

Highlights of the PN's Electoral Programme (1987)

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PN's Electoral Programme

1. A truly national health service

Everyone will be entitled to medical treatment at Government expense by a doctor of one's own choice.

Health Centres will be established in all districts, as against the few scattered polyclinics currently available. These centres will perform the functions of mini-hospitals such as care for expectant women and convalescents, and dental care

We shall provide for the development of comprehensive domiciliary nursing and midwifery service connected with the Health Centres.

In our hospitals, Maltese doctors and specialists will provide particular attention to the seriously ill. Equipment will be well-maintained and up-to-date. Hospitals will be adequately staffed with nurses, who will enjoy better working conditions than those provided today.

Health Centres will be established in Industrial Estates. These centres will have professional staff who will monitor each workplace for cleanliness, safety, noise-levels and the operation of piecework. Measures will be introduced to check abuses by some company doctors.

The mental hospital will be modernised; proper Half-way Houses will be set-up; Special Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centres will be created.

Essential medicines prescribed by doctors in the National Health Service will be obtainable from the pharmacy of one's choice.

Licences will again be granted to private hospitals and clinics meeting Government specifications.

2. Equality in education

Every school, whether owned by the Government, the Church or private interests, will:

- a. participate in a National Education Plan designed to ensure that every pupil acquires a sound cultural base for life-long education and the specific requirements of different branches of learning.
- b. receive Government grants on the basis of pupil numbers the educational level, the kind of school, and special project requirements.

This policy will ensure that school enrolment will never depend on the payment of school fees and that Private Schools will find help not hindrance from the Government.

Government Schools will be restored to their traditional prestigious national standards. Gradually, the divisions between different groups of children will be removed, while special early teaching assistance will be given to those pupils who find it difficult to keep up with their age-group.

The effective use of Audiovisual and Electronic Aids (videos, computers) will be promoted. This will be preceded by provision of the appropriate teacher training.

Every school will provide Student Services, including spiritual, personal and career counselling, medical care, sports and cultural (e.g. library) facilities. The latter will serve as Cultural Centres for all the community during after-school hours.

Special effort will be directed towards developing the creative skills and talents of all our people, with particular attention to children.

The University will regain an appropriate degree of autonomy. We will abolish the present system whereby 'a sponsor' is a prerequisite for entry. Students will receive a stipend during their studies and where a work period is required as an integral part of a course, the student will receive the salary normally attached to the job. The University will also incorporate the faculties of Arts, Science, Social Sciences and Theology. All students possessing the requisite qualifications will be permitted to attend their chosen study-courses.

3. Full Employment and renewed confidence in our country

Government's primary objective will be provision of employment opportunities for all. New job creation requires investment. Government will concentrate on infrastructural works such as water, electricity, telecommunications, education and training - the essential conditions for all enterprises to operate efficiently and profitably.

Maltese and foreign private investment will again be promoted through the establishment of effective incentive schemes and the removal of all disincentives e.g. the fear of nationalisation by a Government with an ambiguous attitude towards free enterprise).

The rate of exchange of the Maltese Lira will be established in consideration of the advantages to all the national community and not just on the basis of the greatest profit accruing directly to the Government's coffers.

Incentive schemes will be developed to boost the activities of the self-employed, promoters of family business and individuals demonstrating strong initiative.

4. A clean Government

Corruption will be fought and eradicated. A Special Standing Commission will be appointed which will, among other things, investigate allegations of corruption in public administration.

The Auditor's powers will be strengthened to permit a tighter check on the expenditure of the people's money.

The public accountability of Public Corporations will be enhanced through the organisation of annual meetings during which members of the general public may enquire about the corporations' policies and performance.

An Ombudsman will be appointed to investigate, at Government expense, allegations of injustices in the public administration.

The PN in government will ensure that anyone, irrespective of rank, found guilty of committing an irregularity in public administration will be disciplined without fail.

An Employment Commission will be appointed, as provided for in our Constitution, with the purpose of ensuring that all appointments with Government and related corporations are made on a professional and impartial basis.

5. A Government for all the people

The Government's resources will never be used for partisan purposes. The State will provide funds for political parties, in direct proportion to their share of the nationwide vote, with the object of ensuring that parties can operate as autonomously and effectively as possible.

The PN in government will bring about reconciliation with all sectors with which the Socialist Government has

clashed over the years: doctors, teachers, nurses, bus-owners, shopkeepers, bakers and others.

In Government offices and buildings, national emblems will be displayed, not those of political parties.

There will be a review of Presidential powers, with the necessary amendments to the Constitution, to ensure that the Commissions responsible for the electoral process, the public service, employment and broadcasting are always constituted.

A Cultural Development Plan will be implemented with the object of enhancing Malta's national identity.

Broadcasting will be impartial and programming quality will be improved. Persons proposing interesting programming material will have the opportunity to present it, possibly through the establishment of a special channel or station for this purpose. Requests will be entertained for the concession of broadcasting licenses to private organizations.

Those who write to the Government in Maltese will receive a reply in Maltese - correct Maltese. The law regulating the use of the words 'Malta' and 'National' will be amended.

Wholehearted support will be given to Maltese artists in every field: the visual arts, music, the theatre, cinema; as well as to local craftsmen to ensure that traditional Maltese skills are kept alive.

A National Sports Council will be appointed with the object of building and improving sports facilities on both a national as well as a direct basis. Coaches will be trained professionally. Every sector of the population will be encouraged to participate actively in some form of sport. Government will ensure that athletes with strong potential will be provided with the facilities and support necessary for them to enhance the image of our national teams when competing internationally.

Some public festas will be re-instated: Independence Day

the National Feast day), St. Joseph, "L-Imnarja" (St. Peter and St. Paul), Our Lady of Victory, the Immaculate Conception. Festa days will also be celebrated on weekdays when appropriate.

Emigrants returning to Malta will enjoy the same rights as other Maltese nationals and will also be entitled to dual citizenship.

6. Homes for all: rent will be converted into hire-purchase

Tenants of old Government houses will be offered advantageous conditions to permit them to purchase these premises. Government will subsidise a similar scheme designed to facilitate the purchase of privately-owned old rented homes by their tenants.

Lohombus interest subsidy on home loans: Government assistance and overtime payments will no longer be considered as part of the purchaser's income when computing a home-purchaser's entitlement to the interest subsidy. Furthermore, other severe loan entitlement criteria will be eased in the purchaser's favour.

Home Improvement Scheme: Increased grants will be provided to adjust for inflation in the cost of certain essential items. In addition Government assistance may take the form of the provision of free labour by skilled Government labourers or of material at subsidised prices.

In future, when houses are not built by their future residents or built to be rented for short periods, payments made for its use will not be considered as rent, but as hire-purchase instalments.

7. An efficient Government: secure supply of essential services: water, electricity, telephones, etc.

Government employees will again render efficient service to the public:

- a. Better pay and working conditions, explicit and equitable promotion and recruitment criteria will be established vacant posts will be filled on a permanent basis.
- b. The Joint Negotiating Council and the Joint Negotiating Committees will be regularly constituted and the right to arbitration will be made available to all Government employees.
- c. Workers' Committees will be effectively established in Government departments.

You will always find drinking-quality water in your tap. The pumping up of excessive quantities of unhealthy salty water will be replaced by an adequate and effective desalination programme; water-wastage will be checked through the replacement of leaking pipes.

We shall no longer experience sudden power cuts. New generators will be installed without delay, replacing the outdated and unreliable second-hand plants purchased by the Government of the Corrupt Few. The use of coal will be controlled so as not to pose any health or environmental threats. Our streets will all be relit. Research will be conducted into the use of alternative energy sources such as the sun, the wind, the waves, etc.

Possession of a telephone should no longer be treated as a privilege, but as a right. The current confusion between old and new systems will be resolved. There will be an expansion of direct overseas services as well as of new services (e.g. telefax) at competitive rates.

New methods will be adopted for the purchase of our petroleum requirements and our petroleum storage facilities will be put to more profitable use.

Facilities will be improved in the ports and the airport (until the new terminal is completed). Sea and road freight services will be reorganised.

Parliament will operate with greater dignity and efficiency in the carrying out of its legislative functions.

8. Local Councils

Local Councils will be democratically elected and will be entrusted with the administrative responsibilities of our towns and villages.

They will be funded by the Government on the basis of size of population and the services offered to the community.

They will ensure that each town or village has its own well-maintained public garden, sports and recreational centres, a Health Centre and a Home for the Aged, appropriate informational services and cultural activities, adequate water, electricity, drainage, road surfacing and cleaning services, etc.

Members of Parliament will not be eligible for election to Local Councils.

9. Saving the environment: translating ideas into reality

We shall repeal the Act which has given the Minister of Public Works unlimited discretion in the issue of building permits which has led to flagrant corruption and the rape of Malta's environment. In its place a new

Land Use Law will be enacted and a new comprehensive plan will be expeditiously drafted and enforced.

We shall appoint a National and Heritage Authority with powers which can effectively and immediately check the current destruction of our environment.

Special protection will be given to our coastline and to our valleys: National Parks will be developed and wardens will be appointed to oversee them.

Our capital, Valletta will regain the dignity it deserves as a historic political and residential centre.

Our museums will be treated as a means by which our nation's heritage can serve as the foundation for a better future. The laws regulating the protection of historical buildings will be reviewed and our monuments will be restored and preserved.

As a rule, no building will be permitted on agricultural land.

10. The Police and Justice: protecting everybody equally

All Police Station will be re-opened.

The Police will protect everybody equally. The abuses perpetrated by a few members of the Police Corps will be checked so that the Force will regain national respect and its traditional effectiveness.

Members of the Corps will be entitled to pension rights at an earlier age than other Government employees: there will also be improvements in their working conditions.

More Judges and Magistrates will be appointed to reduce delays in Court proceedings.

The prisons will be run by qualified officials: prisoners will use their free time fruitfully; assistance will be provided to help inmates to settle back into a normal life on release.

The Courts will be empowered to review the exercise by Ministers or Government officials of discretionary powers conferred bylaw, including the issuing of licences.

11. Partners with the true friends of our country and of peace

Members of the Armed Forces will regain the rights they have lost over the last sixteen years, including half-day working hours in summer and equitable leave and pension entitlements.

No nation will be permitted to exert undue influence in our country. We shall have no foreign bases stationed on our Islands. We shall not join any military bloc. However, we shall seek agreements for the defence of Malta with countries which are free and democratic and which have the interest and the capability to defend us.

We shall promote stronger co-operation between Mediterranean countries on matters concerning economic development and international security.

We shall strengthen Malta's diplomatic representation, particularly in countries with large Maltese emigrant communities and with sizeable markets for Malta-made products.

12. Better working conditions

Members of the Dejma and others similarly employed will not suffer from a change of government, but will receive regular and productive jobs, not subject to conditions of military discipline.

Unemployed workers will be entitled to unemployment benefits if they have left a job for a just cause; they will be entitled to a redundancy payment if they lose their job through no fault of their own; they will receive Government compensation for any loss in income resulting from the introduction of a reduced working week; they will be provided with retraining opportunities; they will be registered for work opportunities on a single work register, without discrimination.

Working conditions will be improved for all workers. Paid leave entitlement will be increased by five days to twenty-five days; the normal working-week for all workers will be brought to forty hours, on a flexible time basis.

No worker will be denied his leave entitlement without just cause.

Overtime, when really necessary, must be distributed fairly on a paid basis.

Employees will be entitled to special long-service leave after a stipulated employment period, and to cultural leave to permit participation at courses or meetings.

The wage freeze will be lifted. The National Economic Council will be entrusted with proposing criteria for pay increases.

The Industrial Relations Act will be applied in its entirety, and amendments will be introduced which will strengthen workers' rights against unfair dismissal (e.g. by preventing new owners of an existing concern from placing workers on probation); every worker will be entitled to a defence counsel of his choice in cases involving Industrial Tribunals; the abuse of employment contracts renewable on a monthly, or weekly, basis will be stopped.

Sound measures will be introduced enabling employees in Government enterprises to benefit, not only from good working conditions, but also from participation in the ownership, profits, and management of these concerns. Furthermore, incentives will be offered to private enterprises which introduce participative programmes for their employees.

Co-operatives will receive greater assistance than at present. The Co-operatives Representative Board will be entrusted with certain powers which the Co-operative Act handed over to the Minister of Agriculture, and the Fund stipulated by the Act will actually be set up. Profits reinvested in Co-operatives will be exempted from taxation.

13. Personalised social services for all families

The country's Constitution and Laws will be amended to include the fundamental rights of the family such as: the right to the protection of the privacy of family and home life; the right to determine the form of upbringing and education of one's children.

All traces of discrimination between men and women will be removed.

Financial compensation will be given over a stipulated period to mothers who dedicate their full time to the raising of their children.

Measures will be taken to ensure that women resigning from employment to look after their young children

will be able to resume their employment when these children have grown up; day-care services will be provided for families with both parents working; Income Tax liability will be reduced on working wives and on newly weds.

Families will be entitled to Children's Allowance and to Maternity Allowances on all children. Income Tax exemptions on children will be increased.

A Family Law will be enacted which will provide the Maltese family with an updated juridical framework.

Social Workers and Home Helpers will be trained to provide help at home to families facing difficulties in raising their children, such as families with handicapped children, with a single parent, or families with aged or sick members.

A comprehensive plan will be implemented to enable our handicapped citizens to lead as normal a life as possible.

Our Income Tax system will be made more equitable. More exemptions will be granted to the less well-off; the unfair 'ex-officio' system will be abolished; and succession tax procedures will be expedited.

14. A better quality of life

A National Consumers' Council will publish the result of research conducted on products available on the local market and will monitor truth in advertising.

There will be an adequate selection of reasonably priced goods on the market. The Bulk Buying Division and the Price Stabilisation Fund which have been responsible for administrative abuses, scarcities of essential items and inflation) will be abolished.

15. Our place in Europe on the right conditions

We shall join the European Economic Community which will assist us in carrying out the necessary changes over an extended period.

16. Our main economic thrust

The PN in government will put the Dockyard back on its feet: through a resumption of friendly relationships with countries whose companies once represented and will again represent our most loyal customers; and through the restoration of managerial autonomy and professionalism to the enterprise by the elimination of all forms of political interference. Continuous modernisation of machinery and regular updating of management methods will ensure that all Dockyard workers will be productively employed.

Marsa Dock, the Marsaxlokk Project, the Grain Silos and the Foundry: detailed plans for these projects can only be drawn up once the necessary information becomes available. The Marsa Dock will concentrate on the construction of specialised ships and on the creation of a Mediterranean Regional Centre for Marine Technology. The Marsaxlokk Project will be complemented through the adjacent development of an industrial estate processing raw or semi-processed goods and through the provision of facilities required for the continued expansion of international trade.

Agriculture's significance to our economy will be recognised through the re-instatement of an Extension Service, staffed with the required experts. Small unworkable fragmented Government-owned plots will be consolidated into workable fields which will subsequently be offered on preferential terms to farmers' groups

or co-operatives. Government will also subsidise the construction of glass houses; facilitate the export marketing of farm produce; strengthen veterinary services with the object of renewing stocks of cattle, sheep and poultry (thus eliminating the ailments that at present afflict them); appoint a Board of Agriculture which will devise an agricultural production plan.

Fishing: Our fishing ports and fish markets will be modernised and regularly maintained; incentives will be devised to promote the establishment of fish-shops and of fish-farms.

Farmers and Fishermen who are members of cooperatives will pay reduced rates of national insurance contributions.

Tourism: We shall focus on attracting the higher-spending quality tourist rather than going for quantity alone) through an improvement in cultural and winter activities; an upgrading in the overall standard of services provided; the provision of tourist facilities throughout the Maltese islands; the development of improved yacht facilities; the attraction of foreign permanent residents; and the realisation of the tourism objectives set out in the special Development Plan for Gozo. A law regulating time-sharing activities will also be enacted.

Other export-oriented services: schools and university courses; a Home for the aged and convalescents; financial and banking services; office quarters for international organisations; a Mediterranean data-bank; establishment of off-shore insurance companies.

Manufacturing industry will receive incentives: to adopt updated technologies; to promote exports; and to create truly Maltese products.

17. A better deal for senior citizens: increased pensions and home help

Home help will be provided to cater for the needs of aging persons able to live in their own homes if given this personal assistance.

Homes for the Aged will be set up in every district to ensure that senior citizens, who are unable to live alone, will nevertheless be able to reside in the neighbourhood familiar to them.

Centres will be established in every district where senior citizens will be able to meet each other in a congenial environment and also receive bodily care.

Retirement: Whoever wishes will be able to retire from work before sixty, or to opt for gradual retirement before sixty with an adjusted pension. On reaching pension age, persons will be allowed to carry on working and retain their full pension rights.

We shall relieve pensioners from the imposition of being the only citizens obliged to pay for their hospital care.

Pension increases: Pensions will no longer be frozen for anybody. The pension entitlement of two-thirds of one's pay will be the minimum and not the maximum. The minimum national pension will be set at four-fifths of the national minimum wage. Widows will no longer see their pensions reduced on reaching sixty. Every widow will be entitled to a pension which is at least two-thirds of her husband's. All the injustices caused at the time of the introduction of the two-thirds provision will be redressed. A special exchange rate will be offered to those receiving their pensions from overseas.

The Income Tax floor for senior citizens will be preferentially raised to a higher-level.

18. Youth in the front row

The rights and obligations of Malta' young people will be defined legally. A National Youth Board will draw up and implement, with the Government's financial assistance, a plan inclusive of the following:

The establishment of a Youth Employment Service distinct from the Labour Office which primarily caters for elder workers.

The drafting of new regulations on Working Conditions for Youth which would ensure that young workers are not exploited but are offered opportunities for further training.

The provision of financial assistance for youth projects.

Support for international youth exchanges and cultural programmes.

The organisation of a National Youth Conference designed to promote active youth participation in the development of our society; special youth representation on Workers' Councils and other similar bodies.

Tax-exemption and low interest rates on loans to engaged couples and newly-weds.

19. Safeguarding human rights and civil liberties

Any citizen who believes that one of his fundamental rights has been breached will be entitled to seek redress through the European Court of Human Rights.

Human rights provisions will be strengthened in our Constitution, with special regard to ensuring that no person is discriminated against in any way because of his political beliefs.

20. Peace with God and peace in Church-State relations

All discriminatory laws and regulations passed against the Catholic Church will be repealed. These include measures hindering the Church from administering spiritual and material assistance to children in Government schools, to the sick, to prisoners, to travellers and to missions overseas.

The PN in government will always observe with the greatest respect, the religious freedoms of everybody and will cherish the Christian values embraced by the overwhelming majority of the people of Malta and Gozo.