



THE SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

**THE WORKERS' PARTY
GENERAL ELECTION
MANIFESTO
1989**

POVERTY AND SOCIAL WELFARE

Poverty is not some sort of 'natural disaster'. It is the product of particular economic policies, put forward by particular economists and carried out by particular politicians. And it can be ended by different economic and social policies - those of the Workers' Party.

The Workers' Party has detailed economic policies for expansion and growth in employment and production. The success of these policies will be crucial in ending unemployment and poverty. For unemployment is the single greatest cause of poverty in our society - unemployment, low pay and the lack of real equality of educational (and hence job) opportunities.

For us, economic and social policies go hand in hand. We want better social services and income supports for people whose incomes are inadequate. But we also want major economic changes so as to increase people's income from other sources and remove the unnecessary obstacles to them taking up employment, and with providing the kind of improved services and supports which will themselves help people to make a worthwhile contribution to developing a better society. The kind of system which draws out people's creativity instead of killing it; which encourages people to develop skills and talents to benefit both themselves and their communities.

The Workers' Party wants a totally different kind of social welfare system to the one we all know and hate. The present system supports people slowly and grudgingly, as if it were doing them a favour, rather than providing entitlements. And the support it provides is usually inadequate. Most social welfare payments are too low for people to live on - as report after report has shown and as 1.3 million of people know from bitter personal experience.

The Workers' Party wants a social welfare system which works in harmony with the tax system to ensure that every adult individual has an adequate income, in his or her own right; and that the income support for every child is also at an acceptable level.

A system which provides individual entitlements is the only kind which can rid us of the injustice and indignity of sex discrimination and the victimisation of people on grounds of their marital status and their family or domestic situation. Such discriminations are still rampant.

The Workers' Party wants a social welfare system which is planned and reformed in accordance with the needs of the people it is supposed to serve. The present system is a ramshackle hotch-potch. Usually, it gets change only when the European or Irish Courts find that some bit of it is illegal or outrageously unfair. Rarely is it the subject of positive government initiative. Change is seen by right-wing governments as something forced upon them by unwelcome 'outside' pressures. But by us it is seen as a wholly desirable necessity - to be sought, planned and wholeheartedly welcomed.

The recent, scandalous passing of the Social Welfare (No. 2) Act 1989 is a classic case of change being forced by the courts - and a bad law being made worse. In 1985 the Workers' Party warned the then government (Fine Gael and Labour) that it was wrong in the way it was implementing the E.C.'s Directive on Equal Treatment between men and women in social welfare. We also pointed out that Section 12 of the Social Welfare (No.2) Act, 1985, which restricted certain payments to married couples, was not only miserable penny-pinching at the expense of women: it contravened the terms both of the European Directive and our own Constitution.

Four years later, the Irish Courts have confirmed our view in relation to the Constitution (and we have no doubt that the European Courts will eventually do likewise in relation to the E.C. Directive). An unemployed couple - the Hylands - had to run the legal gauntlet to prove what was clear from the start: that paying married couples less than their unmarried counterparts was not only unfair but unconstitutional. But Fianna Fail's response was perhaps one of its most cynical strokes of all.

Just before they left office, Fianna Fail rushed through one of its most offensive pieces of legislation - reducing the amounts payable to unmarried, cohabiting couples to the same, wretched levels as those of their married counterparts, in the name of equality. Their cynicism on this occasion was matched only by the spinelessness of Fine Gael and the P.D.s - who on that day would have voted for anything the government wanted in their groveling attempts to avoid a general election. (If they had wished, they could have put Fianna Fail out of office on the issue of further social welfare cuts. But of course they did not.)

The Workers' party despises the cynicism and opportunism of the three right-wing parties in relation to social welfare. We believe that here, more than anywhere, they betray their basic class bias - their commitment to the wealthy and privileged at the expense of the poor and disadvantaged. Their response to a claim for equality by social welfare recipients was to reduce still further the incomes of couples already on the lowest rates of social welfare - rates far below those widely accepted as minimal. Yet a similar claim by taxpayers some years ago (quite rightly) evoked no such reaction: equality treatment was implemented fully, speedily and at enormous cost, without much hesitation. There was no question of levelling-down - that only happens to those already at the bottom, who are ill-equipped to fight back.

For right-wing governments, social welfare recipients are in a very different league to taxpayers. When it comes to dignity, equality and decent living-standards, the poor must wait, it seems.

We say, however, that the poor have already paid too high a price for the economic and social failures of such governments - and they will be waiting a very long time if they wait for improvements from them. They must look to alternative policies, from alternative parties such as ours.

The present scramble towards '1992' and the economic goodies that the 'single market' is supposed to bring, is further demonstrating the right-wing parties' attempts to secure 'economic progress' at the expense of the poor. Despite regular declarations of the 'horror and 'concern' about the growth of poverty in recent years, and despite the common knowledge that unemployment, low pay and unequal treatment and opportunity are the main causes of poverty in Ireland, there have been no serious attempts to tackle these ills. Job creation has been woefully inadequate. Legislation to secure minimum wage rates, or to protect particularly vulnerable groups like part-time workers, has been staunchly resisted. Equal treatment of men and women, whether in employment or social welfare, has been grudgingly conceded only on foot of European legislation or legal action at home - and major anomalies and injustices remain.

The Workers' Party seeks the immediate introduction of a positive, anti-poverty programme which will make real inroads into these problems, before 1992. We want Ireland to enter the 'single market' with dignity and a degree of self-imposed progress. Not with a bitterly divided society, with wide extremes of wealth and poverty, with seething social problems - and a begging-bowl in each hand for our European partners to keep filling. In our view, progress at the expense of the poor is not progress at all. It is usually greed.

The main elements of this anti-poverty programme, for which the Workers' Party is seeking widespread popular support, and which we want adopted in 1989 and completed by 1992, are as follows:-

- * A minimum social welfare payment of £50 p.w. in 1989, rising to £63 p.w. in 1991 (i.e. the likely updated equivalent of the 1986 recommendation of the Commissions of Social Welfare);
- * Payment of the full personal rate of social welfare to all persons who are part of the labour force (i.e. who are normally employed, or want to be), irrespective of their sex or marital and family status;
- * 70% of the relevant rate of social welfare for adults who are dependent on other adults and do not wish to take up employment - such amounts to be paid directly to the adult concerned unless they decide otherwise; and to apply, also, to 'prescribed relatives' who currently receive no payment at all in their own right; this to be seen merely as a first step towards removing the outdated concept of 'adult dependency' altogether, and establishing an independent, minimum income for all adults;
- * For dependent children: 40% of the adult social welfare payment for children under 15; 55% for 15 to 18 year olds; and 70% for over 18s who live at home - these to replace all existing payments in respect of children;
- * Removal of all remaining sex discrimination and victimisation on the basis of marital or family status. Men and women are still treated differently when they apply for certain benefits and when they separate, divorce, re-marry or co-habit. Extending to men the obnoxious co-habitation rules which presently apply to women - as Fianna Fail did in its last savage swipe at social welfare recipients - is not progress but pettiness.
- * Minimum wage legislation to end the exploitation of women, young workers and other vulnerable groups; and legislation to protect part-time workers, who are perhaps the most exploited group of all;
- * Harmonisation of tax and social welfare so as to eliminate poverty traps and facilitate the taxation of all income in excess of the minimum amounts;
- * Broadening of the tax base to include all those whose incomes, capital, property or other wealth and to ensure that a fair contribution to the public finances is made by all (e.g. through effective capital and property taxes, efficient collection of farmer taxes and conversion of tax reliefs into tax credits);
- * Rationalisation and reform of the means tests (though we want them abolished eventually) - including restoration of the deductibility of rent and mortgage payments, increases in 'allowable means' to at least £20 p.w. and a substantial increase in the £45 'personal deduction';
- * Removal of anomalous rules which disadvantage particular sections of insured workers (such as the 'averaging rule' which disqualifies some retired workers from pensions because of gaps in their insurance

contributions) and the '7 year averaging rule' in relation to unemployment benefit, which acts to the detriment of many women, young workers and others who have not been continuously employed for seven years prior to becoming unemployed);

- * Fair and comprehensive PRSI cover for all workers, including part-timers and those on government training schemes; with special provisions for those on low incomes;
- * Reforms of the social welfare appeals system; and better information about social welfare entitlements - low take-up of benefits is still one of the ways in which governments make major 'savings' at the expense of the poor;
- * Introduction of a housing benefit so as to direct state support for housing to the homeless and the needy, rather than to the wealthy who already own property. The recent upsurge in homelessness has occurred alongside a property boom for the super-rich and is encouraged by state incentives which require radical and urgent re-structuring;
- * Better public health services and educational opportunities - since these, along with improved social welfare support, are also essential to the elimination of poverty.

The Workers' Party believes that most or many of these demands are shared by other organisations and individuals with whom we would welcome greater co-operation. It is therefore engaged in a process of developing such co-operation and building a 'Rainbow Coalition' - encompassing many shades of political and non-political opinion - in pursuit of these objectives. Such a coalition would be deeply rooted in the community, representing the many progressive peoples' organisations who do not have the support or backing of establishment politicians or their business friends. We would visualise participation by trade unionists and co-operatives, unemployed groups, pensioners, the disabled and all those working for a fairer society.

THE ECONOMY

The Workers' Party believes that most problems in the country are linked in some way to the economy. Many of our serious problems exist because both Fianna Fail and the previous Coalition Government failed to build a healthy economy.

The people of this country pay a high price for this failure in terms of:-

Unemployment,
Emigration

A very high level of tax - both direct and indirect tax paid by the PAYE Sector.
We also suffer from a unnecessary policy of cuts in Health care and Education.

The way out of the present mess is obvious - a massive increase in productive industry:-

- a. More production and a greater variety of production from the land.
- b. The development of manufacturing industry based on, where at all possible, native natural resources.

The policies followed by governments in the last ten years mean that we have:

- . The highest rate of unemployment in the industrialised world;
- . The greater part of our farm exports sold into intervention;
- . Half the workforce in the building industry denied the right to work;
- . One third of our population living in poverty;
- . One in eight of our manufacturing jobs have been lost in the last six years;
- . Mass emigration
- . We pay one of the highest rates of indirect tax in the world.

THE WORKERS' PARTY PLAN

The Workers' Party puts forward a policy of expansion rather than cuts. We must grow or go down. The debt crisis must be met by massive growth in our Gross Domestic Product (the value of all we produce).

The way to end the crisis and to work towards full employment is:

- a) Change the "spending policies" (grants to the private sector in the hope that they will produce jobs) which was followed by all Irish governments for twenty years. We must have "investment policies" (investment and grants given only on the basis of a firm plan to increase employment and output);
- b) Develop the economy on the basis of a planned output policy focused on the quality products for export.
- c) We must commit resources to marketing our products. This is a crucial area in need of investment. We must have highly trained staff and develop popular brand names.

OUR INVESTMENT POLICY

The overseas firms in Ireland repatriate a substantial part of their profits made in Ireland. A large part of these profits were made as a result of the Irish State guarantee that profits made from manufactured exports would remain taxed at 10% until the end of the century. The government should negotiate for the investment of the bulk of these profits in Ireland and actively canvass for the investment in new production.

Efficient public enterprise in manufacturing, marketing and profit-making enterprise should be greatly expanded. All restrictions on State companies should be removed to facilitate increased diversifications.

JOB CREATION

The Workers' party calls for the creation of an additional 40,000 jobs a year, spread over the next 10 years. We have explained in publications how this can be done. We published an extensive plan AN END TO THE CRISIS - when unemployment levels started to rise sharply.

We published a Farm and Food Industry Study when the EEC started to seriously re-examine its intervention payments policy.

JOBS FROM OUR NATURAL RESOURCES:

Industry based on our natural resources is the best way to create dependable employment. In our farming and food industry study we gave detailed plans for the creation of 150,000 jobs.

It is important to note that the Workers' Party regard productive jobs - jobs which produce a saleable exportable product - as the foundation on which the whole economy must rest. This policy means:

- * The production of high-quality clothing manufactured from natural fibres like linen and wool, mostly for the export market.
- * Supplying our need for paper by producing for ourselves from our own resources rather than by costly imports.
- * The development of a timber industry to produce timber and processed timber for the construction industry, and wood pulp for paper manufacture;
- * Full development of the shoe industry which should be linked to the manufacture of leather from raw-hides now exported.
- * The industrial development of our mineral wealth by smelting our lead and zinc.
- * The development of fishing, fish processing and fish farming, on an extensive scale.
- * The cultivation and processing of industrial crops like bamboo flax, New Zealand flax and dwarf sumac.
- * The development of an indigenous electronics sector with an emphasis on research and development and a capacity for regeneration.

OUR INVESTMENT POLICY - OVERSEAS SECTION

The overseas sector of the Irish manufacturing economy employs 80,000 industrial workers. This sector of the economy is located in new and growing industries, like electronics and chemicals. We note that this sector of the economy imports massive quantities of semi-processed raw materials. It is in this area of great potential development that we believe that negotiations should take place for the re-investment in Ireland of profits made in Ireland by these firms.

ENERGY

The Workers' Party has continually agitated against the high cost of energy to manufacturing industry. It is next to impossible to develop competitive manufacturing industry based on the present 20% energy cost handicap. We recognise that the handicap is to some extent compensated for by a lower rate of pay to the Irish manufacturing workforce. This method of cancelling a cost handicap is a grave injustice.

A part of the high cost of energy in Ireland is caused by a penal levy of indirect taxation on this essential E.S.B. bills, for example, all carry a substantial tax levy. It is an economically unwise aspect of government taxation policy.

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THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Privatisation: The Workers' Party is totally opposed to privatisation of our state companies. Demands to hand over our valuable public assets to private capitalists must be resisted and the motives of those who make such demands must be exposed. The Workers' Party welcomes the opportunity presented by this election to debate the role of State Industry in the Irish economy. The only people to benefit from privatisation would be the small clique of well-heeled financial speculators who would make a killing on the stock market.

Despite massive handouts of taxpayers money, (over a million in 1987) the private sector has failed to deliver the number of jobs needed. Now the same private sector wants to get its hands on the profitable operations within the public sector.

Contrary to the daily propaganda about the "loss makers" our 17 main public enterprises make trading profits. The Workers' party in declaring its outright opposition to privatisation of any of our State enterprises reiterates its long standing policy that our State companies be used as an important engine of economic growth and recovery.

OUR PAY POLICY

There should not be one-sided restrictions on pay. We believe, as do the Trade Union Movement, in a fair pay policy, but it must include all incomes and be linked to an agreed policy of investment. The pay policy to the establishment parties generally involves restricting workers pay and increasing profits with no return to our economy.

Government should not prevent the payment of awards agreed upon by the machinery established for this purpose.

The Workers' party also believes in equal pay and in full equality for part-time workers and has introduced a Bill to protect part-time workers in the in Dail. This was defeated by F.F.

OUR TAXATION POLICY

The present system of taxation is glaringly unjust. It favours wealth, business and the prosperous end of farming. We, and the trade unions, have long been active on this scandal.

The present unjust taxation burden, which is carried mainly by the PAYE sector, will, if the establishment parties have their way, be aggravated by the imposition of VAT on food, oral medicines, children's clothing and school books. This is planned as a part of the Single European Act.

- * The Workers' party will oppose any attempts to impose VAT on essentials.
- * We have for long campaigned to reduce the amount of direct tax paid by the PAYE Sector by 10% and to have this 10% levied on the wealthy, on businesses and farmers. We believe that this policy can be adopted in a short space of time and is the only way to bring some justice into the taxation system.

cut Tax

The Workers' Party plan to cut taxes is outlined above - cut tax to the PAYE Sector - make those who do not now pay a fair share do so.

Establishment parties who say "cut tax" really mean - cut spending on education, on Health and reduce Social Welfare benefits. The Workers' party believe that unemployment and poverty should not be a charge on the taxation system. We believe that our policy of full employment is the only just and effective way to reduce the present high level of spending on Social Welfare which still leaves the deprived living in poverty.

The Workers' Party believes that the tax burden should be carried equally by all receiving taxable incomes. We believe that taxes are needed to finance:

Education
Health Care
Social Welfare
Investment

CONSTRUCTION AND BUILDING SUPPLY INDUSTRIES

It does not make economic sense to have half the workforce in these industries unemployed and forced to emigrate while people need housing and many areas lack necessary amenities. No houses are being built by Local Authorities and house prices are going up and up.

The Workers' Party plans to put the construction industry to work. There must be a sharp cut in building costs. This means putting an end to the rezoned building land racket.

We also believe in public sector activity in this area of our economy in order to prevent the greater part of public funds provided for this section being creamed off by the private sector.

JOB CREATION FROM THE LAND

Land, our greatest natural resource, should also be a rich source of new jobs. Our land is underused. Our agriculture industry, food processing and industrial crops have been developed to only a marginal degree. To begin the process, at this time of crisis for agriculture, the Workers' party proposes that a special authority, the Farming and Food Development Authority, be established to develop agriculture and all its related industries.

The present system of financial aid to farmers combined with the existing structure of the Common Agricultural Policy will not bring about a sustained increase in marketable output nor will then ensure the most productive use of our land resources. They have also failed miserably to develop a comprehensive system of industrial and marketing linkage between the producer on the land and the consumers of food products, timber or horticultural products.

We believe that the creation of a single government agency is vital for the development of the agricultural sector as a vital industrial sector of our economy and as one with enormous job creation potential.

In future all State aids for agriculture should be related to farm plans, national production priorities, value added production, and employment potential. The new Authority would be the executive authority of the State in this sector and have on its board representatives of the farmer's organisations, trade unions, the various development agencies and the State itself. It would be similar in structure to the IDA, but would have a very specific development role in relation to agriculture, food and land use.

EDUCATION

One of the most damaging actions of the Fianna Fail government now leaving office was the reduction of resources given to education. Elected on promises to reduce class size, build new R.T.C.s and put the Curriculum and Examinations Board on a statutory footing, Fianna Fail breached each of these commitments and proceeded to damage the general education service.

The Workers' party believes that, against a background of mass unemployment and large scale emigration, the importance of education in building a more equal society and a more vibrant economy must be re-asserted. A well resourced education system, resulting from equitable taxation, is an investment in the future. The Workers' Party seeks such a system; state funded, democratically controlled, relevant to society and socially progressive.

The use of education to preserve and re-inforce a rigid class system in Irish society has been well documented. Education has been appropriated by the few for private gain. This has happened because of a lack of real commitment to education by successive governments. For too long an essentially pragmatic view has been taken and adjusted to meet the swings of the market economy. The Workers' Party opposes absolutely the erosion (for some six years now) of the semblance of a free education system which had been built during the years since 1967.

The next government's period of office can be very significant in the development of education. Our falling birthrate provides a unique opportunity to improve the service. A number of other factors also have the potential - given the political will, to contribute to rebuilding the service; these include the reviews of primary education now under way, the reunion of syllabi at second level and the need to meet growing demand for places at pre-school, third level and adult education. The welcome growth of parents' organisations raises a new challenge as to the democracy of education.

Conscious of the opportunity to strengthen public education in the coming year, the Workers' Party will in particular seek to advance the points of policy outlined below.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

Education is a right. From this follow a number of basic principles which the Workers' Party will seek to have enshrined as part of the system, as follows :

1. Every person in human society is entitled to an education in the knowledge and skills (including basic reading, writing, numeracy and social skills) required for a full life in that society; to respect in the process of imparting these skills, including respect of the right to be critical; to develop personal skills and abilities; and not to be penalised or excluded from education or any part of the system on grounds of social class, sex, age, religion or disability.
2. The basic level of provision should be set out in a Education Act and the Minister should place before the Oireachtas for debate an Annual Report on the education service.
3. In each school or institution, a guarantee of educational standards should be given to parents and students.
4. The education service should be free of fees and of charges for necessary books and materials.
5. Parents have a right to participate in decision-making at national and institutional level.
6. Students at second and third level and in continuing education are entitled to a representative voice in decision-making.
7. Professionals in education have a right to be represented at all levels of management and decision-making.
8. Election public representatives have a role alongside parents, teachers and students in the management of education.

PRESCHOOLING AND 'NATIONAL' SCHOOLS

Preschooling is at present inadequate, not regulated, and generally available only to those who can afford to pay fees. The establishment of a full preschool system integrated with the existing primary school system, and administered by the Department of Education in conjunction with local government and area health boards should be objective. Immediate regulation of existing preschools is necessary.

The primary (national) school system is at present totally underfunded and is primitive by EC standards (in such areas as class size, school resources and teacher inservice training, for example).

These levels of education must entail:

- . a comprehensive, state-resourced, preschool service;
- . transfer to school from four years of age;
- . classes in national schools of such size as will allow for individual attention (e.g. not above 25 at infant level);
- . free schoolbooks and necessary materials;
- . early identification of, and remedial attention to, learning problems;
- . the opportunity for pupils to develop particular talents;
- . an equal say for parents in school management;
- . regular and adequate reports to parents on progress of child/ren in school and a profile of achievement on transfer to second-level.

SECOND-LEVEL EDUCATION

Second-level education should be available locally to all on completion of primary schooling. Barriers should not be placed in the way of students' participation. Since selective schools place such barriers, the Workers' Party calls for the transfer of funding from fee-charging schools (currently estimated at £21 million per annum) towards non-selective public sector schools. Schools which select pupils on an "ability-to-pay" or on a narrow "intelligence" basis are involved in the perpetuation of class divisions which the state should not subsidise.

The Workers' party also encourages an extension and strengthening of democratic management, as legislation for the VEC system, to all state funded second-level schools.

Second-level education should provide for:-

- . non-selective access to local school;
- . education free from exam fees and costs of basic tests and materials;
- . full subject choice with avoidance of over-early specialisation;
- . a core curriculum, to include social analysis skills;
- . fair disciplinary procedures with right of appeal;
- . a profile of achievement and school certificate on leaving the school;
- . additional provision for pupils with special educational needs;
- . a guarantee of 3 years education/training at end of compulsory schooling, on the national minimum wage at least;
- . availability of school facilities outside school hours for community development needs.

THIRD-LEVEL EDUCATION

The recent Clancy Report again highlighted the gross class inequalities at third-level. The creation of genuine free education at first and second levels must be complemented by the adoption of strategies to open up third-level to all in society; those now excluded from the system are often the very PAYE taxpayers who provide most education funding.

Third-level education should involve:

- . education free of tuition costs;
- . a comprehensive grants scheme to meet realistic maintenance costs;
- . curricula which include a general education in the humanities, including social studies, even in courses which are primarily technical;
- . adequate places, which must involve the contribution of the promised R.T.C.s in Dublin, Castlebar and Thurles;
- . payment of social welfare to recipients in respect of "children" up to the age of 21 years in full-time education, as recommended by the Commission on Social Welfare;

ADULT EDUCATION

This sector must not be an afterthought but an integral part of the overall education provision. The 1983 Report of the Adult Education Commission has put forward a range of recommendations for the development of this sector, yet cuts have bitten deeply here.

The Workers' Party calls for the establishment of a statutory authority with responsibility for continuing education. This authority should ensure:

- . access as of right to a broad range of courses free of charge, especially for early school leavers or those with particular needs;
- . creche facilities for parent-students
- . continuation of social welfare payments to those in attendance at a set range of courses;
- . release from work for a minimum period for education purposes, as enshrined in I.L.O. Convention.

ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES

The Workers' Party recognises also other particular areas of priority

- . support (in payment, conditions, a career structure with equal opportunities and inservice training) for teachers;
- . the importance of proper accommodation for travellers in meeting their educational needs (as recognised in Travelling People Review Body Report 1983, 2.1);
- . bringing provision for those in special education into line with higher EC standards;
- . tocaíocht don Ghaeilge san choras oideachais, mar sampla tre chlaracha teilifíse speisialta a chur ar fáil do na scoileanna.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

In the context of the Single European Act Irish neutrality must be given a positive character to allow our government take a more active position in raising issues of world peace, nuclear disarmament, and support for developing countries and those seeking to create democratic governments in place of racist or dictatorial regimes.

Ireland is in a key position to work for peace and social progress in the world, through development of our role as a neutral and non-aligned state. Within the EEC we are the only country not a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. It is the duty of the government to strongly defend and enhance this status.

Instead our neutrality is under threat from a number of sources. There must be very deep concern at the government's failure to seek adequate written assurances on our neutrality in negotiations on the EEC's Single European Act. The Workers' Party was the only party to propose in the Dail that the Act be referred back for amendments to this effect.

The new spirit of co-operation in international relations and the initiatives of the government of the Soviet Union in announcing many unilateral reductions in nuclear and conventional weapons creates immense opportunities for Ireland to use our neutrality positively. Irish representatives at the United Nations, European Community and other international fora should be to the forefront in proposing further action to deescalate the arms race and remove the political and military barriers in Europe. We should be striving for one Europe free from the threat of war from the Atlantic to the Urals.

POSITIVE NEUTRALITY

A policy of positive neutrality could be enhanced specifically through membership of the Movement of Non-Aligned States, through development of formal contacts with our European neutral countries, such as Sweden, Finland, Austria, Switzerland, and by participating with these and other countries such as India and Greece, in support of calls for an end to all nuclear weapons tests, the setting up of nuclear weapons free zones around the world, the removal of all nuclear weapons from Europe, and the dissolution of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

But we can also take practical steps at home to ensure our neutrality is not undermined.

The Workers' Party, for instance, again tabled a Dail Bill recently which would forbid use of Irish ports or airspace by any military craft which carry nuclear weapons, and would require those in charge of such craft to provide written assurances to this effect before being allowed enter Irish airspace or waters. The proposals are similar to legislation already adopted by the government of New Zealand.

The Workers' Party is also completely opposed to the stationing of any nuclear weapons or NATO facilities in Northern Ireland, as such a situation would undermine Irish neutrality and make the entire island a target in the event of a third world war.

DEVELOPMENT AID

Ireland has an obligation to play a full role internationally in tackling problems of underdevelopment, and to assist developing countries achieve their full economic and social potential.

The magnificent response of Irish people to appeals in aid of recent famines in Ethiopia and Sudan and the consistently high donation of Trocaire, Gorta and other voluntary agencies involved in development work, proves we are fully aware of and anxious to help tackle these problems. Unfortunately the response of consecutive governments on this issue has been much less than satisfactory.

We are still far from achieving United Nations recommended levels of development aid, despite promises made over the years. The target must be to reach the UN figure of 0.7 percent of Gross National Product within the next 5 years by means of guaranteed annual increase.

LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

There has been considerable progress in the efforts of the Namibian people to win independence. The racist South Africa government has been forced by SWAPO to concede independence, but there is a strong need for governments like that of Ireland to ensure that the transition to democracy there is allowed its full potential, and not restricted by interference from South Africa.

Ireland should seek imposition of comprehensive and mandatory sanctions against South Africa, and grant recognition to the ANC. We should exercise greater pressure on the Israeli government to respond favourably to the positive, constructive and peace-oriented proposals of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation for establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

The Irish government should, through use of its influence in the UN, establishment of diplomatic relations and other suitable means defend the rights of peoples in other countries to build a better future without outside interference or attack.

The recent visit here of Nicaraguan President, Daniel Ortega should have been used to establish diplomatic relations with the small central American country, and to criticise the US trade embargo and support for terrorist groups attempting to overthrow the democratically elected government there.

Following the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, the Irish government should be more vocal in calling for international aid to strengthen democracy there and an end to all outside military interference in that country.

The Workers' Party praises the work of Irish UN troops in Lebanon and members of the gardai in Namibia and fully supports their involvement in such peacekeeping operations.

GAEILGE

The Workers' Party recognises the Irish speaking population as an important minority grouping within the community as a whole. Like other minorities, Irish speakers are subject to discrimination and in this regard we call for a Bill of Rights for Irish speakers to establish the right of those who speak the language to use it.

While the Constitution enshrines Irish as the first official language, in practice Irish speakers are subject to many of the restrictions imposed on linguistic minorities in other countries.

The Gaeltacht areas are vital to the survival of Irish as a living language. Citizens in the Gaeltacht areas should have the same rights to conduct their business with national and local government agencies in the Irish language as citizens in the rest of the country do in English.

Greater attention should be paid to the development of resource-based industry in the Gaeltacht through a comprehensive development plan which takes in all aspects of life in these areas including educational, cultural and linguistic development.

Uduras na Gaeltachta should establish Bord na n-Oilean to serve the needs of people living on the islands.

The Workers' party supports the establishment of an Irish Language Television channel to ensure the survival of the language as well as providing a service to meet the needs of the Gaeltach as well as Irish speaking population in the towns and cities.

We recognise Irish as a unique part of our heritage belonging to all and not just the property of one section of the population. We welcome and encourage the upsurge in all Irish national and secondary schools and recognise the need for Irish to be taught as a spoken, living language.

CULTURE

The aim of the Workers' Party cultural policy is to establish democratic access to the richness of cultural life. Our task is to change the situation where culture is identified with a narrow elite. In doing so we want to encourage the development of a radical culture of change.

As the party representing the working class our responsibility is to fight not just for bread but roses, for a concept of culture as a broad non-elitist range of human expression from entertainment to creative participation in the arts, literature, sport, music, drama and society itself.

CULTURAL WORKERS

Wages and working conditions for cultural workers are well below the average for industrial workers. Under-employment is a problem particular to those who work in cultural areas, especially for actors. We give full support to the trade union organisations which have developed in recent years to improve the conditions of those workers. It is our policy to ensure that all cultural workers have a basic minimum wage and full cover for health and social welfare.

DEMOCRATIC ACCESS

Everyone in society should have the opportunity to enjoy and participate in cultural activity. This requires lowering the cost of cultural activities. Public funding of the arts must be based on allowing greater accessibility and in eliminating elitism.

In order to create cultural democracy our emphasis will be on eliminating the economic and social obstacles which deny many creative people access to cultural activities.

Most types of artistic endeavour are not, and have never been, economically self sustaining. They have always required, and always will require, subsidy from either private patrons or the state. We reject the ideology which demands the privatisation of the arts, which would make individual artists once again dependent on the whim of wealthy individuals or corporations, and exclude the public from full access to the artist's work.

The Arts Council is the body which, in response to the needs of artists and communities, should have the full responsibility for the development of the arts in Ireland. Over the past decade, the Council's policies have

borne fruit in a considerable increase in the quality and quantity of artistic work. In collaboration with local authorities, they have also increased public access to the arts, in particular through the development of arts centres.

FUNDING

Yet this progress is now endangered because of the chronic underfunding of the arts by the state. Artists and arts administrators are grossly underpaid. The level of training is, in many areas, derisory. Many of the structures which support the arts in Ireland, both economically and organisationally, are in real danger of collapse.

Arts funding started out from such a low base that, even in the current economic crisis, there is a strong case for significantly increasing the arts budget, so that it may at least operate on a par with other sectors.

We therefore endorse the Arts Council's analysis that its current funding of seven million pounds needs to be doubled, in order to provide the minimum service necessary even to sustain existing structures. We have deplored the use of National Lottery funds as a source of political patronage for the arts, and we welcomed Mr Haughey's statement that in future all Lottery funds earmarked for the arts will be channelled through the Arts Council.

However, we remain concerned at the way in which Lottery funds are being used as a substitute rather than a supplement to the Council's basic exchequer grant. The Lottery functions in practice as an additional tax on the most deprived sectors of society. At the very least, therefore, the Lottery funds should be redirected to the communities which contributed them, and not be used to make savings on essential state services.

We therefore call on the government to finance an upgraded Arts Council grant directly from the exchequer, and to channel additional funds from the Lottery, through the Council, to arts projects directly relevant to those communities most affected by high unemployment and low wages.

PROPOSALS

In summary we propose the following:

- . The immediate doubling of the Arts Council grant;
- . Reserved seats on the Arts Council for delegates from trade unions representing cultural workers.
- . The revival of a single state agency to develop the film industry, similar to the defunct Irish Film Board. The axing of this board, which stimulated an unprecedented growth in Irish film-making, and created hundreds of short-term jobs in the industry, was one of the single most irresponsible and irrational acts of the Haughey administration.
- . The appointment of arts officers to all local authorities which have not yet taken this crucial step in developing and consolidating cultural activities at local level. The arts officer should have the responsibility (and a budget) to ensure that facilities for cultural activities are an integral part of all leisure and community centres.
- . The implementation of a social welfare and employment category of artist.

HEALTH

Our health service grew haphazardly, and there are many differences from region to region, and variations on harsh class lines. The cutbacks forced on the service in the past few years have exposed these weaknesses, because they have been as arbitrary and haphazard as the development of the service itself.

The Workers' Party believes that the proportion of the Gross National product spent on Health should be held at the previous level of 8.6% and a National Health Plan should be introduced based on that figure. The basis of this plan must be equal access for all, and a uniform service should be provided throughout the country.

CHARGES

The ten pounds charge for outpatient visits and for inpatient daily maintenance should be scrapped. This charge is not paid by medical card holders and is covered by existing VHI premiums therefore it is only paid by workers on low and moderate wages who have already paid through PAYE and health levies for the services.

GENERAL HOSPITAL SERVICES

We want to end the scandal of inequality between public and private patients in access to general hospital and consultant care by instituting the following reforms in relation to the consultants Common Contract, the V.H.I. and the rights of patients.

Consultants

1. That the consultants common contract for work in publicly funded hospitals be changed to include the following provisions:
 - (a) That all consultants should see and treat all patients whether public or private, in the same way in the same rooms or outpatients departments, under the same conditions and from the same waiting list; and that it would be a breach of contract to do otherwise.
 - (b) That publicly appointed consultants would only be allowed to practice in the public hospitals to which they are attached.
 - (c) That consultants choosing to practice in private hospitals would not be offered public appointments.
 - (d) That consultants be paid a portion of their salary for public work on a merit or productivity basis.
2. That more consultant specialists be appointed, with a pro rata reduction in the numbers of non consultant hospital doctors, in order to:
 - (a) provide a prompt and effective service to public patients.
 - (b) involve consultant specialists more directly in the day to day management of public patients.
 - (c) provide a better career structure for non consultant hospital doctors.

The V.H.I.

That the V.H.I. as a semi-state body, be developed as an instrument of greater social equity through radical reform of its approach and organisation and greater integration into the overall health care system, through measures such as the following:-

1. Giving the V.H.I. a supervisory role in ensuring equal access and choice, and a high quality of care, for all patients both public and private; with a mandate to alter economic relationships between consultants and patients, as necessary in order to achieve this objective (e.g. by channeling through the V.H.I. a portion of the salary paid by the state to consultants for their work with public patients).
2. Ensuring greater public accountability by the V.H.I.
3. Instituting full participation in the V.H.I. policy formation and decision making by representatives of the main interest groups in the health care area (e.g. through restructuring of its Board).
4. Ending V.H.I. cover for all schemes outside the publicly funded institutions.
5. Maintain tax relief on V.H.I. premium only to the extent necessary to cover provision in public health facilities.
6. Continuing to withhold tax relief from the private health insurance cover other than that provided by the V.H.I. - even after 1992 - since preservation of the V.H.I.'s monopoly is in the public interest, particularly if its role and structure is reformed as above.

Patients Rights

That a charter of Patients Rights be introduced in order to give force to the following:

1. The right to equal treatment on the basis of need.
2. The right to equality of access and care when in hospital.
3. The right to information and access to personal medical records.

GENERAL PRACTITIONER SERVICES

Now that the fee per item system of payment of the G.P.s has been replaced by a capitation system the time is ripe to extend a free general practitioner service to all citizens and provide the incentives and structures for G.P.s to treat, where possible, patients in the community outside expensive high-tech hospitals.

COMMUNITY CARE

In order to facilitate the care of the ill and elderly in the community it will be necessary to increase the number of community based health care workers, e.g. district nurses, home helps. Full family planning services should be provided as should childcare services.

We want the vital role of the "unpaid carers" who carry the burden of community care recognised in the following way.

1. Financial support to carry out this task.
2. Support services such as laundry services, transportation etc.
3. Information and counselling services for carers.
4. Support unit for carers in each area.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

A dramatic shift in policies towards mental health is necessary. It is not enough to call for hospitals to be closed down and replaced with community services. A network of good community services must first be established, including day-care centres, sheltered workshops, hostels, counselling and 24 hour emergency centres. These must be set up to meet the individual needs of the local community and the local community must be involved.

JUSTICE AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

In theory all citizens are equal before the law. In practice our legal system heavily favours the better-off in society, especially substantial property owners. The Workers' Party seeks to ensure equality under the law so that the ordinary citizen's right to a home, a job and a decent life are upheld, and both individual and collective civil liberties strengthened.

EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

The right to a job and protection of jobs. The right of all workers to information on the affairs of the company that employs them, an extension of legal protection for part-time workers, equal pay and opportunities for women, the strengthening of the rights of trade unions, and right of members of the Defence Forces to form a representative association.

FAMILY LAW REFORM

The extension of the pilot-family mediation service nationwide. The removal of the constitutional prohibition on divorce and enactment of divorce legislation: the establishment of a unified family tribunal system.

WOMEN

We seek new legislation as well as the full implementation and strengthening of existing legislation for equality in employment, education, the legal system and social welfare. The Workers' Party welcomes the reform of the law relating to rape but will fight to amend it in a number of key respects. In particular we seek the broadening of the definition of rape, and independent legal assistance and representation for rape victims during all phases of legal action.

There should be a Charter of Rights for women to be enshrined in the constitution.

CHILDREN

We welcome the abolition of the concept of illegitimacy and seek greater protection for children at risk, and improved family support services. We deplore the delay in processing the Child Care Bill and will seek to have it implemented as a matter of urgency, with adequate level of funding.

ACCESS TO THE LAW

The Party supports the rights of minority communities and the building of a pluralist society as well as proper legal aid facilities so that all citizens can have access to the law regardless of their income levels. The existing Civil Legal Aid scheme is scandalously underfunded. In addition we seek simplification of various legal procedures (for example in the area of house purchase) and the introduction of a small claims court.

VICTIM SUPPORT

One of the most neglected areas within the legal system as it currently operates is that of help and support for victims of crime. The Workers' Party calls for sufficient funding for the Irish Association for Victims Support to enable it to carry out its very necessary work of providing practical support for the victims of crime as well as identifying the changes needed in the broad legal process to protect the rights of victims. We are particularly concerned at the abolition of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal and seek its re-establishment as a matter of urgency.

THE MEDIA

The concentration of the print media in a small number of private hands and increasing privatisation of broadcasting must be of concern to all democrats who value the twin principles of media freedom and accountability.

We call for democratic control of the airwaves and the establishment of a strong Media Council.

We suggest the repeal of Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act which, in any case, has failed to achieve its original objectives. It should be replaced by general legislation banning incitement to racial or religious hatred or violence, which would also cover statements made on radio or television.

POLICING

One of the most important rights of a citizen has is the right to personal safety and security, to feel safe in his or her home and on the streets.

To provide protection from crime it is essential to have a police service which commands wide community support and respect.

The Workers' Party views policing as a service to the community.

It must be unarmed service with a strong community policing dimension. The neighbourhood watch scheme has many positive aspects, but it is not a substitute for genuine community policing.

There must be some accountability at Local Government level and we would see local Garda Liaison Committees with a consultative role as being the most effective way of providing this within the framework of the existing organisation of the Garda Síochána.

There is also an urgent need for a Garda Authority which would remove the Gardai from immediate political influence. Such a body must, however, have a democratic component with a minimum number of elected positions as well as representation from community and trade unions.

COMBATTING THE DRUGS PROBLEM

There have been substantial improvements in legislation to tackle the drugs problem and in the way drugs offences are processed through the Criminal Justice system. Many previous loopholes exploited by drug dealers have been closed off and many dealers are currently serving long jail sentences. Detection of drug-related crime remains an enormous problem, and this is a question of resources rather than legislation.

The Workers' Party seeks the provision of funding to tackle three main areas of acute urgency:

1. Garda resources to enable more effective prevention and detection of drug crimes.
2. A strengthened and revamped Customs and Excise unit to prevent drugs from entering the country.
3. A major input of funds into the treatment of drug dependency coupled with a vigorous schools education programme.

In addition we would wish to see drugs legislation include the power to seize and confiscate proceeds from drug dealings.

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

A new constitution capable of dealing with realities of our time must be based on democratic and pluralist concepts.

PRISONS

We seek the implementation of the Whitaker Report in relation to the Prison system and in particular the appointment of a Medical Director of Prisons.

Greater use should be made of non-custodial forms of penalty such as community service order.

Improved educational facilities in prisons must be permitted.

NORTHERN IRELAND

The Workers' Party in Northern Ireland campaigns on a platform of PEACE, WORK, DEMOCRACY and CLASS POLITICS. We take every opportunity to bring this programme to the public and every election shows a steady increase in support for these policies.

PEACE

We are totally opposed to all para-military gangs and their acts. We seek the elimination of terrorism and establishment of the rule of law. The Party recognises the major reforms which have taken place within the RUC and wish to see the police service exercise its role and authority throughout the community. To achieve this end we wish to see the Policy Authority exercise a much more vigorous and public role in its management of the police service.

WORK

The Party has presented a wide range of economic proposals to both the British Government and Labour opposition designed to tackle the deep-seated unemployment problem. The recent reductions in monthly unemployment statistics are accounted for by emigration; compulsory youth training placements for all 16-18 year olds; and continual revision of the statistical base for measuring unemployment.

The scale of the problem demands State Investment: no amount of "enterprise" on its own can generate the tens of thousands of jobs needed to get NI back to work. Our economic programme is based on a planned development and integration of our natural resources; major investment in the building and engineering industries; expansion of specialised food production and the development of the natural fibres industry.

The Party has consistently called for tougher Fair Employment legislation and welcome many part of the new legislation. We are concerned that enforced monitoring may cause difficulties. However we are acutely aware that unless a major jobs creation initiative is launched fair Employment legislation will be absolutely meaningless. There can be no equality in the dole queues.

The Party believe that an all-party jobs conference to discuss possible solutions to our unemployment crisis could be a vehicle for increased political understanding within NI and help force a reluctant British Government to discharge its responsibilities to the people of NI.

DEMOCRACY

The Party is committed to democratic devolved government, underpinned by a Bill of Rights acting as a new constitutional framework for NI as the key to political progress.

The principle and spirit of democracy must permeate all public institutions within NI and we have made recent representation to the Secretary of State for NI on how this might be achieved, especially in the major areas of health, education and housing. Our Local Government manifesto on which we have just contested those elections in NI has won widespread agreement on its proposals for an extension of the functions of Local Government.

CLASS POLITICS

The Workers' Party stands virtually alone in opposing the sectarian politics and parties of both the Unionist and Nationalist blocks. We stand absolutely alone in presenting a Socialist programme as the only possible alternative to the discredited and failed system of private enterprise.

The Party seeks every opportunity to raise class consciousness within the community so that citizens can identify themselves primarily as workers rather than as members of sectarian Nationalist Unionist blocks.

INTEGRATED EDUCATION

The Workers' Party has long campaigned for a system of Comprehensive, Integrated Education in NI. While we recognise the small steps taken by Mr Mawhinney to prevent obstacles to the development of integrated schools we do not believe this policy is adequate. At the very least every parent wishing to send their child to an integrated school should have that choice: the current proposals do not even have that limited proposal as an objective.

The current system of education is sectarian and elitist and no amount of tinkering about the fringes will alter that fact.

ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT

The Workers' Party is deeply disappointed that the Review process allowed for in the Anglo-Irish Agreement was interpreted by both Governments in the narrowest possible sense. We believe that another opportunity has been lost to permit the opening up of dialogue and discussion with and between the democratic political parties in NI. Indeed the Review process would seem to indicate preserving the Agreement for its own sake rather than a vehicle for political change and progress. It is our belief that the British Government, in particular, must end its confrontation role with local parties in NI and initiate discussions that offer the prospect of meaningful devolved government to the citizens of NI. A political initiative which can secure the consent of all the constitutional parties in NI is a more important and effective weapon against terrorism than any security initiative.

YOUTH

Young people know that Fianna Fail, supported by Fine Gael and the P.D.s have failed to provide a decent future for them. They are exposed daily to the inadequacy of our education system. Unemployment, low pay or forced emigration stare them in the face.

Every week in this country, 900 young people are forced to emigrate in search of work. A whole generation have been lost, 45,000 in one year, yet the government has done nothing. The scandal of young Irish illegal emigrants in the US has pierced our national conscience, the plight of young Irish emigrants in Britain scavenging for work and living in appalling conditions has shamed us. Yet none of these emigrants can vote in this election - you should deliver their verdict on this government. The Workers' Party calls for greater protection for Irish emigrants and for the franchise to vote in Dail and European elections to be extended to them.

At home, the Workers' party demands that the government initiate a comprehensive job creation programme and a 'social guarantee' for all young people. We also demand a fair deal for low paid and part-time workers and equality of access to education.

The Workers' Party believes that all young people must be secure in the knowledge that they are assured of the right to live and work in their own country if they desire to exercise that right, in a society in which all the talent, energy and creativity of young people in channelled into productive activity.

SOCIAL GUARANTEE FOR YOUTH

Our Party will fight vigorously for the introduction of a "social guarantee" for all young people which will assure them of a guaranteed right to productive involvement in education, training, leisure and work. To fulfill that guarantee, we will reorganise all the agencies concerned with young people to ensure that access to the facilities necessary for comprehensive education and training development in accordance with their own individual potential. We will not allow young people to suffer discrimination because of their class background. The emphasis will be placed on equipping all young citizens for life and ensuring that the school system has the resources to cater properly for the whole youth population, up to eighteen years of age.

As part of our programme for full employment for all workers, we must ensure that greater emphasis is placed on science, technology and creativity in the education and training institutions. We will also seek the redirection of training resources from the various Social Employment Schemes, or Start Your own Business schemes to training for long-term sustainable employment in the public or private sectors.

We will campaign in the immediate future for the following measures to be taken in the interest of young people:

- * Full-time education, training or apprenticeships for all young people up to eighteen years of age. 706
- * A "social guarantee" of full-time paid employment for all school-leavers, at pay and conditions covered by collective agreements and minimum pay laws. 201
- * Control of all youth employment through an improved protection of Young Persons Employment Act. This will protect young workers against low pay, long hours of work or poor working conditions. 7
- * Trade union rights for all young people in enterprises, social employment, training and work experience schemes. Employers would not get state supports if they abuse young workers. 217
- * Funds from the Youth Employment Levy must go to genuine job creation schemes by public enterprises, co-operatives or community organisations for job-related training schemes. In the longer term we would 210-303

hope to eliminate the need to differentiate between Youth Employment Schemes and a full programme of productive employment generated by the State.

- * Leisure and sports centres must be provided in all communities, particularly in the deprived working class communities. These centres should be built by the local authorities and be jointly run by local community representatives and the local authority. These centres should cater for sporting, cultural or educational activities. They should include facilities for music, theatre, art and leisure. Such centres when properly managed and developed, can contribute both to providing worthwhile services and jobs.
- * By including all young people at work or training in the pay-related social insurance scheme, (PRSI) we will stop all discrimination against young people in the social welfare and health systems. Such an expansion of the health and welfare cover will bring increased recognition of the importance of young people in our society, increase the dignity of their work and training activities.
- * We will abolish all discrimination against part-time workers. This form of discrimination is now being used extensively against young workers, male and female, in a whole range of enterprises.
- * The Government will be pressed to provide a fully developed system of local youth service boards to co-ordinate youth services.
- * All second-level schools and third-level institutions will be asked to provide a programme of sex education and family planning advice. Young people must be able to protect their own health and physical welfare. Education on drug abuse should be included, to prepare young people to withstand the pressures to abuse alcohol and other drugs.
- * All health boards will be told to solve the problem of homelessness among young people. They will be statutorily obliged to ensure that there is adequate provision of shelter and accommodation of all homeless young people.
- * Young offenders must be given the option of participating in community service as an alternative to prison sentences. In most cases such activity is clearly beneficial for long-term rehabilitation.
- * Existing schemes for youth exchange in education and training will be expanded to facilitate greater participation by young workers. This should involve north-South exchanges in this country and increased youth exchanges internationally. This would enable young people to expand their horizons through work experience, voluntary development aid and practical co-operation with under-developed and developing countries.

THE ENVIRONMENT

The environment is where we live - from the room where we sleep to the planet which we share with the rest of humankind.

The environment cannot be considered in isolation from its social and economic context.

"Poverty is a major cause and effect of global environmental problems. It is therefore futile to attempt to deal with environmental problems without a broader perspective that encompasses the factors underlying world poverty and international inequality." (The Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development 1987).

The environment is a class issue. We may all live on the island of Ireland, or in the city of Limerick or Dublin, but the quality of environment experienced by rich and poor are radically different. On a global level, this is shown by the contrast between the vulgar consumerism of the wealthy in capitalist society, and the degrading poverty and struggle for survival by the millions in the Third World. At home, it is reflected in the contrasts in standards and size of housing, in the maintenance of housing estates and in the costs and opportunities for leisure and recreation.

The relentless pursuit of profit, by shifting costs to society, has resulted in Bhopal, Seveso, industrial wastelands, decaying inner cities, ghettoisation and even the depletion of the ozone layer.

In Ireland, the exploitation of the environment has been the very means by which many native capitalists got rich quickly. Particularly, over the past three decades, a few individuals some of them prominent in conservative politics made enormous personal profit from the rezoning of lands, from 'compensation' by the taxpayer when they have been refused planning permission and from the exploitation of home-buyers. A proportion of the price of every house sold in Ireland, new or second-hand, goes to these speculators in higher prices (in housing estates which were not properly finished). This class has been allowed pollute our rivers, coasts and air by agricultural and industrial pollution. This class has dictated public policy which as resulted in the absence of proper planning or control and the toleration of environmental blight.

The politics of the environment concerns the interaction of individuals as members of classes, with their surroundings. There is both a qualitative and quantitative difference between the actions of members of the different classes on the environments.

The issue of the environment challenges the individualist ideology of the Right. The resources of the earth - the air, seas and lands, belong to all the people. A collective will is required to protect the environment. Environmental problems can only be resolved by collective decision and collective action. At its widest level, the threats to the planet from nuclear war or accident, from the warming of the globe, the depletion of the ozone layer or the destruction of plant or animal species can only be tackled by international agreement and co-operation.

Economic development has effects on the environment which can only be resolved by public planning and control. The building of neighbourhoods and adequate housing require democratic decision-making and public control. The policing of environmental crime such as pollution, vandalism and littering require both high standards of individual citizenship and also effective enforcement by the State, acting on behalf of all the people.

The Workers' Party believes that the environment, in all its aspects, is a central issue for our people. We do not confine our definition to the environment to some of its components in isolation. We believe that protection of the environment is compatible with economic development.

The Workers' party has a long record of campaigning on environmental issues, ranging from our participation in the International peace Movement to eliminate the threat of nuclear war, to our agitation on housing needs and local facilities, to local campaigns on specific environmental issues.

The Workers' Party applauds the work of environmental groups who are focusing more and more environmental issues on to the political agenda. We believe that these issues cannot be separated from struggle for socialism which is about the efficient production and distribution of wealth for all the people.

** For More detail see our policy document, "The Environment if Where we Live", published May 1989

HOUSING

Most of us spend anything between 60% and 90% of our entire lives inside our homes. The elderly, women and men who work at home, young children, the ill and handicapped all spend almost all their time in the home.

Space

Housing, therefore, is the most important immediate element of the environment. The Workers' Party believes that the satisfying of housing need requires more than just the provision of shelter.

It must take account of the needs of the members of the household, not only for essential physical facilities such as bathrooms and toilets, but also the needs of members of the household for 'personal space', the needs of school-going children for somewhere quiet to study, the need for well-designed, fitted and suitably located kitchens, the need for downstairs toilets, especially where there are young children, the need for adequate storage for prams and other large household goods, and the suitability of the dwelling for extension as family sizes grow.

There is clear distinction between housing need and housing demand, between the real housing requirements of the Irish people and the ups and downs of the real estate market on which Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats' Housing policy is based.

Market economics and profit-orientated housing policy do not recognise the needs of the 200,000 Irish households still effectively homeless or badly housed. Did you know that there are:

- . 30,000 households still on local authority waiting lists;
- . 5,000 'officially' homeless people;
- . 100,000 households living without one or more basic sanitary facilities;
- . 40,000 households still living in over-crowded conditions and sharing facilities.

Housing in Ireland has become a hallmark of inequality and social privilege - of a growing gap in housing provision between the rich and poor. In terms of overcrowding, space standards and amenities, levels of unfitness and disrepair, house costs and quality of construction, housing is reflecting in bricks and mortar the grim realities of poverty and under-privilege in this country.

Ownership

The threshold of home-ownership is now rising rapidly beyond the reach of many households because of uncertain employment or unemployment. Even with the stagnation of house prices, they rose faster than inflation since 1973.

Prices

There is an absence of good housing at reasonable prices. On the surface it appears that housing is improving but the quality of the general housing environment has continued to deteriorate. The choice of housing remains a narrow one for most people of high-cost, badly built spec. housing, or sub-standard and increasingly unlettable local authority flats and estate housing.

Quality

The quality of Irish housing remains a major problem, with 80,000 dwellings, or 1:12 of our housing stock still requiring basic toilet facilities.

The obsolescence and age of existing housing stock is still high and presents a major problem in our urban areas and in the rural housing in general.

In Dublin City, 53% of housing was built before 1940 and over 50% of inner city housing was built before 1919.

THE WORKERS' PARTY WANTS

1. A new White Paper on Housing Policy, which states the general objectives of government and how to achieve them. It is long overdue - the last one was in 1960.
2. An expanded Local Authority Community Housing initiative providing 35,000 dwellings per year, in a wide range of construction forms and tenure options. This will provide more houses, create more jobs and with the new forms of ownership/rental, need not be too costly.
3. A new Housing Conditions Survey must be carried out to establish, and to provide public information on the level of disrepair and unfitness of our national Housing Stock. The Survey should be co-ordinated nationally and conducted on a five-year basis. It is not an academic exercise and will cut costs by showing clearly what our priorities are and how they are to be achieved.
4. The establishment of Community Housing Information Centres in each Local Authority area, and the introduction of professionally trained and qualified Housing Management Staff. This will reduce costs and improve services.
5. The removal of the restrictive financial and residential qualifications for Local Authority waiting lists and the introduction of National, Regional and EEC-wide mobility and Exchange Schemes for all housing sectors. This will facilitate mobility in an increasingly mobile society and improve social mixes.
6. The formation of a National Flats and Maisonette Policy as the basis of grading and of Area Improvement Schemes for the nation's flat complexes with Community Housing initiatives in the Urban Renewal Areas of Dublin, Cork and Waterford. The designated status should be extended to include the inner area flat complexes of these and other urban areas.
7. A new Charter of Tenants' Rights covering tenure, repair, space provision, sanitary services and fire safety in both the Public and Private Rented Sectors, with a clear housing Management and Enforcement role for Local Authority over the Private Rented Sector in these matters.
8. A national Housing Maintenance Policy must be formulated to cover all public housing and provide a technical/financial framework for the repair and maintenance of all housing sectors.
9. An Emergency Housing Programme must be carried out for the elderly and disabled providing a broad range of community, sheltered and full care facilities, warden-managed and connected by audiolink to the Housing Management structures in each Local Authority.
10. There must be full Defects Protection Legislation for both owner occupiers and tenant purchasers against longer-term design and construction defects on behalf of the developer and Local Authority.
11. Legislation to ensure that house/flats construction is of the highest standards and that it complies with recognised international standards with regard to materials and safety.
12. A New Building Society' Act to:
 - (a) Rationalise the wasteful multiplicity, competition, advertising and Directors' Fees and Expenses which are currently an additional cost on the borrower.
 - (b) Ensure that the conditions for lending are standardised and are not discriminatory.

- (c) Maintain reasonable payment terms.
 - (d) Democratise the control of the Building Society, giving borrowers equal rights with savers.
 - (e) Enable the Housing Finance Agency to compete with the Building Societies, and to eliminate the requirement where a HFA or Local Authority borrower must first be refused by a Building Society or a Bank.
- 13 The immediate resumption by the government of national negotiations with NATA to establish a fair system of rent for Local Authority tenants.
- 14 A Programme of Refurbishment of older housing stock, together with suitable in-fill schemes, and aided by appropriate fiscal policy to enable and encourage people to live in inner city areas.

WOMEN

Neither women or men can ever achieve full human rights and dignity in a society that can only survive because it depends on all forms of inequality - unemployment, exploitation, poverty and the inequality of class. Women suffer under particular forms of discrimination, some of it open and obvious, others more hidden in attitudes and customs.

The Workers' Party believes that the struggle to achieve rights for women is an essential part of the working class struggle, and the Party has a long and proud record of campaigning to remove legal and social discriminations. We want women to be active in political work as fully participating party members, and we believe that party procedures and structures should be examined so as to give women the fullest opportunity to participate. The Workers' party has a National Women's Committee and comprehensive policies on issues of special concern to women. The Party fully support the ICTU Women's Charter.

THE ECONOMY

When they work for wages, women are usually badly paid; when they work at home they are not paid at all. The majority of low-paid workers are women, working in the traditional "female" industries which have been almost untouched by equal pay legislation. Most part-time workers are also women, and they have very little legal protection. Most of those who work from their homes for money are also women, part of the under-paid black economy labour force. The Workers' Party recognises that the solution lies mainly in structural change in the labour market (including an end to sex-segregated industries and occupations).

THE WORKERS' PARTY SEEKS

- . Legislation establishing a national statutory minimum wage.
- . Amendment of equality legislation to render it effective in removing all direct and indirect sex discrimination.
- . Equal access to training and to promotion and provision of "positive action" programmes.
- . Full statutory protection and pro-rata pay and benefits for part-time workers.
- . Equal conditions of employment, including access to sick pay and pension schemes.
- . Provision of comprehensive state run childcare facilities.
- . Adequate maternity and parental leave.
- . Introduction of flexible working hours and a shorter working day.
- . Eradication of all forms of sexual harassment.
- . Promotion of programmes of positive action and contract compliance to end discrimination against women workers.

EDUCATION

The tradition of separate schools for girls and boys in Ireland has meant, in reality, not only separate education but unequal education. Girls have been cut off from the kind of training needed to find jobs in the modern world. Schooling of this kind has strengthened the notion of one role for females, one for males, not only in the training it provides but in the sexist content of books and materials used.

THE WORKERS' PARTY SEEKS

- . A fundamental reassessment of curricula to eliminate sex stereotyping in teaching materials and methods.
- . Equal access to apprenticeships and positive action programmes to encourage girls to enter non-traditional areas of training.
- . Adequate non-sexist career guidance and counseling services.
- . Provision of childcare facilities in third-level and adult education premises.
- . In-service training for teachers to increase their awareness of their crucial role in ensuring educational equality for girls.
- . Provision of a coordinated national programme of adult education.
- . The Workers' Party demands fully comprehensive integrated education for all.

HEALTH

Women are responsible not only for their own health in this society but most of the time for the health of their families. The present crisis in our health services is of urgent concern to women who are already trying to feed children on too little money and cope with the cutbacks which mean fewer services and longer waiting periods for medical attention. It is usually women who take on the additional burdens of caring for elderly relatives and handicapped children, with cruelly inadequate help from the State.

THE WORKERS' PARTY SEEKS

- Full family planning and preventative health care services for women provided by Health Boards at local clinics.
- Child care facilities provided in all health centres.
- Adequate financial support and coordinated backup services for all those providing community care for the elderly, the handicapped, etc.
- Non-directive pregnancy counseling services to be available at health centres, rape crisis centres and sexual assault units, and full post-abortion medical and counselling services to be made available to women whose pregnancies have been terminated.

SOCIAL WELFARE

Our social welfare system is a sprawl of contradictions and complications. It grew from the old Poor Law system of the last century, with regulations and allowances tacked on here and there. It should have been scrapped long ago and reorganised, but the major political parties have neither the interest nor the will to make the changes. Overall, the benefits are pitched to a miserably low level - especially for women who are seen for the most part as dependents on men. The most vulnerable groups are forced to rely on social welfare, among them single parents, widows, deserted wives, women who look after the elderly or handicapped relatives.

THE WORKERS PARTY SEEKS:

- Introduction of a guaranteed minimum income for every adult, with a proportion of this payable in respect of every child, with special supplements and services for people with special needs.
- Abolition of the dependency status of women and the individualisation of entitlements.
- An end to the practice of assuming women to be 'not available for work' if they have children.
- A major publicity drive to inform people of their rights and the provision of social welfare information offices at local level.
- Inclusion of women at home in any national pension plan.

THE LAW

There has been important changes for women in the legal changes of the past two decades but there are still large areas of the law which oppose the concept of equality.

THE WORKERS' PARTY SEEKS

- A charter of rights for women, based on the ICTU Women's Charter.
- A wide-ranging anti-discrimination law which would supersede existing legislation where this conflicts with equal rights.
- Reform of family law and establishment of family law tribunals capable of dealing in a sensitive and enlightened way with these matters.
- An end to the constitutional prohibition of divorce and the enactment of a non-sectarian divorce law.
- A rigorous anti-sexism clause to be included in the advertising code.
- The support of the civil and criminal law to protect women from all forms of violence, including the amendment of legislation covering rape.
- Major changes in the law relating to rape to end the problem of victims being regarded as 'criminals'.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Many of the decisions which directly affect women's daily lives are made at the level of local government by the local authority or health board. Workers' Party councillors have made a great impact in this area already and will continue to fight for those changes that improve the quality of life for everyone.

THE WORKERS' PARTY SEEKS

- Better planning of estates and facilities, including shopping, recreational and childcare facilities.
- Improved public transport facilities and easier access for parents with young children, the elderly and the handicapped.
- Provision of refuges for victims of domestic violence with full counselling facilities.
- Provision of shelters for homeless women and children.

- . Entitlement of women to decent housing in their own right.
- . Provision of Family centres in all estates.
- . Registration of child minders to ensure adequate standards of care.
- . Stricter control of environmental pollution by local authorities and the state.
- . Adoption of an 'equal opportunities' code in matters of staffing, contracts compliance and other appropriate areas.

PEACE

There is a vast unmobilised army for peace in Northern Ireland, especially among women. Unfortunately peace has become a dirty word, partly due to the shambles that the first Peace Movement (Peace People) fell into.

Peace affects women not least because it is as women they are left as grieving widows, or mothers, over lost ones murdered by paramilitaries; they are also compelled to pick up the pieces of the family when husband/son becomes involved in paramilitary activity and ends up in jail.

Women want peace because their demands as mothers, as providers and carers are continually relegated to positions of no importance in the political agenda.

Peace is not an exclusive women's demand but the mobilisation of women behind that banner could unleash a force for change in this community that is long over-due.

DEFENCE

The failure of the successive governments to develop any coherent national policy on defence, certainly since the end of the Second World War, has meant that the Defence Forces have received little or no attention at Cabinet level, have been left without any clearly defined role, and morale, with pay and conditions allowed to fall way below acceptable level.

Apart from defence obligations the Defence Forces have played an important role in the provision of fishery protection, air sea rescue and air ambulance services, and have provided an extremely valuable input to the United Nations peace keeping efforts in such places as the Congo, Cyprus, the Lebanon. Unfortunately the Defence forces have also been used on occasions in anti-worker, strike breaking activities, often against the will of the soldiers involved.

There must also be increasing concern at the growing links between the Defence forces and NATO countries through involvement in training courses, presence as observers at military manoeuvres, which are not appropriate for the Defence forces of a neutral country.

There is an urgent need for a full national debate on defence, with a view to securing a consensus on the type of Defence Policy most appropriate for a neutral country, which we believe should be based on the following principles:

- . Positive neutrality.
- . Non offensive pacts between this and other countries; international peace and disarmament.
- . The declaration of Ireland as a nuclear free zone and the banning of any ships or aircraft, carrying nuclear and chemical weapons, from Irish water or airspace.

In the next Dail the Workers' Party will insist the government addresses the question of pay and conditions in the defence forces as a matter of urgency, as the pay award announced by the government December last is totally inadequate and the decision not to fix any date for the implementation of the second phase of the award is particularly unacceptable. Members of the Defence forces have been neglected by successive governments and we will continue to demand the establishment of a representative bodies to protect the interests of army, air corps, and naval service personnel.

The Workers' Party also deplores the failure of the government to recruit anything more than a token number of women to the Defence Force, and calls for the opening up of all positions within the Defence Forces to women and the recruitment of women on the same basis as men.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

The Workers' Party believes in the principles of local democracy - in people having a real democratic control over the say in the decisions which affect their lives - how their houses are designed, how the housing estate is planned, what facilities are provided, how the area is policed, how the children are educated, how health services are provided. We believe that the principle of local democracy and local government should be enshrined in the constitution.

In Ireland, local government does not equate with local democracy. The powers of local government are more limited in Ireland than anywhere else in Europe.

The role of elected Councillors is restricted due to the increasing centralisation of real decision-making in the department of the Environment, and due to the undemocratic system of city and county management, which gives appointed managers and officials as far greater say in local government than the democratically elected councils.

The structures and size of many local authorities, especially in Dublin, mean that local government is as remote from the people as the Dail. The powers which councillors do have, have very often been abused by conservative councillors, more interested in pursuing their own or their friends' personal profit and interests than in advancing the common goods.

Since the abolition of domestic rates in 1978, Local Authorities have suffered a financial crisis as successive Fianna Fail and Coalition Governments have failed to provide the funds needed by local councils.

In the next Dail, the Workers' Party will press for legislation to:

- * Strengthen local democracy by establishing a broader network of local authorities, with in addition to County, Town, City and District Councils, a new tier of local councils, especially in the larger cities to ensure that there is genuine local democracy.
- * Local authorities to be given a broader range of functions to include.
 - (i) Commercial activity including legal and technical assistance with house building or purchase.
 - (ii) Community services, including legal and technical assistance with house building or purchase.
 - (iii) Employment creation in productive enterprise.
 - (iv) New structures for the control of education, health services, policing and leisure facilities, under the aegis of the local council.
 - (v) Greater powers to enforce planning regulations, building bye-laws, control of rented accommodation and environmental protection.
 - (vi) Greater control over the delivery of services at local level - including Social Welfare, Employment Exchanges etc.
- * The City and County managements Acts to be amended to confer greater decision-making on the elected Councils and to exercise greater control over the management and administration of local government.
- * The funding of local authorities to be seen in the context of overall taxation. The Workers' party believes that in the context of our existing tax system, a fixed proportion of all Central Revenue should be set aside for local government and this to be distributed among local authorities based on their needs etc.
- * Concerning the re-organisation of local government in the Dublin area, the Workers' Party believes that traditional county or town boundaries have very little meaning, given the ways Dublin has developed, and that the existence of such boundaries now has resulted in appalling anomalies for ordinary people - Dublin Corporation houses on County Council land - differences in social welfare entitlements, etc.

The Workers' party favours the establishment of:

- (i) a democratically elected Greater Dublin Council to cover the City and County of Dublin.
- (ii) Separate City or County Councils along the lines already intended.
- (iii) A new tier of local councils for local areas such as Tallaght/Clondalkin, Ballyfermot, Finglas.

We have led the opposition to water charges since they were introduced. Our councillors have succeeded in having them ended in some local authority areas. We will continue to campaign against them as they are a form of double taxation.

In conclusion then, what the Workers' Party wants is a system of Local Government which is genuinely local and genuinely democratic, with greater scope for direct involvement of an consultation with the people. We want these powers for thee local authorities so that local councils are not just the providers of water and carriers

of sewage, but exercise real control over the environment, over services and development at local level. We want these powers to be exercised primarily by the elected councillors. We want the Local Authorities to be properly funded so that they can provide the services need at local level.

For us "decentralisation" does not mean simply re-locating civil servants or their offices out of Dublin. It means giving power back to the people at local level. The Local Authorities are the vehicle for real decentralisation.