



PRESS RELEASE

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Chief Minister's May Day Message, 2018

Today is a day to celebrate workers' rights and I am genuinely proud to have been the Chief Minister that brought back the May Day Bank holiday after the GSD stopped the celebration.

In fact, we in the GSLP are the only ones committed to keeping the first of May a Bank Holiday.

That matters.

Last night the GSLP family congregated, as we do every year, to celebrate the dawning of Workers' Day together.

As a TGWU/Unite member for more than twenty years myself, I am deeply committed to the principles that socialists defend throughout the world today.

Because, in today's world, the events that we celebrate on May Day matter more than in the past.

The things we take for granted, like holidays, a minimum wage, respect for workers' rights, were all fought for by workers who risked their jobs, their families' wage and, in some cases, even their lives.

So when I have had the chance to change things as Chief Minister, I have done so. I haven't just brought back the important May Day holiday: we have done much, much more.

We have increased the minimum wage by 20% in 6 years.

We have increased public sector salaries each year by more than inflation, delivering to our public sector workers "parity plus" well above UK counterparts.

We have committed ourselves to having no agency staff in our Health Authority, other than when it is agreed by the Union.

And we will be working to bring an end to the use of agency staff in the civil service also.



We have changed the way that police officers are represented by establishing a Federation for the RGP.

And we have worked and will continue to work closely with the representatives of GDP officers as we continue to work for them to become employees of the Gibraltar Government.

And just this year, as a result of representations from Unite:

We have applied important new Sick Leave discount principles for Public Workers relating to cancer-related illness.

We have introduced new rules so that Social Insurance contributions accruing towards the Old Age Pension are to commence as from the age of 15 as opposed to 20, so that the work of our young people is better valued and we mirror the position in the UK.

We have changed the Pensions Act so that industrial employees can retire at 55.

We have increased Bereavement Leave in respect of loss of a parent, child, husband or wife.

And we have increased the Death in Service payment of up to 10 years for Final Pension recipients and from 2 to 3 years under the Group Life scheme for all other Public Sector Employees.

In addition, and complying with our commitment, we have introduced a minimum income for pensioners working with the Trustees of Community Care which ensures that the least well off pensioners now receive at least the equivalent of the minimum wage.

Some may want more, but that is a huge step forward for the hundreds who will benefit from it.

And a huge amount of work has been done by the Financial Secretary's office on the calculations of shortfalls potentially suffered by pensioners in Gibtel and Aquagib.

We are ready to meet these pensioner's representatives to agree those calculations and finish the exercise.

And if we can't agree the calculations, we can agree to go to arbitration to have an objective view on how to do them.

But in an even more important step today, on this first of May, I am publishing a Command Paper to establish pensions in the private sector.

This is a long overdue measure in Gibraltar.

I have tried to get unions and other organisations to agree a position on this issue.



It has not been possible.

So I have taken the initiative and I am publishing the Bill as a Command Paper today so that this law becomes a reality.

I will be consulting with a number of organisations and sectors to ensure we have the best and most modern and progressive law possible for employees and for employers.

And we will continue to work with Unite and listen - as part of a family - when we disagree as we continue to work together for our common purpose: doing our best for working people in our nation's economy.

Because even in disagreement, we have respect for each other and friendship and common principles between us.

And with Brexit looming, I have already said that there will be no erosion of workers' rights.

I have already said we will not tolerate a race to the bottom on workers' rights using Brexit as an excuse.

But I am the only leader who has already said it in our Parliament.

The GSLP Liberals are the only parties committed in this way.

Our Opposition is still urging austerity and cuts.

They still say we spend too much on salaries and services.

The "new" GSD now defines itself as a party of "free market capitalists" and "hard line libertarians" who believe in "small Government".

That means that the GSD explicitly stand for lower wages, less public sector employment and less services in our public sector.

Don't let them pretend to convince you otherwise.

For me, socialist values are the foundation of my party and my family's success.

They are the foundation of Gibraltar's prosperity.

They are the principles, I will explain to my children, that have helped my family, my Party and our nation to prosper.

Generations of workers, and generations of Gibraltarian workers in particular, have made sacrifices to secure the rights that delivered dignified working conditions and the prosperity we enjoy today.



So on the first of May every year, that's what I explain to my children we are celebrating, commemorating and preserving.