

Malta Labour Party Electoral Program 1971

Malta for the Maltese: in Peace and Progress

THE people of Malta and Gozo are convinced that after nine years of Nationalist rule, our country is morally and economically sick, and that great efforts have to be made to put our country back on its feet and on the road to progress.

The Nationalist Party came to power through undemocratic means. Even though it had huge funds to dispose of, the Nationalist Government failed in its aim to make our country viable through its own earnings and resources, without the need for foreign aid. And as it failed to reach this aim, it also failed in its other aim, that of obtaining for Malta that state of independence achieved by other nations of our size.

Clear proof of this is our economic and social position in this last year. The volume of exports fell by 15 per cent, agriculture, fisheries and tourism retreated. The building boom, which came upon us suddenly and without any planning from the Nationalist Government came to nothing. Thus, for the first time, there is a deficit of nearly one million in the Consolidated Fund, which makes good, from year to year, for the Government's current expenditure. We also had a record deficit of six million pounds in the Balance of Payments Current Account.

The national debt has reached £43 million, a figure that is alarming everyone. Millions were squandered without helping us to increase production. For the nation to make ends meet, the rate of Government borrowing had to be increased from year to year, and now it has reached the figure of £7 million a year. This debt has, in some way, to be paid either by us or by our children.

Even after so much borrowing, the infrastructure is still very weak and not able to meet the demands of the country. Thousands of applicants still await the telephone service; the electricity enterprise is not only inadequate for the needs of years to come but is also being run at a great loss. Water is being produced through very costly methods, the port has never been in such a confusion as it is today and lacks facilities which the Government has been promising for years.

Despite plans and reports the airport has seen no modifications in the last ten years, and the facilities remain as they were before tourism started.

IN the social field, we had the same bankruptcy. The people remained without houses for years on end and we had protests not only from the Labour Opposition but also from religious organisations.

The cost of living is ever on the increase; it shot up in 1967 when the Nationalist Government, for no valid reason, devalued the Maltese pound by 14 per cent. On pensioners, the unemployed, the widows, the orphans, the sick who live on relief or a low pension fell the greatest hardship. To keep pace with the cost of living, the workers had to resort to a flood of strikes. Brazen-facedly, the Government accused them of playing at politics.

Disorganisation and corruption abounded in Government departments. There was discrimination and abuses in employment and promotions. Discipline in the country vanished and everybody does what he likes and what is best for him. Those who could grab, grabbed. Civic spirit, with everybody taking an interest in his

country and trying his best to improve it, came to an end. This is immorality of the worst order and the Nationalist Government allowed it to grip Malta.

The Maltese people is seeing and touching all this, and thus wants a change. The people understand the need for a new life. There is a need for new efforts so that we can leave the road to ruin and start on the road of progress.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE LABOUR PROGRAMME

So that Malta returns health:-

(1)The people of Malta and Gozo must put aside corruption and live honestly.

(2)Every citizen must do his part so that productivity increases. When the burden is fairly distributed, nobody will suffer.

(3)It is the duty of the Government to reduce the rate of debt the Nationalist Government has burdened us with.

It is the duty of the Government to make every effort so that funds Malta gets from foreign nations for serving them in the military field increase and that they will suffice for the needs of the nation. The aim has to be that within a short time we can stand on our feet economically without the need of exploiting our strategic position in the Mediterranean. In this way only can Malta attain the independence which all other countries have. Otherwise Malta will once again become a servant and an instrument of war in the hands of other countries.

THE FIRST MEASURES TO BE TAKEN

THE Labour Party has faith in the people of Malta and Gozo and therefore proposes these first concrete measures towards salvation:-

1.COMMISSION FOR CIVIL SERVANTS

In this commission all interested parties will be represented. The aim of the commission will be to reform the Civil Service and to make it more adequate for the needs of today. Productivity departments will be set up and plans will be drawn up so that the Government's share in the productive fields is increased. Pending claims for regrading and regrouping will form a background to this re-organisation.

2.DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE.

As early as possible the Labour Government will, together with the unions, revise the discipline machinery and procedures so that justice can be done to employees. Where these procedures are inefficient, they will be reinforced so that Malta can have an efficient and honest administration.

3.OMBUDSMAN

THE party in power would set up an Ombudsman on the lines of that in advanced democratic countries. Among other things, the Ombudsman will have the job of listening to protests from those who were not given jobs between 1958 and 1971 and protests that may arise in future.

4.INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Laws about Trade Unions, industrial unrest, conciliation and arbitration will be consolidated in one law and amended in the light of proposals made by the General Workers' Union and other unions when they replied to the dictatorial law proposed by the Nationalist Government in 1970. The Party accepts and is tied down to these principles:

(a) That industrial legislation should not kill but encourage the responsibility of collective efforts by the workers to better their conditions of work, which are to be in keeping with the dignity of the human being and of social justice.

(b) That for all Government employees there should be negotiating machinery that consists in a Joint Council for all employees helped by Joint Committees In particular sectors.

(c) That the law will hold good for everyone, including the Government and that each party has the right to take the other party to conciliation and in the absence of agreement, to the Industrial Court or Arbitration Board.

A Labour Government would open negotiations with the British Government with the aim of making this law apply also to British Services Departments in Malta as it does to the Maltese Government.

5.THE DRYDOCKS

The Drydocks will be reorganised in the following way: a new Corporation will be set up, 50 of its members being nominated by the Government and 50 by the GWU under a Chairman acceptable to the two sides. The final aim will be to put the Drydocks back on its feet and that control will ultimately fall to the workers. This would mean that employees would be working in their own interests.

Before everything else the Corporation must:-

(i) Together with the Government and the GWU, see what is the shortest time and the smallest amount of money that the Drydocks needs to get back on its feet and stop being a burden on the nation.

(ii) Find quickly a suitable solution for pending claims and to remove the disparity created recently and other anomalies that may crop up.

The Management will be made of Maltese officials who will have the help of foreign consultants.

6.THE AUDITOR

The Auditor's Department will be re-inforced so that there will be better and more detailed physical checking on Government stores and expenditure. The Auditor will have the necessary help that a Labour Government has always given it in the past.

7. THE DEFENCE TREATY

The Defence Treaty will be reviewed and it must be made clear that the funds coming from the British Government are not charity but as payment for the facilities Malta is according to Britain.

Payment has to be adequate for the needs of our country and Britain cannot automatically pass on these facilities to other powers.

It will also be ascertained that the Defence Treaty will protect better the jobs of Services Department employees, and that those sacked will have to be adequately compensated and alternative employment found for them.

8.COST OF LIVING

An increase in wages and salaries will be given soon to alleviate the burden of recent cost of living increases.

An increase will also be accorded to those who receive a pension and who are entitled to National Assistance. In the means test a house occupied by the individual will no longer be valued as capital.

9.MINIMUM WAGE 40-HOUR-WEEK

A minimum wage will be introduced by law; equal pay for equal work will be extended to women in private industry; working hours for Government workers will be reduced to 40 hours per week.

10.INCOME TAX REFORM

So that we can come up-to-date with the huge quantity of arrears and so that Maltese capital invested abroad can return to Malta, a Labour Government will give the citizens the choice during a limited period, to declare capital and to pay a percentage on it.

THE PAYE system will be introduced on the lines of other countries. When this is put into effect, everyone will get a year's grace from Income Tax.

11.ECONOMIC PLAN

A Labour Government will review the 1969/74 plan. In this revision the Trade Unions and Association, Civil Servants, industrialists and others involved will be consulted. In economic planning, which naturally includes other plans after that of 1969/74, a Labour Government will keep these needs in mind:

A special effort will be made so that the infrastructure will be improved to meet industrial and touristic needs. The second aim will be to balance the Current Account of the Balance of Payments. The third will be to reduce the rate of national debt. The final aim will be that Malta will not continue to depend economically on earnings from military bases

Like budgets, every economic plan will pass by a law in Parliament, and can only be changed by another law.

That many of the aspirations of the Maltese people be fulfilled will depend much on the success of the 1969/74 plan and especially on increased productivity in the next few years.

Among these aspirations a Labour Government feels that these are among the most important:

(a) EDUCATION

A serious plan of five years will be drawn up so that the nation will know the need; of all the various education branches, including the University, MCAST, Training Colleges, secondary schools, primaries and others.

It was a gross blunder that in the past these institutions were treated separately as this resulted in a lot of duplication of facilities which had a detrimental effect on quality.

In a modern industrial society where women are given an opportunity of working in factories, it is necessary that beside primaries, the nation should provide kindergartens and infants schools.

A Labour Government will give these a start by means of a pilot scheme. 1. In the primaries, the qualities of learning will be improved. For those children between the ages of 11 and 13, middle schools, in which learning will be equal for everyone, will be set up.

2. Education will be obligatory until the age of 16. Proper classes will also be set up for those children above the age of 13 in which skills and the needs of tourism and industry will be given the importance they deserve.

At 13 years children will have the opportunity of taking either commerce, or skills or schooling that will lead them to academic degrees.

In the academic and commercial institutions, the aim will be that diplomas and degrees will reach the same level as those of developed European countries and will be recognised as such. No new lines of specialisation will be opened until the quality of those already in existence are really improved.

The Maltese people must learn the wisdom of the Romans who insisted that you cannot be intelligent unless in the best of health.

So that the moral and physical strength of our children is cultivated, there is a need for physical education to be accorded the same importance as cultural education; therefore an effort will be made so that sport in the education field will not continue to be regarded as a frivolity but as a necessity for everyone.

Therefore, in all school curricula physical education will be obligatory and facilities will be provided.

For adults, it is equally necessary that the nation provides a centre for car, horse and bicycle racing, a centre for athletics, football and other sports and a start to the national stadium. It is only in this way that we can help the coming generations to avoid drugs and other vices that affluence in developed countries brings with it.

(b) INDUSTRY

A Labour Government will try hard to modify the Common Market agreement with a view that Malta be given time to stand on its feet economically before we open the doors of competition to countries which are

armed to the teeth in this field. At the same time efforts will be made to reach an agreement with Libya so that we can benefit from our geographical position between Europe and North Africa.

A Labour Government would give larger incentives to Maltese investments in new local industries than to foreign investments. Particularly, a Labour Government would exempt from Income Tax any profits made out of new enterprises in the Agricultural, Fisheries and Horticulture field. The main criteria when the Development Corporation gives aid will be the possibility that the aided industries will increase their exports in the future.

SMALL industries with Maltese capital will be aided through the exports credit guarantees system. Help by the Development Corporation will, as far as possible, be changed so that instead of grants and loans the corporation will participate directly as a shareholder in these aided industries.

(c) AGRICULTURE

In these last nine years agriculture and fisheries under a Nationalist Government regressed, despite a number of FAQ. reports which were shelved. A Labour Government would re-examine this problem, and also that of the milk producers, especially in Gozo where the larger part of the population are employed in such work. A commission will be set up to make recommendations as to how in this important sectors these people can decently earn their living.

(d) TOURISM.

So that tourism increases, the most important thing is that the nation should exercise complete control over commercial air services. Today all independent countries control air services entirely or through majority share-holding capital. These countries are, in many cases, happy even to lose money on air services, as long as the airlines controlled by them increases the yearly general income through tourism and commerce.

A Labour Government would work on this example and look upon air services not as an enterprise that must make money, but as part of the infrastructure which will help economic activities that leave profits to the nation. It is ridiculous of the Government to spend huge sums of money on publicising tourism, and then leave this vital service in the hands of foreigners.

THE Development Corporation system giving help so that we will develop enterprise giving facilities to tourists will be continued, but its criteria will be examined again so that incentives will not just help to take clients from an old hotel to a new one but so that the total number of tourists increase each year.

(e) PUBLIC TRANSPORT

An absence of action in this sector during the last five years has brought about suffering to all those involved in this field. Therefore a Labour Government would bring together all interested parties, bus owners, workers and representatives of the public so that this service will be reorganised in the interests of everybody.

(f) HOUSING

A Labour Government would perpetuate the system first introduced by the second Labour Government of 1955/ 58 under which the Government would build houses with subsidised rent for the most deserving families.

1) Plots in localities already furnished with roads and other services will be given on emphyteusis.

(2) Help will be given so that the first storey will be added to.

(3) A Labour Government would work hard to clear the worst slums and in their place put up decent housing.

A Labour Government would introduce a new system under which a Housing Commission would start a revolving fund so that the Government could sell houses to those who rent from the Government and wish to become the proprietors of the place in which they live. With these funds the Government would be in a stronger position to build other houses and help those in need. The Housing Commission would be given powers to act on the same lines as Building Societies in other countries.

(g)CHILDREN'S ALLOWANCE

A Labour Government would do its utmost to introduce a system of children's allowance for the first time.

(h)NATIONAL PENSIONS

A Labour Government would, together with the Unions, try to find the best way of introducing a modern system of pensions in which contributions as well as benefits will be related to the size of the wage or salary.

(i)HEALTH

1.HEALTH INSURANCE

A Labour Government would do its utmost so that Malta, like other European countries, will at least have a start to a form of security during sickness. For this security each citizen must contribute weekly and in return each will be entitled to free hospitalisation and a free nursing service at home.

2.PROBLEM OF THE OLD

The Labour Party saw long ago how serious the problem has become of old people who have no one to take care of them in their old age.

A Labour Government would give every co-operation and help to voluntary associations who are ready to help Maltese society in this field. Particularly, the Government will look into the possibility of establishing a service with reasonable pay for those old people who have means and who wish to remain in their house and be looked after.

3. THE HANDICAPPED

A census of handicapped citizens will be held so that the best method by which society can help them be found.

4. POLLUTION

Though in Malta the problem of pollution of the air is not so grave as that of industrialised large cities elsewhere, nevertheless industries in Malta should be run with every precaution against pollution so that what occurred in other countries can be avoided.

Unfortunately, the position of the seas around us is much worse than that of air. Apart from the adverse advertisement to our tourist industry, it is vital for the country that our seas are not polluted, or at least, polluted areas should be few and known.

It is also imperative that our streets, the beaches and the countryside are not dirtied by rubbish and each one of us must learn that dirt brings ugliness and sickness. A Labour Government, on its part, will see that public services are methodic and efficient.

(j) LAWS AND LAW COURTS

A Labour Government would modernise the laws of the land so that they will be based upon the new needs of industrialisation, new commercial institutions and social relationship have brought.

These laws, besides serving the material needs of the nation, should be drawn up in the light of known human rights with the aim that Maltese society creates equal opportunities for all its citizens and above all else, so that society learns to treat with love the small, the underprivileged and the handicapped and all those who are at a disadvantage in life.

To give proof of its intention, even though the time and the financial situation of the country are not propitious, a Labour Government is willing to lower the succession duties for families who bequeath little.

PARTICULAR attention will be paid to the revision of the Mental Health Act in the best interest of the patient.

In the constitutional field, a Labour Government would give the right to every Maltese citizen to gain satisfaction in the Court of Human Rights of the Council of Europe. Though the Nationalist Government signed the Convention about these rights in 1967, it did not allow the citizen to exercise this right.

A Labour Government would hasten court procedure and will do its utmost to stop court cases taking years to be resolved.

(k) GOZO

So that the Maltese and Gozitan people feel that they are one people, it is imperative that every Gozitan should not be treated as an inferior citizen. Gozitans should enjoy the same facilities as the Maltese. At the

same time it is not possible for a population of under 30,000 to have a University, Power Station and other public services of the same quality as that pertaining a larger population. Therefore the Labour Party is convinced that Gozo's problem is not that we should duplicate in Gozo everything that there is in Malta. If this happens the quality of these things in Gozo will be inferior to Malta's. Gozo's problem is how a Gozitan can reach with certainty the centre of public services with the same effectiveness as that enjoyed by the citizen of Mellieha, Babrija and other villages in Malta. When this certainty is created, the Gozitan will no longer feel himself inferior to the Maltese.

THEREFORE, a Labour Go-would seriously study the feasibility of the Malta/Gozo/Comino causeway project. If it is economically feasible, a Labour Government would give a start to this project. If it is not possible a Labour Government would look for the best alternative so that the means of communication between Malta and Gozo provide that certainty for the citizens of Malta and Gozo.

(l) THE YOUNG

A Labour Government would encourage facilities where the young can meet and enjoy themselves honestly. Entertainment Tax on shows for children and teenagers would be abolished. At the same time every effort will be made so that culture in the young will improve through more libraries, more national competition of folkloristic music and Maltese theatre and literature. The Manoel Theatre, that became the national theatre under the Labour Government of 1955/58, will be the centre of theatrical activities.

(m) FOREIGN POLICY

In its relations with foreign countries, a Labour Government would follow two fundamental principles. The first is that Malta will help other countries so that in the world, and especially the Mediterranean, peace will reign for us, our children and their children. The second is that foreign policy will be used only as an instrument to help the life of the Maltese people in the general picture of full independence. Because of this there should be no ties with countries which we know have an interest that Malta should be subject to them and do what benefits them.

The Labour Party has already, in meetings and other public occasions, without hesitation said clearly where this danger lies. It is a fact known to everybody that Malta is not yet in a position to let its citizens live on normal activities, like industry, tourism, agricultural etc. As long as we remain in this position it is necessary that for anybody who wants to use Malta (without the dangers mentioned above) from the military angle must compensate adequately so that in a short time we will heal from this wound which in the past up till now has left us short of free.

ABOVE all we must be certain that whoever gets these facilities must not be allowed to pass them automatically to others and that each nation that wants to station people in uniform here will before have to talk to the Government of Malta separately.

(n) BELIEFS

A Labour Government, in the implementations of this programme and in the measures necessary for the good of the people of Malta and Gozo will act on these democratic socialist beliefs:

1. that each citizen has equal rights, irrespective of race, creed and beliefs.
2. that each citizen has the right to follow his religious beliefs without hindrance.
3. that the duty of a civilised society is that it should not allow excess suffering for man through a huge disequilibrium between the rich and the poor.
4. that man in a modern society should create conditions under which it will be more possible to live like brothers, in one family instead of like animals in a forest.

In the light of these beliefs only, can Malta become truly Maltese and prosper in peace and progress.