

Chamber draws up 'Keep Malta Clean' blueprint

By SHARON SPITERI

The Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment, Dr Stanley Zammit, on Tuesday promised a great change for the better in the Maltese environment during this year, but added in a bitter remark that, unfortunately, the countryside had already been ruined.

Dr Zammit said he would be considering seven proposals presented to him by Mr Angelo Xuereb, chairman of the environment steering committee set up a year ago by the Chamber of Commerce.

The proposals, aimed at "Keeping Malta Clean", outline ways to drastically reduce abuses by offenders and brighten the future of the "unpolished jewel of the Mediterranean" as Mr Xuereb described Malta.

The committee, in its proposals, suggests that the government should establish an environment warden office in every town or village.

An environmental group, made up of about 10 persons, depending on the nature of the district, would be responsible for the environment in their particular area and would be accessible to the public at least once a week, preferably on a Saturday.

The group would eventually be integrated with the proposed local councils which, when functional, would require a few years to get organised.

In another proposal the govern-

ment would take immediate action to implement the already planned bulky refuse skips in every village or town, according to the number of households in the area.

Once adequate refuse disposal facilities were in place, strict measures would be implemented to instil a sense of environmental responsibility.

Under the proposal, anyone who sees an offender dumping material or rubbish in public areas could take photographs which identify the person or his vehicle. These photographs would be exchanged at an agency or police station for a number of free, possibly two, rolls of film, without the need to divulge any personal information.

Lm20 FINE SUGGESTED

The police or agency would call on the offender and make him pay for the cost of the films, and fine him (Lm20 was suggested). Should the culprit object, he or she could present their case to an ombudsman.

In the third proposal policemen would be given the power to fine culprits caught red handed dumping rubbish (Lm30 was suggested). They would be equipped with wheel clamps to immobilise the vehicle until payment is made.

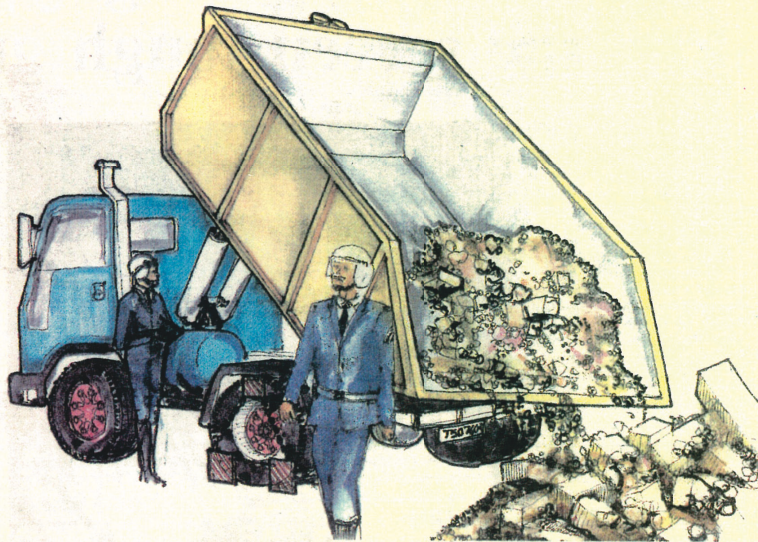
A fourth proposal is for the government to identify a small number of used quarries and use them as landfills since it was said that 90 per cent of dumped material was made up of building debris.

Building material should be disposed of in selected quarries under strict supervision, with stiff fines for culprits.

Once a quarry was backfilled to about three metres below its surface, it would be topped up with a layer of soil and passed back to the owners to be transformed into an orchard.

TOXIC AND INDUSTRIAL WASTE

Toxic or industrial waste would be disposed of in used quarries lined up with large rubber sheets and preferably situated close to the sea so as to avoid any possible toxic chemicals seeping through the rocks and possibly damaging the



Traffic policemen would be given, it is proposed, the authority to fine culprits on the spot. Vehicles would be immobilised with wheel clamps.

water table.

The fifth proposal says that building and civil engineering contractors, architects, engineers and even the government must difficulties in finding selected backfilling material, which is the reason for the bad condition of the road network in Malta since roads need to be backfilled and compacted in layers of selected material of various dimensions.

The committee, which apart from Mr Xuereb, also includes Mr Francis Flynn, Mr Vincent Portelli, Mr Stanley Borg Costanzi, Mr André Zammit and Mr Robert Cachia proposes that a used quarry should be identified close to the proposed waste disposal site, to be used as a debris screening depot.

Anyone requiring specific material could go to these depots and load the required material at a small charge. This operation could also be managed on a commercial basis by a private enterprise.

In the sixth proposal, the committee suggests that building sites should be screened by a temporary wall or screen that would be decorated with an attractive mural painting approved by the planning authority.

In the final proposal, it is suggested that the natural landscape along Malta's south-west coast (from Żurriq to Paradise Bay), could become a pleasant country-

side walkway if made accessible.

A small mechanical shovel could level off, or link up, narrow walkways along the coast and, where possible, provide an open space where families could park their cars. There would be no need for any asphalt or concrete.

The committee concluded by saying it believed the proposals were very practical, effective and easy to implement.

The chamber was willing to give its contribution to help keep Malta clean. They would also provide an incentive to people who reported such offences and consequently provide a much faster and more effective process by the police.

BULKY REFUSE

Dr Zammit said the bulky refuse skips would be introduced in the next few weeks. He was particularly pleased that a tender which would originally have cost the government thousands of liri was being carried out by means of sponsorships, costing the government virtually nothing.

The bulky refuse collection had improved vastly during the past six weeks after it was decentralised, but with the introduction of the skips, and skips on wheels which are expected to be introduced soon, domestic waste should be considerably less problematical.

Dr Zammit congratulated the committee on coming up with such sensible proposals.

The professional staff at the secretariat, he said, was working on the same lines as most of the proposals and he had been pleasantly surprised to find that the committee had reached the same conclusions as the professionally trained staff.

Six environment inspectors had already been appointed to take up what the committee had suggested in its first proposal.

Another six are expected to be appointed shortly. The inspectors, coming from the various environment associations, were very keen on doing their bit for the environment, Dr Zammit said.

He spoke approvingly of all the proposals except the last one on countryside walkways and picnic areas, saying that the government did not intend opening up walkways but rather was trying to identify existing passageways.

He added, on a bitter note, that it was better if what was left of the countryside remained as inaccessible to the public as possible since people were not yet sufficiently aware of the need to keep the countryside clean.



Mr ANGELO FENECH

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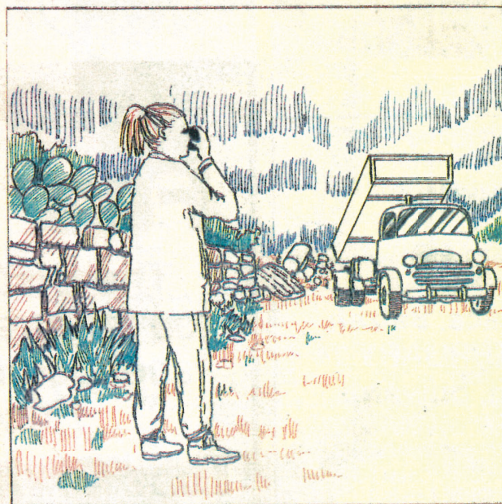
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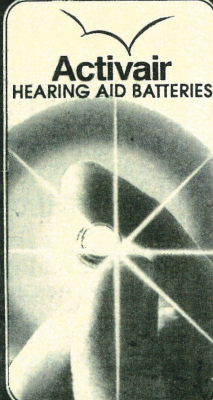
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