

### OUR VALUES

This election is about values. In 2002, the Irish people have fundamental choices to make about the type of country we want to live in, about the type of society we want for our children, about the type of environment we want to bequeath to our children and grandchildren. The options we choose depend on the values we espouse.

In 2002, Irish society is catching its breath after almost a decade of unprecedented economic success. Economically, we have the potential to continue to build our prosperity. With the right Government policies, we can look forward to the prospect of at least another decade of strong economic growth and high levels of employment. Or we can make the wrong choices, and blow this opportunity.

This prospect of growth also holds out the possibility of improving the quality of life for all our citizens. Making Ireland a more competitive economy and a better place to live will require a Decade of Investment in public services and infrastructure, and a strong commitment to quality public services for all our citizens. Or we can continue to neglect public services and let them, and our quality of life with them, wither on the vine.

We can also make Ireland a fairer society. With energy and commitment, we can tackle homelessness, we can rescue our ghettos, we can end the misery and death of drug addiction, we can tackle poverty. Or we can continue to ignore these problems and pretend that they don't really exist.

The outgoing Government inherited an economy in the middle of an unprecedented boom, and an exchequer which was coming into surplus for the first time in 25 years. They blew the lot. They squandered the boom on tax cuts for the privileged, rather than improve quality of life for all, or invest in the future of our public services. The result has been crisis in hospitals and schools, congestion and failure in every conceivable form of infrastructure, and an ever more divided society.

This has not been an accident. This Government has been guided by a combination of crude Thatcherite ideology, as expressed by the Tánaiste and the Minister for Finance, and the populist complacency of the larger Government Party. It has been a recipe for mismanagement and neglect.

The condition of the public finances at the end of this failed administration is vastly worse than the healthy situation they inherited. Charlie McCreevy has cooked the books to avoid the appearance of borrowing. But the outgoing administration has run down services for the

people to finance tax cuts for the rich. Ireland in 2002 now spends less on essential public services than any other member state of the European Union. The politics of Harney and McCreevy are the politics of the short-term and the quick buck.

This Government stands condemned, above all, however, for its negligence, and for its sheer lack of ambition. More often than not, when this Government has had choices, it has chosen to do nothing. Never has an Irish Government had such resources. Never have such resources been met by such little action.

The results are there for all to see. We languish well down the United Nations development league table by comparison with other European countries, and even that is on the basis of figures which almost certainly overstate our level of development. This appalling waste of human potential is the responsibility of a Government that always prefers to do nothing.

Labour's values are different. Ours are the politics of vision and ambition for Ireland. Our approach to Government is driven by frustration with the untapped human potential in Irish society, and a determination to unleash it. We believe that Ireland can be a better place to live, and we are determined to make it so.

Labour believes that the State has a vital role to play in Irish society, as an agent of economic development, and as an engine of social change. The Labour Party stands for a fundamental change in Irish society and for the protection of the dignity and liberty of the individual. As a political force our aim is to achieve a society founded upon the principles of freedom, equality, community and democracy. We bring to these tasks a proud record of achievement since our foundation.

In these aims Labour works in tandem with our sister parties in these islands and in the European and international social democratic and socialist movement. We are committed to international peace and co-operation, especially on the continent of Europe, towards overcoming the legacies of past conflict and towards securing a decent existence for all of our peoples.

For more than a century, the peoples of Europe have looked to social democratic parties to provide a decent quality of life and economic fairness. As globalisation has driven a new wave of economic change and opportunity, it has brought with it uncertainty, and in some cases gross injustice. These new forces driving global capitalism pose a significant challenge to the nation state and to international political institutions. Unchecked by democratic control, global capitalism has a potential to do severe damage to the social and economic rights of the individual. Thus, over the past decade, the peoples of

Europe have looked again to social democratic parties, seeking to harness the benefits of new prosperity to the advantage of the whole community. Unlike the civil war parties, Labour has not been compromised by cosy economic relationships with the representatives of global or national capital. We will stand firm on the side of the liberty and dignity of the individual.

Labour believes that the simplistic economic individualism of Harney and McCreevy is a recipe for unfairness and a poor quality of life. There are some things in life which are best provided collectively, jointly funded by citizens through the state. The failure of this Government to invest in public services illustrates this only too well. In transport, education, health care, social services and so many other areas, this outgoing Government has shown by its neglect how many problems in modern life are best addressed through citizens acting collectively, with the state as the driving force. And when they do so, we all move forward together.

Money alone will not deliver high quality public services. They also require drive and commitment on the part of Government. The outgoing Government has made it clear that they regard public services with disdain. Labour in Government will drive forward with both investment and reform, because we believe in the importance of high quality public services.

We are also committed to strategic long-term thinking. This Government has taken an economy with the healthiest exchequer accounts for a generation, and blown it. It was Labour in Government that helped to lay the foundations for our economic success, and we will do so again. Our last term in office was characterised by a firm commitment to economic prudence and stability. We will continue to pursue sustainable and prudent growth within the parameters applying to Ireland as a member of the EU and the Euro area. We are committed to sustainable expansion in incomes and employment, with sound economic policies, and an unshakable commitment to social justice. In the long term, the two are inextricable. The Labour Party is determined to see not simply development and wealth creation for its own sake, but also a socially just distribution of resources.

A deadening cynicism has taken hold in Irish politics. Political activity is seen to be irrelevant or self-serving. The Labour Party's answer to that cynicism is to reclaim the space of citizenship and political activity by advocating a strong, principled and ideological commitment to the rights of the individual as a citizen and as a member of the community. We reject the influence of business in funding political parties. We reject the cynical and self-interested call of those who offer "value for your vote". We will replace the right-wing agenda of the civil war parties and of the junior micro-party in the

outgoing Government, which is based on the status of the individual as a member of an economy, a client or a dependent, with our rights-based approach of the individual as a citizen and a member of society and of the community.

For politics to be trusted and relevant, politicians must deliver for people. Labour has made it clear in our pledge card what our immediate priorities will be in Government and we will deliver on those commitments.

We are committed to the principle that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, in the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Freedom and equality are the birthright of all human beings, but those rights are jeopardised for a vast proportion of the population of the world and for a significant number of people within our State. Our status as a developed country carries with it an essential duty to assist the less developed nations of the world. This duty is owed as of right and is not a matter of charity or as an optional extra as resources and expedience allow.

We will strengthen Ireland's international commitment – within Europe, by facilitating enlargement of the EU and contributing to the reform of its institutions, and globally by strengthening our commitment to and participation in international law and judicial fora, and our role in international co-operation and conflict prevention as peacekeepers and peace enforcers under UN mandates and as part of UN or RRF Forces. Our Defence Forces will be strengthened to continue to play a prominent part in spearheading the drive for international peace and security.

We are proud of the contribution we have made to the peace process. We will continue to pursue our historic role as campaigners for social and economic justice and as brokers of peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

We in the Labour Party are ambitious for Ireland – we see this country as having the potential to create a truly just and socially progressive society. We will overcome the legacy of five wasted years of dissipating the prosperity and the opportunity to create a better quality of life for everyone. The failed outgoing administration has little or nothing to show for the boom years. We in contrast will work strenuously to build a truly fair and prosperous society. The Labour Party is rightly and proudly ambitious for Ireland. On polling day, we are asking you to join with us in striving for those ambitions.

## **OUR PLEDGES**

### **Health Pledge**

1. Free GP health care for all.  
As Labour delivers a fair, high quality health system, not continued health apartheid.

### **Schools Pledge**

2. A properly funded schools system.  
As Labour invests in our children, not forcing parents and teachers into continuous fundraising.

### **Poverty Pledge**

3. Tackling the growing gap between the rich and the poor.  
As Labour index-links welfare payments to wage increases, not inflation.

### **Children's Pledge**

4. Provision of pre-school and childcare places for all our children.  
As Labour supports the family, not victimises hard-pressed parents.

### **Carers' Pledge**

5. An end to the means testing of carers' allowance.  
As Labour recognizes the central role played by all carers.

### **Housing Pledge**

6. A right to good quality, secure accommodation at an affordable price.  
As Labour delivers radical solutions, not favours developers over families.

## Labour in Government will:

- End the shameful neglect of public services.
- Rule out borrowing to fund current spending.
- Retain existing income tax rates.
- Retain public enterprises in majority public ownership.
- Introduce a national spatial plan to develop Ireland's infrastructure.

## Promoting Employment and Growth

From 1993 to 2000, Ireland experienced an unprecedented period of economic growth. Although growth has recently slowed, and many redundancies have been announced, the fundamentals of the Irish economy are still sound. With the right government action, a return to stronger growth can be expected late in 2002 or early in 2003.

Labour in Government helped to lay the foundations for our recent economic prosperity and, if returned to office, we will again focus on achieving high levels of sustainable economic growth, as a means of providing higher living standards for all. But unlike the outgoing Government, which has squandered the boom, we will focus on achieving economic success for all our citizens. Labour believes that prosperity and social inclusion go hand in hand.

Future economic success will depend on an active role for the state as an agent of economic development. This means putting in place proper infrastructure and services, investing in people and social infrastructure, promoting productivity growth, and maintaining a stable macroeconomic environment.

Infrastructure, in the form of roads, rail, airports, energy and telecommunications is fundamental to economic growth. Ireland is now faced with a huge infrastructure deficit, which must be addressed. This will require substantial financial input, together with structural reforms in the way in which we deliver services. As well as physical infrastructure, we also need to invest heavily in people, including education, training, reintegration of the long-term unemployed, and health and welfare services. A poorly performing health service is bad for business as well as for patients. In knowledge-based economy, this kind of investment is just as important as investment in traditional infrastructure.

While, in the 1990s, economic growth in Ireland was driven by increases in employment, the challenge in the next decade will be to retain high levels of employment, and improve living standards by increasing both the quality of employment and productivity. This will require Government to invest in people, but also in R&D, in the

development of knowledge and its application throughout the economy. It will also require an improved regulatory environment, better competition enforcement, reform of the public sector, and a new deal for the commercial semi-state bodies.

None of this will be possible without a stable macroeconomic environment. This includes sound public finances and a realistic incomes policy, worked out with the social partners in a continued development of the partnership process.

Labour also believes that further economic development will crucially depend on getting the regional balance right. This will involve the development of a National Spatial Plan, to guide the physical and economic development of the country over a fifteen-year period, to ensure that we bring infrastructure, people, transport, housing and jobs together in a coherent way, to promote equity between the regions and to improve quality of life for all.

## Better Public Finances

Never has a Government had so much and done so little, while favouring so few. The latter years of the boom saw huge government surpluses, presenting the government with great opportunities to invest in the economy - in infrastructure, services and tax reform. This opportunity has been squandered, and we are faced again with the prospect of deficits. But the need for Government expenditure has not gone away. If anything, the need to rebuild the foundations of a strong and growing economy demands an active role for Government. If returned to Government, the Labour Party will again confront the task of putting in place the basis for sustained and sustainable economic growth.

To make the most of our underlying economic strengths, the Government must invest in the Irish economy. It must tackle the bottlenecks in telecommunications, energy and transport that shackle Irish business and improve essential public services. We cannot afford to wait for growth to resume to tackle the infrastructure deficit. At the height of the boom, the outgoing Government thought they could cut taxes, fund the National Development Plan and invest in the Pension fund, all at the same time, and without borrowing. By 2002, their fiscal policy is a shambles. Deficits are forecast for 2003 and 2004, but they are still promising billions in additional spending with no tax increases and no public borrowing. Their figures don't add up.

Labour readily accepts the golden rule of public finances: the State should not borrow to fund current expenditure. It is reasonable, however, to borrow to invest in capital projects which give a return over time. This is the same logic which households and businesses apply.

Accordingly, Labour is prepared to borrow to fund the necessary infrastructural projects which our future prosperity demands. We are also committed to investing the funds in the National Pensions Reserve Fund in projects which will expand the capacity of the Irish economy. Our own future prosperity is the best guarantee of pension security in the future.

Labour recognises the positive social and economic role of essential public services and will therefore prioritise public services over further tax cuts for the privileged. Ireland invests less in public services than any other country in Europe, as a percentage of national income. This affects quality of life for all our citizens, but also means that Ireland has one of the worst records on poverty and inequality in industrialised world. Labour believes in protecting, reforming and developing public services as essential elements in the quality of life of all citizens.

New spending priorities will also require new structures for economic planning. The existing system of public expenditure management is fractured, short-termist and lacks strategic focus. We will implement a programme of reform in public financial management, including a greater degree of concentration on key strategic issues. We will focus on the need for 'joined-up Government', as distinct from the current system that is excessively departmentalist, and on introducing a greater degree of multi-annual budgeting into the system. We will also provide a greater role for the Oireachtas in scrutinising public expenditure. We will require all expenditure to be the subject of scrutiny in the estimates process, not just new expenditure, and will involve Oireachtas committees in the process. We will also set up a public expenditure evaluation unit within the Houses of the Oireachtas.

- ❑ Labour will continue to run the current account in surplus – we will not borrow to fund day-to-day spending.
- ❑ Labour is prepared to borrow for capital purposes to ensure the completion of the National Development Plan.
- ❑ Labour will require all expenditure to be the subject of examination by a new Public Expenditure Evaluation Unit within the Houses of the Oireachtas.
- ❑ Labour will adhere to the terms of the EU Growth and Stability Pact.

Labour has recently set out the parameters of its fiscal policy between 2002 and 2007 in the policy document 'The Politics of Choice.'

### *The National Pension Reserve Fund*

Labour will continue to make contributions to the Fund

over the lifetime of the next Government. However, those contributions will be at a reduced rate of 0.25% of GNP. The remainder will be specifically allocated to support the capital investment programme set out in the National Health Strategy. This proposal will generate €5bn for additional investment in a programme that has been costed at €7.7bn.

By 2007, we estimate that there will be close to €14bn in the reserve fund. Labour has always been supportive of the fund. Nonetheless we have argued that the level of contributions to the fund in any given year would have to be determined by broader economic considerations. The needs of pensioners are after all broader than just pensions. Today's pensioners are suffering unnecessary hardship because of the lack of nursing home and step down facilities within our health system. Investment in those facilities now will not just benefit today's pensioners, but the pensioners of the future.

All public sector pensions are defined benefit pensions. The NPRF was established to ease the exchequer burden of paying pensions into the future but a temporary reduction in contributions will in no way affect the entitlement to receive a pension or the level of future pensions, which are and will remain fully guaranteed by law.

### **Fair Tax Policies**

Labour will give priority in any tax changes to the needs of low and middle-income earners, while calling a halt to the regressive tax cuts for the privileged of recent years. Labour will not allow our essential services to wither on the vine so that the privileged can be given massive tax cuts. At the same time, we are giving a commitment not to raise income tax rates.

Our tax objectives over a 5-year Dáil are as follows:

- ❑ We will ensure that minimum wage earnings will not be subject to income tax.
- ❑ We will not increase income tax rates.
- ❑ We will increase the small gains allowance for a married couple to €5,000 per year, but thereafter capital gains will be taxed on the same basis as income. The existing full exemption for the family home will be fully protected and employee share ownership schemes will be exempted.
- ❑ We will stick to the agreement reached between Ireland and the EU on Ireland's 12.5% corporation tax rate.
- ❑ We will examine the scope to develop 'green taxes' to incentivise better environmental choices.
- ❑ We will redress over time the discrimination against single income families brought about by the individualisation of the standard rate band.

Labour will continue to take strong measures to increase tax compliance. We introduced an amendment in the Dáil which resulted in a significant increase in the level of penalty for tax offences, and we will continue to strengthen the tax code and to ensure that financial and imprisonment penalties apply to those who fail to meet their obligations. We will introduce further controls on those who assist with the preparation of tax returns, to ensure that they act diligently and appropriately. We will continue to press for disclosure of the names of Ansbacher depositors.

### **Tackling the Infrastructure Deficit**

Despite the unprecedented level of resources available in recent years, investment in infrastructure under this Government has been completely inadequate. This is seriously affecting the potential for further economic and employment growth, while many of the essential services needed by our community are failing to cope with demand and are in desperate need of investment. The National Development Plan is already hopelessly behind schedule, due in no small part to mismanagement by Government and unwillingness to commit adequate resources.

Labour believes that a decade of sustained investment by the State will be necessary to remedy the infrastructural deficit. But there is also a pressing need to speed up the process of delivering on urgent infrastructural projects currently in the pipeline. To achieve this, Labour will appoint a Cabinet Minister with responsibility for infrastructure, and integrate infrastructural planning within a new Government Department. We will also make available adequate funds for infrastructure. We are prepared to consider appropriate public private partnerships (PPP) arrangements where justifiable, and will use the funds in the NPRF to invest in capital projects at a reasonable rate of interest.

To the forefront of this programme will be a new National Spatial Strategy which will provide a key framework for the development of transport, energy and communications infrastructure as well as balanced regional development over the next 15 years. In the medium term we are committed to the implementation of the existing National Development Plan which will be integrated into the spatial plan.

The need for a properly planned infrastructure of transport, energy, communications and other services is to the forefront of Labour's agenda for the next decade. That is why we have published a detailed policy paper on the development of a national spatial plan up to the year 2015. The Labour Party's belief is that spatial planning should be driven as much by the needs of citizens and communities as of the economy. We are therefore fundamentally committed to a process of engagement,

debate about the goals of the national spatial plan and the means required to achieving those goals. Our aims are:

- ❑ To end ghettoisation by income and social class, with the elimination of pockets of social, physical and economic deprivation as a priority.
- ❑ To ensure sustainable economic growth, increased prosperity and the equitable distribution of the fruits of prosperity across the country.
- ❑ To protect and enhance the environment for future generations.
- ❑ To achieve a clean environment and high water quality on a par with the best in Europe.
- ❑ To stabilise the population of rural Ireland.
- ❑ To emphasise and ensure the quality of the built environment and the heritage of our rural areas.
- ❑ To consolidate the role and competitive potential of Dublin and other large cities while developing a balanced and sustainable spatial structure.
- ❑ To provide for further decentralisation of state agencies where appropriate and in consultation with relevant trade unions.
- ❑ To co-operate with Northern Ireland to develop a plan for the whole island in the context of overall European planning.
- ❑ To develop an effective network of national infrastructure including railways, roads and motorways and other transport infrastructure as set out in our spatial plan.

Our national spatial plan will provide a comprehensive strategy for dealing with regional planning, transport infrastructure (including rail, road, waterway, sea and air infrastructure and the provision of public transport facilities such as bus services), power and gas networks, energy consumption issues, availability of broadband and other technologies, physical planning including the protection of areas of national significance as well as coastal and river areas. The latter aim will be pursued while fully respecting the rights of the populations of those areas.

Part of our overall planning objectives will be to ensure that minimum universal service obligations are put in place for service providers. These will include guaranteeing the public infrastructure in rural areas. In urban areas we will provide administrative and financial supports for a heightened emphasis on public transport and cycling over private vehicles. Legislation will be introduced to ensure that heavy goods vehicles are kept out of city centres during peak times and that cycle lanes will be extended and will as far as possible be physically separated from road spaces.

### **Promoting Competitiveness and Supporting Enterprise**

Our future prosperity depends on our competitiveness and

on vibrant enterprise. Throughout this Manifesto, Labour is setting out a series of measures which will support Irish business and make the Irish economy more competitive. Tackling the infrastructure deficit is essential to driving down costs. Investment in people will deliver the skilled labour which business requires. Investment in social services is also important – our proposals on childcare will tackle a huge social problem, but will also enhance labour supply which has been a key driver of the economy. Similarly, our proposals on competition and regulation will help to reduce costs for business. We recognise the need to support innovation and the application of new research in the enterprise sector, and to promote e-business. In addition, Labour will:

- ❑ Tackle the cost of insurance, which is choking small business, by promoting competition in the insurance sector, reducing the cost of claims, and taking measures to reduce legal costs.
- ❑ Examine ways to facilitate simpler reporting requirements to state agencies.
- ❑ Promote ways of encouraging better use of information technology, particularly among SMEs and the traditional sectors, particularly through support for training

### Supporting Public Sector Enterprises

In the next five years, public sector enterprises will be crucial to the delivery of improved infrastructure, and to the success of the economy at large. Yet, political mismanagement in this area has left the semi-state sector in disarray.

The outgoing Government's intervention to prevent the expansion of the ESB into Poland is but one example of a growing crisis in this area. Similarly, their series of policy U-turns on Aer Lingus indicates a total lack of strategic thinking at the heart of Government policy.

The failed privatisation of Telecom and the subsequent selling of Eircom to the highest bidder have raised new questions and concerns about the future of the commercial semi-state sector. What was trumpeted as a new beginning for these companies has turned into a policy fiasco, not least for the unfortunate shareholders. The simplistic right-wing privatisation agenda is giving way to a broader debate about the role of semi-state companies in overall industrial policy.

Retaining the commercial semi-states in national control is essential to our strategic national economic interest. As was shown by the Telecom saga, privatisation can lead rapidly to takeover by foreign multinationals. Immense damage would be caused to the Irish economy if semi-states such as Aer Lingus were to be sold off in that way. The essential services and infrastructure which

commercial semi-state companies provide must be retained in Ireland in the interests of the whole economy. Ireland simply cannot afford to risk losing our interest in the provision of air transport. The semi-states are vital commercial assets and must be retained in Ireland.

At the same time, it is important that the semi-states be commercially successful, in the interests both of the efficiency of the economy as a whole and of the people employed in those firms. The Labour Party has long accepted the limitations of the traditional control of the semi-state sector. We support the introduction of competition where necessary to ensure consumer choice. We support ESOPs/ESOTs and strategic alliances where appropriate. However, we have also consistently argued for the maximum level of social control of key utilities and have insisted upon updated universal service obligations.

We believe that:

- ❑ Policy towards the semi-states must be governed by strategic and long-term considerations.
- ❑ The semi-states should be retained in national control.
- ❑ Access to funding for investment is critical.
- ❑ Competition in accordance with domestic and EU law will be a feature of the trading environment in order to benefit the consumer.
- ❑ Political interference and civil service control in day-to-day operations should be avoided.

In order to achieve these objectives we are proposing the following structures:

- ❑ A holding company to be known as the Public Enterprise Management Agency (PEMA) with a commercial mandate and independence from the Government similar to the NTMA will be established by statute.
- ❑ The commercial semi-states will be incorporated within PEMA and Government shares will be transferred to it. PEMA will then be charged with overseeing the development of the semi-states. PEMA will be given a mandate commercially to develop each company in conjunction with the individual company boards, provided it retains a minimum of 51% control.
- ❑ There will be no disposal of any of the shares in a State company without Government and Oireachtas approval.
- ❑ Each individual company should retain the capacity to enter into third party shareholdings including an ESOP or enter into a joint venture, strategic alliance or other appropriate structure. Decisions to raise risk capital should be jointly agreed between the company and PEMA.
- ❑ PEMA's board will be appointed by the Government.

This approach has a number of key advantages. It will put the management of semi-states on a proper commercial basis while allowing for a continuation of the practice of building stakeholders within public companies. Crucially, it will retain public control over strategic commercial assets. In short it will guarantee a future for the semi-states consistent with the need for appropriate social control and accountability. We will seek to foster and renew the public service ethos throughout the State sector, including the semi-states, and will develop the public service culture in consultation with workers in the sector.

## **Competition and Regulation**

The accountability of regulators is one of the glaring gaps in our democratic system. Regulators are now taking not only administrative and regulatory decisions regarding essential services, but also key policy decisions divorced from democratic legitimacy. We will ensure that Ministers, accountable to Dáil Éireann, retain the right to make key policy decisions, subject only to EU law where applicable.

Under the outgoing Government, an army of regulators have arisen who decide on prices, national universal service obligations and contributions to be paid by new private entrants. This development is deeply unsatisfactory. Key decisions such as the level of universal postal service we require, or whether rural post offices stay open should be made by Government.

Labour will rewrite existing legislation for regulators. Single-member and individual sector regulators will be abolished and their functions transferred to an overall Enterprise Regulation Commission consisting of at least 5 members. The commission will sit in divisions of at least three members dealing with any individual industry. This new structure will avoid the undesirable situation whereby a single member regulator will be in total control of regulation of a particular sector.

We will establish a standing committee of the Oireachtas, to be called the Regulatory Oversight Committee, to which the Enterprise Regulation Commission will be directly accountable. The committee will undertake public examination of the exercise by the Enterprise Regulation Commission of their functions and scrutinise their decisions having regard to Government policy and specific policy directions. The Regulatory Oversight Committee will make regular reports to the Houses of the Oireachtas on all matters in relation to the Enterprise Regulation Commission. Members and staff of the Enterprise Regulation Commission and other relevant persons will be required to appear before the committee and to produce papers.

Labour believes that regulators should be required by Government to adopt a firm approach to ensure lower charges, better service levels and strong universal service guarantees.

The Competition Authority will retain responsibility for competition in the various sectors, but will also come under the remit of the Regulatory Oversight Committee. Our proposals for a system of parliamentary questions for statutory bodies will include the Enterprise Regulation Commission.

## **Consumer Affairs**

The introduction of the euro has been just one recent instance which has given rise to an impression that consumers are being taken for granted by many enterprises. Unjustified price rises were not uncommon and regrettably there was an almost total lack of effective regulation.

Our consumer policy is based on the need for openness and consumer choice, as well as competition to ensure improved services. We will strengthen the office of the Director of Consumer Affairs and will improve her powers and resources. We will legislate to eradicate practices which conceal necessary information from consumers, such as the deplorable practice whereby it is legal for an employer such as a restaurateur to retain a service charge as profit. Pyramid schemes which fall outside current legislation will be banned. We will legislate to promote competition in the interests of consumer choice and better services. In the liquor licensing area, for example, we will legislate to provide that pub licences will be available on the basis of existing criteria but without the need to surrender an existing licence. There is an important balance to be struck between opening hours on the one hand and public order considerations on the other. We will consult widely with affected communities in order to attain the right solutions, which may require a more flexible legal code to require for example earlier closing hours in residential areas.

## **Supporting our Workforce**

### *Full Employment*

Labour remains committed to full employment. To take the final steps to achieve full employment and to make it a sustainable and permanent feature of our society will require concerted action to enhance regional development, training and the experience of employment itself. We are committed to the active involvement of the whole workforce in economic and social activity. With increasing economic uncertainty, and new forms of work as well as an anti-union ethos prevailing in a number of enterprises both domestic and multinational, there is as

great a need as ever for the protection and enhancement of the statutory rights of workers and in particular their right to fair remuneration and just conditions of employment.

Despite advances in employment opportunities there remain areas of deprivation which have been immune to the benefits enjoyed by society at large.

The creation of employment at a just wage is central to tackling poverty. Experience over the last five years shows that it is also necessary to ensure that those who are unemployed have the skills to take up this employment and to progress within it. Labour's policy will be one of an all-out drive to bring areas of deprivation and long-term unemployment, both in urban areas and the regions, in from the margin. Our strategy will be based on targeting disadvantaged areas and working in partnership with local communities.

The minimum wage is a key element in our drive to eradicate poverty. It is unacceptable that a hardworking citizen who puts in a full working week is entitled only to a modest sum by way of minimum wage. We will strengthen the Minimum Wage Act, protecting younger workers in the process, and will legislate for an increase in the minimum wage.

The Employment Action Plan devised by the outgoing Government at the behest of the European Commission does not offer the type of remedial intervention required to break the cycle of intergenerational and long-term unemployment. The plan must be refocused on the long-term unemployed, as well as other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups such as lone parents. Labour recognises the central role played by employment schemes in maintaining services in disadvantaged areas and will undertake an external review of the structures and operation of FÁS as part of a broad review and overhaul of national training and employment services policies.

The last three years have seen, along with an overall increase in employment, a return to higher levels of redundancies. While some of this reflects the inadequacy of current Government industrial policy, a high level of job losses is likely to be a continued feature even of a full employment society, as old jobs are lost and replaced by new jobs. Redundancy payments legislation will need to be upgraded to reflect the understanding that employees have a right to security of income if they are to deliver the flexibility required to remain competitive in the new economy. Many of the job losses are in low skill sectors and the redundant workers will require training if they are to gain employment elsewhere. Labour will also explore, with employers, the provision of training in these sectors, prior to redundancy.

### *Corporate Social Responsibility*

If organisations fail to consult their workforces about major changes, they will damage morale, weaken the ties that bind workers to their employer and ultimately reduce productivity - often drastically. Despite that fact, the outgoing Government took a deeply hostile position to the adoption of the major draft Directive proposed by the Commission providing for a framework of employee information and consultation at local plant level. Despite their best efforts to frustrate and delay it, the Directive has just been finally adopted by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers early in 2002. Labour will implement in full the new Information and Consultation directive with strong sanctions for employers who choose to ignore their obligations to their workers.

We will promote corporate social responsibility and enact key operating and financial review reporting requirements recommended by the Company Law Review Group and the O'Toole report on audit standards. We will legislate so that companies should report on corporate social responsibility, community investment, ethical management practice and sustainable growth.

Company law will be amended so that directors of companies which trade without adequate insurance for injuries caused to employees will be held guilty of reckless trading and will be personally liable for compensation.

Other corporate crime such as tax evasion will be rooted out by the introduction of a Whistleblowers Bill, to protect employees who report wrongdoing. The law dealing with companies that recklessly endanger their workers will be extended to provide a new offence of corporate manslaughter.

We will also work with our EU partners to promote corporate responsibility in developing countries by countries operating in Europe where too often the goods that end up on our shelves are made by poorly paid and exploited labour.

### *Making Work Better*

Work is central to the lives of many of our citizens. The labour market is one of the main determinants of life chances and work is one of the main avenues for fulfilling our human potential. In the past, failure by employers and by the Oireachtas to provide for proper conditions of employment has detracted from the legitimate aspiration to satisfactory and enjoyable employment of our working population.

- Apart from the Netherlands, Ireland has the fewest public holidays in Europe, including Northern Ireland. Labour will legislate to

- introduce two additional public holidays per year.
- ❑ Existing statutory redundancy provisions are unfair and inadequate. We will legislate for a minimum redundancy payment of three weeks pay per year of service for all employees, irrespective of age.
- ❑ We will enhance maternity leave and parental leave with a new system of paid family leave for both parents. We are also proposing a significant increase in provision for childcare facilities for working parents in particular. We will also introduce a right to part-time work for a defined period after the birth of a child unless an employer can show that it would not be reasonably practicable to provide a part-time position.
- ❑ In addition the maternity protection legislation will be reviewed alongside the adoptive and parental leave laws with a view to strengthening the rights of the employee.
- ❑ We will legislate to strengthen protection against discrimination in the workplace. Existing legislation on sexual and other discriminatory harassment will be extended to provide for express civil remedies against bullying and other harassment in the workplace which does not come within the existing law.
- ❑ Effective civil remedies will be introduced to deal with breaches of transfer of undertakings and collective redundancies legislation. We will legislate to improve protection of employees' pension rights in transfer of undertakings situations.
- ❑ An overhaul of the health and safety legislation together with the introduction of meaningful penalties and a substantial increase in resources for the enforcement of the legislation will be introduced as a priority by Labour in Government. We will require all employers to take out employer's liability insurance.
- ❑ Employment practices will be monitored so that a false self-employed status is not conferred on employees in particular areas, such as home working or the building trade.
- ❑ In unfair dismissals cases, we will provide the Employment Appeals Tribunal with enhanced discretion to award compensation for the manner of a dismissal, whether or not there has been a loss of earnings.
- ❑ Ireland currently has a large number of state bodies dealing with industrial relations matters. We will institute a review of the existing industrial relations system, and if necessary rationalise and reform existing structures.
- ❑ We will examine ways to protect workers from exploitation in relation to Sunday working.

## Agriculture, Forestry, Marine and Tourism

Ireland's rural population is becoming more diverse in terms of economic interests and expectations. While many rural communities are experiencing inward migration, problems of poverty and rural isolation remain. Groups particularly at risk include marginal farmers, low-income families, women and older people. Labour believes that it is time to develop a broader rural policy which responds to the needs of a changing rural society.

Labour is committed to ensuring that employment and incomes in agriculture are protected and that the sector continues to contribute to the development of the economy. Pressure from the EU and the next round of WTO talks will be managed insofar as possible to ensure that any changes to supports or liberalisation of markets will be brought about in a gradual and phased manner. We will also give priority to global economic justice and, where appropriate to assist the development of the world's poorest countries, we will facilitate the trading needs of those countries in relation to agricultural or industrial produce. We believe that this process can be managed in a way which will avoid any undue hardship to Irish industry or agriculture.

Labour in Government will:

- ❑ Establish a separate statutory agency for the administration of FEOGA and other EU payments,
- ❑ Reduce the bureaucracy and speed up the payments process.
- ❑ Properly fund the appeals unit.
- ❑ Undertake a comprehensive review of Teagasc, to examine how that agency can best meet the challenges of the future.
- ❑ Tackle the problem of non-compliance in meat factories.
- ❑ Examine methods of increasing price transparency in the beef-processing sector.
- ❑ In conjunction with Northern Irish authorities, establish an All-Ireland Animal Disease Control Centre.
- ❑ Provide support for young farmers by improving access to quota, and providing incentives for older farmers to pass on land.

Farming methods will increasingly come under environmental scrutiny and we will ensure that, as with all members of the community, the need to protect the environment is respected, with appropriate financial supports.

Legislation will be introduced to enhance the protection for animal welfare, including more stringent protections for animals in terms of food and water, handling, access to the outdoors, light and ventilation, space for movement

and exercise. Slaughter should be carried out in a humane manner. In the international context we will campaign at EU level and in other fora for better protection of animal welfare. We will also introduce a more rigid control on certain categories of animal ownership, such as exotic species. This legislation will extend to animal welfare and ownership outside of the agricultural context.

Labour will protect and develop the rural economy and rural society. We will maintain rural post offices, and ensure that they are developed to offer a wider range of services. We will develop rural transport services, to reduce the isolation experienced by many rural residents. We will provide incentives and support for alternative farm enterprises and off-farm enterprises.

Labour favours the development of the forestry sector in Ireland, as an important element in the rural economy. We will promote forestry development, incorporating diversification in timber species.

Labour will continue to support the marine sector and will continue to promote the employment and development potential of sea and inland fisheries and aquaculture. We will pursue the fight to retain and enhance existing fish quotas and seek opportunities to develop our fishing fleet. Labour will take radical measures to protect wild salmon and wild sea trout stocks.

Legislation will be introduced to provide for a coastal zone management authority. A comprehensive mapping project will be undertaken of the entire coastline of the island of Ireland using the latest mapping technologies. Maritime safety will also be a priority as will the implementation of outstanding international agreements in relation to the law of the sea.

Sustainable tourism will be a priority for Labour in Government. Following international economic and political uncertainty, the restoration of confidence and enhancement of tourist numbers will be a priority. We will seek where possible to avoid the pitfalls of environmentally damaging mass tourism and will seek to ensure a balanced spread of tourist flows to hitherto neglected regions and during off-peak periods. Co-ordination of tourist promotion through the all-island structures will be enhanced. In the short-term, an immediate priority will be to increase marketing spend in key markets such as the UK, to facilitate the sector in its recovery from the 2001 slump.

## Technology and the Information Society

The Labour Party is committed to scientific innovation and research and will continue to enhance programmes of funding for academic research in information and communication technology and the other sciences.

Labour in Government will:

- Ensure that broadband technology and high speed internet access is progressively made available throughout the State.
- Take measures to provide marginalised groups and communities with access to information and communication technology training and facilities.
- Comprehensively implement European and international legislation regarding data protection, distance selling and privacy of communications.

A framework Bill on e-government will require all agencies to undertake an audit of all information which could be put on the web, including as far as possible making available free information which is currently subject to charge; and of all procedures whereby public services may be provided via the internet as well as conventional means. Under our leadership, the public sector in Ireland will drive forward the information society to create a new model of democratic access and openness for an information age.

Labour in Government will:

- Create a comprehensive eGovernment portal accessible through the internet, digital TV, and mobile technology.
- Create a system for a universal account to enable all citizens to receive electronic payments.
- Enable citizen participation in the administrative decision making process by providing comprehensive structures for the making of submissions including electronically on draft Government policy, administrative and legislative proposals.
- Initiate a review of the high costs associated with internet usage in Ireland

## II. A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE

### Labour in Government will:

- Establish a universal system of health insurance to ensure world-class health care for all, including universal free GP care.
- Invest in our schools to end the chaotic system whereby parents and teachers are forced into endless fundraising.
- End the means testing of the carer's allowance;
- Tackle the growing gap between rich and poor by linking social welfare payments to wage increases.
- Embark on a massive social and affordable housing programme to redress 5 years of neglect.

### Excellence in Healthcare for All

The shambles of the healthcare system, with its inherent structural bias towards private patients, and the Government's sticking-plaster solutions, is a scandal. Labour proposes a comprehensive package of reform based on equality of care. The Government's health strategy is a fig leaf, offering too little, too late without any overall vision for the health services.

We are fortunate to have highly professional staff in our health service: doctors, nurses and other professionals who are working in stressful and difficult jobs to provide treatment and care. It is time that we had a world-class health system governed by the principles of excellence and equality. Bed shortages, lack of staff, increased demand and long waiting lists must be tackled. It is unacceptable that only one-third of the population have cover for primary care through the GMS. And at secondary level the 54% of the population who are public patients are forced onto lengthening waiting lists.

The inequality of our health system gives rise to higher mortality rates, earlier death and poorer outcomes generally for public patients. It also gives rise to the stress and pain of a lengthy wait for care. Labour proposes to get to the root cause of what is in effect a health apartheid system.

The cornerstone of Labour's health policy will be to abolish the distinction between public and private care by giving everyone the standard and access to care currently enjoyed by those with health insurance. We will introduce a system of universal health insurance, under which each individual in the State will be insured on an equal footing for all necessary health services.

The State will pay 100% of the cost of the universal benefits package for those with incomes below the specified thresholds and a proportion of the costs for those above the threshold by a specified amount on a sliding scale. The individual will have the right to nominate the insurer of their choice. A new contract based on universal health insurance will be offered to consultants and family doctors. The detailed implementation of the principle of universal insurance will be the subject of negotiation.

The Health Insurance Agency will define the essential benefits package and regulate the system. It will benchmark the price of the essential benefits package. Community rating and risk equalisation will continue to apply and insurers will be free to offer optional extras without State subvention. There will be a Universal Health Care Guarantee to ensure that all citizens are entitled to good standards of care.

The new system of universal insurance will be accompanied by a major programme of capital investment to increase the number of hospital beds, to improve equipment and improve the quality of care.

There will be a significant increase in funding to meet the needs of the community under the new system.

We will:

- Introduce a free high quality GP service to all individuals within the State.
- Introduce a Universal Health Guarantee to ensure good standards of care.
- Retain the drugs refund scheme in the context of general free GP care.

- ❑ Tackle the crisis in our A&E departments.
- ❑ Take measures to integrate primary and secondary care.
- ❑ Develop acute hospital services in particular, significantly increase the number of consultants and substantially improve the NCHD to consultant ratio.
- ❑ Recognise the geographical inequalities that currently exist and develop a countrywide service to provide access to patients regardless of their location. In particular, we support the development of regional cancer care centres, starting in Waterford.
- ❑ Provide a proper career structure with full training schemes while ensuring that working hours are reduced.
- ❑ Establish an integrated Personnel and Training Body to overcome the fragmentation in training and personnel development, and address the needs of the increasing number of women professionals.
- ❑ Implement an urgent co-ordinated strategy to address the shortfall in nurses.
- ❑ Ensure that the privacy and dignity of patients is respected and recognise that patients should be involved in the decision-making process concerning the future development of the health services.
- ❑ We will establish a National Forum on Health to involve all stakeholders in the future development of health policy.
- ❑ Bring about the extension and improvement of community care services and rehabilitation facilities.
- ❑ We will carry out a full review of the mental health services with an emphasis on properly funded community care and effective integration between health boards and local authorities in providing housing and supports. We will recognise support groups working with those suffering from mental illness.
- ❑ Develop and implement a range of public health strategies and interventions to promote public health.
- ❑ Introduce new measures directed at the reduction of health inequalities.
- ❑ Devise strategies to prevent harm caused by alcohol including the introduction of framework legislation to regulate the advertising of alcohol.

Health legislation will be extended and updated. Human cloning will be outlawed. The Mental Health Act will be fully brought into force and services for people with mental illness will be comprehensively reviewed for the first time since 1984. We will also legislate to repeal the statutory ban on advertising of treatment for sexually transmitted diseases. Female genital mutilation will be outlawed, with strict penalties. We will introduce an updated Medical Practitioners Act and ensure the registration of other health professionals.

### **Investing in an Education Future**

Life-long education is central to the social democratic vision of society. It is the driving force behind economic success and should contribute to a fairer, more enlightened, more egalitarian society. Education is the key to the future and the opportunity for individual excellence. Labour's record in education is one of historic developments towards access and equality, such as free third level fees, driven through development of the partnership approach together with students, teachers and parents.

Education should be the jewel in the crown of public services. Instead, it is run on a shoe-string, often in dilapidated buildings. Our educational system is riddled with inequalities and inefficiencies. There is no comprehensive state funded pre-school education. Illiteracy rates remain staggeringly high. Drop-out rates remain high. The outgoing administration has failed to deliver structural reform to guarantee equality and opportunity.

The Labour Party is committed to a fully funded public education system for all. We believe that from pre-school to third-level and beyond, all those who desire to study and learn in the Irish educational system should be able to do so regardless of background, financial resources or geographical location. We believe that life-long learning, where citizens continue to learn and acquire skills throughout their life is critically important.

Labour will:

- ❑ Guarantee all children of 3-4 years a place in pre-school for a year before beginning primary school.
- ❑ Make the tackling of disadvantage a key priority. Needs in disadvantaged areas must receive far greater support than the disgraceful situation under the outgoing administration. We will relaunch and reinvigorate the Breaking the Cycle programme.
- ❑ Meet the full running costs of primary and secondary schools by doubling the capitation grants to schools, thereby ending the demoralising and difficult task of fundraising.
- ❑ Institute a programme of investment in run down and unsafe schools with a transparent system of prioritisation.
- ❑ Devolve power from an over-centralised and bureaucratic Department of Education to democratically structured local education boards.
- ❑ Address the problems faced by teachers by improving access to in service training, and proper recognition for the full range of duties. We will invest in teachers so as to ensure that teachers and principals are enabled to further their standards of excellence.
- ❑ Recruit and train more teachers to secure a reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio.
- ❑ Promote the use of information and communication technology in the education system.
- ❑ Provide a renewed and vigorous career guidance and counselling service to tackle high drop out rates. We will treble the number of career guidance counsellors over the 2000 base.
- ❑ Increase the age for leaving full-time education to 17 by law.
- ❑ Overhaul the third-level grant system to provide a full social welfare allowance for all students whose family circumstances entitle them to support. We will raise student grants to the basic social welfare rate, and review the third-level grants system to ensure that students from the PAYE sector are fairly dealt with.
- ❑ Target improvement of access by students from disadvantaged areas to third level education.
- ❑ Take effective measures to combat the astonishingly prevalent problem of illiteracy among adults and children. This will involve officially measuring the levels of literacy and establishing comprehensive programmes to combat literacy difficulties.
- ❑ Promote life-long learning through a comprehensive programme of adult education, including the establishment of open learning centres in the community.
- ❑ Invest in the third level sector, as providers both of teaching and of the research and knowledge development which is so fundamental to our economic and cultural life.

### **Social Solidarity**

Labour believes that the welfare system should be a trampoline as well as a safety net, offering opportunities and support for those who can potentially support themselves in paid employment. For those, including pensioners, who cannot, Labour believes that the social welfare system should guarantee a minimum level of income to all citizens consistent with the requirements of human dignity in a civilised society.

A key part of our platform will be to make provision for social welfare increases to be linked to increases in gross average industrial earnings.

As part of that Programme, Labour in Government will increase the old age pension to €200 a week by our second Budget, and effect further significant increases thereafter.

We believe that social welfare payments should be benchmarked such that the lowest social assistance payment does not fall below 30% of gross average industrial earnings. We will make significant progress towards this goal over the lifetime of a Government, with initial priority being afforded to pensions. Once the benchmark has been achieved, social welfare payments will be indexed to increases in average wages.

- ❑ We will honour the existing commitment to increase child benefit.
- ❑ The impact of social welfare increases on local authority differential rent scheme and the rental subsidy scheme for private accommodation will be examined to ensure rational and coherent operation and to tackle poverty traps.
- ❑ We will redress gender inequality in the social welfare system and achieve fairer treatment of families by moving towards the right to an individual payment.
- ❑ All increases including child benefit will come into operation in January of each year.

- ❑ We will pursue the extension of FIS to the self-employed and those phasing out of the back-to-work scheme.
- ❑ We will integrate FIS into the tax system.
- ❑ Free schemes will be extended to widows and widowers with dependent children.
- ❑ We will double the Back to School allowance.
- ❑ Restrictions on accessing the increased mobility allowance for persons with disabilities who have availed of tax relief for private transport will be eased.

In the light of the outgoing Government's unjustified raid on the social insurance fund in Budget 2002, Labour will establish an independent social insurance board, comprised of the social partners, to act as trustees to the Fund and to advise Government on its future use and direction.

### **Caring for Carers**

For too long, carers have been the forgotten of the Irish health system. Often providing constant care, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, too often at the expense of their own health, carers have been taken for granted by the State and by society. Carers often carry a huge burden while at the same time relieving the state of caring obligations which it would otherwise have to fulfil. They often do so without adequate backup from the community care services.

Labour wants to end this neglect. We want to recognise the importance of carers in our society, and provide concrete financial and professional support for carers. Carers will be among the beneficiaries of our proposals for free GP care. In addition, Labour is proposing:

- ❑ To abolish the means test for the Carer's Allowance.
- ❑ To relax the regulations regarding qualification for the Carer's Benefit.
- ❑ To develop a Carer's Payment which is indexed to average earnings.
- ❑ To implement a Carer's Premium for those already receiving a social welfare payment.
- ❑ Substantially to improve the level of support provided by community care services, in particular by Public Health Nurses. We will also develop the Home Help and Personal Assistant services, and dramatically expand Respite Care. We will legislate for a needs assessment for all carers.
- ❑ To establish a Carers Commission to look at financial systems for sustaining long-term care and promote best models of community care.
- ❑ To establish a National Carers Register and database of carers so as better to understand carers' needs.
- ❑ To create a Partnership of Care with a strong role for carers and their representative bodies.
- ❑ To establish a Carers' Ombudsman.

### **Tackling the Housing Crisis**

Under the failed outgoing administration, house prices have more than doubled, rents have doubled, the numbers on council housing lists have doubled and homelessness has doubled. Under the outgoing Government, home ownership has been put beyond the means of most young couples. Their housing policies have been a dismal failure.

Radical new solutions are needed to solve the housing crisis and to ensure that our people will have a right to good quality, secure homes at affordable prices. Only the Labour Party is committed to the radical reforms which are needed in housing.

- ❑ We will build 50,000 social housing units over a 5-year period and will commence the process of land acquisition, design and planning immediately on entering Government.
- ❑ Legislation will be introduced to provide for the final abolition of ground rents.
- ❑ We will speed up the implementation of the homelessness strategy.
- ❑ Labour will establish a National Housing Authority. The Authority will have overall responsibility for co-ordinating the housing strategies of local authorities and for providing the professional and managerial supports needed by local authorities to meet their housing targets. The NHA will oversee the production of housing supply to meet the housing needs of the population as identified in the housing strategies. To this end, the NHA will have the power to enter into long and medium-term contracts with the private construction industry to deliver

the affordable housing which will be needed over the next decade. This approach will ensure that housing supply is directed to meet need and that stability is ensured for the home construction industry.

- ❑ Local authorities will be required to assemble land banks for their own housing programmes, for voluntary housing schemes and for private sector building under the fair price certification system. The 20% maximum requirement for social and affordable housing will become a mandatory requirement for all local authorities.
- ❑ Labour will increase the thresholds for participation in the shared ownership scheme.
- ❑ Labour will introduce legislation to establish a Housing Market Commissioner, to ensure that high standards of building quality are maintained in house construction, that the house buyer is protected against sharp practices by builders or estate agents and that a system of Fair Price certification is established to which a house purchaser can refer.
- ❑ Rogue developers will be hit with legal sanctions where they fail to complete estates. Under our legislation they and their associated companies will be refused permission for further developments.
- ❑ The right to reasonable access to housing will be included in a constitutional amendment Bill on economic, social and cultural rights.
- ❑ Labour will widen the role of the non-profit housing sector. We will ensure that voluntary and co-operative housing bodies are supported and encouraged to increase the proportion of dwellings which they provide.
- ❑ A new Housing Benefit will be introduced to replace existing Rent Allowances and to end the disincentive to work in the present system.
- ❑ Because the delivery of our housing programme is dependent on proper infrastructure, the national spatial plan will integrate housing provision with infrastructural needs.
- ❑ In addition the operation of some management companies at the behest of developers is a matter of concern and requires legislative regulation.
- ❑ Labour will substantially increase the provision of purpose-built student accommodation.
- ❑ We will take measures to tackle the failure to provide adequate accommodation for members of the Traveller community.

Labour condemns the failure of the outgoing Government to implement the modest measures provided for in the Report of the Commission on the Private Rented Sector. We will introduce legislation to regulate the private rented sector and to encourage investment in the provision, on a long-term basis, of good quality affordable private rented accommodation.

- ❑ Tenants' security of tenure will be enhanced.
- ❑ We will take legislative measures to promote affordable rents.
- ❑ A Housing Court will be established on the model of the Labour Court/Employment Appeals Tribunal to resolve disputes between landlord and tenants. It will have a Mediation Service and will have the power to determine disputes.
- ❑ The current system of registration of landlords will be scrapped and replaced with a system of prior licensing and inspection.
- ❑ Landlords will be given quick redress where there is abuse of a tenancy agreement.

This legislation will be accompanied by measures to treat the private rented sector as a business and to encourage investment in the long-term provision of good quality, well-managed private rented accommodation.

## **Better Environmental Protection**

### *Five Years of Failure*

The next Government of this country faces enormous environmental challenges. The failed outgoing administration is leaving behind a huge environmental mess, which Labour in Government will have to clean up.

After five years of rule by the outgoing Government:

- ❑ Ireland is before the European Court on numerous charges of failing to protect our own environment, especially on waste management and water quality.
- ❑ Ireland is already over twice the limit allowed by the Kyoto Agreement for greenhouse gases.
- ❑ Up to 40% of the water in some parts of the country is unfit to drink.
- ❑ Waste Management is in crisis.
- ❑ Traffic is in chaos because of the outgoing Government's failure to provide public transport
- ❑ The countryside is at risk as the outgoing Government favours developers over the environment.

The principles of ecology and sustainable development are at the heart of Labour policy. Our objective is not just to clean up the environment, but to prevent environmental damage from occurring in the first place, by pursuing an approach to development which is sustainable and which puts the environment on a par with economic and social considerations. We hold the environment in trust for the future.

### *Spatial Planning*

Labour has published a blueprint for the future development of Ireland over the next 15 years. Our plan, "Visions of Ireland", shows how Ireland's infrastructure can be developed to continue the country's economic prosperity, to create a fairer and more equal society and to protect the environment. Labour's approach emphasises the sustainable development of towns and villages, linked by good public transport.

As part of this plan, Labour will preserve areas and place of special environmental significance, free from development.

Planning and development processes need to be better integrated across local authority functional areas, and we will progress the need for national and regional development plans as part of the process of national spatial planning.

Planning is becoming more fragmented, with many public and infrastructural projects exempt from normal planning control, including some controversial developments such as mobile phone masts, or developments by a local authority itself. We will limit alternative forms of approval processes and reduce the number of developments that can be exempted from the planning process.

The planning process contains tight legal timetables for the acceleration of planning decisions. However due to staff and funding shortages these timetables are often not met. We will invest in local authorities and An Bord Pleanála to ensure that the planning process is accelerated and we will review procedures to ensure priority for significant projects. The planning and enforcement process will be simplified. For example, planning injunctions will be transferred exclusively to the Circuit Court. This will speed up the process, but also make it more affordable for all concerned.

Public spaces in the ownership of central or local government bodies and statutory agencies are often inaccessible or badly maintained. We will examine ways to ensure that such spaces are available as national amenities for the public benefit.

### *Enjoying the Countryside*

Labour recognises that hill walking and countryside rambling have now become pastimes that thousands of our citizens and many tourists enjoy. We firmly support the right to roam. We will, in consultation with local community groups and landowners explore ways how this can be recognised and enhanced while protecting the property and livelihood of the farming community. The social partners, including the farming organisations, have a positive role to play in this development.

### *Kyoto Protocol and Energy Policy*

Energy efficiency will be a key priority of Labour in Government. We will take seriously the international obligations of the State to reduce energy usage and emissions of greenhouse gases in particular. Investment in renewable energy will be further encouraged and binding targets will be set and adhered to.

Climate change remains the most serious environmental challenge facing society. The scientific evidence of global warming brought about by human activities, in particular energy consumption, grows daily. It poses a threat to the environment and to sustainable global economic development.

While critical of the morally delinquent decision by the Bush Administration in the US to withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol, the outgoing Government has acted exactly the same – doing nothing to ensure Ireland’s binding obligations will be met. No effort has been made to implement the measures outlined in their own national strategy.

Labour in Government will take effective action towards meeting our obligations under the Kyoto Protocol. We recognise that this will have a cost. However, we will take action early so as to ensure that the overall cost to our economy is minimised. These actions will be co-ordinated to maximise their effect in reducing emissions of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas. To this end Labour will accelerate the move towards a sustainable energy supply system and will:

- ❑ Require the regulator to make binding the recently adopted indicative targets set down in the EU Directive on Renewable Energy Supply by imposing a renewable obligation on all electricity suppliers.
- ❑ Eliminate vehicle registration tax on all electric and hybrid electric vehicles.
- ❑ Introduce an integrated system of legally binding negotiated emission reduction agreements and emissions trading.
- ❑ Ensure national cattle and sheep herds, emissions from which produce a third of Ireland’s greenhouse gases, are managed in line with EU agricultural policy and in support of our Kyoto obligations.
- ❑ Accelerate the provision of public transport options.

Labour will also adopt the necessary compensating measures to ensure low- income households do not suffer from fuel poverty.

#### *Waste Management*

Labour will move immediately to implement a new national waste management strategy, based on reduction, re-use and recycling.

- ❑ Labour is totally opposed to incineration as a solution to the country's waste crisis. Instead we propose investment in an alternative strategy which will depend on the development of a recycling industry with reliable markets for recycled products
- ❑ We propose the establishment by law of a National Waste Management Agency to drive the implementation of the new national waste management strategy, while enhancing the role of elected councillors within the local government system.
- ❑ The Agency will co-ordinate with local authorities to fund the clean-up of existing waste facilities, the provision of infrastructure and disposal facilities and the development of markets for recycled materials.
- ❑ We support the establishment of a specific division of Enterprise Ireland, with appropriate expertise in enterprise and waste management, and sufficient resources, to support and encourage the development and growth of the recycling industry in Ireland.
- ❑ We will oversee the introduction of a new state procurement policy which will give preference to the procurement of re-use and recycled goods by all Government Departments, local authorities, state agencies and other public bodies.
- ❑ We propose the introduction of “Lead by Example” Practices by State agencies and public bodies aimed at minimising waste.
- ❑ Mandatory codes to ensure minimisation and re-use targets are met will be put in place. For example, unnecessary packaging waste will be banned.
- ❑ We will put in place a major programme of public education on the issue of waste reduction, re-use and recycling and other waste management issues.

In line with the development of the recycling industry, Labour will introduce a new separated waste collection system, which will encourage householders to separate their waste at source. The bin tax will be abolished nationwide when this service is rolled out.

In the meantime a National Waiver Scheme will apply to householders on low incomes who have to rely on private services for waste collection.

### *Water Quality*

Water is essential to sustain life. Ireland's water is at risk. Some water is already unfit to drink. Many of our rivers and lakes are badly polluted. Making Ireland's water clean and safe to drink will be one of Labour's major objectives in the next Government. We will:

- ❑ Accelerate the programme of water treatment facilities to ensure that local authorities stop polluting waterways with sewage and waste water.
- ❑ Strengthen the enforcement of water pollution laws, and give the Gardaí a new role in the detection of water pollution offences.
- ❑ Increase the resources and powers of Fishery Boards to enable them to more effectively prevent and detect water pollution.
- ❑ Ensure that Local Authorities adopt and implement effective and meaningful Water Management Plans, and provide them with the necessary resources for this purpose.
- ❑ Promote change in agricultural practices to minimise waste and fertiliser run-off to waterways.
- ❑ Amend Planning laws and practices to ensure that future developments, especially those that are not served by public drainage are minimised to reduce the contamination of ground water.

We will also continue to invest in improving air quality and will strengthen the regulatory régime. We will meet our international obligations not only under Kyoto but also under other international environmental treaties. Heritage and habitat areas will be fully protected in accordance with EU law.

### *Sellafield*

Labour in Government took determined measures to deal with the menace of Sellafield. Under Emmet Stagg's direction we set in train the first comprehensive and co-ordinated campaign against the British nuclear industry. A team of scientists and legal experts was put together to draw up a detailed case against the NIREX dump. Emmet Stagg presented the opening statement of the Irish case against the dump at the public inquiry in Britain. On foot of these objections the British Government decided to refuse permission for the NIREX dump, citing in particular the Irish Government's legitimate concerns. We maintained an unremitting level of pressure on the nuclear industry during our time in Government.

Under the current administration however, the team of scientists and legal experts that had opposed NIREX has been disbanded. The inter-Ministerial working party – chaired by Brendan Howlin in the previous administration – was downgraded.

Labour in Government will reinvigorate the national campaign against Sellafield. We will upgrade the Ministerial task force and resource the RPII to monitor the threat from Sellafield. We will work with NGOs campaigning against Sellafield.

The threat from Sellafield and British nuclear power stations will be taken seriously, as opposed to the belated and confused approach of the outgoing Government and its unfortunate Minister for nuclear emergencies. A detailed and workable emergency plan will be drawn up with open public participation in the strategy process.

We will also legislate to comply with Ireland's obligations under the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and will promote nuclear disarmament in international fora.

### **Food**

Consumer confidence in safety and quality of food is at an all-time low after the disaster of BSE, ongoing concerns relating to animal health and issues regarding GM and irradiated foods.

We will move to restore confidence by transferring responsibility for food safety out of the Department of Agriculture to another appropriate Department. The Food Safety Authority will have a specifically dedicated enforcement unit designated as the Commissioner of Food Safety.

We will institute a comprehensive policy of public information and awareness, increased consumer information through labelling, more comprehensive licensing of food retail outlets, and strict controls of overuse of lawful animal remedies, fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides.

Unethical farming practices will be examined and outlawed where recommended by the Food Safety Authority. Likewise GM foods will be kept under close scrutiny.

### III. SUPPORTING THE FABRIC OF SOCIETY

#### Labour in Government will:

- **Firmly tackle the crime and drugs problems with effective and comprehensive strategies.**
- **Comprehensively tackle the childcare crisis.**
- **Promote a broad-based policy towards sport.**
- **Promote racial harmony within a multicultural society.**
- **Support public service broadcasting with an index-linked licence fee and with the repeal of the outgoing Government's failed Broadcasting Act.a**

#### Crime and Drugs

##### *Criminal Justice in Chaos – Returning Policing to the Community*

Violent crime and offences against the person have increased alarmingly under the outgoing administration. Zero tolerance has become zero credibility. Under the incompetent mismanagement of John O'Donoghue, Ireland has become a more dangerous, more uncaring place to live.

Labour knows more than any other party the misery which crime inflicts on communities, both urban and rural, particularly on the elderly. We know too the destruction wrought on so many young lives from drug addiction.

We will take strong measures to combat crime, particularly violent crime and offences against the person. We will take on the problem of drugs in a multifaceted way, addressing both the supply of and demand for drugs. We will introduce realistic drug treatment programmes, inside and outside our prisons.

We totally reject the tyranny of vigilantism. There is only one police force in this state – An Garda Síochána. Their record of service to the Irish people is an honourable and courageous one, particularly in protecting the democratic institutions of the State against armed threats for more than 30 years.

Labour believes that the men and women of the Garda Síochána deserve modern management structures. It is as much in the interests of the Gardaí themselves as of the public at large, that there be proper systems of accountability for policing, and proper democratic structures in relation to policing.

Labour has produced the most comprehensive and radical restructuring of An Garda Síochána since its establishment. We will bring into effect a Garda Authority at national level, and local crime committees to ensure effective and accountable community policing. We will abolish the Garda Síochána Complaints Board and replace it with a Garda Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will be independent of the Gardaí and have dedicated staff. We will restore community confidence in An Garda Síochána and strengthen Garda confidence in themselves.

##### *Combating Crime*

We will take strong measures to combat crime, particularly violent crime and offences against the person.

- We will introduce strong and punitive measures to tackle the problem of joyriding as set out in our Private Member's Bill on the subject – voted down in the Dáil by the outgoing Government parties.
- Public Order offences pose a real threat to the safety and well-being of everyone. We will introduce a strengthened Public Order Bill.
- We will review the Liquor Licensing Laws and the Planning Laws as they relate to late night fast-food outlets.
- We will provide specific grant aid to Local Authorities to provide CCTV monitoring of at-risk locations.
- Sentences for offences against the person will be increased to address the ludicrous situation brought about by this Government whereby property offences have higher penalties than many offences against the individual. Certain property offences will continue to be treated with particular severity, such as burglary of houses, particularly those which are occupied at the time, and such offences will be dealt with as severely as offences against the person.
- We will establish Night Courts to bring violent criminals swiftly to justice.
- We will legislate to increase sentences for violent and anti-social behaviour where alcohol is a significant factor. Consumption of alcohol should no longer be used as an excuse for leniency.
- We will impose curfews on offenders by establishing community service schemes which require attendance on Friday and Saturday nights.
- We will require the Gardaí substantially to improve their record in attending to burglaries.

- We will develop a detailed charter of rights for victims, in particular victims of violent crime, so as to ensure that victims are treated with dignity, have a right to have a victim impact assessment drawn up and taken into account, and have a right to address the Court at the sentencing stage.
- We will introduce Proceeds of Corruption legislation and establish a Proceeds of Corruption Recovery Agency.
- We will speedily enact a statutory system to regulate the private security industry.

#### *Combating Drugs*

- We will continue strong criminal justice measures to reduce drug supply.
- Comprehensive educational and community-based measures will be developed towards demand reduction.
- A guarantee of services for treatment and rehabilitation of addicts will be given and will be an integral part of the post-conviction criminal justice process, or as an alternative to prison under the drug court scheme.

#### *Domestic Violence*

- We will provide funding for a comprehensive national network of refuges for victims of domestic violence.
- We will fund research into the problem of domestic violence and will develop national interventions to protect victims and to ensure the accountability of perpetrators.
- We will review the domestic violence legislation and its implementation.

#### *Sentencing and Prison Policy*

- The Prisons Service will be established by statute independently of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.
- We will implement the Whittaker Report, 17 years after it was published, so as to provide a modern statutory framework for all aspects of penal policy. An independent parole board will be established by statute.
- We will invest in the probation and welfare service to create real alternatives to prison for non-violent offenders.
- A new Sentencing Bill will be introduced, drawing on the Law Reform Commission report on sentencing and the Whittaker Report on Prisons, which will provide that prison would normally be reserved for serious offences particularly crimes involving violence.
- The Sentencing Bill will specify aggravating and mitigating factors to be taken into account by the Courts. Putting the victim in fear of further injury will be a serious aggravating factor in any offence against the person.
- Prison as an alternative to paying a fine will no longer be available, and will be replaced by attachment of earnings and welfare. Welfare payments may be attached up to a limit of €10 less than the weekly SWA payment.
- We will introduce legislation along the lines of the UK Rehabilitation of Offenders Act which will provide for convictions to be regarded as spent after 5 years with necessary exceptions for violent crime and serious offences against the person especially those covered by the sexual offences register.
- The jurisdiction of the Ombudsman will be extended to deal with complaints about the Prison Service.
- We will act on the recommendations of the report on restorative justice for the sub-committee on Crime and Punishment and on the report of the European Committee on the Prevention of Torture.
- Our sentencing legislation will give the courts the options of sentencing less serious offenders to weekend or evening prison sentences, so as to encourage them to retain their stake in society.

#### *Police Reform*

- We will strengthen the Garda Síochána through a new Garda Act that will establish a statutory Garda Authority to oversee new and more accountable structures and practices in the force.
- Local crime committees will be established to ensure effective and accountable community policing. We will promote community and neighbourhood policing through such local structures.
- The Garda Authority will be charged with conducting an Optimum Numbers Survey to determine an effective number of Gardaí for the State.
- The Garda Síochána Complaints Board will be scrapped and replaced by an independent Garda Ombudsman, who will report directly to the Houses of the Oireachtas.
- Garda representative bodies will be allowed full trade union status.
- So as to ensure greater safety of convictions, we will introduce mandatory audio and video recording of Garda interviews as a condition of their admission in evidence.
- Labour will amend the terms of reference of the McBrearty tribunal to cover the responses of the Garda Commissioner, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform and other state agencies to the issues involved.

## Supporting Childcare

The right to have and raise a family is one of the most fundamental human rights. Yet, for far too many Irish parents, caring for children, and balancing home and work have become a major source of psychological and financial stress.

In the course of a generation, we have moved from an economy which compelled women to relinquish their jobs on marriage, to one where half the mothers of under-5s are in paid employment. While this transformation has largely benefited women, the failure of society to adequately cater for childcare needs has placed an intolerable burden on families where both parents wish to work.

Tackling the childcare crisis is essential, to protect equality in the workplace, to improve the quality of life of all parents, and most importantly, in the interests of children themselves. The lack of adequate childcare infrastructure at affordable rates is a serious block on the economic development of the country and the personal development of its citizens. Adequate and affordable childcare will free up parents to get involved in the workforce or in training or education, and will relieve the severe economic and time pressures on individual parents. Nothing less than a revolution in childcare policy will suffice.

Labour's childcare policy is based on the following principles:

- That the welfare of the child is the first concern.
- That the role of the state is to support and respect the choices of parents in how they wish to care for their children.
- That responsibility for childcare and the cost of its provision should be borne through a partnership between the state, employers and families.

Labour is proposing an integrated approach to childcare which reflects the changing needs of the growing child.

Starting from birth, we will enhance existing provisions on maternity leave and parental leave with a new paid family leave system. Under our proposals, 18 weeks of maternity leave and 14 of parental leave will be supplemented by a further 20 weeks paid leave which can be taken by either mother or father. Our proposals would therefore provide for example up to 52 weeks paid leave for the mother plus 14 weeks for the father, or 32 weeks for the mother and 34 weeks for the father. Parental choice is a touchstone of our policy.

We will also promote family-friendly working for parents of children of all ages. This will include a new right to part-time work for a defined period after the birth of a child with necessary exceptions where an employer can show that it would not be reasonably practicable to provide a part-time position.

For under-3s, we will provide an Early Years' Subsidy in the form of a direct payment of €50 per week, to commence on completion of Family leave. This will be payable whether childcare is provided by parents in the home or through a paid childcare arrangement.

For pre-school children, we will provide a place for every child in a quality playgroup. For children at school, Labour will provide real support for after-school programmes. For working parents, finding a childcare place remains a core issue. Our childcare strategy will not succeed unless we can expand the number of childcare places within a short period of time. Labour will also take urgent action to expand the number of available crèche places, through direct provision by the County Childcare committees, through development of childcare facilities in schools, on housing estates and in community premises, and through changes to the planning laws to make childcare provision a condition of planning permission in new housing estates and commercial developments. We will also provide support for upgrading premises, and for toys, books and other equipment, and will take measures to tackle the severe shortage of trained child-minders.

This programme of reform will require a driving force at national level. Labour in Government will establish a National Childcare Authority to co-ordinate and drive the implementation of our Childcare Strategy.

The provisions on parental leave will be funded from the social insurance fund, which currently has large surpluses. We will also seek a contribution from employers towards the total cost of the package, by reversing the cut in employers' PRSI in Budget 2002. The funds raised in this way will be transferred to the exchequer to fund the childcare package.

## **Children**

Labour in Government will take comprehensive measures to support the rights of the child.

- We will extend the remit of the Ombudsman for Children legislation to go beyond the flawed and limited Bill introduced by the outgoing Government.
- We will implement the National Children's Strategy and the NAPS target of eliminating child poverty, and will develop child well-being indicators to measure progress in this regard.
- We will bring the Children Act 2001 fully into force.
- We will propose a constitutional amendment to copperfasten the rights of children.

Labour in Government will initiate an inquiry into allegations of child sexual abuse in the Ferns Diocese to cover the response of the state and clerical authorities. The nature of such an inquiry will be guided by the Birmingham report.

## **Ending Public Transport Chaos**

Nowhere is the outgoing Government's failures more evident than in the area of public transport. The outgoing administration has failed totally to come to grips with the urgent need for adequate public transport. Failure to develop public transport has been a major contributor to the traffic chaos affecting every town and city in the country. The costs of this failure are enormous. In the major cities, the toll in terms of quality of life, costs to business, on-going carnage on the roads and damage to the environment have been immense. Inadequate services in rural areas continue to contribute to social exclusion and isolation for the young, the old and those on low incomes. As Government policy continues to rely on the car, the price of insurance for young people has escalated, and put car ownership beyond their reach.

Policy in this area is itself deadlocked, between a Minister who won't make decisions and a hopelessly fragmented local authority structure. Labour in Government will establish a new Government Department with responsibility for infrastructure, including public transport. In Dublin, where the problem of fragmentation is particularly severe, we will establish a Greater Dublin Regional Authority with responsibility for transport and traffic issues.

Public transport is not just a Dublin problem, but the problem is particularly acute in Dublin. Labour will invest in public transport across the country, not just in Dublin. The problem in the Capital, however, demands particular reform measures and structural change.

While there is much to criticise in the planning of transport in the greater Dublin area, the last thing Dublin needs is more delay to revise plans. We will seek to maintain momentum in transport planning by avoiding any "back to the drawing board" approaches as favoured by the outgoing administration. We will stick with the DTO plans for Dublin traffic management. Action is needed now.

It will take years to put in place the LUAS and Metro systems due to Government bungling. In the short term the key to solving the public transport problems of Dublin and other urban centres must lie in expanding bus services. Since 1998, this Government has succeeded in putting a grand total of 95 new buses on the streets of Dublin. By 2006, the city will require another 500 buses, in addition to replacement of old fleet.

We will speed up improvement of rail-based services such as Dart, suburban rail, LUAS and the metro, but we will not lie idle while waiting for grand schemes with long time-horizons.

Labour in Government will:

- Create a Greater Dublin Regional Authority, with responsibility for transport services and land use issues in Dublin.
- Give priority to public transport projects within the NDP.
- Rapidly complete QBCs.
- Introduce cross-ticketing and introduce greater integration of transport services.
- Rapidly and significantly increase the number of buses in our cities, through public investment and the introduction of competition for routes, where appropriate.
- Put the citizen at the centre of public transport policy by introducing a Guaranteed Level of Public Transport Service.
- Part of the new arrangements will be a comprehensive all-night service by bus and train in urban areas.

We will also work vigorously to improve road safety. The penalty points system will be fast-tracked. The use of mobile phones without a hands-free set when driving will be made a specific offence by primary legislation replacing the rushed and confusing regulations brought in by the outgoing Government.

## **Sport**

The Labour Party is strongly committed to the development of sports facilities throughout the country and of greatly increasing participation in sport particularly among women, people with disabilities and the disadvantaged.

We are conscious of the huge dividend to the public health arising from more widespread participation in sport throughout the country.

We strongly endorse the local sports partnership concept being developed by the Irish Sports Council and are committed to ensuring that the funds available under the Sports Capital Programme would be allocated in a strategic way along the lines recommended by the local sports partnerships. We will also ensure that lottery funding is made available in a transparent manner. We will also support the national governing bodies of the various sports in order to bring about appropriate development of all sports.

We are committed to addressing the area of physical education curriculum development in both primary and secondary schools and to adequately finance the implementation of that curriculum.

The effective Minister for Sport, the outgoing Taoiseach, has reduced the State's sports policies to his obsession with the National Stadium.

In the last few months we have witnessed an incredible display of incompetence and mismanagement. Labour believes that the whole project should be reviewed further in light of the High Point Rendel Report. This review should include consultations with the relevant sports bodies. We would envisage a scaled-down stadium with state-of-the-art facilities for our athletes as an outcome of such a review. However, we wish to see Lansdowne Road retained as a sporting venue.

## **Young People**

Labour will restore the needs of young people to the national agenda. We seek to ensure that the needs of youth are taken into account in policy formation and we will attempt to combat what appears to be a growing sense of alienation from the political process.

Our plans for radical improvements in education funding, regulation of the private rented sector, public transport and access to GP care will all benefit younger people but in addition, Labour will:

- Increase the age for leaving full-time education to 17 and will drive to ensure that all young people finish second level education and are offered the chance at training or higher/further education. It is simply unacceptable for young people to be deprived of life chances due to place shortages occasioned by State underfunding.
- Promote continued education and training of under 18s by further tightening legislation against employment of young people and by vigorously ensuring enforcement of that legislation.
- Commit the additional resources necessary to implement the Youth Work Act and the National Youth Development Plan.
- Prohibit by statute the involvement of 17 year-old soldiers in combat tasks including peace enforcement and will ratify the protocol on this issue to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Bring forward a constitutional amendment to allow 18 year old citizens to run for any office of the Oireachtas.

The burden of rising motor insurance costs disproportionately affects young drivers. Five years of indecision and procrastination has meant not a single initiative has been taken by Government. The recent publication of the MIAB report merely confirms the analysis set out in the interim report which was rubbished by the Government. Labour will implement the recommendations of the report.

In addition Labour will fund the Equality Authority to conduct an independent formal inquiry into unfair penalisation of young drivers, with power to insist on the supply of necessary information, the production of documents and the attendance of witnesses to give evidence under oath. We will fully address the recommendations of such an independent inquiry.

## **Older People**

Under the outgoing administration, the benefits of economic growth have been shared anything but equally. Older people in particular have often little to look forward to after a lifetime of work, and often feel there is no-one to speak out on their behalf. And in the case of those who need the assistance of a carer, they often come up against the hard wall of inadequate Government support. Older people have a lot to give to society but sometimes little chance to give it.

The Labour Party believes passionately in the rights of older people. That is why we proposed the first wide-ranging age discrimination legislation in Europe, now successfully enacted. We are committed to dramatically increasing the level of attention and action devoted to older people and to ensuring that they are enabled to play a full part in society. We will support the participation of older peoples' representatives in the social partnership process.

To that end we will, establish a high-level Commission on the Status of Older People, with a mission to investigate and report on practical and legislative measures which the Government, employers and others can take to allow older people live life to the full. The Commission will be asked to hear submissions from older people, their families and carers, and to make an interim report not later than one year after its establishment regarding immediate measures that should be taken.

We will go beyond the outdated concept of the fixed retirement age. We will introduce legislation to make it illegal for employers to require an older person to retire on reaching a certain age, if it can be demonstrated that the person is capable of and wishes to go on doing the job. Such legislation will of course have necessary exceptions for judicial and military posts and such other posts where there are special reasons for a fixed retirement age.

The social solidarity section of this Manifesto details the measures which we intend to introduce in the short term to assist older people in that context and to ensure that they share in the fruits of economic growth, including the specific commitment to increase pensions.

We will develop, in tandem with the work of the Commission on the Status of Older People, a set of guaranteed social rights to accommodation, healthcare, nursing home and community support for older members of the community.

We will also guarantee older people the right to free travel on public transport, at all times, day or night, throughout the State. We will examine alternative options for older people that live in areas not well served by public transport. We will expand downsizing housing schemes that serve the needs of older people and the broader community. Labour's commitment to funding the health strategy is particularly focused on improving step down and other care facilities for the elderly.

## **Culture**

The Labour Party reaffirms the key role and potential of the arts in enriching our lives and communities. Labour will once again invigorate this sector.

Labour will:

- Create an Irish Academy for the Performing Arts to nurture outstanding young Irish artists.
- Establish a body to recognise the achievements of Irish performing artists and to provide appropriate financial supports (complementing Aosdána's role in respect of creative artists).
- Implement the EU Directive on Artists' Resale Rights.
- Reaffirm the "arm's length principle" of arts funding embodied in the Arts Act 1951. The autonomy of the Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon will continue, and will be consolidated by an overhaul of its staffing structures. We are committed to supporting the third Arts Plan.
- Enact our UNESCO Commission Bill and ratify the convention on stolen and illegally exported cultural objects.

Culture and heritage are among Ireland's most important and distinctive assets as we interact with the world at large. Enormous potential exists for the development of Irish cultural activity abroad, but it has never been realised due to a lack of institutional capacity. Fresh institutional options will be considered, including the potential establishment of a new state agency to discharge this role, possibly in tandem with the Institute for Democracy which we propose to enhance Ireland's development role in Eastern Europe in particular.

The Labour Party proposes:

- The allocation of additional funding to the Heritage Council to match Local Authority grants for architectural conservation, as recommended in the "Strengthening the Protection of the Architectural Heritage" report.
- Initiate a review of Dúchas with full public consultation.
- To introduce a moratorium on any further development of fish farming in Lough Swilly pending the completion of a scientific assessment of the impact of such farming on the Lough.
- To provide increased protection for areas of national historic importance.
- The National Cultural Institutions Act 1997 will be brought fully into force.
- Consolidated national monuments legislation will be introduced to strengthen the protection of monuments.

The Labour Party believes that the citizens of Ireland have a right to public service broadcasting as part of the range of radio and television services produced in the country. Labour deplores attacks on RTÉ's financial security and we have indicated that we will review the licence fee within three months in Government, on condition however that mechanisms are put in place to establish a firm contract between RTÉ and its audience for the delivery of quality services.

- Advertising directed solely at young children will be banned in the context of our measures to put RTÉ's finances on a sound basis.
- We will repeal the Broadcasting Act 2001 and ensure that digital and other broadcasting infrastructure remains in public ownership by being transferred to the overall ownership of the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland.
- We will support public service broadcasting and, following the review of the level of the licence fee, we will ensure that it is properly inflation proofed.
- Legislation will be introduced to impose a must-carry obligation on satellite operators, so as to promote public service broadcasting. The must-carry obligation will also include an obligation to carry TV3, which has been an outstanding success as a new broadcaster.

## **Multiculturalism**

Labour is determined to ensure that our society will be one characterised by racial and cultural harmony and tolerance. Allocation of functions to Government Departments and agencies will give priority to ensuring that multiculturalism is accommodated within our society. We will seek to develop three key policy strands – cultural harmony, a rational immigration policy, and a fair and speedy system for asylum and leave to remain claims.

### *Cultural Harmony*

- We will give strong political leadership to a relaunched campaign to promote public awareness of the need for racial and cultural tolerance.
- We will initiate a re-examination of the primary and secondary school curricula so as to broaden the cultural perspectives of our young people.
- We will take measures to ensure that the needs of non-nationals in relation to services such as health, education and housing are fully addressed.
- As part of the Sentencing Bill proposed in the Criminal Justice Section of this Manifesto, any racial motivation will be deemed to be an aggravating factor in any offences against the person.
- We will review the Incitement to Hatred Act with a view to making it more effective.

### *Immigration Policy*

- A new legal immigration policy will be instituted. The work permits scheme, which has become a form of bonded labour, will be scrapped and replaced with a green card system.
- An Immigration and Asylum Authority will be established by statute to administer the new system. It will operate in two divisions dealing with refugee claims and leave to enter or to remain respectively. It will subsume the Refugee Applications Commissioner and Refugee Appeals Tribunal.
- A new non-Irish Nationals Bill will replace and update the Aliens Act, 1935, in line with international human rights norms.

### *Asylum and leave to remain system*

- Labour will ensure that all applicants for asylum receive a decision on their claim within a six-month period.
- All applicants for asylum will be entitled to an oral hearing on appeal, without delaying the processing of their appeals.
- The new system will be administered by the new Immigration and Asylum Authority.
- We will restore the full right of appeal to the Supreme Court in relation to immigration and asylum matters, and the other restrictions on judicial review procedures introduced by the outgoing Government in 2000 will be reviewed.

## **An Ghaeilge agus an Ghaeltacht agus na hOileáin**

Tá Páirtí an Lucht Oibre dílis d'fhorbairt an dátheangachais ar oileán na hÉireann.

Tugaimid aitheantas don obair atá á déanamh cheana féin agus atá á forbairt ag an bhforas trasteorann Foras na Gaeilge maidir leis an nGaeilge, agus is cúis áthais dúinn go bhfuil obair ar sholáthar foclóra

údarásaigh Béarla-Gaeilge tógtha ar lámh ag an bhForas. Ba chóir an foclóir sin a thiomsú i dtús báire i leagan leictreonach.

Tugaimid aitheantas don luach agus an tábhacht a bhaineann le caomhnú chultúr na hÉireann, mar aon le tuilleadh forbartha a dhéanamh air . Tá imní orainn, áfach, nach bhfuil dóthain measa go forleathan ar fhíorluachanna na seoide náisiúnta seo. Táimid go láidir den tuairim go bhfuil gá le plé iomlán, macánta agus fadréimseach a spreagadh maidir le hábharthacht na Gaeilge do shochaí na hÉireann. Tá sé in am dea-thoil i leith na teanga a thiontú ina ghníomh éifeachtach.

Táimid dílis d'anailís chostsochair iomlán a dhéanamh chomh fada agus a bhaineann leis an airgead a bhíonn á chaitheamh ar an nGaeilge, cuspóirí an chaiteachais agus an méid de na cuspóirí sin a bhaintear amach. Mar shampla, caithefear scrúdú a dhéanamh ar an gcás ina mbíonn ocht mbliana oideachais sa Ghaeilge ag go leor leanaí nuair a théann siad isteach sa mheánscoil agus go dtagann siad amach aiste níos líofa i dteanga iasachta ná sa Ghaeilge.

Thionscnaigh Páirtí an Lucht Oibre agus iad i Rialtas ceann de na rudaí is inláimhsithe a chur le forbairt na Gaeilge, is é sin TG4. Ní bhíonn páirtithe eile ach ag caint faoin teanga; cuirimidne rudaí i gcrích.

Leanfaimid de thacaíochtaí airgeadais agus eile a thabhairt don Ghaeltacht agus do na hoileáin, agus méadóimid na tacaíochtaí sin. Aithnímid go bhfulaingíonn na hoileáin go háirithe ó mhíbhuntáistí sainiúla agus féachfaimid le haghaidh a thabhairt orthu sin trí uirlisí bonneagair, uirlisí airgeadais agus nuair is cuí uirlisí reachtúla.

Achtóimid Bille Chomhionannas na dTeangacha Oifigiúla, agus forálfaimid i reachtaíocht do shaoráid le gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge le haon ghníomaireacht phoiblí nó Stáit, agus sin a bheith mar cheart. Éileoidh sé sin acmhainní réasúnacha, lena n-áirítear lárionad teangaireachta do cheisteanna do Ranna Rialtais agus Gníomhaireachtaí Stáit. Beidh foilseacháin oifigiúla ar fáil sa dá theanga laistigh d'am réasúnach.

Tabharfar aitheantas agus tacaíocht don éileamh atá ann cheana, éileamh a bhíonn go síoraí ag fás, do Ghaelscoileanna ar fud an Stáit.