



PRESS RELEASE

MALTA INSTITUTE OF TAXATION

A TAXPAYERS CHARTER

The Malta Institute of Taxation feels that it must express its serious misgivings at the lack of progress in the matter of a Taxpayers' Charter for Malta.

The Institute first raised this issue with Government several years ago, but the only feed-back has invariably been "...very interesting ...but we do not have the resources to implement such a charter...". After repeated and totally fruitless efforts, the Institute took up the matter at the level of the Confederation Fiscale Europeenne, which comprises thirty-two tax organizations from twenty-four European countries and has close ties with the European Commission. The C.F.E. welcomed the Institute's initiative, made appropriate recommendations to the E.C. and devoted half of its annual seminar to the subject.

The C.F.E. gave such importance to this matter that two-thirds of a publication celebrating its fiftieth anniversary (a 330 page volume) was devoted to a review of taxpayers' charters all over the world. A detailed study is made of the position in eleven countries, with a final reference to the E.U. Treaty as a charter of taxpayers' rights. Philip Baker, the noted authority on tax considerations, was entrusted with giving a brief overall reflection on the question.

Despite all this, Malta continues to drag its feet.

The country has been advised in Parliament that a Taxpayers' Charter was being actively considered. May one ask with what result? No consultations seem to have been carried out with anybody concerned with taxation matters: certainly, the Malta Institute of Taxation has not been consulted.

Is a Charter really necessary for Malta: one need only look at the published Court decisions on taxation to convince himself of this necessity – that is, if any convincing is still necessary.

Malta is in danger of becoming a laughing stock among the progressive countries of the world, let alone Europe. Any further excuse about resources is simply not acceptable. The E.U. has already expressed its opinion on shortcomings from Malta which we have tried to fob off with excuses of lack of resources. Can we really expect to take our place among the liberal, democratic elite of Europe, not to mention the rest of the world, if we do not grant our taxpayers a modicum of protection of their rights against the all-powerful state and its organs? In any case, who can fairly mention lack of resources, when an additional 52 pages of complicated legislation have just been enacted for the purpose of implementing

the Budget proposals. If resources are available for the preparation of this massive influx of new provisions (incidentally, about twice as long as the original Income Tax Act as enacted in 1948), surely they are available for the implementation of measures recognizing that the taxpayers also have rights which must be protected. The old poetic adage that “.....theirs is not to reason why.....theirs is but to do and die....” (or pay up in our case), is no longer valid, if it has ever been.

The taxpaying public demands its rights. It will no longer be satisfied with half baked platitudes that had better not be promised, published or implemented.