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INTRODUCTION

Twemmin (Beliefs) is the GWU's vision for a just society. The central principle is that every member of society is important. We do not believe that the strong get their way while the weak are left to drift behind. Since its inception, the GWU was a protagonist in endeavouring and insisting on changing society in being humane. It insisted on social progress and the dignity of workers including manual workers. It also struggled to ensure that the wealth that is created, is distributed in a socially just manner. This is the basis of the society that the GWU believes in.

This document is based on progressive principles and ideas that the GWU always embraced and worked for. But the GWU was always ready to adopt these principles to changing times so as the benefits acquired would flourish throughout time and be enjoyed by future generations. We believe that the principles and values in this document provide the central fulcrum around which the GWU will couch its actions to provide a better way of living to all in a changing society.

Twemmin took its life from motivated discussions within the GWU structures with the main objective of providing the GWU with a set of guiding principles on which to base its future actions. It was based on the conviction that the GWU would remain a social movement that is proactive to the changes that are taking place. This document does not throw away the work and achievements gained throughout time but uses these as the basis for future successes.

Just like our forefathers did, we will base our work on the accepted principles. More than this, we will do our best and use our resources to see that this plan of action is implemented and thus guarantee social justice which is the basis of human dignity.

Social justice is the fundamental principle on which the General Workers' Union (GWU) was founded and which guides its actions and achievements. For the GWU, social justice is not solely applicable to workplace rights but extends even to political rights, through which the workers participate effectively in national affairs. Social justice is hard earned and does not come free. Hence, independence is essential for the country to decide and direct its own destiny.

The main objective of the GWU is to promote better working conditions for its members and improve their standard of living to acceptable levels to the development and the times.

The GWU declares to hold high the dignity of work and do anything within its strength to promote the following rights of workers:

(a) Social justice coupled with equal opportunities to enhance civil liberties and decent living conditions,

(b) Employment for all, with the right of choice of employment and career without hindrance or discrimination whatsoever,

(c) Security of job, adequate wages and other rights,

(d) Safety from hazards in every place of work,

(e) Representation on all matters that concern the workers' rights and interests.

The General Workers' Union was founded and organised on a national basis so as the Maltese working class would not remain disorganised and split. As such it would have the strength devoted to unchain the working class from exploitation, and give it and the workers the dignity they deserve. Workers' rights are not restricted to the place of work as no human was born only to work. Such rights are meaningless without political rights.

For these reasons the GWU since its inception, has struggled for workers' rights so as the workers would gain their dignity at the place of work and political rights at national level. The GWU believes that the latter enables the workers to participate in the management of the country. This resulted in the history of the GWU and the social history of Malta blending together and reflecting each other.

Inspired by the fact that the highest human dignity would be achieved only if the country is able to determine freely both its present and future and to increase its prosperity, the GWU's role always reflected these objectives. It has, therefore, always been a protagonist in the political history of the country.

Social justice was always the driving force behind the GWU. It was and always would be the ultimate objective of the GWU. Where social justice is lacking, social progress cannot be achieved and the respect and dignity for the workers will be absent. This led to the GWU adopting a role of a strong social movement.

The GWU is an integral part of the world movement of free trade unions. If a union provides a strong voice locally, a global organisation would give it strength internationally. This conviction motivated the GWU to be a founding member of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions, an active member of the European Trade Union Confederation, and of other international bodies to which it is affiliated.

At the national level, the GWU has for many years made several attempts to bring closer together the local trade union movement. It believes that the workers' interests benefit from such a stance. The GWU is determined to continue to strive for such an objective. Just as it has done in the past and more recently, the GWU will, in future, be putting forward initiatives to attain this objective and provide a stronger voice to labour.

Nobody should be excluded from society whatever the circumstances may be. All citizens should have their fundamental rights guaranteed and each must be given enough space to develop.

Since the Industrial Revolution society has changed radically. From a society made up of small communities, now we are facing mega-cities where one finds large concentration of people who were attracted by the work opportunities that factories provided. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, production was at subsistence level and each family produced its own needs. The family cared for all the needs of its members.

The mass movement to larger city communities changed society's values and the power structures within it. Society had to take charge of its citizens' welfare.

The concentration of workers in factories led to the formation of labour unions. This was catalyzed by the inhuman conditions of work that workers had to face at the initial stages

of the capitalist era. Through the development of unions, progressive political parties evolved. These endeavoured to make capitalism humane. Otherwise capitalism, through its profit rationale, would destroy anything that stood in its way.

Capitalism began to be regulated through the introduction of standards regarding conditions of work, wages and working hours. Exploitation subsided and the standard of living increased. The owners of the means of production were the elite and the masters of the political structures within society. When challenging their employers, the workers were also challenging the political structures, which were organized in such a way, as to preserve the elites' power to the exclusion of the rest.

People aspired for a better life. But this was only possible through the introduction of the democratic system, which emancipated all citizens and gave them a say in the management of society. This led to solidarity from which flowed the welfare state and all its benefits.

Contemporary society faces the same challenges. Today, individualism has taken roots and it is becoming acceptable that those who can play the markets benefit while the rest fall behind. The ideas presently being spun propagate that the state should shed its responsibilities while these are to be borne by the individual. This will sap solidarity.

The GWU believes that as the government acts on behalf of the citizens, it should tend their interests. This includes both the interests of those who can play within markets and especially those who cannot and thus need supplements to live a decent life.

The Citizen

Society should care for the interests of all citizens. Society is duty bound to show its solidarity with all citizens and should not exclude anyone for whatever reason. These include gender, beliefs, race, colour or lifestyles. Society should not emarginate any of its members because of prejudices which are outdated. The first basic right is the right to live. Nobody has any right to terminate the life of another.

Gender Equality

Both genders are equal. Gender equality is not fulfilled only by equal pay for equal work. Equity also means equal responsibilities towards society. Such responsibilities must be evident within the family where child rearing should be the responsibility of both parents. Society should equally value women who stay at home to rear the family and those who pursue their career in the economy. Society should not expect that women's sole duty is to care for the family and perceive career women as the source of problems within families.

The state should build and encourage the setting up of facilities that help women contribute towards society from their economic activity. The GWU believes that children should be brought up not to follow the prejudices embedded in traditional ways. We should educate ourselves to understand that socialization should not mean to be a clear distinction between gender contribution towards society. The GWU believes that it is nearly impossible to distinguish any jobs that are the reserve of either gender because of the way technology is developing. The GWU itself strives to eradicate the distinctions that still persist.

The GWU has been a forerunner in accepting equity among genders. Moreover, it has worked to make this a reality much before such a concept was accepted within our legislation. However, the GWU will continue to strive towards enabling women to

participate in the running of the GWU that reflects the contribution that women give towards our economic wellbeing. 7

Beliefs

All citizens have a right to believe in what they feel is good for them and the environment in which they live. Beliefs are personal and each has a right to live his/her beliefs. Each has a right to propagate such beliefs through conviction and not imposition.

The freedom of thought and expression is a fundamental right that gives identity to an individual or a group of individuals who believe in a like manner.

No one, religious, political or otherwise has a right to impose his/her beliefs on others. Neither has s/he a right to discriminate or encourage discrimination based on beliefs.

Liberty and Freedom

Society does not have a right to emarginate or discriminate against those who decide to lead a way of life different from that practised by the majority. Those with a different life style should be accepted within society. Society should understand the reasons that lead these to live the way they live. It does not have a right to be judge and jury.

Freedom of thought and expression reflected through the way one lives is a fundamental natural right.

Persons with special needs

Such persons are an integral part of society. Society should strive to enable such persons to be wholly integrated within society rather than pity them. The GWU believes in an inclusive society and the state should drive society to encourage these people to evolve more their talents. Society should provide the facilities and the structures that enable these people to develop their independence.

Accessibility, the GWU believes, is not to be limited only to the physical aspects but also to structures that facilitate integration which results in independence to the individual. The GWU was the first union that had set up a unit for workers with special needs. It was set up in recognition of the dignity that these persons enjoy. Work should be accessible to them. Legislation is not enough. Accessibility to work provides independence to this group of people.

Those who err

Criminality is the result of vice which weakens society. The GWU believes that we must educate each other to free ourselves from vice such as drug abuse and alcoholism. We must find the roots of vice so as to help those who are trapped in such situations. Structures, which are regulated and recognised, must be developed to provide a personalized service to people in such difficulties.

In schools and places of work, assistance should be available to those in need. The GWU is the only union which uses its meagre resources to provide such services at places of

work. But we believe that such efforts should encompass other voluntary and stata organisations. Emphasis should be on prevention rather than cure.

The GWU believes that we need a national reform with regards to criminality among youth especially those who err for the first time. These should not be condemned for life. Society cannot afford to lose those members who err by emarginating them especially after they have served their time. They should be reintegrated within society and provided work. Failure in this respect will only result in strengthening habitual criminality. The state should ensure that prisons do become corrective facilities. The state should also provide space for voluntary organisations who devote their energies in this respect.

All criminal acts must be accompanied by adequate penalties. However, the state should see that the rights of the accused or those condemned are protected especially by serving justice within reasonable time. No crime should carry the death penalty.

The victims of criminality and their relatives should be assisted to overcome the trauma they have suffered. While serving prison sentences, prisoners should be helped to recognise their faults and be helped to reintegrate back within society especially through community work. Moreover, justice should be blind.

Leisure time

Leisure time is important to every individual. Unfortunately, free time is in constant decline. The urge for a better standard of living is pushing man to live only to work. Work should serve man rather than the opposite. But the ever increasing aspirations are making man go from one job to another thus losing any free time available.

Work should provide adequate compensation which guarantees a decent life. We must educate each other to appreciate free time as this provides a space where creativity and talents of each develop.

The GWU believes that free time is an investment in itself. Hobbies should be practised within a legal environment which is not too taxing.

We also believe that youth exchange programmes should be encouraged and extended also to include worker exchange programmes.

Voluntary organisations should find support both from the state and private institutions. Such organisations should not be pushed in using most of their time begging for funds to continue their work. Society should support them.

Youth

Society depends on youth for their future. Not only are they to provide future leadership but they are the ones who must provide society with all its needs. The world we are moulding is the world that we would be giving to future generations. This is a responsibility we must be conscious of.

We must start now in providing youth with space within society. This provides them with an opportunity to influence decisions, which will affect future generations. It is only through such an opportunity that youth becomes the protagonists of the future. Such space should be provided in all aspects of society and should be available to all. Our trust in youth would be evident through such involvement that would result in an evolvment of solidarity between different generations.

Youth must be prepared to carry out such responsibilities. Both statal and private organisations should be involved in such a training project. It is trust in future generations and responsibility that made the GWU invest in such an extensive educational programme for its members and their families amongst which one finds youth.

The GWU also believes that the public and private organisations should also involve themselves in youth training programmes designed for youth who are employed in manufacturing and service sectors. We cannot accept that this largest section of youth will remain without training. This lapse is resulting in excluding these citizens from society. Consequently, this is laying down the foundations of future poverty.

Education should aim towards eliciting creativity and the development of every individual in his/her totality. Education has neither limits nor barriers and it is the best investment opportunity.

Education has no limits. It is not restricted to the classroom only where the individual is prepared for the world of work. Education is also an essential resource for the individual's personality development. A country can achieve its optimum by investing in its citizens. It is by through such investment that every human will develop his/her creativity and attain his fulfilment and thus so society. Every citizen should have the right to free access to education, training and information all through his/her life-time.

Access to education can lead to the development of the nation. However, social barriers and improper environment can be of hindrance to the access of education.

Therefore, the state has to provide free education at all levels and has to ensure that this will be the best the state can offer. Besides, the state has to facilitate training programmes as well as keep education abreast of any new developments suiting the needs of the country, and this being done in agreement with the social partners.

Education in its totality provides the future vision of the country. Education should include more than just the transfer of information. It should include education per se and trains one to be analytical.

The GWU was a pioneer in promoting provision of education to the working class and their families. It endeavoured so that the working class would have the opportunity of life-long education. It is for this purpose, that the GWU will continue in voicing its opinion on areas related to national politics on education and training. The GWU feels that it is in the interest of all that the social partners share in the decisions, which will be needed in the planning and execution of national educational policy.

The GWU has to ensure that one of its functions would be the provision of education and training for its members and their families. It should act as an agency providing education on socio-economic areas.

Nevertheless, the GWU wants to pursue its work and continue in developing the Reggie Miller Foundation and transform it into an institute, which will promote workers' education and training. At the same time, the GWU would like to be among the initiators to promote research in the area of labour studies. Such studies would generate the working class

agenda. It would also develop educational systems that would promote also labour studies. The GWU has to keep on persisting that subject areas like the history of the international trade union movement and basic knowledge regarding labour issues, be included in the national curriculum of both secondary and post-secondary schools.

The GWU feels that education programmes for workers provided by public organisations and private agencies should not focus only on training but should also encompass broader issues that deal with the worker as man. It is within this framework that the GWU has to strive to ensure that more workers will be able to avail themselves of paid educational leave until this becomes a right. In this context, the GWU supports all those organisations that are involved in the training of personnel and encourages them to continue in doing so.

Adult Education and Information

The present technological progress has increased and facilitated the access to information. The GWU believes that it should not concentrate only on improving the living standards of the workers but also has to target for a higher quality of life. It believes that the means of information enhances the standard of living and consequently, access to information should be prioritised.

It is important that the future generation, from an early stage, should become conversant with the information technology. This access to information should be made available by the nation's educational systems and thus instil in our children the thought that only through their creativity can they attempt to increase access to information.

On the other hand, technological changes should not be a hindrance to anyone. Progress will be made as long as individuals become familiar with the ongoing changes that are taking place. For this reason, the state should see that all become familiar with and keep abreast of the technological changes that are occurring.

The state has to see that citizens should understand that it is never too late to be educated and that this is a life-long process. The state should see that education should not end as a process of certification.

The state should guarantee that the education systems be accessible enough to further education beyond that needed by the labour market. But the educational system, including the tertiary level, should be flexible enough to allow employees to further their studies while following their career.

Culture

Culture cuts across social classes. It is not the reserved right of any one social class. Through culture, the individual expresses his creativity and the GWU believes that culture will flourish more through decent standards of living that allow workers to have more time for leisure.

The GWU believes that every individual should be encouraged to take more interest in culture. The GWU believes that space for creativity should be available and everyone should learn to appreciate this creativity.

The state has to safeguard its national culture as this characterises its identity. The GWU believes that our language forms the core of the Maltese culture. For this reason, the state

should endeavour that the Maltese language be not only more practised within government structures but also be more developed and appreciated.

The state is obliged to see that our heritage is protected in spite of being a modern society. Progress without roots in culture is one without any spirit and thus is not progress.

Health is a right and serves as a means of security towards the citizen. Health is not only restricted to cure but it starts from prevention. These concepts are to apply everywhere including the place of work.

As every human being has a right to education, likewise, one has a right to good health. Health and education complement each other because health does not mean having medical treatment in hospitals but it also means being educated to lead a healthy life.

Once every citizen has a right to health, the state has the duty to provide health services to all. The state should provide enough education on prevention but these two have to complement each other.

The private health sector should not withhold the government from investing in the state services. These should be the best the country could offer. Investing in health services is one of the government's duties.

Health and cure are poles apart from each other. It is important that children should be taught how to take care of their health from early childhood and this should continue throughout their lifetime. This includes health and safety education for the place of work.

Health and Safety at the Place of Work

Health and safety need to be a constant priority to the worker himself. The GWU was amongst the very first and still is striving hard in making the workers conscious of health and safety issues. But the GWU was and still is a protagonist in making government set up the necessary structures and implement enforcement for health and safety at the place of work.

Regulations alone do not suffice. Regulations alone without enforcement are empty. Enforcement of regulations leads to training of workers in health awareness. This also includes the need of trained personnel to inspect every place of work as well as safeguarding health and safety precautions are taken. Surely, safety precautions should not be taken only after serious accidents occur, as it seems customary in Malta.

The drafting of bills, which provide effective health safety for the worker at his workplace, is an absolute priority that requires further development. This should take into consideration both the physical and mental health state within the context of modern technological advancement.

This specialised area should be considered as a priority and should incorporate: - Medical treatment in case of unforeseen accidents, together with regular tests to identify and

health hazards. - Setting up of information and educational systems that make workers aware of health and safety issues.

The environment belongs to all of us and affects directly the quality of life of every citizen. Likewise the environment is affected by our actions. A healthy environment is essential for both present and future generations.

It is evident that a series of environmental problems is leading to the deterioration of our environment and standard of living. This is mainly due to a number of factors, amongst which are the following: the economic development (very often, unplanned and hasty decisions are taken where the only consideration is often growth), high density of population and mismanagement of resources.

The GWU recognises the fact that all our activities leave an impact on the state of our environment. At the same time, all our initiatives for social and economic developments depend on the kind of environment we have as these are greatly effected by environmental restrictions.

The GWU accepts that all actions and initiatives aimed at improving the standard of living and the social development of citizens should be directed towards these environmental objectives. These protect and ameliorate the state of the environment, our health and quality of life.

The GWU is conscious of the fact that the improved working conditions achieved by the workers through industrial relations as well as their fundamental rights may be lost, if such development is not in balance with the natural, cultural and social environment.

So much so, it is our duty to ensure that, in protecting the basic rights and improving the working conditions enjoyed by workers, our action as a union has to be aimed towards protecting and ameliorating the state of the environment. Thus our health and the quality of life would be ensured.

Likewise, it is our duty to see that our actions do not jeopardise or lead to deterioration in the quality of life of future generations.

The GWU believes that the government should follow these basic principles to avoid the dilapidation of the environment:

1. The environmental problems result mostly from mismanagement and abuse of environmental resources. Everyone has the duty to ascertain that all our environmental resources are utilised justly both for present and future generations.
2. It will be impossible to solve or control the environmental issues unless huge funds are provided. For this purpose, we should aim on prevention rather than finding solutions to problems that might result. This can only be achieved by taking into account all the environmental issues in the planning and execution phases of the economic and industrial policy.
3. The social partners should be responsible for safeguarding both environment and quality of life. This can only be achieved by means of an effective dialogue between the same social partners.

4. It is important that all the authorities concerned and social partners should regard and protect the right of every individual, to be forewarned and made conscious of the possible environmental risks he is exposed to. The government is responsible to reassure that the public in general is conscious of environmental conditions in which we live.

5. Furthermore, the individual has to be educated and made aware of basic environmental principles. This will help the individual to be aware of changes regarding the environment and thus his standard of quality of life. The individual should be able to participate effectively in every public debate on environmental issues.

For this purpose, the GWU believes that the authorities concerned should set up objectives and national standards on all aspects regarding the state of the environment. Besides environmental indicators should be developed and used in conjunction with the usually used indicators such as economic.

The GWU will take into consideration the environmental impacts of any of its actions and will strive towards the development and implementation of environmental auditing as a managerial tool in local industry, public corporations and enterprises. The GWU will also disseminate environmental education among its members.

The GWU believes in the setting up of a National Consultative Forum on the environment. This Forum will work hand in hand with the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development. It should be composed of the social partners, the Planning Authority, the Department for the Protection of Environment and last but not least, the Department of Industry. The aim of this Forum should be that of creating an effective dialogue and collective action for environmental management so as to assure common objectives for long-term sustainable development are agreed upon and implemented. This Forum will have the power to make specific recommendations to Parliament with regard to general and particular issues related to the environment.

Society is made up of families themselves microcosms of society. Society is based on the families. The family needs to be appreciated and recognised as it is of fundamental value to society. This is achieved when the family needs in contemporary society are comprehended.

The family is the basis of every society and the future of society depends on the consolidation of the family. The family is one of the most precious values. So much so the state has to do its utmost so that the family remains the basic institution where socialisation is provided to its citizens.

The family is facing radical changes as in many cases both parents are economically active outside the family. Today, the male is no longer considered as the sole breadwinner. More often than not, both parents are seeking outside employment. This is sometimes due to financial needs in return for a better standard of living or for furthering their career. All this can have adverse effects on the children that will be tomorrow's generation.

The Family and Work

One can argue that children suffer most in such circumstances. The GWU has long identified the trends in our society, so much so that it proposed and achieved parental

leave and reduced working hours. Although these achievements, at present, mainly apply to the public sector, we need not exclude that these rights may, in future, be extended to the private sector.

The GWU believes that trends show that the participation of women in our country's economy is increasing. Every effort should be made towards this end. It will be futile if words are not put into actions. If facilities that make it possible for both parents to enter the labour market are not provided, we would be disregarding the interests of our children, as well as those of the parents themselves and that of society in general.

Marriages are breaking down more frequently. Those who run the family single-handed are in need of facilities for their children. The same goes for those families, which from the beginning, had one parent (male or female). The GWU still believes that every person has the right to build up a family anew.

For this purpose, the state should aim at setting up child-care centres and sees that this is realized. The state should introduce schemes of reduced working hours for those who cannot temporarily work on a full-time basis to take care of their children or one of their relatives in need of medical treatment. On the same level, parental leave should be made available as well to other economic sectors so that parents will be able to take care of the children during their early childhood. The same goes for responsibility break for those employees that need to care for their relatives. The GWU believes that through these and other measures, the concept of the family will be strengthened to the benefit of society.

Flexibility

Trends show that more workers will be requesting flexible working hours while enterprises will implement more flexi-time for reasons of competitiveness.

The flexible working systems can be grouped under the phrase 'atypical work'. The most common are part-time work, shift work, term-time work, job sharing, flexi-time, annual hours and flexible hours during the day. Some of these systems have long been used in our country. Others have not been introduced and are not that popular.

In the future more pressure can be expected to introduce other working-time besides those already in existence. But the GWU will watch out, protect and simultaneously improve conditions of work already achieve throughout time. The GWU believes and insists that there should be consultation leading to the introduction of each system that concerns flexibility. There should also be effective communication with those concerned and changes should be implemented gradually.

Consultation will not only be between the management and the union but these issues have to be discussed internally within the union as such decisions will have repercussions on the whole labour force. The workers have to be involved throughout the different phases from its early stages when such schemes are introduced.

Like in other cases, the GWU would communicate entirely the raised issue to the workers concerned at both the planning and implementation phases as such systems would affect the quality of life of both workers and their families.

The GWU believes that each scheme has to be implemented gradually in order to assess the effects of every scheme. Besides, the GWU believes that the introduction and implementation of these schemes once agreed upon, have to be well planned and

executed within a flexible framework, with clear guidelines and continuously updated if and when necessary.

Housing

Every family aims at enjoying a decent standard of living and likewise the need for suitable accommodation with a proper environment. The GWU believes that all should be aware that accommodation is not a luxury but a need. Although accommodation is an investment for the family itself, this should not drain the family resources on a long-term basis.

On the other hand, the state should assist those that do not have the means to or those who end up without accommodation or adequate accommodation. The state should use social accommodation schemes in such a way that it will utilise the thousands of empty houses that are spread around the country. But the state cannot deny the proprietor of each empty residence of his rights. Such schemes would give an incentive to both the owner to make use of his property and to the state itself.

The government has to do its utmost to curb the price of housing accommodation. Similarly to what already had taken place, when there are no price controls, property is sold at exorbitant prices. Many a couple or family have to endure debts over a long-term basis to obtain suitable accommodation. The state has to protect the interests of the family. The urge to pay back the debts on their property within a short period of time is neither in the interest of the family nor in the interest of the country.

Children

One of the highest values every society possesses is the protection of children. The children are the future mirror of society. When the family is given support and protected by the society as a whole, this value in itself is being safeguarded. Society needs to contribute its resources to children during their childhood. It also wants to enforce itself for the benefit of the children so that the latter can reap its benefits for themselves and for those to come.

In this context those children that become orphans by both parents should not be left abandoned by the state. Likewise the same applies for those that are the victims of broken families. Therefore, the GWU believes that the rights of the children should be protected by adequate legislated in order to protect those children who might for one reason or another be endangered.

Workers are wealth creators in society and thus they should have a say on how this wealth is distributed within society. Democracy, participation, and social partnership are rights that have been achieved by the workers gain influence and participate in the decisions that concern them all. Strengthening these rights would ensure social justice.

A true democratic system ensures that citizens has an effective say in all areas where decisions are taken. A political system, which calls on the citizen once every five years to decide who would govern him, and then expects him to stay put until another election, does not satisfy the main criteria of a democratic society. A truly democratic system put the citizen at its cores. Without the full participation, the system would be a dead letter.

Democracy

Democracy was the principal reason that led to the evolution of social movements that endeavoured to give a voice to the various interests that exist in a modern society. The trade unions were among the most prominent of these social movements that represented the workers' interests. It should be noted that before unions were set up, millions of workers were denied representation as they were denied the right to organise and the right to vote. The trade unions led the way forward and as a result today the workers participate actively in the political system. In other words, it was the trade unions who democrat sized our political systems. This is also true to Malta as the GWU actively participated and was one of the main promoters of our democratic system soon after World War II.

The GWU believes that a democracy is open government. It means that decisions are not taken in an autocratic manner but with the active participation of all those on whom the decisions will have an effect. A democratic system should be a system, which truly represents these diverse interests, and not become a procedure to rubber stamp those decisions that have already been taken.

A democratic system, the GWU believes, respects and defends the fundamental human rights, which must be never tampered with to suit the interest of the power that be.

The GWU also believes that such a system should have a judiciary system that guarantees justice and be proactive to see that all are treated with equity in spite of their social status or beliefs. A judiciary system that does not guarantee these will not be respected and trusted by the citizens. Such a failure would lead people to believe that it is better to take the law into one's hands even though this might create greater injustices to others.

One cannot be complacent that the institutions we have, like Parliament and its Committees, although representative, are attaining their objectives. Most do not realise that once such institutions lose their effectiveness, democracy would be at stake and it would be more difficult to distinguish between a constitutional dictatorship and a true democracy. This would jeopardise our democratic future.

Social Partnership

The GWU believes that the government should not take all decisions on its own. New forms of participation, which effectively give a say to different interests, must be found. The Union sincerely believes that social partnership is a new form of participation. In order for these forms to succeed, new structures must evolve to give the chance to the different sectors to participate. Thus they share in the decisions, especially those that affect both their standard and way of living.

Social partnership is both an achievement and a right. Workers generate wealth through their labour while capital contributes through investment. These two sectors together with the elected government constitute the three social pillars. Political will is essential for such a process to succeed. Resources needed by the social partners to identify problems, discuss them and bring out solutions must be made available. Such a process leads to a balance rather than the divide that will exist between the have and the have-nots.

Social partnership means effective participation both in the economic and social spheres. The GWU has been endeavouring for such an objective for a long time now. The GWU also believes that the social partners should consult as much as possible the civil society through its non-governmental organisations. These specialised groups, which are developing continuously, involve other sectors, which must also be given a say.

Participation

Workers' participation must evolve new forms since its old forms have now been depleted. Workers' participation means much more than a single director in a Board of Directors full of politically appointed directors. Forms which have evolved on a national scale and which have proved effective should be adopted within firms. Such forms must also penetrate downwards through the organisation structure to reach for the participation of the individual worker. Such forms such as labour-management committees have the added advantage of not splitting the workforce through elections.

Participation is in the interest of the worker. Malta does not have natural resources. To face successfully the challenge of globalisation we have to work closer together. We must learn to collaborate with each other, and to increase efficiency in all productive sectors of the economy. Participation provides a means for both sides to listen to each other. This would provide a means to build a trust relationship between employers and employees.

The GWU believes that each organisation has got its own objectives. Participation helps to achieve these aims in a democratic way.

The GWU will remain committed to promote those organisations, especially those which itself set up, to attain the objective of extending workers' participation. The GWU is also committed to continue educating workers in skills that are useful to the efficient running of participation. We believe that it is useless to introduce participation without training the workers who would be running it, in skills like running effective meetings, focused discussion, administrative aspects, economics, management, organisations, political institutions, legal aspects and other useful areas of studies.

Such training will also help the efficient running of co-operatives that are based on participation. This will help the co-operative movement to be extended and develop into a modern and productive sector of the economy.

The consumer

Participation should be extended to levels that affect our daily lives. The worker is also a consumer. Consumer protection has a very short history in our society. One reason is that our economy has taken ages to attain a sustainable level. Interest in this area developed at the end of the seventies when in spite of huge difficulties our standard of living reached new heights. It was in those days that the first consumer association, which pressed and obtained legal reforms, was set up.

It is important that in our country we have a Department for consumer affairs and a tribunal for consumer affairs. However, participation by the consumers is still a way off.

One of the main difficulties that the consumer faces in Malta is the poor service provided by government departments and parastatal bodies. The government always refused to make these entities assume their legal responsibilities when providing shoddy service to

the consumers. It is useless to set up customer service if the personnel who run them are not trained or if there is no organisational orientation to provide good services to the consumer.

Participation of consumers is not an issue that can be solved through organisational efficiency. Thus privatisation would not provide a solution. Most of these entities are natural monopolies and privatisation would not change one iota but changes ownership. Regulatory bodies are one way forward irrespective of the type of ownership The GWU believes that consumers should be represented on these regulatory bodies.

Consumer representation is also needed in professional services such as health, medicines, insurance, investments, legal services and education. In most cases, the regulators are members of the same profession. While it is important to have expert advice, it is essential to have a representative of those who are using the service. Those who complain must feel sure that their complaints will be treated fairly and justly.

Another area where we have a lacuna is in the area of advertisements. At present we have no authority to verify that the information given is true. Moreover, we have no product testing to verify advertisements. One finds that food products are also affected. We have no quality testing of foods; we have no information from where it originates, whether it is natural or artificial, especially that regarding genetically modified foods. The fact that the ingredients are listed is not enough to determine the quality of food being offered for sale.

The GWU cannot ignore these issues that affect both our quality of food and public health. The GWU is committed to protect consumer interests. It feels that, together with consumer associations, it can be a major force in protecting consumers' interests.

The economy must find a balance such that all interests, including economic ones, are also given their due importance. Both public and private sectors have a role to play. Social partnership would make the economy viable to create wealth.

The economy should serve man and the opposite proposition should not rule the order of the day. A free economy would not take care of other interests except profit. In order to be humane, the market economy must be directed in a way to balance all interests within society. At present we are facing capitalism in transition. The Industrial Revolution, which moved man to cities, made him a production slave.

The unions evolved out of the exploited masses of workers and these created new balances within society. They provided a humane face to the structures of the industrial society and man stopped being exploited.

The attempt to eradicate the trade union movement, especially in the United Kingdom in the eighties, was nothing but an attempt to reshape the balance between different interests that was achieved soon after the war.

Globalisation is being used as a convenient excuse to rebalance these interests in favour of more profits because of competition. Globalisation cannot be stopped, as it is a result of fast technological development. But policies are man-made and they should be tailored to give globalisation a humane face rather than to further exploitation.

The role of the state has been redefined through these efforts. The balance being created is biased against those who are weak in society.

Society cannot emarginate its own members. Solidarity which has evolved through the efforts of the unions, many a time accompanied by the efforts of progressive political parties, cannot be lost. If these efforts and values are lost, we would face a society based on a large divide between the strong and the weakest in society. There are many ways to create such a scenario.

The market

The GWU believes that the market provides certain advantages such as choice. But it should not be totally free as it would debase society. We also believe that commerce should be free of bureaucratic restrictions but it must operate within the framework of fair competition.

A free market can bring havoc in society for two reasons. Markets exclude those who have nothing to offer either as sellers or consumers. Man however, has got a right to a decent living and certain basic services. The government must ensure that all have access to such services and to safeguard the principle of social justice.

The second problem is the value system it generates. Markets are based on values of individualism, egoism and an unquenchable drive for profits. All agree that these values debase society. Since we adopted the market system, it is our duty to propagate values such as social justice and solidarity to ensure society as we know it. On the other hand, the government, with the representatives of commerce and employers, has got the duty to encourage ethics in these areas. Success in these areas depends on the commitment of the social partners and the availability of space and structure to promote these principles.

If markets are left on their own, they may easily be transformed into a monster which devours anything that stands in its way. It will bring economic havoc. That is why we need fair competition. This assures protection and space for honest businessmen and consumers. The government's role should be that of a regulator to protect the interests of society in general, the consumers, honest businessmen, investors and the self-employed.

Commerce is taking a new dimension because of the large investments required. The government's role is to ensure that the interests of those who provide capital for these investments such as banks, are to be protected. It should be remembered that the government would be protecting the deposits of workers in this way. One way to do that is for the government to insist on certain managerial standards and transparency - principles that must be adopted even by the private sector.

The government's role is not to be a producer. However, because of the smallness of the Island, certain services will remain within the government's competence due to the large investments needed. Otherwise, in our context such services would not be produced. But the government cannot shed its responsibility with regards to the management of the economy. The government should provide direction and create an environment which would make investment viable.

The role of the State

The more government retreats from the provision of essential services, the greater the imbalance within society. The private sector is not there to provide essential services. Its objective, and rightly so, is to work for profit. Thus it is not the private sector's competence to provide essential or social services. These services' availability should not be subject to profits, though they must be sustainable. Otherwise profits would replace the social aspect of such services.

The GWU believes that social services should be addressed to those in need. But they must sustain also pensioners with a decent standard of living appropriate to the times.

An economy so small and without any natural resources depends on good management to stay tuned and competitive. It is not the first time that our economy had to face restructuring ; the most radical when it changed from a fortress economy to a commercial one.

Throughout the post colonial period, the people's aspiration was to set up a welfare state, so that none will fall behind and guarantee the provision of essential services for a better standard of living. The business sector, on the other hand, needed a better infrastructure, transport and energy to expand. These were large commitments for a small economy. The enterprises to achieve these aims are still essential for the efficient running of the economy. If such firms are dependent on the whims of foreign investment, our experience had shown that provision is not guaranteed.

The GWU believes that if the country loses control over its economy, it will lose its political independence. It is because of this that these enterprises are considered as strategic in nature. However, a strong private sector presence in these enterprises is not excluded. This applies even to those enterprises which provide essential services, though the government should maintain control to protect society's interest.

The role of the private sector

The GWU believes that investment is the motor of the economy. It also believes that the private sector has got an essential role to provide investments which will create employment and wealth. On the other hand, the government's role of regulator is to ensure the smooth running of the economy and the dignity of the worker.

Similar to the Catholic Church, the GWU believes that private property is not absolute as this has got its social aspect.

In this respect, workers' participation has got a significance as the workers, though not owners of the investment, are contributing in making this investment work. Thus workers' participation can contribute to guarantee the social aspect of private property.

Even profits have its social aspect. Profits should not be given the highest priority. Jobs should not be sacrificed to maintain or increase profits. The focus of all economic activity and investment should be man.

The private sector in Malta has been strengthened and needs the economic infrastructure to work in. government should, with the coordination of all its structures, promote new investmnets. Our embassies abroad should not only be used as political instruments but also as a means to attract new investments. Bureaucratic procedures which stifle investment should be done away with while infrastructure is important.

However, the private sector should be given direction of what is needed through aids to industries' schemes.

A viable economy

In spite of the fact that all agree to the process of restructuring, there are many, both in Malta and abroad, who want to lengthen the process.

We must be pragmatic and realise that we live in a small archipelago of islands and depend on a handful of firms, the sun and the sea for our wellbeing. The attitude of any leftist movement should be to guarantee that the workers obtain the best conditions of work while it ensures investment that generates employment.

Restructuring means change, necessary change. Surely, the least willing to change is the investor as this involves costs. But change must be undertaken as markets, technology and the tastes of consumers are changing. The worker must also learn to change to benefit from restructuring. Otherwise, s/he becomes victim of change.

The GWU is open to change. If the enterprise is undertaking change in a planned manner and the change is directed as a response to market forces, it will co-operate. If, on the other hand, change is being used as a camouflage simply to reduce the wage-bill and increase profits, it will be militant to defend the workers' rights.

The worker must learn to anticipate change. The GWU is ready to get itself involved in planned restructuring both for the sake of employment and because this improves the economy. The GWU is ready to participate in identifying the best options and in the planning of re-training to attain the skills needed by our industry.

But the GWU is proactive in this process. It is ready to co-operate in any project that would re-train workers. Such retraining, the GWU believes should not be limited to save jobs but to make our workforce employable. The main aim should not be 'employment' but 'employability'.

The GWU also encourages workers to form co-operatives. The GWU is ready to support any new initiative, as it believes that this type of enterprise is based on the social aspect of work. It also believes that the strength of this movement is the social aspect. We do not believe in co-operatives, which are set up just to benefit from tax rebates and other regulations, as these contradict the very concept of a co-operative.

The GWU believes that up to the time members of a co-operative start attaining the wage that they used to earn while in employment, they should be entitled to unemployment benefit. Co-operatives should also benefit from other programmes.

On the other hand, the GWU had already shown that it is ready to take initiative to create employment. It started with setting up the National Front for Employment and will continue with its work to attain this objective.

Restructuring must be undertaken at a speed that is compatible with the country, as it is the country at large that is being restructured. However, the GWU believes that restructuring should be a continuous process that guarantees that we are always competitive on the international markets. Restructuring should not be undertaken to give advantage to some economic or political block.

We also believe that this process should take cognisance of our strategic position and develop Malta as a hub of economic activity maintaining commercial relationships with all economic blocks and all countries.

It is only through such a strategy that we can create wealth through employment.

The worker within the economy

The wealth that is created through the labour of the workforce should be distributed fairly and in a just way throughout society. The worker also forms the majority of the citizens and the internal market depends on this group's spending power. This extends the rights of this group outside the boundary wall of the workplace.

For the GWU, it does not make any economic sense, apart from going against the grains of social justice, if labour is made to carry the largest part of the taxation burden simply because it is the easiest group to tax.

Controls on inflation are one priority the GWU believes in. We believe that free markets do not necessarily lead to lower prices. Many a time this leads to cartels being formed which neither provides the best prices nor the best service to consumers.

On the other hand, lack of control of inflation will lead to demands for higher wages, which in turn will lead, to loss of competitiveness and thus reduced the level of employment.

The standard of living depends on the purchasing power of the wages. The GWU cannot abdicate its responsibility of ensuring good conditions for the workers. However, the purchasing power is also eroded through unjust taxation. The Union believes that direct taxation leads to better social justice than indirect taxation. A system of direct taxation administered properly would achieve this aim. Indirect taxes do not distinguish between the income of individuals.

The Union believes that the government should have the structures to ensure that those with higher income contribute their share to society through the payment of taxes. Such structures should not give shelter to those who evade taxation, as this act is nothing but plundering society.

Such a system would result in an unjust burden on the workers to finance the government expenditure. Such expenditure should be made carefully with set priorities in mind. Any increase in inflation should be compensated through higher wages that should apply to all. Pensioners should also benefit proportionally. Thus it is important that the cost of living adjustments in wages should be based on reliable statistics of the average family expenditure taking cognisance of the prevalent quality of life.

Work dignifies man and the government should aim at creating employment. There should be agreed plans and strategies to promote and sustain employment. However, work should be created to serve man and not vice-versa.

In work man finds his dignity. All men have a right to their dignity and thus to employment. One objective of government activity should be to create employment. The GWU along the years has contributed not only to bring the best conditions of work but also to attract investment to Malta.

The GWU believes that the worker should have the best conditions of work and it endeavoured to achieve this objective. Good conditions of work should apply to all types of employment, whether full-time or part-time. Those engaged in part-timer work should benefit from these conditions pro rata and according to the amount of weekly hours

worked. Trends are showing that workers having part time employment as their main job are increasing. The GWU believes that conditions of work should be improved to meet the aspirations of the workers for a decent quality of life.

Work is the highest objective of all. There are persons who seek a job for life while others prefer a temporary job while they are studying. One current problem is that more illiterate or unskilled people are seeking to enter the labour market. Full-time jobs, temporary and even part-time, such as in the tourism industry, nowadays, require both qualifications and skills.

Another factor is the lack of mobility. This is primarily due to tight labour markets. This is resulting into a section of the work force engaged in undesired jobs while others are overqualified.

One growing characteristic is that other workers continue their education. The misfortune is that some employers in the private sector are not only discouraging workers to further their education but also are hampering them. In the public sector the situation is different since opportunities for workers to prolong their education exist.

Labour market strategies

Job creation requires strategies. Strategies have three phases to be attained: the analysis of the current situation, the desired situation, and the action needed to take from one phase to another.

In reality, today, we do not possess enough information to enable us to draw up a detailed map of our labour market. Although data regarding the competences needed by the labour market exist, it is not considered reliable or accurate by those who are familiar with the situation.

Therefore we are hindered in drawing up an accurate picture of the situation. The first thing that needs to be done is that the Employment and Training Corporation obtains current and accurate information on the labour market. The GWU is ready to give its assistance for such an exercise to succeed. Being the largest union in Malta, the GWU has a multitude of contacts with the world of work. This experience may provide essential information for such an exercise.

The same applies to employers' associations. They can be a valid partner in this process which should be an ongoing one.

Once we come to know exactly what the real situation is, we can then decide on the desired scenario that is suitable for Malta. It is being said that objectives have been set for a restructuring process. Industry needs to be restructured and shifted from labour-intensive to technology-intensive and thus the added value would be higher. The tertiary sector of the economy, it is also being said, must be given the prominence over other sectors. This sector includes the tourism industry, which must be restructured in a way to be spread throughout the year.

But in order to undertake this process, we need to have a better trained and higher skilled workforce.

One can then undertake a training needs analysis by comparing the present with the desired economic scenario. It is through identifying the skills and the competences needed that long-term economic objectives may be met. Such an exercise must be updated regularly.

One of the priorities for this strategy to succeed is to further employability of the workforce. This would enable the workforce to take the opportunities that might arise.

The GWU has for long complained that such a strategy is still missing. The fact that lots of words are being said about restructuring does not mean that any significant efforts are being made. Reality shows that the country does not have a strategic plan for restructuring. Consequently, we do not have a training strategy for our workforce. The more we procrastinate, the more difficult it becomes. The situation worsens if restructuring be interpreted as starting afresh and in the process throwing away all that we presently possess without adequate planning. This would mean sending thousands of workers on the unemployment register. Many of them would be without the basic skills needed to take up the new jobs.

The GWU believes that the best strategy is to build on what we already have and change to a rhythm that the country can sustain without much hardship. The Union believes that the Employment and Training Corporation should start giving mandatory training to the unemployed. Such training should be funded by both the public and private sector.

However, the GWU is seriously concerned about the long-term unemployed. We believe that incentives should be given for employers to enrol this group of workers. To identify this sector and facilitate matters, the unemployment register should be grouped together. Such an incentive and similar others should be applied to older workers who find themselves unemployed. These would encourage employers to invest in these workers.

Work to serve man

Unfortunately, competition is being used to introduce strategies directed at the labour force in the workplace, which makes one believe that man was created to serve production rather than the opposite. These strategies, which have been integrated in Human Resource Management (HRM) are being introduced as such, and are known to oppose, among other things, the right of workers to organise themselves in unions. There is also a movement to deal with workers individually instead of collectively to weaken solidarity. Such orthodox strategies are biased in favour of the entrepreneurial interests and do not balance the interests of both employer and employee. These do not look at the worker as a human being but uses the human resources in a manner similar to other resources.

HRM has replaced Personnel Management, which never penetrated the echelons of management and ended up as a record-keeping function. HRM, on the other hand, forms part of top management structures and was developed in order that the worker serves the central objectives of the firm without the worker becoming the focal point.

The GWU believes that HRM should not be practised in an orthodox manner as in this way it would be exploiting and dehumanising the worker. It is not believed that, in Malta, HRM has been widely introduced in such a manner for the simple reason that only a handful of firms have in fact adopted HRM as a strategy. Most have only changed the nameplate from Personnel to Human Resources Management.

But the GWU also believes that HRM can develop the human aspects of work. If HRM focuses on the human aspect, instead of exploiting, it would contribute towards the development of the workforce. We believe that Human Resource Development (HRD) should form the core of HRM rather than being simply a peripheral branch.

HRM should consider the worker as a human being in his totality. Rather than providing the worker with information, it should develop his talents and skills and provide the worker with a new set of analytical tools that would enable him to develop his personality and

working capacity. In such a way, HRM would be developing the enterprise and the workforce at the same time.

The GWU will co-operate with all those enterprises and firms which implement HRM in such a manner that the interests of both sides are developed and safeguarded.

Sexual harassment

The GWU believes that all types of sexual harassment are a form of discrimination. Such an issue, unfortunately for our society, is still a taboo - we know that it exists but few want to discuss and deal with the issue as it might reflect badly on us. Such an attitude prohibits us from knowing the extent of the problem. One must dare say that we know little or near to nothing about this problem on a national scale. This lacuna is mystifying the issue. Sexual harassment is a delicate matter as it hits directly on the dignity of man.

The GWU believes that employers should carry responsibility, even liability to damages, of sexual harassment if they do not adopt a policy that deals with the problem in a responsible manner. Such a policy must provide an effective way of investigating complaints lodged. Each place of work, apart from a code of conduct should have effective procedures that deal with such complaints in a confidential and impartial manner. It should, above all, discourage such behaviour.

The GWU is already endeavouring to deal with this problem with individual managements. In collective agreements, it is introducing new anti-discrimination clauses, which treat sexual harassment as a serious offence. The GWU will continue to deal with this issue in an effective and tough manner. There are two measures which will help deal with this issue. First, a national debate that will place it on the national agenda. Secondly, management should train its employees to eliminate all forms of sexual harassment.

Home Workers

New forms of employment arrangements have been introduced in Malta. Nobody seems to know the types of work arrangements that have been introduced, the sectors in which they are being implemented, the number of workers employed under each type of employment and the conditions of work of these employees.

The GWU is conscious of these new methods of employment. It realises that these new forms of employment can be used to eradicate the conditions of work. Something, what is being introduced as under the cloak of being a modern measure, could easily deprive the workers of rights for which they have worked hard in the past to attain. The GWU believes that, as a first step, it is important that these new forms of work and their characteristics are captured by the national statistics.

The GWU as a social movement which functioned relentlessly to attain the best conditions possible for the workers, identifies itself with the ILO and encourages the government to ensure that workers in all forms of employment would enjoy the same benefits. Above all, they must enjoy the same rights with respect to wages, hours of work, health and safety, the freedom to organise and social security benefits.

The GWU believes that all workers, even those who are engaged in atypical forms of employment should benefit from the same rights. Most of all, if we really believe that the worker is important, we must not wait for someone to drive us into adopting such protective measures. We should act now.

Life does not end at the time one retires from work. Our society must recognise the experience of our senior citizens and must provide space so that they remain active within society even though they have retired from work. The best way for society to acknowledge the contribution that our senior citizens have made is to guarantee and sustain a decent way of life.

Life does not end at the time one retires from work. Retiring age is just another phase in life. After years of participation through direct economic activity, retirement is the period when one rests from such hectic activity. The GWU believes that work gives dignity to the worker but old age gives dignity to the senior citizen as a result his/her past contribution. The GWU believes that the state's first responsibility towards senior citizens is to guarantee a pension that provides a decent way of living during retirement.

As such, it is the state's responsibility to guarantee that the pension meets the needs of senior citizens especially the basic needs and health services. The GWU believes that as in the case of social security, pensions' provision should not be left to the whims of the market. Experience has shown that when the state starts shedding its responsibility of providing a pension, which sustains a good standard of living, the social security scheme will become more dependent on the private sector. It should be remembered that the private sector's main objective is profits and not the provision of a decent way of life to citizens. The responsibility of guaranteeing the citizens' rights rests with the state.

The GWU does not believe that the state should provide only a safety net and that a decent way of living should be provided through private pension schemes. This would mean that those who are not able to invest in such schemes are condemned to a life of deprivation during old age.

The Union believes that, just like all other social services, pensions should be sustainable. This need should encourage the reforms needed to guarantee a sustainable decent life style after retirement. As the GWU had shown, the nation's demographic structure is changing and by the year 2015, the number of people contributing to the maintenance of the pension scheme would be drastically reduced. The GWU has insisted that during the interim period reforms, reflecting the economic circumstances of our Islands, should be taken to guarantee a sustainable pension system. The Union believes that the way the government is projecting the issue is nothing but a smokescreen to channel pensions to the private sector.

The GWU believes that society must recognise the experience of the senior citizens. This recognition should provide means through which senior citizens can continue their active participation in society.

The state, in co-operation with the private sector, should provide adequate accommodation and housing. The state should be the guardian to protect the senior citizens from any abuse or discrimination seeking suitable accommodation. The

government should invest in old age homes so that pensioners would not be forced to live in private ones.

The state's recognition of the validity of senior citizens should also take the form of providing subsidized essential services.

Old age does not mean that society does not need the senior citizen. The experience which the senior citizens had acquired throughout life must be used in all spheres especially those which regard youth. New opportunities must be developed, as old age is not the end but a new phase in man's life. As a consequence, those who are about to enter this new phase must be prepared before retirement to meet the challenge.
