2 Investigations into projects that have been harmful to the environment

A new Labour government will investigate controversial projects that have been harmful to the environment to remove the threat they pose to the environment.

These projects include:

- a. Chambrai, which is being developed on savagely commercial lines leading to the destruction of its historical and natural importance;
- b. The planned airport at Ta' Lambert in Gozo, that will destroy prime quality agricultural land;
- c. The Solid Waste Recycling Plant in Marsascale, where a new Labour Government will invest substantial and adequate funds to remove the environmental threat posed by this project. And if this investment is found to be insufficient to solve the problem, the project will be relocated.
- d. The tunnel project for drainage between Pwales and iċ-Ċumnija in the north of Malta.

4.3. Plans for regional development

We recognise the need for Regional Development Plans, particularly in Gozo and for the south of Malta. These should be designed to propose sustainable development that respects the environment. In the case of Gozo, such an environmental plan would ensure that development would be sustainable and not be controlled, as is currently happening by the barons. In the south of Malta - that is the area between Cottonera and Marsaxlokk - Labour's main aims would be for development to be truly balanced, to strengthen social and physical infrastructure, and to improve the quality of its citizens' lives.

4.4. New solutions for traffic problems.

Methods must be found to ease traffic flow in village cores. Serious efforts must be made to improve buildings and street maintenance.

4.5 Air pollution Control.

A board to monitor and control air pollution will be set up. Standards must be established to regulate and enforce noise pollution levels.

4.6 The sewage problem

Immediate action is needed to implement a really operative national plan to deal with the sewage problem. The time for procrastination and half-baked solutions is well past.

The growing threat of pollution of our waters is especially serious in view of the high percentage of our potable water that is currently being obtained from sea-water reverse osmosis plants.

4.7 Water Supply

The huge expenditure on water supply carried out in recent years has still not solved the underlying problem of secure and cost-effective water supplies to the population.

In Labour's view, a number of important measures need to be taken to overcome this problem. Among them, the systems of distribution should be replaced to reduce the large scale waste of water through leakages.

Also, the procedure of pumping borehole water straight into the mains system should be stopped. The level of nitrates in the water supply must be reduced to an acceptable level.

The traditional custom of hunting and trapping should be recognised and allowed, within limits that respect environmental constraints and the interests of the rest of the public to enjoy the island's natural environment. The limits to be set to hunting and trapping will be in conformity with the Berne Convention, with suitable reservations to reflect Malta's special situation.

The protection and rehabilitation of our valleys need special attention. The Maltese population must be given the opportunity to enjoy the beauty of our natural environment with the creation of open spaces for family recreation and with the setting up of caravan sites.

5. NEW LIFE FOR EDUCATION

Labour believes that education in our country, especially state education, needs a new lease of life. State education must be substantially improved, while Church schools, private schools and parents foundation schools continue to enjoy full freedom to operate.

5.1 Education as a project of top priority

Fully aware of the importance of education for the Maltese to face with confidence, the new century's economic, social, cultural and technological challenges, the New Labour Policy offers a project TOWARDS A FREE AND JUST CHOICE IN EDUCATION, with the aim of making state education the top option within a reasonable time scale. The project will be given top priority by a new Labour government.

Primary Education

The project gives top priority to government primary schools, providing children with all the resources necessary for them to benefit from a tender age of the best quality education. Heavy investment will be made to build new schools and to upgrade and refurbish existing schools, through the effective management of existing and new human resources, and through the development of better curricula, not least in science and informatics.

Secondary Education

The project TOWARDS A FREE AND JUST CHOICE IN EDUCATION will reform the secondary school sector to give students full access to a curriculum leading to a worthwhile certificate, recognised at the work place and at post secondary level.

Technical Education

Similarly new life will be given to technical schools, the top priority being that whatever the structure of the school, by the time they are sixteen students there will have received a general and sound technical education.

All students in government schools must be given a technological formation according to the level they have reached. The aim of the project TOWARDS A FREE AND JUST CHOICE IN EDUCATION, will be that by the time they leave school all students in state education, will be computer literate and completely familiar with information technology. All the financial investment necessary will be made to reach the aim of the project.

Education for children with special needs

Parallel with all these changes every effort will be undertaken to give children with special needs the full opportunity to be integrated into mainstream education. This will be done according to a well designed plan, drawn up in consultation with those involved, and with adequate resources. All examinations at every level will be set in such a way as to cater for the particular needs of persons with disabilities.

More time and effort must be given to improve the level of education of children who have fallen behind, either for social reasons, or because while they do not have special needs, they will be 'educationally subnormal' All this will be done in full consultation with teachers and parents. Attention will be given to further education for adults.

5.2 Private Schools

The New Labour Policy recognises the Church-State agreement on the running of Church Schools. This agreement will continue to be observed and followed by a Labour government.

5.3. The post-secondary level

Regarding post secondary education, Labour will consult all those involved in the improvement of the quality of education for students over sixteen. New opportunities will be created for them especially in the informatics sector, where they will be taught how to study independently and will be helped in the development of their personality.

There must be more continuity and integration between the secondary level and the post-secondary level. There must be reforms in the curricula and in teaching methods, so that students can begin developing their talents before they reach sixteen.

Full attention will be given both to those students going to University, and to those youths who take up courses in technology, vocational or secretarial training, maritime or tourist studies, farming or commerce.

5.4 Educational Links

For Labour's aims in education to be reached, there must be full coordination between the sectors of education, health and social services so that the best use of resources can be made. A service must be built up of councillors, therapists, psychologists and doctors to help students who have learning problems.

The education system must give equal opportunities to boys and girls. It must create active links between school and the family, especially by ensuring that parents are fully informed about their children's educational level.

Progress will be held up if teachers are not allowed full expression in educational policy. The scarcity of teachers needs to be investigated together with the Teachers Unions.

Casual teachers need to be given training courses, amongst other things. A study must be conducted into teachers' social and work conditions. The system whereby career advancement for teachers automatically means leaving the classroom to run the school must be changed.

Above all, the management of the educational process must be based on participation. Schools and teaching institutions must be run on truly participatory lines open to administrators, teachers, parents and others from the world of economics and culture, who have an interest in education.

Study and examinations programmes must change radically, in full consultation with those involved in the sector. The educational system needs to win the full confidence of parents and students. This can be helped, if students are given the right, if they ask for it, to see their corrected examinations paper.

To encourage the continuing development of education, a National Commission of Education must be set up for a long term revision of developments in the area. The Commission will give advice for future needs and will make sure the quality of teaching and training is really improving.

6. UNIVERSITY

Entry to University must be open to all those who reach the required academic level without social or financial impediment. The University must really give the opportunity to students to develop their full human potential. The stipend system will continue.

New opportunities will be created with new courses designed for those who work and cannot attend day courses.

It is of fundamental importance that the university management structure becomes participative and democratic and that it upholds and strengthens academic standards of teaching and research. This system

must be open in practice to students, teachers and non-academic staff. It must be open too to the chief representatives of the social economic and industrial sectors.

With such democratic structures, the University should eventually enter into a contractual arrangement with government, valid for a stipulated period of time, covering the funds it receives to fulfill its teaching, research responsibilities as well as its own self-management.

In a transparent manner, the University will be responsible to parliament for the way in which it fulfills its duties. It will have to publish a detailed report of its work, including its accounts.

An Ombudsperson will be appointed for University to look into and decide on complaints of unfair treatment by students, academic and non-academic staff.

Instead of operating like a large scale factory, the University should provide the opportunity for the development of a wide mixture of ideas coming both from students and from teachers. It must create an intellectually dynamic climate in which lecturers can give a worthwhile contribution to society.

Finally, the vital part the University plays in Malta's development must form an integral part of the educational system as a whole. The sector must give citizens the knowledge and skills they need to give their full contribution to society in all sections, not only the work section.

7. SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOLIDARITY

The systems of social benefits and insurance linked to Labour policies, education, health and housing, have always been the central foundation of the welfare state built by Labour governments of Malta.

A core belief for Labour has always been that quality of opportunity for all citizens in all spheres of human activity must be the starting point in any political strategy for the future. At the same time, the social security system must remain firmly anchored in the economic potential of the country.

Labour's new policy affirms the need to maintain the closest linkage between social policy and the control of inflation, so as to prevent price increases from eroding social benefits.

Similarly, the target set for economic policy must be that of ensuring the highest level possible of employment.

The national minimum wage must be set at a level ensuring that together with the social allowances it is entitled to, a family can live well enough on such a wage.

Social policy also has above all to be kept in line with policies in the fields of education, health, care of the elderly and housing. It must be linked to controls on abuses and waste in government spending not least in the area of social benefit payments.

Meanwhile, the existing structures of social welfare benefits must be continually adjusted to the rapid changes taking place in society. For example, there has been a huge growth in services as a percentage of total jobs held. The number of women active in the 'gainfully employed sector' of the economy is increasing regularly. Various categories of part-time and flexitime job arrangements have developed with time.

In a free market economy, the danger exists that social forces having extensive funds and access to technology, will acquire an ever increasing share of power in society. Among these forces, one finds big commercial companies led by a handful of barons, and the State itself. In the face of these forces, the citizen

and whole sections of the population - are likely to feel defenceless. The new Labour policy is proposing measures to give the citizen the power to defend his and his families interests against these forces.

Labour's new policy therefore insists on the need for a social security system which provides citizens with an effective say in exercising their social rights. Among other things, it encourages more personal initiative by citizens in the defence of their rights.

8. NEW SOCIAL PROPOSALS

Social policy must also take into account the needs of one parent families and separated persons. Current discrimination against them will be removed. The concrete proposals endorsed by the new policy, are modelled on current European social practice. Among the proposals one finds:

ensuring that members of the family do not have to work extra hours against their will, simply because the family's social wage does not price increases, educational and health expenditures and housing costs.

adequate social security for those citizens working part time or flexible hours, to ensure they have equivalent access to social benefits as citizens working full time.

limits to the use of definite work contracts ensuring that where these are being repeatedly renewed, they automatically acquire the status of indefinite contracts.

a revision of the social security system to ensure that with proper safeguards against abuse, social benefits enjoyed by workers and employees are extended to the small self-employed sector.

development of a rigorous and modern legal framework, ensuring equal pay and equal treatment for men and women at their place of work and in their access to social security systems.

ensuring that workers, employees and their representatives are given adequate and regular information about the situation of their workplace.

creating training schemes and job opportunities for workers and employees over 45 years old who find it difficult to find new jobs when they are made redundant.

regular systems of social auditing will be introduced on a regular basis independent of the government, to check on the management and deployment of the social welfare system.

introduction of a scheme for ex- British Service personnel allowing them to receive their full Services pensions without forfeiting a part of their Maltese two-thirds pension.

In particular, a new Labour government will make sure that disabled persons will have full access to work, education and social benefits. The latter will include:

all the services currently identified with the aged should in fact be granted to all those in need and so automatically they will be extended to all disabled persons, of whatever age.;

old people's homes must provide a service to disabled persons who are unable to live an independent life. New homes must be set up to provide this service. Old people's homes must

include a full range of services - from residential care to respite services of a few hours a day for persons still living with their families.

support will be given to voluntary organisations set up by non- governmental organisations in the human development sector for people with special needs.

job training schemes will set up for persons with special needs, together with an active programme to help these citizens find jobs.

9. HOUSING

On housing, Labour's new policy acknowledges that free market forces by themselves cannot fully respond to the citizen's demand for housing at a reasonable price.

Without effective state intervention to ease the growing housing problem, the problem is bound to increase.

This has been happening in recent years due to the Nationalist government's confused and inadequate handling of the sector.

Wherever possible, through a partnership with the private sector, Labour will ensure equality of opportunity for citizens in housing by:

- launching social housing programmes in specific areas, in line with existing regulations for environmental protection;

- providing incentives for old, empty and dilapidated buildings to be redeveloped for residential purposes;

- subsidising rents on private houses and flats;

- providing subsidies for improvements in residencies which are owner occupied or rented;

- improving the conditions of interest rate subsidy on house loans provided by banks to lower income families.

10. A BETTER DEAL IN HEALTH CARE FOR THE CITIZEN

Nationalist promises for a better deal in health care for the citizen have not been honoured.

Meanwhile, there has been a steady deterioration in certain vital areas of health care, such as management of state hospitals, delivery of primary health care systems, training and supply of paramedical personnel and provision of free medicines to citizens entitled to them under the social welfare system.

Squandering of public funds as well as under-investment in public health care systems are common. A decision to build a new major public hospital was taken against the advice of most informed professionals in the health care system.

10.1 The state health service and the public sector

Labour's new policy on health aims at decentralising the health care system in a meaningful way, by giving a voice in its management to all the professional involved.

While fully recognising the right of citizens to choose private medical health care, Labour will ensure that public health facilities provide the best service in Malta.

10.2 Community Health Service

Community health care should be the basis of a truly national and effective health care scheme. Local health care centres must be increased in number and updated to provide a wide range of preventive and curative services.

As part of preventive care, emphasis will be placed on the teaching of hygiene, preventive medicine and the correct use of health services.

Efforts should be made to widen the scope and increase the importance of district health centres. They should be endowed with preventive, investigative, curative and specialised services as well as 24 hour emergency facilities.

10.3 Hospital health service

At the secondary level, public hospitals need to be modernised and refurbished through an accelerated programme. Available hospital space must be used better, eliminating overcrowding. This applies especially to St. Luke's hospital, where measures are needed to decrease the overloading of beds by providing alternative accommodation for social and chronic cases.

Special attention should be given to mental health care. The modernisation of Mount Carmel hospital has to be carried out with speed and commitment.

Professional management of each hospital under a separate management board must be secured. Participative and accountable structures inclusive of citizen representation should underpin this objective.

The work of paramedics needs to be given better recognition and be better organised. The Institute of Health care will be run more responsibly with high standard courses for paramedics leading to professional recognition for the qualifications granted.

10.4 The citizen's participation

Labour will take steps to safeguard the rights of citizens who need the health services by :

- providing an effective and meaningful participation in the running of such services;

- undertaking and publishing social impact assessment studies regarding wide ranging government measures;

- assessing the health services continuously by carrying out and publishing social audits;

- setting up an independent agency which, apart from providing citizens with information, will investigate and report directly to parliament any complaints

regarding the health services.

11. CARE OF THE ELDERLY

Complex social and health problems ensue from the fact that by the year 2000, 17 per cent of the population will be over 60 years old. Labour believes that through the better provision of services and facilities, the quality of life of the elderly will be improved. The emphasis should be on the strengthening of services enabling the elderly to live in comfort and security at their home.

Meanwhile, more residential centres need to be opened for those elderly citizens who can no longer live on their own.

The services available at Zammit Clapp hospital need to be made available to a greater number of people.

In its policy to improve the quality of life for the elderly, Labour will ensure that families, voluntary organisations and the private sector will be fully involved.

12. WOMEN'S RIGHTS - FULL AND EFFECTIVE EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

Labour's new policy asserts the party's ongoing commitment to equal rights for men and women. It stresses that this commitment needs to be enhanced and updated both for moral reasons, and due to the need to utilise to the full all the island's human potential.

As a result, there are three principle areas where affirmative action is needed urgently.

Women's participation in national decision making must be strengthened through various measures. Here are some of them:-

All discriminatory measures in the policies of departments and public institutions must be abolished.

When social impact studies are carried out on new policy proposals, these should also cover the impact of such proposals on women.

30 per cent of all nominations to government boards are to be women

at least 20 per cent of all appointments to executive ranks of the civil service are to be made from qualified women employees

while fully respecting the rights of serving officers arrangements should be made for married women who have left the public service for family reasons to be reinstated into the service at the grade at which they left.

Meanwhile measures designed to safeguard women's rights in the work place should include:

the effective implementation of the principle that men and women should earn the same money for doing work of the same value;

ensuring that government policy in all areas conforms to international conventions, such as ILO convention 156 regarding workers having family responsibilities;

all forms of sexual exploitation and harassment at the place of work to be made unlawful;

Other measures are required to protect women's private and family life. These would include:

educational campaigns on health issues of special interest to women;

the state to provide a full range of modern means of birth control as available in the rest of Europe, excluding abortion;

the development of programmes against violence perpetrated on women at home and in the community;

Labour will also see how to extend the existing social services, through the help of NGOs to provide financial and social support to single parent families.

Labour's new policy declares that educational policy has a leading role to play in the implementation of real equality between the sexes. In particular the education system must provide:

the means to socially transmit gender equality as a principle and natural value;

the full development of students, irrespective of gender, to pursue studies in the areas they choose. The obstacles that prevent women studying science will be removed

curriculum and texts that reflect women's contribution towards our society in all its aspects;

structures within the system which distribute responsibilities equally among the sexes.

The project TOWARDS A FREE AND JUST CHOICE IN EDUCATION incorporates these measures. So short and long term work strategies will be drawn up. In the short term, this should lead to the elimination of the concrete disadvantages suffered by women in their daily lives when they involve themselves in decision making. In the longer term this plan should lead to the adoption of new models regarding the roles adopted by men and women in the conduct of social affairs.

These roles need to be redesigned for the new situation resulting from real and effective equality among all men and women. In this aspect, the media must provide more direct means of participation both at the production level and in the running of programmes. Sex discrimination in media reports and adverts will not be allowed.

13. YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A YOUTHFUL SOCIETY

Labour's new policy for young people is premised on the idea that they should have an active share in national affairs now, and not sometime in the future.

All social inequalities affecting young people should be eliminated. Young people on the other hand must increasingly accept and exercise their responsibilities in a new society.

On this basis, Labour presents a number of major objectives for youth policy, and initiatives are specified

through which each one of these objectives is to be achieved.

13.1 Young people and education

In the first place, there is a need to ensure that public education and vocational training are of a consistently high standard.

Educational and economic structures must help young people arrive at independent decisions regarding matters that are of direct interest to them. The right to education is guaranteed through:

- improvement of standards at all educational levels which will be accessible to all students irrespective of their social and financial situation in line with the Labour project TOWARDS A FREE AND JUST CHOICE IN EDUCATION; the strengthening of schemes whereby Maltese and Gozitan youths would be able to study in EU and other countries;
- participation of students in the design of course curricula;
- widening technical education especially in areas of modern trades and new technology.
- those who join training schemes and lack sponsorship will no longer be denied serious vocational training as they are at the moment - national education will be accorded the dignity it enjoys in other advanced countries and will no longer be considered inferior to academic education.

13.2 Youth in the world of work

The state must adopt all those relevant social and economic measures that promote better job opportunities for young people.

The rights and conditions of work for young people have to be safeguarded and progressively improved. Labour will see that young workers are given equal opportunities by:

making every effort to help the young unemployed find a career which suits them most;

guaranteeing that young workers are not used as a source of cheap labour and that they do not suffer discrimination while in employment;

initiating schemes to provide the necessary financial backing to the young who want to set up their own business; great importance will be given to projects launched by young people in the field of informatics;

supporting initiatives to inform young people of their rights and responsibilities as workers.

13.3 The participation of young people in political and social life

Young people should be encouraged to take an active part in associations which defend their rights as workers, consumers and citizens. This will be promoted through:

the introduction at every level of the education system of information about the structures of power and democracy;

consultation with youth organisations and representation of young people on government boards;

Besides, young people should be ensured full access to health, housing and social protection services.

Labour will also recognise the role of youth voluntary organisations in all spheres - culture and sports - by supporting their initiatives while respecting their autonomous nature.

Labour will ensure the active participation of our youth in international activities by extending among others, student, sport, and cultural exchanges. Youths will be encouraged to participate in international fora especially in areas which interest them.

Labour's new policy also discusses the need to eradicate sex discrimination in the treatment of young people. It highlights the need to provide better recognition and encouragement to young people with special needs.

13.4 Protection of young people from exploitation.

A Labour government will ensure that young people are protected from every type of exploitation. The party feels that leisure time can be especially useful to develop youths' creativity and talents. Therefore Labour is proposing:

the introduction of modern corrective methods especially designed for the young;

priority will be given to the fight against drugs, by dealing harshly with the drug traffickers and providing professional help to the addicts.

identification of the health problems of the young and the launching of educational campaigns against drugs, alcoholism, prostitution, delinquency, HIV, and venereal diseases among others.

suitable and adequate measures will be taken in places frequented by young people to protect their health and safety

prices for entry to places of youth entertainment will be established according to clear criteria, to avoid exaggerated prices being charged.

The participation of young people in decision making and in current social values should be increased through youth participation in government corps and entities involved in the social and economic running of the country.

13.5 Youth participation in the protection of the environment

Young people should have the full possibility to involve themselves more in environmental protection. They will be:

encouraged through special programmes to understand local, regional and global environmental problems;

provided with scholarships both local and overseas, in environment protection;

encouraged to undertake research projects either on their own or through their respective organisations on environmental issues

given the chance to actuate practical programmes for the protection of the environment on a local and a national scale.

14. FULL SECURITY FOR THE CITIZEN

14.1 The running of the police force

The promise made by the Nationalist government that citizens would enjoy full security in their homes has not been kept. While the police force is overburdened with duties that are irrelevant to its main tasks, the real incidence of serious crime is growing. The equipment that police need is either lacking or completely primitive.

Labour's new policy projects the establishment of a forward looking plan aimed at giving the police force a sense of prestige and confidence. Police salaries, conditions of work, managerial equity and training systems need to motivate officers in their work.

Moreover, Labour plans to improve police crime fighting equipment, both in police stations and on the streets.

14.2 The authority surveying the police force

On another level, Labour is proposing a new mechanism to make the running of the police corps more transparent and the police fully accountable for their actions. A parliamentary select committee, presided over by an Opposition MP would be empowered to monitor the running of the police corps, without interfering in the execution of their duties.

Moreover, the judiciary will be given new powers and its own resources to conduct investigations into allegations of police misconduct or abuses. Investigating magistrates would thus be able to conduct a fully independent inquiry since they would not have to depend on police resources for their investigations.

14.3 The war against drugs

Meanwhile, the drug trafficking and abuse situation in our country is reach critical proportions. For years, not enough was done to clamp down on drug peddling.

Drug trafficking has become one of the main businesses in our country and the police are at a great disadvantage in their fight against it. It is not surprising that the drug scourge has become rampant with the most serious social consequences for citizens and their families.

A new Labour government will wage a merciless war against the drug barons and will give the police the necessary means to ensure its success. The laws governing the monitoring of drug traffickers, the confiscation of their assets and other measures to strengthen police operations against trafficking, should be made tougher in line with modern European countries.

At the same time preventive programmes will be implemented to raise anti-drug awareness

amongst parents, young people and children.

A new Labour government will give every encouragement and support to drug rehabilitation programmes, both those run by voluntary organisations and those set up by government agencies.

14.4 Prison management

Labour's new policy strongly condemns the political interference that has been rampant in the management of the prisons in recent years, leading to laxity and drug abuse inside prison precinct. The prison must be managed in a firm and humane manner exercising discipline while respecting prisoners' human rights.

The prison service needs to be provided with medical, social, and psychological back-up to monitor the welfare of prisoners and their families. Labour will ensure that the wardens' service is run on a professional and disciplined basis, winning back the respect it has lost.

15. Efficiency and transparency in the administration of justice

In the administration of justice, the citizen expects the process of law to be efficient, intelligible and truly fair. On each one of these points citizens are far from being satisfied.

All reforms meant to improve the administration of justice must be planned and co-ordinated with the judiciary, the legal profession and court officers. Labour's new policy provides for a comprehensive review of the legal process in which all sectors involved will participate. A major aim of reform would be to drastically curtail the delays that still plague the courts of law.

Steps would be taken to increase the respect due to the judiciary, not least in terms of their conditions of service.

To attract members of the legal profession to work in the law courts and in the office of the Attorney General, a system should be offered on a voluntary basis similar to that of housemen in the medical profession.

16. TOWARDS A MODERN CIVIL SERVICE

The civil service must be recognised as a leading institution which should be subject to clear and fair rules of management.

Labour's new policy declares that there should be a clear demarcation between the administrative space that should be subject to political decision making, and the space that should be left to the discretion of impartial administrators who show loyalty to the government of the day.

Public management needs skills and competencies that are as important as those required by the public sector.

Improvement of conditions of service in the public system should be seen as a continuous process that must include training and modernisation of equipment and procedures, especially in the field of informatics.

To promote the modernisation of the civil service in the interest of all citizens, Labour proposes among other

measures to:

establish a civil service charter which will reaffirm the identity of the service, and define the rights and obligations of the public official;

sustain the role of the Public Service Commission to monitor appointments and discipline in the public service while taking steps to make the Commission's procedures less bureaucratic. This would prepare the ground for constitutional changes that would make the procedures of the Public Service Commission subject to court review.

reconsider the actual structure by which many of the civil service's functions have been hived off to separate bodies. In consultation and full agreement with the workers organisations involved, Labour's aim would be to reintroduce flexibility of personnel between different branches of the public service, as well as to ensure transparency in the implementation of public affairs. This will ensure the working conditions and professional prospects of all the employees involved.

revoke the system of temporary contracts for top jobs in the civil service and update the Estacode. Consultants appointed by government on the basis of political loyalty, will not have an executive role in public administration

In areas where local experience is lacking, foreigners will be brought in. But Labour will not allow the current situation to prevail, where Maltese with the same qualifications and skills as foreigners are made to work under inferior conditions.

17. THE ARMY - SECURITY AND CONFIDENCE FOR ALL

Labour's new policy declares that the army should be made up of professional volunteers serving in an efficiently run and properly equipped organisation.

The army's main tasks should be: surveillance in the air and at sea; anti-smuggling, anti-terrorist and anti-drug operations; emergency tasks in cases of national emergency; and protection of strategic locations.

In general the army will not be assigned to carry out public works projects.

There is a need for a reorganisation of army structures, designed to increase the proportion of personnel who are assigned military duties.

An army reserve corps will be set up composed of army retired personnel. The reserve will have the capability to serve as a back-up force in cases of national emergency.

A corps of part-time volunteers will be set up for civil defence purposes. Special attention will be given to training of army personnel in Malta and abroad in modern methods of military work.

Recruitment to the army could also take the form of an apprenticeship system for young people under the age of 19, who wish to enter the army, where they will be trained to do military work, without discontinuing their studies.

Conditions of service should maintain parity with equivalent grades in the civil service that require the same expertise or qualifications.

A new Labour government will give the Army personnel the right to join associations to safeguard their rates of pay and conditions of service. These associations will be subject to the strict limits imposed by the law on those who provide services essential to the running and security of the country.

18. NEW HORIZONS FOR GOZO

In drawing up the new Labour policy for Gozo, we tried to learn from all the good that had been done in Gozo in the past, whoever was responsible. We tried too, to avoid the mistakes that were made in the past, whoever was responsible. For new horizons to be opened for Gozo, it needs its own specially designed policy, drawn up as far as possible by the Gozitans themselves. The policy would treat Gozo as a region.

Such a policy would follow the lines of a Regional Plan, but for it to succeed, it would need the full support of the central government which would ensure that decisions taken on a regional level for Gozo were really being implemented.

In this regard the current set-up of a Ministry for Gozo parallel to the structure of local councils is not giving the best results.

The absence of a plan for Gozo is hampering progress. It has inhibited transparency in the conduct of public affairs, and has stimulated inefficiencies, abuses and corruption.

18.1 Regional council for Gozo

Among Labour's new proposals for Gozo the most important is the establishment of a Gozo regional council, composed of all Gozitan MPs, representatives of all local councils in Gozo, the parliamentary secretary responsible for Gozo affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister himself, who will preside over the Council. A Permanent Secretariat for Gozo will have offices in Gozo and Malta run by a high-ranking permanent secretary having sole responsibilities for Gozo.

The Gozo regional council which will eventually develop into the Gozo Regional Government - will be charged with the formulation and review of a development plan for Gozo to be then approved by parliament. The plan would cover all main aspects of government economic, social and cultural development.

18.2 To save Gozo

The more time passes, the more the threat to Gozo's natural environment increases. If the rampant speculation we have witnessed in the last few years, remains unchecked, the natural and historical heritage of Gozo in places like Chambrai, Ta' Lamber, ix-Xlendi, Hondoq ir-Rummien and San Lawrenz, will be irredeemably destroyed. The Regional Plan for Gozo's main task will be to see that the development of Gozo is sustainable and respects the environment. At all costs, we need to save Gozo.

18.3 Measures for Gozo

Among the priorities set for Labour's new policy for Gozitan development, there are:

the supply of sufficient water and energy resources in Gozo itself wherever this is technically possible.

the development of modern industry and crafts;

the promotion of agriculture and fisheries;

the drawing up of special incentives to encourage long stay tourism in Gozo.

the improvement of transport between Malta and Gozo. the allocation of government technical and administrative offices operating from Gozo, to provide employment there for Gozo residents;

special encouragement to Gozo artists;

measures to provide appropriate protection to the Gozitan consumers who sometimes get a far worse deal than their counterparts in Malta.

Initiatives in education will be taken so that through information technology educational opportunities would be increased for Gozitans in Gozo itself.

Labour's new policy emphasises that Gozo can and should become a model of how a small community in a small island can function as a modern society. It can enjoy full access to the most recent technological and social advances, without having to sacrifice its traditional life-style or its natural and cultural environment.

19. LOCAL COUNCILS - STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY VALUES

A major political challenge facing our society is that of reinforcing community values.

Labour's new policy affirms the belief that by involving citizens in the decisions effecting their community, Local Councils can provide a major response to this challenge. A corollary of this belief is that elections to Local Councils should not be organised on party lines.

The citizens should choose their councillors according to who they think can give the best service, not according to their partisan loyalty.

Labour believes that in coming years, there should be a gradual and well-planned transfer of certain executive functions to local councils. This would cover certain areas such as the co-management - together with the competent educational authorities - of local schools, police, traffic and public transport and the provision of some social services.

However, funding for councils should continue to come from central sources and not from local taxation. Councils should have their own personnel able to carry out local tasks under the direct command of councils.

Secondly, councils need to be vested with consultative functions when projects and initiatives, taken by central government or its agents or the private sector, and affecting their locality, are being implemented. For this reason, the Local Councils will be represented on the boards of State Corporations which provide essential services (for example the Planning Authority, Enemalta, Telemalta, etc), by a director they appoint. Relevant consultations would be for construction permits for houses and commercial centres, the building and extension of roads, and the establishment of monuments and natural reserves. Additionally, Councils should take the

initiative to give voice to the aspirations of citizens in their locality, such as for instance by supporting voluntary organisations and encouraging local talent.

20. A MODERN SET-UP FOR BROADCASTING

In a modern society, the right to information should be guaranteed in a meaningful way to all citizens. However, the reality is that powerful economic and social forces like big companies, the state, the political parties and the Church are in a position to directly influence the means of communication, at the expense of the citizen.

20.1 Private Broadcasting

Labour's new policy is in line with the decision to introduce private services in the broadcasting field. Such companies should be allowed to open as many radio and TV stations as there are technically viable frequencies. The private broadcasting stations would be regulated on the same lines as the press.

20.2 Public Broadcasting

At the same time, public broadcasting should be given a leading role as a means of communication that should operate impartially in the interests of the people as a whole.

Therefore, public broadcasting should be given the best available resources and placed under the direct executive control of the broadcasting authority. The latter would ensure impartiality in the running of public services.

The general and professional administration of public broadcasting would be left in the hands of administrators and professionals of the public system. Operations will be monitored by an outside Consultative Board to verify whether professional standards are being maintained and improved.

A parliamentary select committee would be given the responsibility to oversee public and private broadcasting, as well as general developments in the information sector.

20.3 An Informed Society

Our society needs to constantly keep up to date with the rapid developments in information technology.

Citizens should be given all possible encouragement to assimilate innovations as they occur and to use them. The state should give full support to those companies and individuals from the new information technology sector wishing to start up activities in Malta.

21. ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT UNDER MODERN GUIDANCE

Labour's new policy starts from the assumption that a modern economy that aims at full employment and recognises the need to acquire foreign currency from export and good services, needs guidance if it is to develop in a balanced and sustainable manner. Balance in the rhythm of growth has declined in recent years because the Nationalist government failed to provide economic guidance in a serious and modern manner.

A Labour government will prepare a PLAN FOR A BETTER ECONOMY every three years. Such a plan would set out the country's economic objectives and project the government's intentions regarding public sector, capital outlay and taxation. The Plan will serve as a guide for economic operators, private and otherwise, and will guarantee for the private sector, all the necessary scope to assume the main responsibility for productive activity in the whole economic sector.

Representatives of associations of entrepreneurs and employers, unions and educationalists would be invited to participate in the drawing up of the Plan which would be reviewed annually.

In this way, the government would be providing ongoing economic guidance. The private sector would function as the motor of economic development, while Government's plans for expenditure would be made known through the Plan for a Better Economy.

22. TAXES

For a start a Labour government will tackle expenditure. It will control it. It will cut waste, abuse and theft. To finance serious and reasonable public expenditure, a Labour government will collect the money that may be collected at current Income Tax rates, in an appropriate and just manner. If later it becomes feasible to reduce the rates, this will be done at the appropriate time.

Labour will enforce strict fiscal morality with the help of those in good faith, so that everyone will pay his just rates.

Government will seek to raise the balance needed to finance public expenditure through indirect taxes, in a more just and economically efficient way than at present. Labour will implement measures regarding VAT in full consultation with economic operators and trade unions. Labour will collect the remaining indirect revenue necessary to finance expenditure without waste and theft, through a system that protects those least able to pay, and does not stifle the producer.

The system will be less easy to operate than VAT for Labour, but it will also make government monitor its own expenditure.

Under Labour, parliament through its own apparatus and with the appropriate resources, will be able to closely monitor government expenditure, unlike today where government itself decides to hide expenditure from parliament and the people.

23. PROTECTION OF CITIZENS' RIGHTS IN THE PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Labour's new policy ensures that the provision of essential services, like electricity, water and telephones remain in the hands of the state. They should be provided at a reasonable price for a

good quality service.

A Charter of Citizen's Rights will be drawn up to describe the services to which citizens are entitled and to empower the citizen to claim his rights as a consumer of these services.

Elected representatives of employees, consumers and local councils would be appointed to the boards of corporations providing essential services.

24. VAT MUST BE REPEALED

Labour's new policy emphasises the need to control tax evasion while preserving a just balance between direct and indirect taxation.

Direct taxes should not serve as a disincentive to private initiative. Indirect taxes should not be allowed to inhibit production and essential consumption.

A Labour government will eliminate VAT and instead introduce a structure of taxes and duties equivalent to those prevailing prior to the first of January 1995.

This measure will be implemented at the same time as serious steps are taken to eliminate the waste, squandering and corruption that have become rampant in the public administration, and that have led to an ever higher public expenditure. Labour will encourage a tight control over government spending by means of a select parliamentary committee which will be given real powers to monitor developments.

A Commission for Fiscal Morality will be set up to investigate on a permanent basis the way government collects revenue. Trade Unions, employers and the media should be represented on it.

25. ANTI-INFLATION MEASURES A PRIORITY

It remains a priority of Labour's new policy to ensure that inflationary forces, that the present government is contributing to with its incessant borrowing, are dampened and controlled.

The official price index should be measured and managed by independent experts to guarantee that its results are free of all controversy.

Cost of living increases should be statutorily compensated for on the basis of an annual wage increase, payable as from the following year.

The government should encourage unions and employers to negotiate responsibly on wage levels according to what each enterprise can sustain in prevailing market circumstances.

A more representative mechanism needs to be set up between the government, employers and unions for the overall coordination of industrial relations.

26. TRADE LIBERALISATION AND THE INITIATIVE OF THE SMALL SELF-

EMPLOYED SECTOR MUST BE SUSTAINED

Labour is fully confident that the repeal of VAT will give a new sense of confidence to the commercial sector. This should be especially true for the small self-employed businessmen who have badly hit by government policy in recent years.

Labour's new policy is committed to maintain the current approach of trade liberalisation, through fair and effective competition, allowing a real choice to the consumer.

26.1 The Development of a Really FreeMarket

Labour wants a really free market for the development of the private sector in everyone's benefit and not just that of the chosen few. This will be done through the drawing up and enforcement of laws which will act effectively against monopolies and other unacceptable practices, whoever is responsible for them.

Labour will also take steps to ensure that there will be no conflict between the consumers' right to the best services and products at the most competitive price, and the right of distributors and shop keepers, on the other hand, for a reasonable profit on their sales.

The Labour Party is aware of the problems being faced by many Maltese and Gozitan families because of the rising cost of living and is proposing these measures both to protect the rights of consumers as well as the right of every businessman to a just profit.

26.2 Towards free and just competition

Labour will set up an independent authority to reconcile fair competition and consumer rights. The authority will be given the discretionary powers in these areas, currently enjoyed by the Minister.

The main aim of this authority will be to both protect the consumer and to ensure fair competition in the interests of the development of the commercial sector.

Amongst other things, the Authority will give importance to the need for full information about consumer matters. It must be fully committed to keeping the public informed about the main issues affecting it.

The Authority will be authorised to appoint regulators in the main economic sectors. The regulators will monitor the competitiveness in these sectors and publish their findings where necessary.

26.3 Protecting the citizen as a consumer

The Authority must be equipped with adequate resources and the necessary instruments to meet the challenges facing it thereby providing effective protection to the consumer.

A publicity campaign will be launched on a regular and continual basis in order to inform both consumers and businessmen on their rights and obligations according

to law.

The Fair Competition Act will be amended in such a way that a businessman need not have 40% of the market in order to be considered having a dominant position. A lower threshold will facilitate the regulation of certain abuses in prices that are detrimental to the consumer.

The law will be amended with a view to regulating non-competitive prices by firms enjoying protective levies designed to protect them from competition on the market concerning similar imported products.

The feasibility of extending parallel trading to main areas of importation will be studied so that the consumer will gain the maximum benefit (of price and quality) in an environment of unharnessed competition. Areas involved in this exercise include medicine, provided that imported products are certified by recognized international laboratories as not being inferior or harmful to the consumer.

Government departments, corporations and public authorities and agencies will be subject to rules designed to protect the consumer.

Other measures introduced by the Labour Government by way of protecting the interests of the citizen as consumer, will include:

An Ombudsperson regarding consumer rights, to be appointed by Parliament;

Consumer representation on public corporations boards;

Adequate financial assistance to consumer associations who will be able to take legal action to protect the citizen;

The Trade Description Act will be extended to services;

Traders who make untrue claims will be considered as committing a criminal offence;

The monitoring of prices with a view to collecting and publishing information on the prices of products imported into Malta and sold at high prices locally.

27. TOURISM: TOWARDS A HIGHER RECOGNITION OF ITS VALUE TO THE ECONOMY

The tourism sector must be accorded greater recognition and support to overcome the problems that accrued over the last years. The Labour Government will include a cabinet minister to look after this sector alone.

While retaining the Forward Buying Rate system, a strategy will be followed regarding the development of tourism with a view to attracting to Malta a sustainable number of middle income tourists from the United Kingdom, from the European continent and other areas.

The tourism infrastructure will be improved on the basis of plans that are regularly reviewed and updated. Air Malta will be considered as part of this infrastructure - in the context of their commercial strategy, it will aim at providing support to an improved quality tourism. Action programmes will be urgently launched in collaboration with the private sector with a view to improve and enhance areas of touristic interest like Bugibba, Paceville, Marsascala and others.

The effective use of natural and cultural resources in our country will attract a greater number of middle income tourists looking for a holiday that includes more than sun and sea.

Gozo will have its specific share of initiatives in tourism policy on the basis of a separate plan for the Island. This will be form part of the Developement Plan for Gozo as devised by the Regional Council.

With the abolition of VAT and the strengthening of the mechanism of the forward buying rate, the Maltese tourist market will once more acquire its competitive edge in foreign markets.

The New Labour Policy recognizes the urgency for the utilization of available funds in promoting tourism more professionally and more aggressively. The private sector will be invited to play a central role in this activity and in the general layout of the tourist policy.

Similarly, while greater importance will be attached to the devolopment of niche markets the private sector will be given a greater say in the general planning of tourism policy.

28. INDUSTRY AS A CHIEF PILLAR OF THE ECONOMY

The Labour Party affirms its belief that industry must remain the chief pillar of the economy. For this reason a plan will be devised and measures taken in order:

- to provide effective encouragement to start new export-oriented industries;
- to promote the modernization of existent industries and proffer assistance to industries seeking new markets for export and industrial partners, particularly in Europe and the Mediterranean;
- to set up an Investment Bank specifically oriented to the investment of risk capital to industries;
- to remove all discriminations between foreign and Maltese industry in carrying out measures of assistance and encouragement to industry;
- to give attention and special support to small- and medium- sized firms against an aid programme designed specifically for them;
- to offer encouragement to co-operatives.

28.1 The Drydocks

The New Labour Government views the Maltese drydocks as an enterprise that can make a great contribution to the economy. The sectors of ship repair and where possible shipbuilding according to the latest advanced technology in the

sector must be consolidated according to the international economic circumstances with a view to making the Drydocks more competitive in their sphere and enabling them to reach a position where they can finance their operations by virtue of their gains and profits.

By means of an agreement between the Government, the Drydocks and the GWU, a plan will be devised for the development and consolidation of the sector that will be based on levels of financial aid and investment in the Drydocks related to clear targets that the Drydocks must reach.

The Plan recognizes and supports the system whereby Drydocks workers will be responsible for its management while ensuring enough space for the professional management of the Drydocks to administer professionally their physical assets in such a way that their operations will maintain and enhance competitiveness while respecting the legitimate aspirations of the Cottonera citizens to a higher quality of life in their locality. This part of the Plan will be devised and implemented in full agreement between the Drydocks, the Cottonera citizens and the New Labour Party.

29. THE PROTECTION OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

The development of agriculture and fisheries will continue to enjoy continual attention. The New Labour Policy ensures that these two spheres continue to play a vital role in a balanced social and economic development. No self-respecting country can allow its agriculture and fisheries to die out as has happened over the last years through the actions of the Nationalist Government.

One of the chief goals of the New Labour Government will be to ensure that efficient farmers and fishermen continue to make reasonable earnings.

Meanwhile, agricultural land must be safeguarded more solidly as must other initiatives towards increasing the water supply that can be used for irrigation. Farmers who work on arable land must be protected from those who wish to drive them away from it.

Agricultural centres run on modern lines

Farmers will be able to sell their wares directly in the agricultural centres themselves.

Training programmes for youths who are interested in agriculture and fisheries will be polished and updated. These programmes will be based on the latest technology that is suitable to Malta and on the latest agricultural methods.

The Labour Government will ensure a continual improvement in the national infrastructure according to a professionally devised plan and according to the latest technology that is suitable to the circumstances of the nation. Investments will be aimed at improving the quality of services while reducing production expenses as far as possible. The reduction in production costs resulting from the use of modern technology in which investment will be made will be translated in the prices offered to the consumer. (The reverse was true over the last years: regardless of the amount of investment made purportedly to reduce production costs, the price of services continued to soar).

The infrastructure for fisheries will be enhanced with the creation of a fish market equipped with cold stores. A programme of modernization will be launched with fishing fleets and the setting up of fisherman's cooperatives.

30. THE INFRASTRUCTURE

30.1 Energy

The Labour Government will ensure a supply of energy to meet the demand of the public, regularly and without cuts. Current energy plants will be run in the most efficient manner and in the most ecologically valid way made possible by modern technology.

Every effort will be made to study and eventually make use of the latest technological developments by virtue of which small power stations can be erected without incurring excessive expenses or harming the environment. In this respect Gozo will be accorded priority.

30.2 Transport and Communication

Expenditure in transport and communications over these last years did not lead to the improvement that was expected in facilities and services. In certain sectors like public transport, the situation worsened rather than improved.

The Labour Government will take a more active interest in the public transport sector, along with local councils, with a view to creating better service and improved facilities. New bus routes will be devised to cover new residential areas.

The Labour Government will revise current bus routes and devise new and superior methods of maintenance and introduce a new system to improve roads.

Essential facilities needed for air traffic control, both in-coming and out-going, at the International Airport will be improved after suitable consultation with all airport users (airlines, operators and unions).

A revision of the port management will be carried out leading to a much needed clarification regarding the roles given to the various sections of Grand Harbour and the Free Port.

In telecommunications, the huge expenditure incurred in the new technology did not lead to a reduction in consumer tariffs as happened elsewhere. The consolidation and enlargement of current services will ensure the proper management of facilities and staff as well as the respect due to consumers who will get their money's worth.

CONCLUSION

The measures being proposed by the Labour Party in this manifesto underline the fact that the

Party's slogan *The Citizen First* is not simply an election mantra.

The measures are a complete programme that cares for the citizen's life in all its aspects - health, education, the home, personal security, the economic structures in which the citizen moves, the taxes the citizen pays to finance government expenditure, the benefits for which the citizen is entitled, the way the citizen can control the Government and watch over politicians.

What ties up these measures together is one principle - the principle the citizen is the focal point of the whole exercise.

The main point is that all activities are carried out for the benefit of the citizen; for this reason the citizen must be involved in them all.

These measures envision that the citizen must express himself/ herself not merely as a voter, once so many years. Rather, each time that programmes are devised and decisions are made that affect the citizen, the citizen can express himself/herself through his/her representative.

In exercising this fundamental principle to the full, the Labour Party commits itself that a Labour Government will involve the representatives of the people in a series of measures that need to be taken.

These measures involve the improvement of schools, hospitals, public administration, the control of government itself through Parliament that represents the entire Maltese people. They include the abolition of VAT within six months from the inauguration of the legislature, and the setting up of a Commission for Fiscal Morality, the design of a Plan for a Better Economy.

By means of this truly democratic leadership the New Labour Government will build a new solidarity with the people in a society that will not be unnecessarily divided but which will, on the contrary become increasingly oriented towards participation.

The mandate Labour is seeking is to form a Government that, while being elected by the majority of the people, will endeavour to work hand in hand with all the citizens which it continues to regard as being first and foremost.