

This is an incomplete version of the MLP election manifesto of 2003.

The text appeared in several installments in The Malta Independent beginning on 26 March, 2003. However, the installment which included sections 8 through 14 of the manifesto was not posted on The Independent's website and thus is missing from the text here.

Introduction

The time has come for a change in the government of the country. A Labour government will be a serious government that will offer a guaranteed future to all Maltese citizens. The proposals in this document guarantee a better quality of life to Maltese families. They are concrete proposals that address the aspirations of Maltese citizens. This is an ambitious programme that can only be implemented by a Labour government.

A Labour government respects and obeys the principles of parliamentary democracy in Malta and insists on full respect for the Constitution. It is committed to work in favour of peace and will observe the principles of neutrality of Malta.

I. A better quality of life

New job opportunities

A Labour government will create a social partnership between the government and citizens, between citizens and public institutions, between consumers and those who provide services and products, between workers and their employers and with entrepreneurs to create new job opportunities.

It will work to create the economic, social, and political conditions where foreign investors can begin to look again at Malta as the base for their operations and to create new jobs.

It will tackle unemployment, especially among youth and those aged over 40.

It will increase the participation of women in employment without diminishing the importance of women in the family.

The tax system will be such as will not hurt those who cannot shoulder such a burden, especially those with low or medium incomes while at the same time it will not hinder the entrepreneurial initiatives of those who are able to create jobs.

The Social Security Act will be given a modern format, which will be ore accessible both for the beneficiaries and for the department's employees themselves.

2. New life to the economy

A new Labour government will introduce a sense of care and efficiency in the management of public finances by reducing public expenditure, except in education, health and the environment, in which areas expenditure will increase.

Waste will be reduced: there will be full control of waste in the management and administration of the public sector. Value for money will be demanded everywhere and the many authorities, corporations, foundations and consultancies will be rationalised.

The government will have an intensive and comprehensive plan to lower public expenditure. Malta will save some of the Lm22 million it now spends conforming to European Union rules and government entities will be made to seek more efficiency and productivity and all waste in central administration will be reduced.

A Labour government will call in independent auditors to establish, in a short time, the real state of public finances.

Under the foreseeable circumstances, a Labour government aims to attain a nominal growth rate of five to six per cent of gross domestic product as from 2004. The fiscal deficit will be cut to three per cent of GDP by 2006.

The government will review the tax rate for couples who are buying their first home.

A Labour government will limit capital expenditure to six per cent to support its main projects on education, the environment and roads as well as to attract new investment to Malta and retrain workers.

A Labour government will take immediate action to regenerate the stagnated economy by announcing new measures to encourage new commercial activity.

The level of social services will remain untouched, especially the health and the elderly sectors.

3. VAT

The document lists the reasons why the Labour Party has agreed to retain VAT. This will be reviewed as follows:

There will be no VAT on food, medicines and printed matter.

The rates for various economic sectors, such as tourism and food in restaurants, will be reviewed.

The range of products and services that today are subject to this tax will be reviewed so that the consumer will no longer be taxed on essential products or services, education, culture and sports.

The thresholds for small enterprises will be reviewed because many are causing expense and burdens out of proportion to the actual businesses, which are also subjected to fines and uselessly harsh measures.

The refunds procedure will be reviewed to help tackle the problem of liquidity and of economic stagnation.

The procedures for the collection of taxes will be reviewed so there is no discrimination.

Non-profit organisations, such as band clubs, philanthropic organisations and sports associations will be exempted from VAT.

4. Direct taxes

In today's "disastrous" financial situation, the party understands it must do everything possible not to

continue burdening the people with more taxes.

A Labour government will not increase income tax or consumption tax rates and aims that in the lifetime of the legislature it can also reduce the tax burden on people. Over a five-year period, it will bring the tax burden under control.

The anomaly between the Tax Compliance Unit and the Inland Revenue Department will be eliminated, so taxes are collected in the most open and transparent manner. The department will be strengthened so its role will change from an administrative one to one that investigates tax evasion.

5. Tourism

Every year a Labour government will carry out a major tourism project in order to improve infrastructure.

Malta must differentiate itself from its competitors and position itself as one of the best tourist destinations, not just to Europeans but to other markets. We can offer the best product and service, at the best competitive price.

The Maltese product and service must be improved to attract a better quality tourist.

A Labour government will help operators to keep their prices low and to have more effective promotion and marketing.

The seasonality of tourism must be tackled so there is a better spread of tourists all year round.

Long-term direction will be provided regarding the number of beds and the standards in the accommodation sector to help it become profitable.

Importance will be given to agro-tourism and to Maltese crafts.

There will be more supervision and enforcement to keep very high standards in this vital sector. Tourists' problems and complaints will be handled in a proactive and preventive manner.

There will be much better maintenance of historic sites, many of which are not adequately protected.

Efforts will be made to develop projects such as a golf course (with environmental concerns being taken in consideration), a casino and a marina, together with the private sector.

A Labour administration will clean up Malta from the neglect and rubbish lying around.

It will also encourage wise investment in the sector, spread more equally geographically.

Care will also be taken concerning the quality of seawater.

Gozo will have a separate tourist plan.

Local and foreign tour operators will be involved in the drawing up, administration and management of a serious national policy on tourism. Air Malta will be part and parcel of this strategy.

There will also be serious planning in all sectors involving tourism especially with regard to product development, competitiveness, and marketing.

A serious policy will be drawn up regarding the capacity of the Maltese Islands so tourism becomes sustainable both from the environmental and economic point of view.

6. Industry and strategic markets

The government will be a facilitator to create conditions that can attract Maltese and foreign investors to Malta. The government must not take the place of a private investor.

There must be the necessary infrastructure, such as sufficient industrial space and a stable provision of electricity.

There will be heavy investment in education so Maltese children seeking jobs will be more skilled, according to the best international levels, in technology, information and communication.

More job opportunities will be created for all Maltese.

Public funds will be used in the best possible way. Public spending must be checked. Thus, the government's borrowing from local banks will be reduced and the private investor will find appropriate credit, at an appropriate rate, so he is encouraged to invest and create more jobs.

The government must not burden the productive sectors of the economy with extra expenditure because this detracts from their competitiveness. Certain sectors must benefit from subsidies on the real prices of public services but all must be made aware of the difference between the commercial price and what they are in fact paying.

A Labour government will amend the Business Promotion Act to ensure Malta benefits from the best possible level of competitiveness in those sectors of industry where Malta has a comparative advantage. This will be achieved through the introduction of a package of incentives for foreign and Maltese direct investment which is competitive, non-discriminatory and cost effective, easy to administrate and free of bureaucracy.

Clear procedures will be introduced to ensure that bureaucratic delays in accepting proposals for local and foreign new investment are reduced.

A Labour government will disband Malta Enterprise because it is clear this organisation aims at accommodating in-people with an increase in public expenditure without addressing the main priorities that can really attract foreign direct investment.

The steps taken between 1996 and 1998 for the restructuring of the Malta Development Corporation must be continued to make this organisation a one-stop-shop. The MDC will also get a Code of Ethics with time-frames for the evaluation and approval of projects.

There will be adequate resources for the effective marketing of Malta, in association with Maltese embassies abroad. The Malta External Trade Corporation will have a role in this sector, especially with regard to Malta-made products even by foreign investors.

A sustainable balance will be created between the cost of the work of trained workers in different skills, and competition, so that industrial peace is preserved, investment is increased and there are more opportunities for serious and stable economic development without detracting from the rights of workers.

A free trade area will be agreed between Malta and the EU. This will offer Malta a niche opportunity where it can have an advantage compared to competing countries which may be tied up in the EU.

A Labour government will create a package of incentives which are competitive, effective, sustainable and clear, and which will attract both Maltese and foreign investment within the context of a partnership relationship with the EU, which will be more flexible and suited to Malta.

Knowledge-based activities will be given the necessary importance. A Labour government will seriously consider the rapid changes in the technological sphere.

Information Communication Technology must be applied seriously to Malta, and not only as an academic subject. New software development, eco-friendly products and electronic commerce will be exploited to provide new opportunities for Maltese young people.

A Labour government will promote a policy that ensures industrial peace and the best use of the human resources of the country so that the country achieves the best productivity, quality and flexibility.

Fiscal incentives will be provided to the film industry while space will be created for the attraction of international co-production of films. A fund will be set up to promote small co-production of films.

The Malta Freeport will be changed into an effective cell in an international network of ports.

In full consultation with the unions and owners, a plan will be drawn up for modernising and improving management efficiency of Maltese harbours.

7. Financial services

Financial services already contribute seven per cent of GDP.

A Labour government will conform to international regulations, but without foreign interference in this sector.

Through the Labour Party's European policy, the financial services sector will be developed without the burden of taxes and uniform regulations that the EU wants to impose on all member states.

If Malta follows the Swiss model, our competitiveness in this sector will increase. Malta will operate as a financial centre and for private banking of integrity, which will have the necessary flexibility to grasp all new opportunities that can be created from, among others, the EU countries themselves.

A Labour government will work to attract to Malta not only fund managing companies that want to enter the Maltese market but also to attract those who want to use Malta to penetrate other markets.

A Labour government will work to derive all possible advantages from existing agreements, such as double taxation agreements with different countries.

The way in which the council of the Malta Stock Exchange is set up will be reviewed.

A Labour government will see that the regulator of the Stock Exchange affirms the principle of free trading on the market. He must also be given the necessary tools so that this sector becomes more dynamic and brings about better profit to the country.

The people who serve at senior level with regulatory institutions, such as the Central Bank, must not have conflicts of interest.

Since the MFSA has assumed a regulatory role, Malta is without a promotional organisation for financial services. This gap must be filled, in cooperation with the operators in this sector.

A specialised unit must be established to attract foreign financial service providers and investment fund managers.

As the EU moves towards fiscal harmonisation, Malta must strive to attract financial business from countries inside the EU such as Luxembourg, Ireland and Cyprus so established foreign banks are encouraged to transfer their business and financial activity to Malta.

The necessary material and fiscal infrastructure must be created to widen the role of private banking in Malta.

New life will be given to the Stock Exchange and the 15 per cent Capital Gains Tax on collective investment schemes will be removed as this has practically killed off the sector.

A Labour government will investigate the sale of Mid-Med Bank to HSBC, which has come to have a dominant position in the banking sector. This situation will be remedied in respect of the laws and the market forces in Malta as well as within the context of other, international, laws, to ensure that there are no monopolistic structures in the Maltese banking sector.

[SECTIONS 8 THROUGH 14 ARE MISSING]

15. A healthy environment

A Labour government will:

Improve the surrounding environment.

Be fully committed to create a new social coalition to include all who want to contribute to a serious environmental policy for Malta, especially NGOs.

Work to control air, water, seawater and land pollution and to clean the environment from all pollutants.

Reject unsustainable development: every development will be measured according to environmental impact and not profit.

Ensure that agricultural, especially arable, land is protected from urban or industrial development.

Preserve characteristic rubble walls and teach young workers the skill of building them.

Launch an educational campaign for better use of energy in homes.

Reduce light pollution.

Protect coasts and bays from pollution.

Ensure that seawater and drinking water quality is monitored regularly and the results published.

Reduce atmospheric pollution levels by controlling air-polluting development and preserving traffic-free green spaces in urban areas.

Take concrete steps to reduce pollution by vehicles, including public transport, and encourage the use of unleaded petrol, gas or electric vehicles.

Be committed to introduce international standards on noise levels permitted in residential areas and in

the workplace.

Introduce domestic waste separation of organic waste, plastic, glass and paper from other waste and implement a regional waste management policy.

Close down the Maghtab and Qortin landfills in 21 months.

Introduce new rules specifying minimum environmental protection levels to prevent pollution extending beyond the sites where waste is collected.

Introduce better protection for marine life and strict regulations for fish farming.

Nurture existing parks and create new natural parks and reserves.

Rehabilitate valleys to serve their natural function regarding rain water and ensure that they can be enjoyed by all.

Increase the planting of indigenous trees for soil preservation.

Re-evaluate present plans for waste in Gozo so that it is processed and managed there.

Continue opposition to an airstrip in Gozo.

Ensure that work sites are safe and no danger to workers' health.

Ensure implementation of international conventions that are signed.

Ensure the laws on hunting and trapping existing before June 2002 are enforced and remain unchanged

Ensure a balance between hunting and trapping and those who love birds.

Emphasise importance of historic heritage and ensure resources are not wasted in carrying out necessary repairs and draw up a preventive strategy to protect the environment, including the historic environment.

A Labour government will make necessary changes to existing systems so that those which protect the environment work rationally.

There will be a minister for the environment responsible for four sections: the environment, planning, natural resources and certain aspects of civil protection concerned with protection of the environment. There will be a department for each section.

The Department for the Protection of the Environment will be strengthened. A geological survey unit will be established.

The ministry will prepare contingency and action plans with the Civil Protection Director to deal with a disaster or to ward off pollution from our shores. Local councils will be involved in enforcing the law.

A Labour government will reform the Planning Authority to eliminate duplicated work and ensure accountability and transparency.

16. Children's rights

Children's rights should be considered an integral part of fundamental human rights. Children have a

right to happiness.

A Children's Charter will be drawn up, listing children's rights.

The party reaffirms its belief in the right to life and is thus against abortion.

It believes that there should be no discrimination of children with regard to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion or social status.

The Family Court will be set up to protect the interests of children in separation or annulment procedures or cases of domestic violence. All laws discriminating against children born out of wedlock will be abolished.

Malta must ensure that it is not just a signatory but also efficiently implements conventions on children's rights.

A Council for the Protection of Children's Rights will be established to consider laws and regulations.

A Children's Ombudsman must be set up, linked to the Council, to create a semi-judicial structure to protect children's rights.

The educational system must provide a pleasant experience for children, allowing them to enjoy their childhood, be creative, gain self-confidence and learn to express themselves.

17. Education

We need to reform education to help our children be active citizens in today's open society and advanced economy. Schools must be improved so that more children flourish educationally. Those who are already flourishing need to do so in a different way due to the changing world.

Through partnership with the European Union, Malta will increase participation in EU educational programmes by an agreement similar to the one that exists between the EU and Switzerland. Educational schemes will also be arranged with countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia.

A Labour government will reduce Matsec charges. It will remove VAT on the educational sector, as well as the cultural and sports sectors.

Schools must receive the necessary equipment. Books and educational material must be upgraded. Every school must be managed with a democratically chosen development plan.

Professional training will be increased so that Malta has enough educational psychologists and teachers trained to work with dyslexic children and those with other learning difficulties.

The educational system must be developed in such a way that it provides equal opportunities both for boys and girls.

The Education Division must be renovated according to today's needs with its main duty that of supporting the work done in schools and evaluating the quality of education.

There must be full coordination between the teaching, health and social services sectors to make the best use of the resources in our country.

We address the problems of drink, smoking and drugs among adolescents and initiatives must be taken so that children live better, and do not suffer from obesity due to lack of good food and no

exercise.

Kindergarten

A Labour government will ensure that kindergarten education continues to expand and improve so that the 20 per cent of children who drop out at age seven due to serious literacy problems can be helped.

Primary education

Reading will be strongly encouraged to improve levels of Maltese and English. More efforts must be made to develop children with regard to mathematics, science and technology.

Art and sports activities must become an integral part of primary education.

The problem of heavy school bags, which is causing so much damage to children's health, must be tackled.

Inclusive education

Schools must really be open to all children and different methods of teaching must be used to reach them all. There must be a new culture, through which heads and teachers are responsible for ensuring that all children are reached.

Children with special needs must be given every opportunity through a well-prepared plan with adequate resources and specially trained teachers.

Special schools must be developed into resource centres and support centres for disabled children in other schools.

Different young people

Secondary schools must change so that we can save those who end their compulsory education not having the necessary skills. The educational experience must be made to be more relevant to these young people who at present find the environment outside school to be more relevant and attractive.

Contact between schools and places of work must be intensified.

Vocational subjects must be introduced in secondary schools emphasising learning in sectors like IT, catering, basic engineering, tourist studies, carpentry, construction and farming.

Educational experiences must be created for young people with the necessary skills who are now in danger of being excluded from society and attracted by crime, drugs and a hopeless life style.

An examination board at SEC level, to be responsible for certification of vocational subjects must be established.

The structures of the SEC board must be strengthened and it must work more closely with state schools, Church and private schools.

Students must be entitled to see their examination paper when requesting a revision of paper.

Education and the creation of wealth

A Labour government must tackle the problem of skills deficit of thousands of jobless young people who are looking for work, and the problem of employers who conversely face skills shortages.

Apprenticeship schemes must be upgraded to the 21st Century.

A Labour government is committed to ensuring more students coming from vocational education go on to university.

Students with special needs who receive a vocational education must be helped prepare themselves for life at work and in society.

Post-secondary education

The quality of education for over 16-year-olds must be improved. New opportunities must be created for them in those areas which can offer them a job according to the economic and social development of the country.

MCAST will be strengthened through a five-year plan. Coordination will be enforced with the university, ETC, ITS, the Swatar centre and Institute for Health Care to avoid duplication.

Better use must be made of technology teachers so that they do not remain under used. MCAST teachers must be given better training.

The Junior College must be strengthened and given the resources it needs to function and improve.

The MATSEC advanced and intermediate systems must be improved.

The participation of students in all post-secondary institutions must be improved through the legal introduction of the Students' Council.

The university Ombudsman must also handle post-secondary levels and must be available every day at the university campus and at MCAST.

New initiatives will be launched so that through the Internet and IT young people do not have to attend courses in the traditional way.

Young students from Gozo must not fall behind in post-secondary education. MCAST and Sixth Form in Gozo must work closely with those in Malta.

Care must be taken to discover why young people who begin a study course or an apprenticeship drop out so that these young people are not lost to the country. Work must be done to see that more young people succeed in their studies or apprenticeship (only half of students sit for MATSEC).

The university's entry requirement for students to obtain six passes in the same year to begin a course must be removed.

18. University

There should be a new contractual agreement between government and university so the latter can plan its activities more long-term. The university will give a public account of its activities and finances. The academic auditing of courses and research must be strengthened.

New opportunities must be created through new courses for those who are already working and who cannot attend regular day courses. New initiatives are taken in conjunction with international organisations so that university can begin to organise courses through IT where students can follow the courses from home, without having to physically attend the lectures.

The administration structures of the university must be changed into a participative and democratic system which sustains and strengthens the academic standards of teaching and research.

The university must take new initiatives for the professional formation and ongoing education of the professions in Malta.

A Lm 1.5 million fund will be set up to finance study programmes of Maltese students abroad. The participation of Maltese students and academics in EU programmes and in educational programmes of the US, Canada, Australia, Unesco, Commonwealth, Council of Europe and OECD will be strengthened.

Lifelong education

The Labour government will invest in serious educational and training programmes both for those who are already working and for those who are unemployed. Educational and cultural initiatives for the elderly must be increased.

19. Youth

Young people must share in national life. All social inequalities that affect young people must be removed: young people must shoulder their responsibilities and express them in a new society.

A Labour government will give great importance and a new sense of leadership to the educational, cultural and sports sectors. It will increase its investment in these areas. It will also remove the burden of VAT from the educational, cultural and sports sectors.

Education

Public education and vocational training must be of the highest quality.

Young people must find the support of adequate educational and economic structures when they come to take independent decisions about matters which affect them. All levels of education must be open to all young people, whatever their social or financial standing.

Students must participate in the drawing up of the programmes of their courses.

Technical teaching in trade areas and in modern technologies, especially IT, must be widened. There must be new opportunities at MCAST. Those students who want to learn skills must find open doors in the educational sector. Those who enter training schemes and who do not find a sponsor must not be deprived of vocational training, as is happening now.

Jobs

The state must employ all social and economic measures to foster better opportunities of work for young people.

The rights and conditions of work of young people, especially those who work in factories, must be preserved and improved all the time.

A Labour government ensures that young workers be given equal opportunities. It will be ensured that young workers are not used as cheap labour and do not suffer discrimination at work.

The schemes which provide young people with the necessary financial backing to open a new enterprise must be strengthened.

A Labour government will work, above everything else, to create job opportunities in Malta for young workers. European citizens will not have automatic access to the job market in Malta. Maltese young people will thus be able to find work in Malta without useless and unfair competition.

Voluntary organisations

There will be more consultation with associations of young people and their representatives in government boards.

A Labour government appreciates the useful work of voluntary associations of young people in all areas of culture and sport by supporting their initiatives, while respecting their autonomy.

The participation by Maltese young people in decision-taking and in the upgrading of Maltese social values must be widened through participation and the involvement of young people in government bodies and entities which deal with the social and economic management of the country.

Environment

Young people will be encouraged, through specially-drawn up programmes to understand environmental problems on a local, regional and global level. Courses of study will be offered in Malta and abroad on environmental protection.

Housing

The access of young people to housing and property in Malta must be increased. The subsidies and rent systems must be improved.

European citizens will not have the automatic right to purchase property in Malta. A Labour government will protect the interests of young couples who will be buying their first property by controlling land speculation.

Entertainment and sport

A Labour government will ensure that young people are protected from all kinds of exploitation. Transparent criteria must be drawn up as regards the prices that young people can be charged at places of entertainment, so that young people do not end up being exploited by exaggerated prices.

A Labour government will ensure that places frequented by young people have adequate measures to protect their health and safety.

Sports facilities will be increased and there will be ongoing maintenance of the existing sports facilities. Help will be given to sports nurseries in different disciplines. The participation of women in sports will be encouraged, as will be opportunities in sports for citizens with special needs.

Physical education will be put on a higher level: the curriculum will be revised in this respect.

Home Affairs and security

A Labour government will declare total war against the drug industry. Drug Courts will be set up in Malta to facilitate the hearing of court cases.

The law regarding investigations will be amended so police can identify people suspected of drug trafficking who have already been found guilty of drug cases. The Financial Intelligence Unit will be strengthened, so that drug barons who are involved in usury and prostitution can be traced.

Laws will be drawn up to eradicate the Omerta especially in investigations connected with drug trafficking because many who refuse to divulge what they know do so because of fear and lack of protection.

The Drug Squad must be strengthened with a bigger complement of police officials, operational resources and modern technology.

A legal framework must be drawn up so that the police will be able to investigate the provenance of the property of people of suspect character or companies involved with such people.

The Income Tax law must be amended so that the investigative authority, especially as regards the provenance of capital, is strengthened. The police (and security services) must be involved in these investigations.

As regards the use of marijuana, a study must see how the existing law can provide an opportunity to the young people involved to get back to normal life. Legal aid must be provided to those who cannot pay when they require HIV treatment.

The prison rules must be reviewed so that it becomes more difficult to plan or traffic drugs or for drug barons in prison.

The Drug Misuse Act of the UK has valid legal points which may be applied to Malta as regards entertainment venues. This will help ensure public order where drug abuse takes place.

A special law must be drawn up to ensure the independence of the Malta National Laboratory. Apparatus which helps the police in their forensic investigations must be bought.

A legal system must be found whereby the figures of drug abusers in Malta become more credible.

The law regarding the notarial profession, which dates back to 1925, must be changed with regards to the duties of notaries and the reports they must make in case they suspect crime to be the origin of money they handle, or money coming from usury or the inheritance of money coming from drugs.

One must seriously consider the protection of informers who collaborate and provide precise and truthful information in drug trafficking cases.

The surveillance and enforcement in ports and around the Maltese coast by police and the armed forces must be intensified since it is clear that drugs are still coming in illegally.

As regards the legal profession, lawyers and legal procurators, as well as accountants, ways must be found to facilitate reports in cases where it is clear that money deriving from drug trafficking is being laundered. Non-reporting may in certain cases be complicity.

The police

There must be a stricter war against crime, especially against theft since this has increased considerably these past years. The Police Corps must monitor trends in crime so that there be suitable prevention and this wave is reduced and rolled back.

Payments to police, their conditions of work, fairness in the management and in training systems motivate the police in their work.

A Labour government will improve the equipment and the means at the disposal of the police in their fight against crime, both in stations and on the road.

The prison

There must be more professionalism and transparency in the management of the prison so that this continues to stay further away from political intrusion.

The prison must be managed in a strong but humane way, with discipline being used and the human rights of prisoners being observed.

Prison must have medical, social and psychological support systems for the good of the prisoners and their families. More strength will be given to the Board of Visitors.

Voluntary groups must be helped so that they can contribute to the best of their abilities and their specific nature.

21. Housing

Means and measures must be found to alleviate burdens faced by families, especially young couples with low or medium earnings, who have to pay large sums to purchase their first home.

Housing subsidy schemes must be upgraded to reflect today's social realities so people who find themselves in difficulties are not burdened with new problems.

A concrete effort must be made so empty property in good shape be purchased to reduce the housing problem. A Labour government, in partnership with the private sector, will launch schemes which provide an opportunity to thousands of people to have a suitable home.

A Labour government will ensure that government housing is truly given to those whose revenue would not permit them to purchase or rent from the private property market.

The legal framework must be drawn up to ensure that this inheritance is used according to the intentions of those who bequeathed it.

There is a need for homes for those women who have had to leave their homes because of violence. They must also be able to take their children with them to these homes as children of a certain age are not being allowed to be with their mothers. This is leading to the further breaking up of the family relations of these children.

22. Women The Labour government's policy on women will be in agreement with international conventions. Where needed, Maltese laws will be amended so that they agree with these conventions.

Work will be taken in hand and an effective strategy put in place to ensure that women's active participation in society is increased.

The Labour government will invest in day-care centres for children, especially for those whose mothers have to go to work.

The educational system shall be used to enshrine equality among the sexes as a prime and natural value in society. A breast screening programme will be gradually put in place as well as other cancer-related screening.

23. The elderly

The experience the elderly have acquired should not be wasted: they must contribute to the well-being of the community.

The elderly must be given the opportunity to participate fully in educational, sports, cultural and social activities together with people of different age groups.

In the health sector, initiatives must be taken to better the quality of life of elderly people.

The elderly purchase many medicines. A Labour government will not impose VAT on medicines as the Nationalist government wants to do.

Preventive medicine services specially for the elderly must be launched.

The services for the elderly who live in their own homes must be strengthened, with security and comfort so that the elderly remain living in their community as long as it is physically possible for them.

The number of day centres for the elderly will be increased in conjunction with councils.

The St Vincent de Paule residence, the Zammit Clapp hospital and the homes for the elderly will continue to get more services according to today's needs.

The concept of carer families will be introduced so that families who live around the elderly share in taking care for those elderly who live around and who have no one who cares for them or who visits them.

The Kartanzjan, which was set up with no juridical backing, will be given a juridical and legal standing.

The particular shopping basket for the elderly, which is the basis for the retail price index for the

elderly, must be drawn up better and will remain as the cornerstone of the Labour government's commitment to a better quality of life.

The pension scheme for the ex-British servicemen, which in 1996-98 was only partially implemented, must be completed.

State pensions will continue to be guaranteed. Private pension schemes will be encouraged, through the necessary fiscal incentives, as long as these are strictly voluntary, subject to strong regulation and seriously managed.

The elderly will be represented on the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development.

24. Health

Departmental structure

The Health Department will be renovated and modernised. It will be split up into two main structures: regulatory and operational.

Every hospital must be managed in an autonomous way.

All employees of the health structure, except those in a strategic and high position, will have an indefinite contract.

Primary care

An educational campaign will be launched on specific illnesses. This kind of preventive education must not be restricted to particular days, such as Aids Day for education about HIV.

There will be more education and research on prevention on non-communicable illnesses, such as diabetes and health diseases. This can be done through a partnership with the World Health Organisation. Initiatives such as the Healthy Cities Project and the Health in Prisons Project, which were launched by the Labour government and blocked by the Nationalist government, will be restarted.

Health centres will begin to operate 24 hours a day. There will be more cooperation from the private sector to ensure that there is less pressure on the out-patient department.

Secondary care

Effective steps must be taken to address the problems faced by patients in secondary care. This must be done in cooperation with the trade unions, patients and health sector employees.

Patients must not have to wait for long for an appointment in the outpatients department. Another problem which must be tackled is the long queues for operations and the long wait in the emergency department.

There must be more coordination between government hospitals and doctors in the community regarding patients who have been in hospital, through a discharge letter that must be given to patients before they leave hospital. In future, this coordination will take place through IT.

Nurses who have qualified before the setting up of the Institute for Health Care must not be discriminated against in promotions. The government must invest in ambulances and in training of paramedics.

Priority will be given to cleanliness and hygiene in hospitals. The Nursing Officer for every ward must be really the person who is responsible for the management of the ward.

The preparation of food for patients must be done on a more professional base. Every patient must be informed, through a leaflet, on the illness, what cure will be given and what precautions must be taken after being cured.

The law relating to mental health must be updated and Mount Carmel Hospital modernised.

Tal-Qroqq hospital

The new Tal-Qroqq hospital will offer all acute services in the health service, as was the agreement reached with all the stakeholders when the decision to change from the wrong concept of a hospital split in two was changed to that of one general hospital, which gives a service of excellence, with the latest technology, apart from being a university teaching hospital.

The Tal-Qroqq hospital has been reduced and it is estimated to be costing more than that which was planned under the 1996-98 Labour government.

Discussions must immediately be held with all stakeholders regarding the infrastructure of the new hospital, as changed by the Eddie Fenech Adami administration after the 1998 election.

All stakeholders will be involved right from the beginning as to how the new hospital will be run.

A serious evaluation must take place how the people's finances have been used. The charges of abuse of power in the construction and equipment purchasing of the hospital will be investigated.

Public health

Conscious of the pollution in our surrounding area, the Public Health Department must increase the places where tests on seas water are carried out all through the year. Through coordination with the environment departments, the research that is being carried out on certain illnesses is investigated from environmental points of view.

The standards and hygiene in the preparation of food for consumers must be strengthened.

Medicines and pharmacies

There will be no VAT on medicines or on medical equipment.

The medicines which are authorised to enter Malta must be registered. This will be done by ensuring that those medicines which are already registered in countries with a high standard of medicine, such as France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, Switzerland and Norway will be automatically registered in Malta.

As a result, the prices of medicine will not increase with the tariffs imposed by the Nationalist government to register medicines.

The majority of medicines in the local market will be able to be imported with a variety of different prices for the consumer.

The government will ensure high standards in the local manufacturing of medicines.

The government medical stores will be managed on a professional basis and the technology which is necessary and essential to uncover an audit trail will be introduced so that the medicines and medical apparatus which are purchased by the government really do arrive at their proper destination, instead of being stolen or wasted.

Regulations will be drawn up once again regarding new licences for pharmacies based on a demographic system according to an agreement drawn up in September 1998 between the government, the Association of General Retailers and Traders and the Chamber of Pharmacists.

25. People with disabilities

There is a need in this sector for an integrated long-term plan which will include what should be done and also what concrete, financial, and human commitments will support this activity. This plan must be drawn up and implemented together with the voluntary sector and also with those who are active in this sector.

When children with disabilities reach a certain age, the educational system closes its door on them and instead of moving forward, they regress. The Wardija school will be treated as important and it will not be neglected as it has been under this PN administration.

Efforts must be made to increase the number of teachers for people with disabilities.

A family with a person with disabilities incurs many expenses. So a specific shopping basket must be drawn up for this sector to ensure that they do not fall below the poverty line.

The Adult Training Centres must be upgraded and the support schemes to enable people with disabilities find work must be strengthened.

The opening of community houses for people with disabilities will be encouraged. New sports facilities must be accessible by people with disabilities.

A Labour government will amend the electoral law so that people with sight impairment will be able to vote without help or through the help of their trusted friend.

26. Animal rights

A Labour government will change today's law on animals and instead present the bill it proposed as a private members' bill, which the present government did not discuss at any time.

This draft bill regulates many things in detail while the PN law speaks more about the powers of the minister to draw up rules than about the animals themselves.

Animal protection and the promotion of enforcement will derive from a series of regulations which will ensure the best living conditions.

Among other things, the bill will include the setting up of a National Council for the Protection of

Animals.

One must also examine the possibility of a 24-hour care facility for animals including the possibility of a hospital for animals. Progress in this sector will only be possible through the cooperation of voluntary organisations which will not only be acknowledged but also helped.

27. Partnership

The foreign policy of a Labour government must have three main characteristics: Europe (the great links we have with Europe in politics, trade and culture), the Mediterranean (our geographic position and common interests with our Mediterranean neighbours regarding the environment, security, trade and economic development) and our relations with other large countries like the United States, Australia, Russia and China.

Malta must have the closest and best relationship with the European Union in a way that agrees with Maltese and European interests and all our other neighbours. The Partnership relationship with the EU will be structured according to Malta's circumstances and in the interests of all Maltese workers.

The partnership proposal with the EU consists of:

An industrial free trade area between Malta and the EU so that Maltese products can enter the EU unhindered and vice-versa.

Special arrangements for agriculture so that, while the interests of consumers are protected, we can protect the interests of Maltese farmers through protection where necessary.

Agreements of cooperation and joint action with the EU in areas such as social affairs, education, environment and health.

An agreement with the EU on security in the heart of the Mediterranean on drug trafficking, terrorism, illegal immigration and money-laundering etc.

Political cooperation between the Brussels authorities and the Maltese government and between the Maltese and European Parliaments.

This partnership strategy does not close any doors on:

The partnership strategy does not close any doors on the advantages enjoyed by the export industry in EU markets and beyond.

It will protect farmers and the remaining countryside in Malta.

It will protect the families of fishermen and ensure that Maltese fishermen retain control of our seas.

It will protect the interests of Maltese businessmen, especially retailers and self-employed.

It will create job opportunities and protect the interests of Maltese workers, who will not need to compete for jobs against citizens from other EU countries.

It will ensure that property prices remain within the reach of Maltese families because foreigners will be able to purchase any property they like in Malta automatically.

It will ensure food prices are at a level which our families can afford so families are protected from EU tax burdens.

We will decide things for ourselves and the government of Malta, and not Brussels, will take the best

decisions for Malta.

It will protect the Maltese companies and individuals who offer professional services in Malta.

It will protect the interests of dockyard workers and parastatal companies like Maltacom and the Freeport.

It will protect our students' interests who, while still benefiting from study programmes like Socrates and Leonardo, will not have to compete for university places or jobs in their own country against citizens from EU member states.

We will enjoy all the advantages of full cooperation at all levels without losing the advantages of neutrality. The Maltese want peace and do not want to be used in the wars of others inside the EU's military alliance.

We can take all necessary social measures to help those who are affected by commercial prices, such as water and electricity rates.

We can adopt the beneficial laws and standards of the EU for social policy and jobs, industrial policy and consumer protection, health and safety protection at work and environmental care.

It would give a new lease of life to financial services and investment.

We will not have to pay more taxes to the EU than we receive, as we would with membership.

We will not have to tax books, medicines and food as would happen with EU membership.

A Labour government will call a referendum during the legislature, where people can choose between a partnership agreement with the EU and membership. Government will accept the result of this referendum and implement the decision. A sincere effort will be made to reach agreement with the Opposition so that this referendum will be agreed to by the political parties and its result will be considered as final by everybody.

28. Infrastructural development and transport

There will be infrastructural projects, through partnership with the private sector, regarding drainage treatment, drinking water and alternative energy sources.

The drainage system will be strengthened to ensure all residential areas are connected to the main system. Priority will be given to Bahrija.

Work will continue on a national master plan for rain water, abandoned by the Nationalist administration, to proposed and implement solutions regarding all aspects of this precious resource.

The Coordinating Unit will be reinstated so that all road work is done after the completion of underground infrastructural work. It will also coordinate with all involved, such as local councils and the police.

A Labour government is committed to surfacing all residential roads during its five year legislature and upgrading roads and junctions still prone to traffic congestion.

The National Geographical Information System will be established to record all information on infrastructural services in Malta on one database.

Projects

Work will begin on the Connections project, the entrance to Valletta and the Opera House site and the Cottonera, Sea Passenger Terminal and Manoel Island-Tigne projects will be given further impetus.

An ambitious project to regenerate ports, Grand Harbour and Marsamxett will begin, in conjunction with the private sector.

Development projects will be implemented for Fort Sant' Angelo, Fort Ricasoli and Fort St Elmo.

An adequate, central place will be identified for the building of carnival floats and a carnival village will be created.

The Gozo yacht marina project will be reintroduced.

Embellishment projects in tourist and recreation areas will continue. New projects will be started in Paceville and St George's Bay, St Julian's, Xghajra, Wied iz-Zurrieq, Lapsi, and Dingli cliffs.

Committees will be established in important tourist areas to ensure regular maintenance.

Work will commence on national parks at Burmarrad (Kennedy Grove), Ta' Qali, Delimara and Cottonera.

Restoration projects in our historical towns and cities will continue. The three existing rehabilitation committees will be amalgamated, to be known as the Walled Cities Rehabilitation Committee, which will be given responsibility for work at the Gozo Cittadella and Victoria, and also for Rabat, Malta.

Restoration projects for historical areas will create heritage trails such as the Victoria Lines.

Transport

A national transport strategy will be formulated for an efficient transport system that will improve the environment and quality of life.

While the central terminus will remain in Valletta, regional termini will be created which offer circular services in their region and serve as connections between regions.

In collaboration with local councils, traffic management systems will be introduced in all town and village cores to give residents and pedestrians priority over vehicles.

New parking systems will be introduced.

New modes of transport will be encouraged and adequate protection given to those using environment-friendly transport such as bicycles.

The possibility of a light railway system will be studied.

Work on a roads master plan will be given absolute priority and implemented according to specific time frames and a work programme already laid down.

A Labour government will solve parking problems in commercial centres and popular tourist attractions by the park and ride system.

29. A strong national identity

Historical and traditional sites will be developed through partnership with the private sector and with the involvement of local councils.

The historical heritage will not be allowed to deteriorate. Incentives will be created so that tourism percolates to village levels and local jobs are created.

Museums and historical sites will be better managed through partnership between government and the private sector for the enjoyment of all.

The educational value of Malta's historical heritage will be emphasised.

Culture

Maltese artists, writers and musicians will be encouraged.

Maltese cultural animators and artists will be helped to use IT developments effectively.

Management structures of the National Library, the National Archives and public libraries will be strengthened.

Archiving will be encouraged and incentives provided for access to private archives.

Values

Malta does not want to be isolated: on the contrary, all doors must be kept open for opportunity from abroad. This does not mean we must not defend the values of Maltese society. While admitting the development that globalisation brings with it, we must ensure this proceeds at the same speed as the strengthening of moral values.

A Labour government will not succumb to any pressure to legalise abortion and will not allow taxpayers' money to be used to finance abortions abroad.

Those with family problems must not be sidelined but must be addressed in partnership with Maltese citizens, especially with regard to separated people and single parents. Labour expects all social forces to share in an open debate, characterised by mutual tolerance, to ensure a better future for Maltese families. Practical and efficient measures will be identified to support families with great social problems.

The law must not deny protection to unmarried couples especially those with children. The relationship of long-standing couples will be regulated by law to ensure no-one suffers if the relationship ends.

The Labour Party defends minorities. A Labour government will not permit discrimination or marginalisation due to sexual orientation, race, or for any other reason. Immigration laws will be amended so that foreigners in a stable relationship with a Maltese citizen are not excluded.

Maltese migrants

Descendants of Maltese migrants wishing to settle in Malta will be given preference to European citizens.

Citizenship laws will be further liberalised to help even more people of Maltese origin.

A Labour government recognises the importance of Maltese language teaching and a new project will be launched for the electronic teaching of the Maltese language for use by Maltese migrants.

A Labour government will finance twinning with Maltese communities abroad.

The fate of Maltese children sent to Australia in the 1940s and 1950s where they suffered horrible experiences is worrying the Council for the Maltese Community in New South Wales. A Labour government will launch an investigation, to which Maltese from Western Australia can give information.

The Commission for Maltese Abroad will be strengthened to encourage contacts between communities of Maltese migrants around the world and Malta to strengthen Maltese culture.

30. Clean politics

A Labour government will work with all those truly interested in the country's good. It will be a government in partnership with Maltese families to solve the country's problems and address those worrying the Maltese. The Nationalist administration is characterised by confusion and cliques that have devoured government contracts and have become rich on Maltese taxes. Every decision of the present government has favoured friends of friends, never those who, in their homes, struggle for a better future. The Labour government of 1996-98 gave clear proof of a serious administration with no taint of corruption.

Maltese families deserve a clean, efficient administration and a government that does not waste taxes. They deserve a government that does not lie or do its utmost to trick people.

A Labour government will be an honest administration telling things the way they are. It will be based on clean and moral politics so that money paid by citizens is not wasted. The citizens' money will improve everyone's quality of life and not be wasted on the enjoyment of the few.

Maltese politics needs a new breath to change the main structures according to the desires of Maltese families, and provide the country with moral, clean, and honest politics.

In State matters:

A Labour government will remove the time limitation in corruption cases.

The magistracy will be strengthened by investigative powers, including total access to government records and necessary resources, independent of the police, so that it can investigate corruption charges or abuse of power.

The role of the Ombudsman, who must report to parliament more frequently, will be strengthened and his recommendations will be truly respected.

A Labour government will ensure that all government contracts include a clause giving government the right to block any payment if any apparently well-founded allegations of corruption are made.

The Auditor General's office will be strengthened to evaluate the quality of government's social services and whether it is reaching those really in need.

The culture of social auditing must be introduced so that the public services of health, education and social security are evaluated to ensure they are effectively reaching those for whom they were created.

In party matters:

The financing of political parties must be made public.

The use of public funds given to political parties must be verified by the Auditor General.

A political party in government must never receive commission for government work.

31. Reform of the institutions

Council of state

A commission will be set up to consider creating a Council of State, constituted of distinguished people in public life. This will examine and give advice on issues regarding observance of the Constitution and on how the Constitution should be interpreted.

A Council of State could also be asked for advice on issues affecting Maltese life and democracy.

Referenda

The law on referenda must be changed to establish how referenda will be held, their validity and how the result will be measured.

Propository referenda will be introduced so that if a number of citizens wish for the introduction of an ordinary law they can, if they have sufficient signatures supporting their petition, request the holding of a referendum for people to decide on their proposal.

Administrative tribunals

Administrative tribunals will be established, with an easy system and without too much expense, where the citizen can find quick and effective remedy against an administration that commits mistakes, or is capricious or commits an injustice to the citizen. These tribunals exist in many modern countries and monitor the administration.

An administrative tribunal could hold someone personally responsible for damage suffered by a citizen.

32. Justice

Access to justice is fundamental. Today, such access for people with a fixed, or low to medium income, is hindered due to the exaggerated increase in court costs and because the legal aid system is incompetent.

The tariff increases must be addressed and tariffs reduced.

Legal aid, provided to people without means, must be reformed so they receive the best service. Coordination between government, the judiciary and the legal profession must be strengthened so that the administration of justice can be improved in a way that ensures justice without delay.

The Family Court will be established so that there is a specialised structure to better suit the needs of those whose marriage has failed. Judicial social assistants, specialised in this sector, will provide their contribution.

Work will continue on changes necessary in procedural laws and the master system in the civil law area where this has been ignored.

Work will continue on establishing a regional tribunal to lessen the burden on the ordinary court.

The Tribunal for the Investigation of Injustices will be strengthened by the recruiting more judicial assistants to facilitate the work of the presiding Judge.

Procedures pending in front of this tribunal will be decided more efficiently and without delays. Decisions in favour of the complainant will be implemented in the first week of a Labour government unless there are constitutional problems. These will include cases decided by the Ombudsman.

The Gozo Court will have all the registers existing in court for the benefit of Gozitan and Maltese citizens and their lawyers.

Work will continue on the complete amalgamation of the Public Registry and the Lands Registry.

The Attorney General's office will be strengthened and his function be better defined through a separate law, apart from the Constitution.

The Civil Code will be amended to remove discrimination between the legitimate or illegitimate status of a person, including issue regarding inheritance.

33. The Civil Service

A law regarding public service will be prepared and a Whistle Blower Act will be enacted.

Government must make effective use of human resources at operational as well as other levels so that government provides recognition to its employees and an honest account to citizens who pay taxes.

Reform of the civil service, and the creation of a substantial number of bodies forming part of the public sector, but with some degree of autonomy, should have led to better use of government resources. In fact, it has led to waste, with a lack of transparency and accountability. A radical reform will be carried out in this sector.

The public service will be better managed, with clear parameters and direct responsibilities. Each department's functions must be clear. The bureaucratic machine will not continue to grow uncontrolled.

A Labour government will introduce this new mentality also in parastatal bodies, government agencies and local councils.

The necessary cultural change will not happen overnight. It will be carried out in a planned manner in consultation with representatives of workers and the administration.

Relations between government and the public sector will be built on a solid basis and employees will benefit from greater autonomy and benefits, and work better and with utmost loyalty to the country's administration.

A Labour government will create productive work and tackle capital projects in the same way that the Labour government used public service employees in projects such as the ones in Bugibba, Marsascale, Birzebbuga and Gnejna.

A Charter of duties and rights of Public Service employees will be drawn up. More administrative functions will be decentralised to better serve the public. A system will be introduced enabling managers of private and public enterprises to share their experiences and abilities. Public employees will be given new training opportunities.

Communications between the Public Service and citizens will be strengthened by establishing communications directorates in every ministry and/or department.

34. Local councils

Local councils must be councils of citizens, from the citizens, for the citizens.

Local councils are assuming more roles formerly carried by central government. A Labour government acknowledges the importance of decentralising power but also acknowledges this must be accompanied by adequate resources at human and financial level. A Labour government will provide more resources to local councils.

The gradual transfer of certain executive functions to councils will be strengthened.

Councillors will receive legal protection regarding words expressed during council meetings, so that councillors can do their duty well.

The Coordination Board within the Ministry for Infrastructure will be re-established to provide full coordination in infrastructural work on all levels. This will lead to work being done well and not having to be done twice. This will be operational for other departments dealing regularly with central government so there is better coordination.

A Labour government will review election rules of the Association of Local Councils to remove its democratic deficit.

Local taxes

A Labour government will amend the law to prevent local councils introducing any local tax, whatever this is called. The Labour Party is against additional taxation.

Enforcement at local level

Local wardens are not being used well in situations more resembling tax collecting, where they are pressured that unless they issue enough fines, they will lose their job. A Labour government will revise the whole procedure regarding local wardens because they cannot be used to collect money for the councils. Local enforcement must aim to educate people that observing rules is important in society.

Regional and local development

A Labour government will facilitate sustainable development by continuing the regional plans project, with different areas of Malta taking the best decisions according to its needs. Despite our smallness, we must acknowledge that the south has different priorities to other parts of Malta and Gozo, both on economic and social and environmental levels.

These plans must not be prepared by a small group enclosed in a room. The Socio-Economic Plan for the South of Malta, in which local councils, NGOs and all those who had any interest in the area under discussion were involved, must be used.