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INTRODUCTION

In the forthcoming election the Maltese people have a choice to make. It is a choice between voting for one of the traditional parties-which in many respects have become a photocopy of each other - or vote for

Alternattiva Demokratika, the political formation which vows to guarantee its commitment towards those in our society who have little or no power at all. Throughout the years, Alternattiva Demokratika has shown its commitment in favour of accountability, the defence of the environment and the firm belief in equality before the law, together with a conviction that society has to be based on meritocracy rather than on nepotism and clientelism.

The similarities between the PN and the MLP are due to the fact that both parties have become so dependent on basically the same type of groups. There are a number of business men who finance these parties, helping them financially to keep up their luxurious headquarters, media machines and their electoral campaigns the costs of which run into millions of liri. This has created a situation where no matter which party is in government the actual governing group is always some business clique or other, a situation which threatens Maltese democracy.

It is very evident that the electoral campaign is being battled through the use of slogans and other gimmicks rather than on political content. Both traditional parties still believe in a political system based on favouritism and clientelism, rather than on social liberties and human rights. Both parties have criminal and corrupt elements on their membership lists. Both are reluctant to take the bull by the horns on certain delicate issues, such as the Drydocks question, law enforcement and indiscipline in certain sectors within the civil service. Both traditional parties try to give the impression that they are large and powerful when, in reality, they are being constantly blackmailed by each vote which can make all the difference between obtaining a majority or not during the elections. Maltese politics has thus become stagnant and the country cannot evolve because the traditional parties avoid rocking this boat of conflicting interests.

Now is the time for those who are tired of this situation to make full use of the power they have through their vote and join Alternattiva Demokratika in striving for parliamentary representation. Those against the squandering of public resources, the environmental havoc, a system whereby law enforcement is weak with the strong and strong with the weak, and a political system which runs on clientelist tracks should, this time, vote no. 1 for Alternattiva Demokratika, the political formation which guarantees a choice in favour of the Environment, Accountability and Social Commitment.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes that :

The public should have access to all beaches and all parts of the coastline. The government should enforce the expropriation act to ensure that, on sites which are presently inaccessible to the public, the first four metres from the coast remain open to the public;

in order to decrease the land use problem and at the same time the ever increasing requirements for the construction of dwelling sites are met, a special tax should be imposed on persons who for capricious reasons, such as quarrels over inheritance or land speculation, keep habitable property empty for a lengthy period of time;

the State substantially increases subsidy on reconstruction of old houses and on the sale or lease of apartments to young couples who have low to average income;

construction is to be restricted to urban zones and the possibility should be examined of constructing buildings with a larger number of storeys, as long as these constructions do not affect negatively the characteristics of our villages and cities;

animals' rights should be safeguarded, hunting and trapping during spring should be prohibited while illegal hunting and trapping should be clamped down forcefully;

no VAT should be charged on solar panel heaters and on wind-generated energy apparatus. VAT should be decreased on environment friendly products while it is increased on others which harm the environment;

tax exemptions become introduced as incentives to those who wish to invest in waste recycling industries; or to those who choose to invest in industrial processes and quality packaging which reduce waste at source. The option for an incinerator for domestic waste is absolutely unacceptable since it has been scientifically proven that incinerators are a major source of dioxin, a highly toxic chemical substance which causes cancer, child disabilities and other diseases;

with regards to illegal construction, the law should be enforced equally to all;

Permits for the construction of tourist complexes and hotels etc. should no longer be issued; rather there should be income tax exemptions on refurbishment projects. This measure is being considered as a means to safeguard the tourist industry itself, since the haphazard construction of projects will in the long run deplete the country's characteristics which should be attracting tourists;

public transport should offer a better service and longer hours in order to decrease traffic which is mainly due to the people's preference to use private transportation; the registration tax on motorcycles and motor scooters should be reduced;

more rigorous controls on pollution should be established;

Natural methods in agriculture should be encouraged instead of the use of pesticides as well as the use of alternative medicine through the use of natural products which are not hazardous to health of human beings;

slums, particularly those in such zones as Valletta, Floriana and the Cottonera, should be demolished;

traffic in historical zones should be restricted. In order to achieve this aim, there is a need for the construction of underground car parks which, even if run by private companies, should have reasonable prices;

to preserve the Maltese landscape the construction of rubble walls should be encouraged. Workers in the building industry should be encouraged to learn the art of restoration of old houses by agencies such as the ETC;

the representatives of the political parties on the Planning Authority should be replaced by others coming from environmental groups;

quarries which are no longer in use should be advertised as sites for agricultural projects or public gardens.

GOZO

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that beyond the absurd controversy as to whether Gozo should have a minister or a parliamentary secretary, we need to protect this island from the destructive development which has created an environmental disaster in Malta. We should protect the Gozitan countryside and landscape from the greed of speculators who have a very distorted view of what sustainable development is. Therefore there should be stronger opposition to

absurd projects like the airstrip and the building of tourist complexes like San Lawrenz.

MERITOCRACY INSTEAD OF FAVOURITISM

Party candidates should no longer be nominated on constitutional committees, and on government and parastatal boards. The criteria for the nomination of these committee members should be ability, integrity and meritocracy;

the members of the special commission which is responsible for the safeguarding of impartiality in the electoral process, the media and public employment should no longer be nominated by the political parties. Instead, it is the President of the Republic who should nominate the members.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC

The President of the Republic should have a more active role. He or She is to be elected by a body made up of parliamentary deputies and the mayors of all the local councils. The president should also be responsible for appointing members in sensitive roles prescribed by the constitution.

JUSTICE

In order to safeguard the independence of magistrates and judges, these should not be appointed by the government. These should be appointed after specialised studies and examinations under the supervision of the Council for the Administration of Justice, which, again, should not have the majority of its members nominated by the government;

The law courts should retain the power to examine the way how ministers and government officials use their discretions. To this effect, the amendments of 1981, through which the law courts lost their power to control the abuse of power and the misappropriation of the law, should be lifted.

PUBLIC ORDER

Substantially harsher penalties should be imposed in cases of premeditated homicide, and violence on the elderly and minors. These are to serve as deterrents. Harsher penalties are to be enforced in cases of sexual abuses on children;

Community work, instead of imprisonment, should be imposed on young people who break the law for their first time. Rehabilitation Centres are to be set up for these young people to help them integrate themselves in the world of work. Prisoners should be given the necessary services to be aided to confront their problems;

General amnesties should no longer be given. Reduction in sentences are to be granted only on individual merits within the context of serious reform programmes. Pardons should not remain the prerogative of the government, but should be administered by the inquiring magistrate. As a rule there total pardons should not be granted, but reduced penalties or house arrest should be introduced;

to ensure that the jury system works in a more just and balanced manner, a mixed jury system should be

introduced made up of members of the jury together with a judge or a number of judges in order to guide the other jurors during their deliberations.

CORRUPTION AND SQUANDERING OF PUBLIC FUNDS

The permanent commission against corruption and the Director of Audit should be totally independent of the government. These bodies should be appointed by the President of the Republic and should also be accountable to the parliament rather than to the prime minister. Besides, these bodies should be equipped with the required qualified staff.

MAGISTRATURE - AS A TOOL TO COUNTER CORRUPTION AND ABUSE OF POWER

Magistrates should be able to investigate and prosecute independently in an objective and impartial way. It is to be noted that the Police force has always been subjected to political pressure. Consequently, one can hardly expect the police force to investigate properly cases in which supporters of the party in government or ministers are involved, particularly in cases of corruption and abuse of power. Therefore, the magistrate should have the power to investigate and act independently of the police. The magistrate should promote investigations and should have the power to initiate an investigation without having to wait for the police to take the necessary steps. Besides, the magistrate should also have the power to order the police to conduct searches and to arrest suspected persons.

THE DIRECTOR OF AUDIT

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that the post of director of Audit should never be left vacant or else be filled by an Acting director for a period of more than three months. The present situation, with this post being left vacant for more than a year, amounts to defiance of the highest law of the country which emphasises the independence of this office, which has the role of ensuring that public funds are responsibly used;

that the director of Audit should have the power to check all the accounts of all public corporations and other companies run by the government, which at present are being being verified by private auditors.

PUBLIC TENDERS

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that tendering procedures be completely free of political influence. To this effect, the power of cabinet ministers to revise decisions taken by the contract committee, should be lifted. This should also apply to decisions taken by the Planning Authority.

PENALISING THE CORRUPT

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that the prescription period in cases of corruption be extended to fifteen years in order to ensure that cases of corruption can still be handled even after a change in government takes place. The penalties for cases of corruption should become harsher. In such cases, besides imprisonment and fines, those found guilty should be obliged to refund any money, property or other goods generated through corruption.

WHISTLE BLOWER'S ACT

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

the establishment of the whistle blower's act, as a safeguard against estacode procedures or the law on professional secrecy , for those public employees who choose to disclose cases of corruption or abuse of power.

FINANCING POLITICAL PARTIES

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

the strict regulation of donations and aid which parties receive from the general public and the business community. There is gross disparity between a supporter who donates LM100 to the party he supports, and the tens of thousands of liri which the PN and the MLP receive yearly from top businessmen. Donations of more than LM1000 yearly should be declared illegal, while the names of donors of over LM200 should be made public.

PUBLIC LAND

Alternattiva Demokratika notes:

that the present system whereby public land is granted through a resolution in parliament or by tender, is leading to abuse. Every transfer of land should be subject to a resolution in parliament or should be done by public tender.

PROPOSITIONAL REFERENDUM

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that citizens be given the right, through a propositional referendum, to enact laws which the parliament is reluctant to pass;

to reintroduce the constitutional right to a referendum, when it comes to introducing amendments to important constitutional articles.

RIGHT OF INFORMATION

Alternattiva Demokratika favours:

the right of access to information generated or collected by the ministries and the government departments. The ministries and the departments should be legally bound to publish reports, studies, consultations and files on a yearly basis. Moreover, the law should make it possible for citizens to apply for copies of these documents.

BROADCASTING

Alternattiva Demokratika insists:

that the present low cultural level of the media be immediately remedied. If the government is truly committed to retaining Maltese cultural identity, then there it is of utmost importance that the media set the example;

that the media, whether publicly or privately run, should provide access to minority groups, be they ethnic, political or religious groups.

BROADCASTING AUTHORITY

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that the members of the Broadcasting Authority should no longer be nominated by the political parties but by the President of the Republic. The authority should be truly independent and should also safeguard impartiality and make sure that good levels are maintained.

LOCAL COUNCILS

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that the mayor be elected by the people;

that local councils become empowered to directly enforce all the administrative laws effecting the town or village, including illegal construction and the use of commercial sites;

the encouragement of neighbourhood watch systems under the surveillance of the police force. Naturally, all local police stations should be open all day long.

MALTESE NATIONALS WORKING OR STUDYING ABROAD

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that those Maltese citizens who for reasons of work or study leave the island for a period of time, while maintaining their permanent residence in Malta, should retain their right to vote.

THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that the political parties should no longer have the right to know who did not vote in elections. The section in the electoral law which gives this right to the parties should be revoked because it is an infringement on individual privacy;

that a proportional electoral system based on a national quota should be introduced.

DUAL CITIZENSHIP

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that the right for dual citizenship be given to all emigrants who have freedom of movement in Malta.

WORKERS' PARTICIPATION

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that the concept of Workers' Participation should be enhanced. Workers should also be consulted when important decisions regarding their employment are about to be taken. A director-worker should be appointed in every public company and corporation. However, participation should not lead to a situation similar to the one at the dockyard where there is confusion between the roles of the elected workers' Council and the professional management.

HOUSING

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that there should be no VAT charged on work and materials involved in the construction of moderately sized dwelling places which serve as a first residence;

that the government should create systems of control on the price of land. In a country where land is so scarce, it should not be the market which determines the prices for land;

that all slums should be demolished;

that there should be VAT exemptions on maintenance works in houses which have serious problems like humidity, structural damages, flooding and lack of natural light;

that the government subsidises those young couples with low to average income who buy or rent apartments of average size. Hence, the government would not only be aiding those social strata which need assistance, but would also be reducing the land use problem;

a Condominium Act to ensure that the common parts of blocks of flats are kept in a proper state. The government should likewise ensure maintenance in government housing estates;

that the minimum value of LM15,000 on property bought by foreigners is no longer realistic. If Malta were to become a member state of the EU, then the government should ask for a derogation to the European laws as is the case of Denmark.

EDUCATION

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

an education system which addresses the development of the whole personality: a mental, physical and emotional development. Education should be accessible to all, and should provide equal opportunity. The family's financial standing should in no manner determine the education received by the child;

that streaming is a discriminatory exercise which privileges the 'high achievers' and discriminates against the 'weaker' students. Schools should have mixed ability classes. To this effect, the teacher-pupil ratio should be kept low, and teachers should be given better support services and be provided with further training;

that children with special needs be integrated with 'mainstream' classes. Therefore, there should be special preparatory training programmes for the teachers. Moreover, classes which include pupils with special needs have to have a smaller class population;

that decentralisation be carried out at syllabus level as well. Syllabi should be set by the teachers themselves, with the co-operation of their students. The role of the Department of Education should be that of monitoring, consulting and co-ordinating to ensure that the different syllabi conform to the parameters established by the national curriculum. Test papers should also be set by the schools. A credit and continuous assessment system should also be employed;

that new powers be conferred to the head of the school. The president of the school council is to be elected by the members of the council and not by the department of education;

that there should be serious maintenance projects for government schools which were built before the war. These schools have many structural problems, including noise pollution, humidity etc. Every school should have enough open space for children to recreate themselves. The school building should not be one which creates physical difficulties for children with special needs;

that under the PN government trade schools have been rendered the Cinderella of the whole education system. There is a serious mismatch between the skills taught in these schools and the requirements of modern industry;

while it is of utmost importance that the university helps all students to achieve what they aspire to, it has a duty to address the needs of the country. There is a serious lack of graduates specialising in electronics, computer studies and applied science. The university should introduce post-graduate courses in these particular disciplines. Malta would benefit much more if the government invested in scholarship schemes for students who wish to further their studies abroad rather than squandering millions of liri to pay the foreign consultants within the MSU;

that there should be serious consideration of university students who lack financial means. As regards the stipend given to students, there should be two classes of stipends: a basic stipend for which all students qualify, and an adjusted stipend for students who face particular problems, such as Gozitan students, or students coming from single-parent families.

CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that space be provided for fringe art groups. The government should assist theatre groups, bands, etc., by providing them with working space. This is possible if the government decides to open the closed, uninhabited property owned by the State;

that the development of the country depends largely on the transmission of culture to the young generation. To this effect, the Arts and education should be under one ministry;

that the art groups which have been assisted by the government should be, on their part, bound to create programmes for children in State schools.

HERITAGE

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that the authority responsible for cultural heritage should have the final say when important decisions affecting our heritage are to be taken. The government should have no power to overrule the decisions taken by the authority for cultural heritage. Moreover, the majority of members of this authority should not be appointed by the government.

HEALTH

Alternattiva Demokratika holds:

that the government is bound to guarantee the best possible medical care, irrespective of the financial means of the patient;

that once the salaries and conditions of work of the medical practitioners, nurses and paramedics in public hospitals improve, these should give the best possible quality service;

that public hospitals should give basic medical medicine services like specialised care, care for chronic diseases and casualty service free of charge to all. Patients with an annual income of over LM 15,000 should be charged for other medical services;

that, in order to ease the existent pressure put on public funds, patients who choose to be cured privately should qualify for income tax rebates of up to 20% on presentation of fiscal receipts;

that greater emphasis be put on prevention by means of vaccination, school visits, post-natal visits and health education, particularly in such areas as pollution, pesticides and herbicides, diet, stress, etc.;

that in order to eradicate the stigma associated with the mentally sick, it would be better if the treatment formed part of the services offered by the general hospital, in the outpatient clinics and short stay wards;

that alternative medicine and natural products as a means of treatment should be taken into consideration.

DRUG ABUSE

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that distinction should be made between persons caught with drugs for personal use, and others who intend to push drugs. In the first instance, the concept of de-criminalisation should be introduced, whereby penalties should include administrative sanctions (like community work) rather than imprisonment or probation. Drug pushers who are also addicts, on the other hand should be given the opportunity to attend to rehabilitation programmes during their period of detainment. If they finish the programme successfully the period spent in the programme should be reduced from the term of imprisonment;

that those persons who absent themselves from work because they are attending rehabilitation programmes, should have the right to retain their employment;

that the police force should be well trained and equipped to carry out professional investigation of persons whose life style and means are incompatible with their official income;

that a special unit be established within the drug squad which regularly and continuously inspects incoming yachts;

that the State increases assistance to voluntary organisations (like Caritas) which are involved in rehabilitation programmes for drug addicts. The decision of government agencies, like Sedqa and Sptar Santa Maria, to compete with Caritas in the same fields is not to be considered a wise decision since this has led to the squandering of resources.

ALCOHOL

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

serious education programmes on the effect of alcohol use to the general public, especially on youth. There should be vigorous control on the sale of alcoholic drinks to minors.

THE ELDERLY

Alternattiva Demokratika notes and proposes:

that since the Maltese population is an aging population, and since family customs have changed, there has been an increase in demand for old people homes. While the homes run by the Church are encountering serious problems due to lack of vocations, the private sector is catering only for senior citizens with high income. Hence, it is the government's task to be in a position where supply equals demand. The government is bound to guarantee a place for all elderly people regardless of their financial means;

that the two thirds pension is not to be decreased when a person has another income from another source;

that the increase in the cost of living affects negatively senior citizens, especially since the price for medicine and other specialised products has drastically risen during the past few years. Therefore, there should be strict controls over the prices of these products. Besides, pensioners should qualify for all the increases given to

make up for the cost of living;

that those found guilty of premeditated homicide of elderly, should be sentenced to life imprisonment.

THE EMARGINATED

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that the article in the constitution regarding gender differentiation should be extended so as to include persons of different sexual orientation, such as homosexuals.

DIVORCE

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that couples whose marriage has been broken down for at least five years, and whose attempts to reconciliation have failed, should have the right to divorce;

that all citizens have the right to refer to the civil court for annulment procedures, regardless of the marriage rite.

FAMILY COURT

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

the establishment of a family court which will have the assistance of a professional body made up of social workers and psychologists, to counsel married couples facing matrimonial problems before starting formal legal procedures for separation. The family court should hear cases in strict confidence and be situated in a separate site from the rest of the law courts.

INHERITANCE

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that in the case of a childless married couple and where no will has been drawn up, the spouses automatically inherit any common property acquired during their married life.

'ILLEGITIMATE' CHILDREN

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that the stigma of illegitimacy, which is morally unjust, and any distinction between the offspring of a married couple and that born of a relationship outside marriage, should cease to exist.

VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that the government should materially assist those voluntary organisations which are already socially committed. Government should not set up parallel organisations which duplicate each other's work, thus wasting precious human and financial resources.

that voluntary organisations should be exempted from the payment of income tax and should be refunded on VAT paid on products and services purchased for the exigencies of the organisation. While the government is bound to assist voluntary organisations, the latter are to be held accountable for the way they spend their funds;

that the government should also provide these organisations with offices and the required equipment to run these offices.

EQUALITY AMONGST THE SEXES

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that despite the recent moves towards equality, there is still a lot left to be done to assure equality between the sexes. There is still need of certain practical measures like day care centres, parental instead of maternal leave, flexitime and job sharing, to make things easier for mothers who have a job outside their home;

that temporary measures be taken to introduce positive discrimination in favour of women in order to obtain equal representation of females and males in the political institutions;

that as regards social benefits, the discrimination between females and males with the same number of social service contributions should cease to exist.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Alternattiva Demokratika notes:

that while European countries consider sexual assault as an offence against the victim, in Malta it is still considered to be an offence against morality. This anomaly should be revoked, and those guilty of sexual violence be given harsher penalties.

PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that the State should offer certain incentives to the private sector to increase the number of employees with special needs;

that effective and serious measures are taken to increase access for disabled persons in public buildings.

COST OF LIVING

Alternattiva Demokratika notes:

that the high cost of living has affected negatively those workers on the minimum wage and others who do not benefit from salary increases through collective agreements. The rise in the cost of living has also affected the elderly. Inflation should be calculated by sources independent of the government through objective and scientific criteria. Furthermore, EU regulations stipulate a maximum rate of inflation of 3%. We have to make sure that this objective is not attained through defective price indexing;

that a rigorous system of price orders be enforced with regard to essential products like food, medicine etc.

CONSUMERS

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that the consumer act be made applicable to public corporations and state run commercial companies too;

that new laws be enacted regarding after sale services, guarantees, product securities, and unjust clauses in contracts, on the lines of EU directives;

that consumer advisory centres be set up in major commercial zones. These centres would be managed through a partnership made up of the Department of Consumer Affairs, Local Councils and consumer groups;

that as to those professions which have a regulatory board, assurance must be given that these boards are truly impartial and that the profession itself is be represented on the board.

VAT

Alternattiva Demokratika notes:

that VAT has caused serious problems to various sectors that were unprepared for this major change which the PN government enacted hastily. Small entrepreneurs suddenly were burdened with a lot of paperwork and became tax collectors for the government. The introduction of cash registers proved to be the most controversial aspect of the whole issue. While it is deemed to be just on the government's part to assist entrepreneurs through tax deductions for the employment of accountants and clerks, we should also note that whoever makes up excuses out of the cash register issue, does not truly believe in fiscal and social justice;

that despite the government's declarations that VAT would not affect the cost of living, the contrary has actually come about. This rise in the cost of living has had negative effects on young couples who build their house - all this in addition to the already existent exaggerated prices for land. It would only be fair, then, that the material couples buy to build or furnish their first residence with be exempted from VAT;

AD proposes a three tiered VAT system on the lines of other European countries. Apart from the standard rate of 15%, a 30% rate is being proposed on luxurious items such as yachts, motor boats, aeroplanes, cars with an engine power higher than 20 hp, jewelry, fur coats, etc. A third rate of 7% should be charged on essential services such as domestic plumbing, etc.

VAT should also serve as a fiscal tool influencing the consumers' choice of purchases. A high VAT rate should be charged on products which are environmentally harmful and, conversely, eco-friendly products should have a lower VAT rate.

PRIVATISATION

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that the government should popularise public companies and even certain corporations by selling the majority of the shares to the general public. Such a system guarantees more efficiency, accountability and presents opportunities of investment to the public. However, the government should remain in control of those companies which have a sensitive role in the economy, and maintain the responsibility for the final decision on important issues;

that laws be passed in parliament to the effect that persons involved in privatisation processes on behalf of the government do not, and will not in the future, form part of the private company to whom the government company is being sold.

DOCKYARD

Alternattiva Demokratika notes:

that there is an appalling situation at the dockyard not because there has been an expenditure of LM60 million in subsidies, but because this sum of money has been spent without any serious plan to solve the main problems of the dockyard. The PN government is to be held responsible for the squandering of these public funds and, at the same time, for failing to bind the dockyard with specific conditions as to how the funds were to be utilized fruitfully. We should point out that the dockyard is not the only case of money squandering and lack of control. Another obvious case is the MSU. Funds should continue to be given to the dockyard on condition that these be used for the purchase of new machinery, the retraining of employees and professional marketing. The enterprise should be managed by a professional team with no interference from the dockyard council;

the government should expropriate dock number one to transform the site into a recreational area for the people of Cottonera.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that mediation services in cases of industrial disputes should be provided by professional and independent persons who have the assent of both trade unions and employers' organisations;

that drastic industrial actions, like the termination of work or lockouts, should only be used as a last resort after all attempts at agreement have failed. At present it is only after the dispute has nearly reached breaking point that mediation is sought for;

the right to strike, including sympathy strike, is to be protected. However, cases of abuse of this right, like

political strikes or sympathy strikes which affect third parties who are not involved in the dispute, should be handled by the Courts. In such cases the court should have the power to lift the immunity of the trade union and charge it the expenses involved;

in all cases, before a strike is called, involved workers should have the right to a secret vote;

closed shops and union directives which discriminate against non-member employees, should become illegal. On the other hand, employers who put pressure on their employees not to join a union should be severely penalised;

the industrial tribunal should be appointed by the President of the republic who will have the power to disband it in the same way as judges and magistrates are divested. The compensation for an unjust expulsion should run parallel to the present salaries and expenses. Civil servants should have the same rights before the industrial tribunal as those enjoyed by the private sector employees;

that members of the police force and the armed forces should have the right to join a union.

DEFINITE CONTRACTS

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that the use of a definite contract is justifiable only in specific circumstances and certain types of work. Whenever a definite contract is renewed for a period of over one year, it should automatically be considered indefinite.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that the newly appointed commission for safety and environment on the workplace is to be transformed into an executive authority with the power to implement its decisions. There is need for the present regulations on security at the workplace to be updated. There is also need to have an adequate number of enforcement officers to enforce these laws.

SAFETY IN LEISURE OUTLETS

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that discotheques and other leisure outlets should conform to a high safety level against the possibility of fire and other emergencies. Precautions should be taken regarding overcrowding in these places.

TOURISM

Alternattiva Demokratika notes:

that the present crisis in the tourism sector is mainly due to government policies which sought immediate

results without foreseeing the implications brought about by massive touristic development. Tourism remains the major source of income and the backbone of our economy, and it is only wise to look after it. However, there is little doubt that the kind of development which took place during the past few years is, ironically, jeopardising the very same tourist industry. Malta will cease to attract tourists if the coastline and the countryside is all built up. It is in the interest of the tourist industry that we should protect what is left of the country side and the coast;

hence there is little sense in issuing further permits for new hotels and tourist complexes. Rather, it would be wiser on the government's part to assist through tax deductions, projects of refurbishment of hotels and quality upgrade schemes;

undoubtedly, VAT has caused further hardship to this sector. Given the crisis which this sector is facing at present, it would be wise to reduce the rate on accommodation to 7%, which is the rate being charged at the moment in Spain and Cyprus;

the government should budget for further investment in infrastructure which affects the tourist sector. There should be serious commitment for the refurbishment of museums and the maintenance of historical, cultural and archaeological sites;

frequently tourists find no remedy for the exaggerated prices they pay for extremely poor services. The department for consumer affairs should set up a helpline service for those tourists who have been cheated during their short stay in Malta;

operators in the tourism sector and hotel owners should have a more active role in the planning of strategies and the costings of the NTOM.

AGRICULTURE

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that since the Maltese farming community is the custodian of our country side its continuous existence should be safeguarded;

the Maltese countryside is an ever shrinking area and the number of full time farmers is also becoming smaller. While back in 1957 56% of the island was agricultural land, this figure went down to a low of 38% by 1985. Farming went on the decline because of massive destructive construction projects in the countryside, and also because income is not realistic compared to today's cost of living. The commission paid to the middle-man and to the vendors reduces the income of the farmer. Hence the middle-man's and the hawkers' profits should be effectively controlled; or else the farmers should be given the right to sell their products directly to the customer;

that farmer co-operatives be given the incentives to open different outlets from which to sell agricultural products in order to make more profit;

that the farming community be encouraged to invest in machinery, glass-houses etc, by means of fiscal incentives and subsidies similar to those being given to the manufacture industry;

that laws should be passed in parliament prohibiting the division of land into smaller parts following quarrels between heirs. Our farming industry cannot be competitive if agricultural land is fragmented into small parts;

that while price controls on vegetables and fruit should be kept, a system of diverse prices based on different quality grades should be introduced;

that farmers should receive coaching in the technique known as 'Integrated Pest Control' which reduces the use of pesticides;

that the eventual negative effects caused by membership in the EU be made up for by financial aid as in the case of Portugal, Greece and Ireland.

SPORTS

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that sports should be made accessible to all regardless of the individual's financial standing. Unfortunately, the social value of sports has not to date been recognized and this may be the reason why there are not enough sport facilities for the use of the citizens. Besides building new sport centres, there should be upgrading projects of existing facilities;

that local councils should manage sport facilities in order to decentralise the system. Thus, sport would be promoted at community level. There should also be projects managed through a partnership of different local councils. It is very important that sport facilities are not used solely by sport clubs but should rather be open to the general public;

that the government financially assist those associations run by volunteers and who do not charge fees to the spectators;

that the government legalizes football pools in order to re-direct income to fund sport associations;

that apparatus used for dope-tests should be VAT free. Sports apparatus in general should also be exempt from VAT;

that sports should be promoted in state schools. There should be a revision in the National Curriculum whereby PE lessons be given daily;

that tobacco companies should be prohibited from advertising their products during sports activities.

EUROPEAN UNION

Alternattiva Demokratika notes

that the question of membership in the EU is to be addressed in a mature and open mentality. The general public lacks objective information. The PN government is ready to put Malta on the EU list of member states without any reservations and without putting any conditions. Even though during the transitional period the government has the right to negotiate derogations on certain directives issued by the EU for a number of years. This servile and submissive behaviour on the part of the Maltese government has led to various hasty changes in our economy and consequently certain sectors of society, which were not yet ready to adapt to these changes, were faced with a series of difficulties. As long as Malta's application remains pending, our country cannot benefit from EU funds which would make up for these difficulties. On the other hand, the

MLP is continuously being negative and is exploiting the discontent caused by these rapid changes;

that although in principle Alternattiva Demokratika is in favour of Malta's entry in the EU, we do not approve of the servile attitude of the PN government. The final decision whether to join the EU or not should be taken by the people through a referendum and only after all the conditions are known to all;

that concern should be shown with regards to those categories within the labour force which have already be negatively affected by the restructuring of the economy. Particular attention should be given to those unemployed who are over 45.

RELATIONS WITH LIBYA

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that although it is of utmost importance that Malta retains cordial relations with neighbouring countries like Libya, this does not mean that Libya should be allowed to consider Malta tantamount to being its colony . In this case too, the PN government has taken a servile and submissive stand. The international image of Malta is suffering because of certain ambiguous situations like the Lockerbie case, the Shqaqi murder and operations by the Libyan secret service.

REFUGEES AND FOREIGN WORKERS

Alternattiva Demokratika proposes:

that a clear policy about illegal immigrants be outlined. The government should not tolerate the hypocritical situation where an ever increasing number of illegal immigrants are exploited by contractors. The government should create a system whereby the quota of foreign workers finding employment in Malta be revised from time to time so as to assure that these foreign workers relish the same rights which are guaranteed by law to the Maltese nationals.