

STATE AND OTHER EMPLOYEES FEDERATION

Memorandum to Political Parties

in the context of the
forthcoming General Elections

7th November 2019

*walking towards the path
of a human centred development*

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MEMORANDUM TO POLITICAL PARTIES 2019

1. Introduction

The development of a country should not only be measured in terms of economic indicators but more importantly the way society evolves.

Conscious that the role of unions is to help raise the standard of living of workers and their families we are making the following proposals meant to help eradicate poverty in the country, address social inequality, create employment for our youth, offer a Quality Public Service, Equal Opportunity, lay foundation for Social Justice work towards the Decent Work Agenda, with a view to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals.

Rapid economic growth has unfortunately been accompanied by several social evils like a rise in criminality, juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, family instability, suicides, and competitive pressures among others.

Welfare State

The premise of the Welfare State is that it rests on a political system in which it is the Government via its Ministries and Departments and its annex institutions that has the responsibility for the Economic and Social well being of its citizens by ensuring that a minimum standard of living is within everyone's reach.

This entails provision of free education, universal medical care, insurance against disability, sickness and unemployment as well as allowances for income supplement and old age pension.

However, the globalized world is faced with drastic changes dictated by new challenges such as climate change which will dictate a new paradigm. This requires a renewed relationship between Government and its citizens. Sustainability of the welfare state in Mauritius will entail society wide risk sharing and the use of a social safety net to help workers and families to adapt to the overall changes in the economy. The Usual Capitalistic Model of Privatising benefits while socializing losses should be buried once and for all.

Any Future Government will need to develop a high degree of truth for its citizens by working together to address societal challenges and reach compromises through democratic processes. The general social contract between public institutions, private cost and citizens should lay emphasis on fairness, equality of chances and equity in distribution of wealth.

1. Elderly Person

To cater for the welfare of elderly and ageing population, more day care centres and recreational centres must be set up. Though public transport is free, it is not accessible to all elderly and disabled people. Thus, same must be reviewed. Better arrangements must be introduced so as to give priority to elderly and disabled person in all public places. More facilities should be given concerning medical equipment, reduction and control of prices of medication. Incentives should be given to keep grandparents within the family.

2. No to Privatisation

Privatisation has always proved costlier services to the public. Promotion of Quality Public Service is the only guarantee for sound economic and social development. The recent financial crisis is testimony of the limitations of privatization. Water which is a public good should not be privatized at all.

3. Education

One of the most important tools to fight against poverty is Education. Therefore, we are making an appeal to provide free pre-primary education to all children, thus, ensuring equal opportunity to every child.

Our education system needs to be reviewed where human values, civic education, fight against climate change and leadership skills should be introduced in the curricula. Our education system should be oriented to meet the future needs of the Labour Market.

4. Corporate Social Responsibility Policy

We are sensitive to the idea that funds from the Corporate Social Responsibility scheme have benefitted a lot to the population especially the vulnerable groups of society.

We at the Federation have ideas about achieving the Decent Work Agenda through CSR funds. In this context, it is proposed that trade unions be qualified for CSR funds and that they be represented on the CSR committee.

5. Gaming Houses

The proliferation of Gaming Houses should be discouraged by imposing a tax on them, as this has a negative impact on our youth and workers in general. A strict control should be exercised on its operation. No new permits should be granted in residential areas.

6. Participation in Elections

The Public Officers should be allowed to stand as candidate in Municipal and Village Councils Elections and therefore contribute in the socio economic development of the country.

7. Public Gathering Act (PGA)

The Public Gathering Act 1991 which is in violation with ILO Conventions No. 87 and No. 98 should be repealed.

8. Health Card for Patients

For more efficiency and effectiveness, our public health institutions should be computerized. There is also an urgent need to invest in new equipment and recruitment of the medical and paramedical staff. Public health is a serious matter for any country and investing in public health is of crucial importance. We are proposing the introduction of Health Card for a more personalized service.

9. Ministry of Economic Planning and Development

Independent observers and operators have expressed the difficulties to understand Government socio-economic policies since the MOFED has swallowed the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development.

It is imperative to reinstate this Ministry inherent to transparency, response to felt needs, clear cut policies, allocation of justified resources that even the ordinary citizen understands. Besides, this Ministry did show the runway for successful executions of mega and small-scale

projects in the past. A Ministry of Economic Planning and Development will de facto ease planning for sustainable development through innovative mechanisms and policies for the short, medium and long terms for the lasting prosperity of all.

10. Contractual Employment to be Abolished

The past P.R.B. Reports recommended recruitment at the level of Permanent Secretary, Senior Chief Executive on contract. The Federation views the situation with serious concern. Appointment to the above positions on strictly contractual terms may affect objectivity in those top-level administrative positions and foster a 'please the political head attitude'.

Contractual employment should be done away in the Civil Service/Para-Statal Bodies except for Advisors, where such competencies do not already exist in Government. The number of Advisors/Senior Advisors to be drastically reduced.

11. Retirement Rights should remain Undisturbed in Case of Conviction of a Public Officer

It is most unjust and unfair that the pensions and lump sum and retirement benefits of Public Officers are foregone on dismissal/conviction of a Public Officer.

If a Public Officer is found guilty for an offence by a Court of law, he pays for the sentence with fine or/imprisonment in line the offence and there should be no attack on his pensions rights. Retirement benefits should be a matter of right to every employee for his/her years of service and should not be forgone.

12. Sugar Sector

Salaries in the Sugar Industry need to be reviewed taking into account the drastic reduction of workers in the sector and the production of sugar.

13. Public Service Bill

The enactment of a Public Service Bill is more than necessary in a small country like Mauritius. This law serves to set in clear terms the powers and responsibilities of politicians, civil servants and Advisors and would also act as a shield to prevent any interference on either side for the benefit of the population and a Quality Public Service.

14. Climate Change

Encourage afforestation and ensure that no development projects are done at the expense of the environment. Any new development permit should be accompanied with very strict conditions regarding drains and green areas.

15. Eco Friendly Environment

Political parties must limit their political posters and banners. (A post electoral fee must be charged for cleaning purposes). They must reduce the use of loudspeakers during the campaigns. Already progress is visible with the use of social media which is an effective tool for elections. More concrete actions should be taken by political parties to protect the environment.

16. Post of Vice President of the Republic

The post of Vice President of the Republic should be abolished as in Chief Justice the absence of the President of the Republic, the Chief Justice acts as President.

17. Public Service Commission & the Discipline Forces Service Commission

A complete reform should be done to the P.S.C, the DFSC as well as the Local Government Service Commission to ensure transparency in the recruitment and promotion exercises. Equal opportunities should be given to all citizens for accessing jobs in those sectors irrespective of political opinion or the other differences.

The P.S.C and the DFSC should not be authorized to delegate its powers for recruitment and promotion but instead be reinforced in terms of their structure and composition. Interviews should be video recorded and used in cases of appeal.

18. Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal

The Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal should be given more powers under the Constitution of Mauritius to consider appeals from Public Officers.

19. Amendment of the Section 113 of the Constitution

Section 113 of the Constitution should be amended to ensure that a Quality Public Service is provided to the Population and to avoid that these appointments of Permanent Secretaries and Directors of Statutory Bodies are not done on a political ground.

20. Collective Bargaining

Collective Bargaining should be promoted in the Public Service. Conditions of Service should be the subject of negotiation between trade unions and the Government and a Collective Agreement reached instead of being unilaterally imposed on Public Officers and trade unions by the PRB.. The Civil Service Arbitration Tribunal should be reintroduced.

21. Adjustment of Salaries following introduction of the National Minimum Wage

Section 9 of the National Minimum Wage Act should be given effect both for public service as well as workers in the private sector. The adjustment of salaries should be effected as from January 2018

22. Promotion of Social Dialogue

“Today, more than ever, decent work opportunities for all are the key to inclusion, social Justice, stability and peace.

In a world of work undergoing transformative change, Governments, Workers and Employers must come together to build the Future of Work we want.” – Guy Ryder, ILO Director General.

One very good example where social dialogue has been a success is the introduction of the National Minimum Wage in Mauritius since January 2018.

Measures should be taken to strengthen the role, inclusiveness and effectiveness of social dialogue institutions in Mauritius.