

MALTA LABOUR PARTY

Electoral Manifesto - 1955

(As published in "The Torch," 13 January 1955)

I. A strong Government

A strong Government is needed to catch up with the arrears accumulated during four and a half years of weak-kneed coalitions.

On the home front it is imperative to oil the rusty wheels of a stand-still administration. The old standards of efficiency and impartial public service must be restored. Another effort must be made for an advance towards social security and social progress.

II. Malta's future

The prolonged debate on Malta's future has finally resulted into an all-round conviction of impending economic collapse and a deep sense of urgency in the application of radical solutions.

Notwithstanding the handicap of a hostile daily Press, the Labour Movement has succeeded in putting its views across to the British Government and outright frankness is now bringing in dividends.

III. Relations with British Government

Our relations with the British Government have improved to such an extent as to earn us the accusation of "tools of British Imperialism" by the same sources who only a year ago were branding us "anti-British agitators."

We therefore take great pride in quoting in full the key note of the Labour Manifesto published immediately after the Party's rebirth in August, 1950.

TWO ALTERNATIVES

I. "At this fateful crossing of the roads we therefore give a positive lead to our nation by advocating two possible alternatives, each of which would make every son of Malta answer any eventual call for duty by the Mother Country without pangs of conscience and misgivings."

II. "The first is the gradual incorporation of Malta into the political, financial and social institutions of the British Isles. This objective would involve a 20-year plan to turn Malta into an integral part of Great Britain with representatives at Westminster and enough safeguards to keep intact the full rights and privileges of the Roman Catholic Church in these Islands. It presupposes an immediate guarantee of aid to raise the, social status of the people of these Islands to heights recorded in Great Britain."

III. "The second implies the recognition of Malta's right to self-determination with the removal of Reserved Matters and an amicable negotiation of a 20-year Treaty of Friendship regulating the relations between the two countries. The choice of any of these two alternatives rests with the British Government. On our part we

shall strive to work through U.N.O. to eradicate racial discrimination and build a sounder civilisation on racial parity."

IV. The Home Office Offer

The Home Office Offer of December 1953 was accepted by the Labour Party as a possible gesture on the part of the British Government to meet us halfway on the basis of our first alternative.

Attempts by the Labour Party to convince Her Majesty's Government to broaden the implications of the offer have been crowned with success. The Secretary of State's invitation to meet and discuss the offer with the leaders of political parties represented in Malta's Parliament was made in response to a suggestion of the Malta Labour Party.

The British Government has therefore given proof of good faith and we are in honour bound to explore the ways and means of implementing a solution of our own choosing.

An undue emphasis on our national prestige or an overestimation of the importance of our Islands in the new disposition of Western strategic forces is not our main danger in the immediate future.

It may rather lie in our eagerness to share the benefits of a welfare state without an equal readiness to shoulder the burdens. No lasting agreement with the British Government is possible, even at this late stage, unless it is sustained by goodwill on both sides and by a spontaneous desire to take the rough with the smooth.

V. A New Constitution

The Labour Party therefore, has already officially submitted the following six points as a sine qua non basis for a new Constitution -

1. Social services and direct taxation for the people of Malta on a basis of absolute parity with residents in Britain.
2. Equality of opportunities and treatment putting an end to the existing wage discriminations.
3. Extension of economic planning and full employment measures to these Islands.
4. Retention of exclusive rights by Westminster in all matters affecting foreign relations and defence.
5. Adequate representation of the Maltese People at Westminster.
6. Unfettered local autonomy in all other matters.

VI. Closer Union and History

It is not in the best interest of our people, "whose natural growth has been stifled through artificial isolation for many centuries, to magnify unduly the dangers of complete absorption of these Islands by a closer political

and economic union with Great Britain. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland did not lose their identity and characteristics. Our history records an almost identical association with Rome in the hey days of the Roman Empire without any adverse effects on our national identity and traditions. On the contrary, the very elements among us who today shriek loudest against this imaginary pitfall were most vociferous yesterday in acclaiming this period of our history as most glorious.

Unless we wish to be remembered by posterity as a rare museum specimen, extinct and incapable of reproduction, we must take a realistic cognizance of the vast regroupings taking shape around us - regroupings of former proud, self-sufficient units, reluctantly combining into a larger conglomeration with palpable losses to erstwhile paramount sovereignties.

Our task today

Our task today is to choose for ourselves the group most congenial to our way of life and most likely to favour our continued existence as a free and thriving community. And we stand no chance of being free unless we are treated as equals.

REFERENDUM

In the impending talks with the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Labour Party will therefore reaffirm and give flesh to its beliefs. Above all it promises to submit any eventual agreement with the British Government for the approval of the people of Malta in a national referendum. Without the unequivocal consent of our people no new order can come into being.

While negotiations are in progress

Meantime, the relations with the Imperial side of the Diarchy will be regulated by temporary and ad hoc solutions on a "quid pro quo" basis.

LOCAL MEASURES

The following local measures will be implemented by the Labour Party if returned to power and independently of the outcome of the negotiations with the British Government.

Social Legislation

- a) Increase of Old Age Pensions to meet the increased cost of living.
- b) The introduction of Unemployment Insurance which will benefit all workers, whether employed in private enterprise or by the Imperial or Maltese Governments.

This measure will have to be introduced as soon as possible whilst there is relatively full employment for all workers, and will be based on similar schemes as those in Britain and on the Continent.

- c) An Insurance Scheme to substitute the present Workmen's Compensation Act and to

compensate workers for all injuries sustained during the performance of their duties.

d) Free medical service for the lower-middle and working classes. This would also include measures to expedite the building of a modern Sanatorium in substitution of the Connaught Hospital.

e) Introduction of new social services and betterment of existing ones to alleviate the lot of the poorer section of the population.

f) Revision of the laws of Malta such as to bring our legislation and Courts of Law in line with other European countries and codification and improvement of present industrial legislation, particularly to bring about a more speedy settlement of industrial disputes.

g) Repeal of any regulations contemplating penal measures against Trade Union leaders and workers availing themselves of the right to strike, and other rights existing under the Trade Union Act.

Police Federation

h) Setting-up of a Police Federation to protect and promote the interests of minor officials and for other purposes.

Service in the Police Reserve will be made to count towards pension. Other reforms which will ensure an efficient and happy Police Force.

Employment

i) Non-Party economic Commission which would be entrusted with the task of giving employment in Malta and Gozo.

Education

j) University - Recognition of Malta's degrees in Britain, on the Continent and in the Commonwealth.

Necessary reforms in primary, technical and higher education.

The Press

k) All-Party Commission to be set up with a view' to studying and solving the existing problems of press monopoly in Malta, in consonance with the freedom of the press.

Making Malta known to English Residents.

Trade

l) Liberalisation of local trade. Protection of local traders from expanding activities of N.A.A.F.I. and similar Institutions. Restoring equilibrium in local trade. Encouragement of local industries. Instituting a Board of Trade. Building of Tourist industry. Drive for increased food production on these Islands. Institution of an Agricultural, Fishing and Industrial Bank. Sale of Government land to farmer occupiers.

Agriculture and Fisheries

m) A comprehensive study will be made of the various obstacles hindering the growth of agriculture and the expansion of fisheries with a view to improving the lot of farmers and fishermen.

Rent Restriction

n) Revision of Rent Restriction Law to safeguard the interests of shop keepers and consumers. Clubs shall be included when this revision takes place.

Broadcasting and Television Station

o) The erection of a National Broadcasting and Television Station to replace the outmoded Rediffusion Service. Negotiations with present Rediffusion owners to achieve this end.

Housing

p) A comprehensive study of the housing problem to alleviate present hardships.

Cost of Living and Wages

q) Endeavours will be made to keep the cost of living as low as possible.

A Labour Government will give immediate and careful consideration to any claims for pay increases by officially-recognised Trade Unions. In case of disagreement the matter will be submitted to Arbitration.

Playing Fields and Sports

r) Construction of Playing Fields.

s) The Labour Party will endeavour to raise the standard of sports and for this purpose a Government Board will be set up to make the necessary recommendations to the Government.

GOZO

t) The civic services provided for the people of Gozo are recognised by the Labour Party as far below the standards of Malta and a great effort will be made to improve them.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In all our actions we take our inspiration from the teachings of Our Lord Jesus Christ, as propounded by the Roman Catholic Church. In our relations with the British Government we are guided by the belief that all men are born free and equal; that all men are God's children. For the smooth and friendly co-operation between employers and employees, between rich and poor, we shall continue to apply the Christian tenets of the Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Anno, and we shall continue to combat Communism in all its forms.

D. MINTOFF

Leader

D.M. CREMONA

Gen. Secretary.

E.C. TABONE

President.