

# Malta Labour Party

## Draft Electoral Manifesto - 1962

To be discussed and approved by the General Conference of the Malta Labour Party at the Tivoli Theatre, Pawla, Sunday 7, 1962 [sic] at 9.30 a.m.

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The Malta Labour Party reaffirm their democratic socialist principles which do not run counter to Christian beliefs and solemnly subscribe to:

- (1) the right of every nation, however small, to govern itself and to determine its own international relations in its own best interest and for the furtherance of its own progress and prosperity.
- (2) freedom of conscience, This ensures for every citizen the right to exercise his own religious beliefs without hindrance and at the same time to fulfil his civic duties without pseudo-religious interference.
- (3) the equality of all citizens before the law of the land. This implies not only the adherence to the Charter of Human Rights but also the abolition of mediaeval privileges which have retarded our own social and economic progress. Any interference with the right of a democratically elected majority to implement the people's mandate is a crime.
- (4) equal opportunities to all citizens. This entails freedom of speech at public meetings, in the press, on the air, universal suffrage, free compulsory education, full employment and adequate social services from the cradle to the grave. Whilst the right to private ownership is by no means denied the state must exercise the positive function of preventing any individual or group of individuals from dominating the heights of the nation's economy and dictating living standards to their fellow citizens. The Malta Labour Party firmly believe in the right of the people to have the final say in the nation's vital means of production. All forms of Cooperative and Social ownership should therefore be encouraged in order to curb the excesses of unbridled capitalism.
- (5) Charter of the United Nations and the equality of all the human races - black, white or coloured. In particular Maltese Labour believe in the right of every nation to choose the method of government and the social system most consonant with its economic environment and its special political and social stage of development. The division of the world into two huge power blocs, the one intent on destroying the other, militates against world peace and the brotherhood of man. Whilst therefore communism with its anti-democratic suppression of freedom of conscience and of association and other restrictions on human rights earns Labour's unequivocal condemnation, the means chosen so far to combat it - namely nuclear weapons and military alliances are equally reprehensible. Labour believe in a reinvigorated United Nation's Organisations able to enforce the principles embodied in the Charter through an international police force.

## II - Independence

Since time immemorial our islands have been dominated by foreign powers. Our people have not therefore been the custodian's of these fundamental human rights. On the contrary our social, political and economic institutions have been at the mercy of foreign masters who have fashioned them to suit their own requirements.

During 1955-1958 the Maltese Labour Movement made the first historic attempt to obtain for our people an equality of status with the citizens of the United Kingdom. The integration proposals (or closer union with Britain) had as their objective not merely representation at Westminster but also the solid benefits of the British Welfare State. The British Government granted the former but jibbed at the latter.

That economic equivalence would have cost the British Treasury a tidy sum is not a measure of the unreasonableness of our claims but merely the evidence of the neglect and exploitation of our islands by the Protecting Power.

It is now evident that the right of self-determination of the Maltese people can only find expression in independence. We have all the requisites of a modern nation: natural frontiers, language, customs, and a national conscience. Notwithstanding all the restrictions imposed upon us by foreign rule, we have in the recent past succeeded in giving proof after proof that we can govern ourselves far better than anyone else can do it for us.

But even if this were not so, we have now learnt that a nation without independence is like a living organism without a soul, relegated for ever to the lower scale of creation. To us an existence without freedom is like life without light, a body without limbs. Under Colonialism our existence is not different from the one inside a tomb where worms flourish in the dampness and fetid air. We are therefore determined to bring colonialism to an immediate end. This is the supreme task of our people in the twentieth century.

## **New Constitution**

Pressure upon Britain by the United Nations Organisation and the resounding fiasco of the past four years of direct colonial rule have coerced the British Conservative Government into a change of plan. No longer do they and their ecclesiastical collaborators extol the virtues of British imperialism. They now speak of an Anglo-Maltese partnership which retains for Britain the pith and substance of all power. Britain's Colonial Office have accordingly devised a constitution which re-establishes a Maltese Parliament shorn of all powers on defence, foreign affairs, currency, civil aviation, national borrowing, broadcasting, the civilian dry docks, the civil service and the police force. These remain firmly in Britain's hands and a watchdog of the Colonial Office nicknamed the United Kingdom Commissioner shall have not only the power to veto any legislation but also to enact any law which he considers essential in Britain's interest. The United Kingdom Commissioner shall have the right to scrutinise all Cabinet papers. He and his nominees shall enjoy extra-territorial rights.

Small wonder then if the Blood Constitution has been universally condemned even by the "loyal" settlers. But to condemn it and at the same time accept its provisions and be prepared to work it reveals a duplicity of spirit which cannot deceive anyone today.

Indeed for any political group to submit to the electorate programmes of social and economic changes which they suggest they can carry out under the Blood Constitution is the climax at best of self-deception, at worst of unscrupulous chicanery.

Accepting the provisions of the Blood Constitution is literally equivalent to sheepishly obeying all the dictates of the Colonial Office and collaborating in a puppet show with the Maltese Parliament and Cabinet as Punch and Judy and Britain's Colonial Secretary as the clever manipulator.

To those who claim to be in a better position to smash the Blood Constitution by temporarily putting up with it we only have to point out the constant failures of our fathers and forefathers in following this cowardly course. Time after time have the British offered the carrot of freedom: in one hundred and sixty years of British rule

we have had more than ten Constitutions, and all of them with the promise of a final happy ending. Over and over again we had to start from scratch and today we run the risk of being the last remaining colony in the world.

### **Constituent Assembly**

There is therefore not slightest doubt that the primary duty of the elected representatives of the Maltese people is to refuse the responsibility of office until such time when

(a) the British' Government will recognise the new Assembly as the only body entitled to draft a constitution for Malta based on the right of self-determination of the Maltese people, and,

(b) the British Government will respect the wishes of the majority of the Maltese Assembly and give the Maltese people the constitution which they choose for themselves through their representatives.

This is a commitment binding on all the whole Labour Movement. Similarly in the drafting of a genuine Maltese Constitution the elected Labour representatives are committed to take( as their guide the five fundamental principles enunciated at the beginning of this electoral manifesto.

### **Why Independence?**

No one has as yet tried to oppose our campaign for independence from the moral standpoint. Morally our case is unassailable.

During the past four years, however, British propaganda has been incessant in its attempt to convince the Maltese people that political independence would spell the economic extinction of the Maltese people. What is even more shameful has been the persistent echo of this propaganda in local ecclesiastical pronouncements. That man does not live by bread alone seems to be conveniently forgotten by those very groups who in the past have repeatedly accused our movement of crass materialistic tendencies.

What truth is there in these pro-colonialists allegations? Let us assume for the sake of argument that Malta cannot survive without a British base. When are we more likely to receive adequate compensation for our constant exposure to war and the constant impediments to a full and free exercise of our peace-like activities? When the compensation is fixed unilaterally by Britain herself and we are haughtily told take it or lump it? Or when the boot is on the other foot and we are in possession of our God given right to tell Britain to take it or leave it? Even the greatest simpleton can give the correct answer.

Let us also assume that the United Nations Organisation, the U.S.A. and other interested neighbours find themselves in the unlikely predicament of being unable to supply us with the relatively small credit we require to change rapidly from a British war economy to a Maltese peace economy. When are we most likely to negotiate terms which would ensure our ability to stand on our feet in the near future? When we stand naked in the negotiating chamber or when we negotiate as equals, each with his own right to refuse or to accept? Again the answer is obvious.

### **Inside or Outside the Commonwealth**

Over and over again we have been misrepresented by our enemies as wanting independence outside the

Commonwealth. Labour stands by its previous pledge namely to allow the people to decide on this issue when they are really free to do so after independence. This and other vital issues such as our relations with the Common Market and with our Mediterranean neighbours will be finally settled by the ballot box in a national referendum. At the proper time when the full historical and economic context is laid bare before our eyes, the Labour Movement will not fail to give a lead to the Maltese electorate.

### **Move We Must**

Labour has faith in the Maltese people, in their ability to catch up with our European neighbours and in their determination to conserve and enlarge this democratic and Christian heritage. Independence is the key to the gate which opens on the new avenues leading to peace, progress and prosperity. We cannot turn back and take shelter in the sellars of British colonialism for fear of the storms which await all those who take to the highway. The old structure is cracked and if we hesitate much longer we will be buried under its debris.

Move we must. Forward rather than backwards. Towards the light away from darkness, with manly strides and head held high and the old battle cry ringing in our ears - Malta First and Foremost.

*[A few minor amendments to this Draft were adopted by the General Conference and have been incorporated in the text above.]*