

# MANIFESTO



**Westminster Election**

**April 1992**

## **CREATING SOCIAL JUSTICE:**

Health and Social Services

Education

Culture and Arts

Employment

Social Security

Housing

Women

Senior Citizens

Disability

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## **GENERATING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:**

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# A NEW NORTH - A NEW IRELAND - A NEW EUROPE

The SDLP is a Party which has a solid belief in the political process and an equally solid belief that the strength of that process is basically provided by the electorate with the intelligent use of their vote. That is why at election time the SDLP has always spelt out its strategy and policies for dealing with the problems that we confront. Having sought approval from the electorate for that strategy and policies put before them in our manifesto the SDLP then applies all its energies and influence to follow that strategy and pursue those policies.

We have, unlike other parties, and organisations never indulged in the politics of the slogan or the instant solution. We have always insisted that a solution to our deep political problems can only come through what we have called a healing process and we have been working steadily at that process over the years as our record shows and we have been producing results. We keep building.

In our 1982 manifesto we called for the setting up of the New Ireland Forum. It was set up. We described it in our June 1983 campaign as "potentially the most significant political initiative since 1920" and forecast that its effect on British and International opinion would be such that the Northern Ireland problem would be brought to the centre of the Westminster Stage. It was.

The Forum led to the first serious British/Irish government talks for 12 years and produced the Anglo/Irish Agreement. In April, 1981 four and a half years before that Agreement we published a policy document on Anglo/Irish relations and suggested the structures of an Anglo/Irish Agreement should be a Council of Ministers, a Secretariat and a British/Irish Parliamentary tier.

No one can doubt that that Agreement was the most significant development in Anglo/Irish relations since 1920 as events since have shown. The problem was once again back in its proper framework, the framework for a solution.

In our 1987 manifesto we said "it is abundantly clear that a purely internal solution to the problem of Northern Ireland is not possible. A solution must deal with the problem which is one of relationships not only within Northern Ireland but within Ireland and between Ireland and Britain".

In November, 1988 we presented a document to both unionists parties suggesting talks based on that precise agenda and suggesting that the talks take place in the gaps between the Anglo/Irish Conference meetings. Our agenda for talks - the three sets of relationships - has now been accepted by both governments and the unionists parties.

We quote those past records to show that as a party we state our strategy openly and honestly and that we use all our influence and persuasion to bring it about. We do so by

dialogue and political means alone.

In that dialogue, which for the first time is a dialogue of real hope, we will continue to pursue the objective that we have spelt out regularly. We are encouraged in our real hope that we do so as part of a new Europe which has left its very bitter past behind. It is looking to a future in which its unity and stability is based on respect for diversity and in which its institutions of government continue to show respect for difference while allowing everyone to work their considerable common ground which is economic and offers real hope to people.

In our dialogue the SDLP will seek to follow the European example by proposing institutions of government to give expression to all our relationships which respect our differences but which also allows us to work our common ground together. All of this process, which will not be easy, should be pursued, as we have agreed as part of the basis of our talks, by agreement.

We would also hope to secure a declaration from both governments aimed at encouraging the continuing dialogue. They should define clearly the problem as that of a deeply divided people, the last such division in a new Europe; that they will use all their resources to create the atmosphere that will encourage that division to be healed by agreement. Let us all look to the future and leave the past behind.

We ask the people in this election to give us the strength to continue to pursue our strategy of peace and hope. We ask them to give us the maximum political strength at Westminster at this important moment in our history. No one can doubt the necessity of having a strong voice at Westminster at this time. Does any intelligent voter believe any longer in the alternative nonsense of abstentionism?

We seek a mandate for that strategy which we will continue to pursue on the basis of the progress achieved to date.

It is not too much to say that we look forward to an endorsement of our proven leadership.

We also offer representation. The record of our existing MPs is one of solid constituency service. We have voiced the rights, needs, concerns and principles of ordinary people with our sound input in a host of policy areas.

This manifesto outlines much of our philosophy and approach on so many major social, economic, environmental and international issues. It underlines that we are serious about our politics and use the political process to create justice, prosperity, social solidarity and hope.

The SDLP, in offering this manifesto, is challenging people to vote for their hopes not their fears.

# CREATING SOCIAL JUSTICE

People matter: that has been the guiding principle of the SDLP since its inception. All our policies and our actions are governed by that principle. We believe that society must reflect that principle and advocate that our health service, our education system, our social and public services and our social security network embody it.

We are appalled by government attacks on health, education and social security. Our public representatives continue our campaign for social justice: for a society where schools and hospitals are not market-places, but where people are respected and cared for.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES:**

Since the last Westminster election the Conservative government has embarked on a re-organisation of the health service which owes more to the ideology of the market place than to a real concern for the health and well-being of the people. Northern Ireland has adopted a complete copy of these proposals regardless of the different circumstances of small size, high levels of deprivation and the fact that regional specialist services are provided in a single location. Alone among the parties the SDLP has put forward a vigorous and well argued argument opposing many of the proposals.

We do not believe the present re-structuring of the NHS will solve the real problems of the 1990's which are:

- Chronic underfunding compared with other European countries.
- The growing number of elderly.
- Persisting inequalities of health and health care between income classes.
- The importance of income levels, education and housing in the prevention of much ill health.

## **THE NHS AS A PUBLIC SERVICE:**

The government's changes are not intended to reform the NHS as a public service but to deform it into a commercial business. Health boards will be compelled to shop around for the cheapest treatment and hospitals will be forced to compete against each other for business rather than co-operate with each other for the benefit of the patient. The NHS is not and should not be treated as a market place. The only result of such an approach is that people suffer.

## **GENERAL PRACTICE:**

We are totally opposed to budgets for general practitioners. Every decision on whether to refer a patient to hospital or prescribe an expensive drug will be taken with an eye on the budget as well as on the condition of the patient. Budget holding threatens to discriminate against patients who are older and sicker. It also undermines equity in the NHS if patients of GP budget holders receive a better deal in hospitals than patients of other GPs. We are also opposed to the current contracts for GPs which encourage them to seek large patient lists with less time for each patient.

## **HOSPITALS AND COMMUNITY UNITS:**

The Royal Victoria Hospital will become a self governing Trust next year unless Labour becomes the next Government. All the other hospitals and community units in the Eastern Board and some in the Southern Board are expressing an interest in becoming self governing Trusts responsible only to the Department of Health and Social Services. We believe that Hospital Trusts will have every incentive to concentrate on only certain aspects of specialist care which can be seen to operate profitably. There is no statutory obligation on them to continue to serve the local community and look after the chronic sick and the elderly. We are totally opposed to Hospital Trusts.

As for Community Unit Trusts we do not believe the needs of the community are sufficiently well researched to enable them to be costed. Neither are the concepts of care assessment and management sufficiently well developed to enable the outcomes to be properly monitored. Community Unit Trusts would also have a complete monopoly of a number of services in an area.

## **NEW MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES:**

Under the new structures much emphasis is being placed on purchasers and providers. The Boards will purchase treatment or care for its residents and the Hospitals and Community Units will provide the treatment and care. Although there are some merits in the concept we do not believe that sufficient account is being taken of the outcome. If the quality of the treatment purchased is to be as important as the price we will be pressing the Department of Health and Social Services to insist on much more sophisticated monitoring of outcomes that exist at present.

## **COMPULSORY COMPETITIVE TENDERING:**

In the NHS this has resulted in high turnover and casualisation of staff with an increased workload on other members of ward and home staff. Where private contractors have secured contract the result has been poor standards of cleanliness and catering. We are totally opposed to compulsory competitive tendering, and are particularly concerned about its impact on women workers.

## **CARE IN THE COMMUNITY:**

We are totally committed to the aim of enabling people to live at home whenever possible and to support those caring for them. We will press for adequate resources to enable this to be done and oppose attempts to treat community care as the 'cheap option'. We are concerned that this policy should not simply be reduced to family care or consequently, female care.

## **RESIDENTIAL CARE:**

The SDLP will continue to seek a fair choice in residential care between private and public provision by putting access to income support on the same footing whether an elderly or disabled person chooses a private residential home or a home run by the Community Unit.

## **PREVENTIVE MEDICINE:**

We will vigorously support action to tackle the causes of ill health and to promote good health. Action is needed on tobacco advertising and the right to smoke free areas. Education on healthy eating must be linked to consideration of the costs of a healthy diet and income support levels. Free eye tests and dental checks should be restored.

## **EDUCATION:**

One of the most effective tools for the creation of social justice is an equitable, properly resourced education system. The SDLP is committed to such a system and believes that it should be governed by equality of opportunity, respect for children and regard for parental rights. We wish to see changes in the educational system - from primary to tertiary - to make it a system which is equitable and relevant to the needs of young people.

We are gravely concerned at many of the recent changes in our education system: both their substance and the speed of their introduction are deeply worrying. They

have caused upheaval, confusion and instability in our classrooms and have done much to overburden teachers and attack their morale. In particular we:-

- are opposed to the publication of "League Tables" for schools: they are misleading and bereft of educational validity.
- reject the testing of 8 year olds: it is of no proven value and puts unnecessary and potentially damaging pressure on youngsters.
- are opposed to LMS: it is a cynical cosmetic exercise designed to shift the onus of making economies.
- reject the excessive emphasis on a pupil-weighted formula for funding as inequitable.
- are very worried at the speed of the introduction of the new curriculum and demand that its implementation be properly resourced at its coalface, in the schools.
- propose steps to protect smaller, isolated schools, particularly in rural communities, which are valuable, integral parts of the local community.
- are deeply concerned with the substantial underfunding of the maintained sector and demand government action to remedy this inequity.
- demand the end of the 15% "voluntary" contribution to capital costs in the voluntary maintained sector.
- demand significantly more resources for state provision for the under fives.
- call for the availability of nursery education for all 3 - 4 year olds.
- demand proper grant aided support for 3rd level students and call for the abolition of the student loans system and the restoration of vacation entitlement to benefits.

We remain opposed to the educationally unsound and socially divisive system of selection and believe that the introduction of the common curriculum reinforces the case for comprehensive education.

Our regard for parental rights means that we also believe that proper financial and administrative support should be provided for Irish medium education or Integrated Education where parental demand exists.

## **LIBRARIES:**

The SDLP is concerned about declining resources available to libraries and will continue to press for improved funding for this important service. We are particularly concerned about the possible effects of LMS on school libraries and believe that the School Library Services should be centrally funded.

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## **CULTURE AND ARTS:**

We will continue to press for the establishment of an Irish Cultural Institution to support and encourage Irish Cultural activities. This Institute would incorporate a training institute for Irish teachers and establish close links with the Arts Council as proposed in our Irish Language document. Details of this proposal are available in our policy document.

Our role in putting lesser used cultures and languages on the EC policy agenda underlines our commitment in this area.

We welcome some improvements in the funding of the Arts in Northern Ireland but will seek further progress and in particular will argue for a better distribution of the benefit of Art funding throughout our community.

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## **EMPLOYMENT:**

Unemployment has always been a serious problem in Northern Ireland: government policy and the paramilitary campaign of violence have contributed to a situation where NI's unemployment rate is considerably higher than the UK average, and where there are marked regional variations in the unemployment rate.

Particularly tragic are the high proportions of long term unemployed and of young people on the dole. Emigration, a perennial problem, has also been exacerbated in NI's own particular context. The SDLP is committed to and has continually worked for the increase in jobs, particularly in areas of traditionally high unemployment. We are opposed to measures introduced by government which result not in a decrease in unemployment but in simply removing people from the register. We advocate measures targeted specifically at job creation for long term unemployed and the young. We are committed to the establishment of a national minimum wage, the setting up of a Low Pay Unit in NI, and exchange schemes for the unemployed.

And we call on the paramilitaries to cease their campaign of violence which has put so many people on the dole and kept so many jobs out of Northern Ireland.

## **TRAINING:**

The SDLP believes that every young person has the right to develop his or her abilities to the highest level of achievement possible, and we believe that every 16 year old school leaver should have the right to continue training or education.

Adult training must be facilitated by easy re-entry to education and training programmes in later life for those wishing to obtain a first qualification, enhance existing qualifications or obtain new ones. Women in particular should have access to affirmative action training programmes especially in the field of non-traditional occupations.

## **EQUALITY OF JOB OPPORTUNITY:**

As a party which emerged from the Civil Rights struggle of the nineteen-sixties and which has maintained civil rights as a key element in all its policy making, the SDLP regard the achievement of full equality of opportunity in the workplace as central to the creation of social justice.

Full and equal representation in the workplace has not yet been achieved. many workplaces in Northern Ireland continue to contain workforces which on grounds of religion, gender or disability are not representative of the community at large.

Discrimination on any grounds, be it religion, gender, disability, political views or race, is intolerable and unacceptable in any society which claims to uphold democratic principles and to invoke social justice amongst its aims.

The SDLP will continue to use all its resources to achieve justice in the workplace for all.

The SDLP is proud of its role in the campaign to reform the 1976 Fair Employment Act. In co-operation with the Irish government the Party lobbied vigorously for many of the amendments which were included in the 1989 Fair Employment Act. At present the Party is carefully monitoring the implementation of this legislation in order to determine its success in ensuring fair and just opportunities in the workplace.

The SDLP is campaigning to ensure that employers whose workforces are unrepresentative either in terms of religion, disability or gender are required to implement affirmative action programmes which will contain clear goals and timetables for the achievement of a more representative workforce and where there is culpable failure to comply with such programmes that action be taken to ensure compliance. The SDLP is committed to an overhaul of the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay legislation in order to ensure that the UK complies with its obligations under European law and that the procedure, particularly in relation to equal pay, is simplified.

The SDLP is also committed to more flexible working practices, better provision of child-care facilities and severe penalties for sexual harassment.

## **SOCIAL SECURITY:**

A society which is socially just is a society which ensures that everyone has sufficient income to enable them to meet their public and private obligations and to exercise their legal, political and social rights as individuals. The Tories have created a society of poverty, forcing more families on to benefit and forcing the poorest into debt and dependence on charity. The SDLP is committed to reversing the income re-distribution of the Tory years - the fall of £3 per week in the real incomes of the poorest fifth of the people while the incomes of the richest fifth have risen by £150 per week. Social Security benefits are particularly important in Northern Ireland where a large number of households are entirely dependent on benefits because of the level of unemployment.

In particular we:-

- would seek to restore child benefit in real terms to what it was in 1987 when the Tories froze it.
- support an increase in the basic retirement pension and restore earnings linked indexation.
- would press for the replacement of the Social Fund by a system of grants as a legal right with an appeal system as well as discretionary grants for emergencies.
- would seek restoration of the right to Income Support for 16 and 17 year olds.

In our 1989 Manifesto we were the only Party to commit ourselves to seeking special social security provision for the terminally ill. We made progress when following prolonged representations by the SDLP, the government agreed to introduce special qualifying rules for terminally ill in respect of Attendance Allowance.

Similarly we promised to press for the review of social security provision in respect of disability. While we have seen some progress in respect of unfair limitations on Mobility Allowance and Attendance Allowance which we identified in 1987, we believe that overall the Disability Living Allowance and Disability Working Allowance fall well short of what is needed. We will therefore seek a new comprehensive disability income scheme.

## **HOUSING:**

Housing has always been a major focus of the SDLP's campaign for social justice and is the source of much of our public representatives' day to day work on behalf of their constituents. The SDLP takes pride in its achievements in this area - from SDLP proposals which led to the establishment of

NIHE to its achievements in securing European finance to support housing provision.

Despite the transformation which has taken place in housing in the last 20 years much more needs to be done.

In particular the SDLP is opposed to the continuing cuts in the housing budget by central government and supports the NIHE bids for sufficient and realistic funding. These cuts have led to job losses in many sectors of industry, job losses which Northern Ireland can ill afford.

We are particularly concerned about funding for repairs and maintenance schemes, and about the level of unfitness, most pronounced in the private sector and in rural areas and will continue to campaign for housing to be made a budget priority.

The SDLP is very concerned about the growing number of homeless people in Northern Ireland, a problem which has not really been improved by the Housing (NI) Order 1988 which defines "homelessness" very narrowly. The SDLP favours the imposition of much stricter legal obligations to provide for the homeless and proper public funding to ensure that these obligations can be met. We are particularly conscious of the lengthening waiting list delays and growing frustration - not least on the part of transfer applicants - arising from the current implementation of the homelessness legislation in the context of a declining house-building programme.

As the Party who just raised the issue of Integrated Rural Development and identified particular housing problems in rural areas, we are very supportive of the Housing Executive's policy development in this area. We condemn the government's failure to respond to the Executive's case and the social need that lies behind it. We will work to ensure full realisation of the policy options contained in "The Way Ahead".

## **WOMEN:**

Our society fundamentally discriminates against women: bias is structural, ingrained and endemic. Women are under represented at almost every level, particularly in government, business, politics and the professions. The law fails to afford proper protection for women at work and in the home and to provide for women's safety in particular.

The SDLP is committed to a society where men and women are treated fairly, which affords real equality of opportunity and which promotes the interests and needs of women.

Our commitment is spelled out in our policy documents which deal with a wide range of issues including:- affirmative action in the whole field of sex discrimination and equal pay,

childcare facilities, sexual assault, the rights of part time women workers and care for children, the elderly and disabled.

We also wish to encourage more women to become involved in public life in general and in politics in particular. The SDLP's record is the best of all the major parties in this respect and is proud of the fact that it was the first party on this island to elect a woman as its Chair.

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## **SENIOR CITIZENS:**

The SDLP is committed to proper standards of health care for the elderly and is worried at the impact of the NHS reforms in this regard. We will continue to campaign for proper resources for pensions (see Social Security Proposals) and improved provision for the elderly in general. SDLP MPs have been pressing for the introduction of free television licences and travel passes which are provided in the South and will continue to do so.

We will renew our call for an annual "thermal allowance" for pensioners to assist with the costs of keeping warm in a manner which the current system of cold weather payments cannot do.

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## **DISABILITY:**

The SDLP believes that the disabled should be afforded every opportunity to participate in society and public life. Disability rights should be defended and extended. The SDLP will campaign for the introduction of a new comprehensive disability benefit which provides an allowance according to the level of disability for those who can work and for a disability pension for those unable to.

We will continue to advocate that all of the Disabled Persons Act be brought in to effect, and not just those sections which are calculated to be low cost. We will campaign for increased facilities and allocation of resources for training for disabled people.

We are committed to promoting the needs and interests of disabled people.

We believe that people with disabilities deserve the protection of anti-discrimination legislation. Hortatory measures have achieved as much as they can and this is obviously inadequate. We therefore favour legislation which would make it illegal to discriminate against a person on grounds related to disability in employment, commercial services or public services.

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## **YOUNG PEOPLE:**

The future of this country lies with its young people and society must invest in and promote youth.

The SDLP advocates properly resourced education and training for the young, adequate financial support for them in training or higher education. We would institute programmes aimed at stemming the "brain drain". We oppose student loans and the attacks on student entitlement to benefit.

Traineeships must be based on real qualifications, unlike the present situation where a high proportion of trainees in schemes are left with no qualifications at all. Public money should be invested only in programmes which will lead to proper qualifications, not in schemes which allow trainees to be taken on for the benefit of employers who do not ensure supervised training according to the agreed needs of each individual.

Training for 16 to 19 year olds must be placed within a proper framework, one which enjoys equality of status and esteem from the authorities, and which will make it easier for a closer integration of education and training in those years. In so far as it is possible to achieve, training and academical courses up to 18 years should be compatible so that credits obtained within one area may be used in the other.

The SDLP has tried to highlight the "black hole" in terms of financial support into which many young people in further education fall. We believe that without guaranteed financial support young people do not have a real choice to continue in further education. The SDLP can certainly claim some success to date securing an overdue review of Education Maintenance Allowances and the introduction of Access Funds. However these and the Discretionary Awards systems are still inadequate and inequitable. We believe that young people staying on at school or entering a further education college should have an education allowance similar to the Training Allowance which would be available to them.

Health education for young people must be properly resourced and managed. The SDLP supports the provision of accessible sex education and advice services for the young, under medical supervision.

Children's rights must be strengthened and we look forward to the introduction of the Children (NI) Order. We advocate the incorporation into domestic law of much of the UN Convention on Human Rights.

We encourage young people to become involved in democratic politics and are heartened by their support for the SDLP.



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## **PUBLIC SERVICES:**

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We believe that efficient and effective public services are essential to our well being and development as a community. While we recognise that the market is an efficient distributor of many private goods, we also recognise that it is inefficient, uneconomic and inequitable as a means of providing 'public goods' eg. education, health, social services, social and economic utilities etc. Public services offer the best prospect for long term planning and development, for proper investment and cost effectiveness and for optimum co-ordination and integration of services as new needs are identified.

We are conscious that today's citizen wants - and is entitled and right to do so - reliable standards and accountability from those services of whom the citizen is both customer and shareholder. We also appreciate that most staff in public services want to improve and develop those services and would value the opportunity to do so.

As the Party which advocated the establishment of the Housing Executive we are in principle in favour of providing services through agencies as distinct from departments. We will however, oppose any attempt to establish an agency as a prelude to privatisation. We believe that agencies must be properly resourced, given scope to research and develop new services and standards and should have a role in identifying programme needs and in policy evaluation.

We recognise that there is much to be gained from developing voluntary sector - public serviced partnerships. The voluntary sector plays an important role in highlighting new policy needs and initiating new service provision models. The public service must support these and adopt themselves as appropriate. However we are concerned that government policy trends are passing off too many elements of public service provision to the voluntary sector.

The SDLP has argued against the Tory policy of undermining and fragmenting public services. In particular we have denounced their abuse of the concept of "choice". We are clear that communities want, and must have, the right to make certain common choices about services and standards instead of being denied these in the name of individual choice. We understand that people want confidence in services before they want dubious choices. Patient confidence in health care services or parental confidence in education provision are fundamental requirements. Without such confidence "choice" can only be a dilemma or a gamble.

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## **FISCAL POLICY:**

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We are concerned that moves from direct to indirect taxation are at the expense of those on lower incomes. Trends in British taxation and EC fiscal projections point to more indirect taxation generally. We support the use of indirect taxation as a tool in public health policy eg. on tobacco or alcohol. In our discussion paper "Red and Green" and our response to the British Government's Environment White Paper we pointed to the value of such fiscal measures as part of a comprehensive environment policy.

However any shift to more general indirect taxation should not proceed unless accompanied by relevant compensation measures for lower income groups. This also applies in the case of certain possible environmental taxes if these are not to add to fuel poverty for instance.

# GENERATING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The grave crisis in which the economy in Northern Ireland languishes is first and foremost a human tragedy. Statistics only serve to focus attention on the number of lives blighted by the denial of opportunities to work and on the loss of talent to the whole community experienced through unemployment and emigration. And the continuing violence and attacks on commercial property continue to hamper the attempts to generate economic development.

But the economy must be developed and regenerated, and, despite the very great obstacles which lie in the way, the SDLP has been at the forefront of new, innovative and successful initiatives aimed at producing investment and jobs.

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## **ECONOMY:**

The challenge in generating economic development has to be addressed through a number of initiatives, most notably by refocusing investment strategies, by developing more competitive approaches to marketing goods and services abroad and through enhanced training and educational services which will ensure a highly skilled and well educated work-force capable of contributing to economic development on a level equal to, if not better than the best anywhere else in the world.

Already the SDLP has been showing the way to a more locally focused and locally supported industrial investment strategy. The initiatives in which our three MPs have been engaged, attempting to attract inward investment to their areas, show every sign of being successful and point the way to what could be achieved on a wider scale. With support from central agencies like the IDB and LEDU the SDLP MPs have shown how local pride, local commitment and local contacts can all be harnessed to target industries and investors abroad and convince them to invest and locate in Northern Ireland.

The same local initiatives can be exploited to develop and enhance the export market which, in the years immediately ahead, will become more and more competitive. For far too long exports have concentrated on markets near to home and opportunities for sales to be achieved in wider world markets have been ignored. The SDLP believes that local initiatives have a role to play here too.

Exports markets in the future will include greater opportunities for the sale of services abroad. Already this is emerging as a significant sector, but it must be one which requires careful and skilful development. Special teams needs to be established to promote the sale of services abroad, especially in the developing world and in the emerging states of eastern Europe.

This refocusing of investment and marketing strategies will not eliminate the need for a central agency to support and co-ordinate initiatives. It does, however, lend weight to the argument for a single agency and the SDLP, therefore, supports the speedy amalgamation of the IDB with LEDU in order to maximise the new drive for economic development.

There is considerable scope for Cross Border co-operation in the whole sphere of economic development, whether in promoting local investment through joint initiatives in industry, in agriculture, in tourism or in the sale of specialist services abroad. The SDLP will continue to urge that the Anglo-Irish Ministerial Conference become the agency through which such initiatives are encouraged. We will work to secure the adoption of the many practical proposals which we submitted to the two governments in our 1990 paper 'Proposals for Cross-Border Economic Co-operation'.

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## **RURAL DEVELOPMENT:**

The development of a dynamic Rural Development Programme is central to the struggle for economic advance in Northern Ireland, and we in the SDLP have been arguing this point since the late seventies. 1984 John Hume proposed, in the European Parliament, that there should be an Integrated Rural Development Programme for Northern Ireland. Simultaneously the SDLP published in booklet form our view as to the essential ingredients of such a programme. The European Parliament appointed T. J. Maher to draw up a report on the Hume proposal, and his report was subsequently adopted almost unanimously by the European Parliament. The Maher Report led down the essential elements of a Rural Development Programme, and the SDLP, in successive Annual Conferences, has been demanding that government respond to the Maher Report.

The government has now, at last, responded by introducing its Rural Development Initiative. We welcome the setting up of the Rural Development Council, and the associated measures which are part of that initiative. Over the next few years we hope to see increasing resources invested in this initiative, in order to help rural communities survive, expand and develop their standard of living on a par with urban communities.

We have also been calling repeatedly for the introduction of a scheme of assistance for small farmers, to provide replacement farm dwellings in areas like those West of the Bann, where the degree of housing unfitness is at critical level. We therefore welcome the introduction of the Replacement Grant.

There is also a surprising number of remote rural areas in the North, where large number of households are without mains water or electricity. There is a clear need for a vigorous programme to complete rural electrification and water supply.

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## **TOURISM:**

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One of Ireland's greatest assets is its scenery. combined with the legendary friendliness and warmth of its people, North and South, this asset should make this country one of the world's foremost tourist attractions. The SDLP advocates the initiation, by both governments as well as the Tourist Board and Bord Fáilte of a vigorous campaign to promote tourism, involving more imaginative marketing and increased facilities. Partnership in this area between the EC, the International Fund, government and local authorities could and should lead to tourism becoming an important facet of economic regeneration.

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## **AGRICULTURE:**

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Reform of the CAP is now absolutely inevitable. During the last year intervention stocks built up again to unacceptable levels, and it is clear that stern measures are needed to restore balance. No one wants to see a return to the situation where a huge proportion of the Community's spending on agriculture was going to cover the cost of storage. The SDLP is also conscious of the environmental input of intensive farming methods and is sensitive to the developing world's concerns about the impact on them of certain EC surpluses.

At the same time pressure on the Community has been growing within the GATT framework. The European Community must live in a world environment and must trade to live. The bulk of the Community's trade is in manufactured goods and services. Therefore it must take account of the views and interests of its trading partners if it is to survive. And it is clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that the other major trading blocs in the world will not accept forever a situation where EC over-production stimulated by price supports, continues to grow and to cause distortion of international markets.

If agreement is not reached there will be a trade war, and everyone will suffer in the European Community.

If over-production is to be curbed, then we have to ask how and where it is being caused, and direct corrective measures at those factors responsible. The traditional CAP mechanism of price support, rising in proportion to the quantity produced, has to be changed, because it is a clear stimulus to ever greater production.

Now if change must come the burden of that change

must be largely borne by those best able to carry it. Change must be brought about in such a way as to protect the interests of the weaker and smaller farmers, who have precious little margin of profit. The changes must not lead to a rush from the land to the destruction of traditional rural communities.

The reform proposal put forward by Commissioner McSharry, largely meet these criteria. The restrictions and the cut-backs currently being proposed by Commissioner McSharry would affect only a minority of our farmers. And the whole thrust of support arrangements would over a period be directed towards the development of the non-food sector of the rural economy.

The vast majority of our sheep and beef producers would not be adversely affected by the proposed changes. More than half of our dairy farmers would suffer no reduction of quota, and would be compensated for price reductions. The great majority of our cereal producers would qualify for the first tier of support as well, and would therefore not be seriously affected. However, the reduction in the price of grain would have a beneficial effect upon the intensive sector who have come through lean times in the last twenty years. And LFA farmers would benefit generally from proposed higher permitted stocking densities.

In all the circumstances, a package of reforms which would leave unaffected the great majority of our farmers and which would affect only those best able to bear the burden is just about the best outcome we are likely to get, if we are to be realistic. We have everything to gain from a new direction in the CAP towards the support of the rural economy - particularly in less favoured regions.

# ADVOCATING HUMAN RIGHTS

Central to the SDLP's work in the last twenty two years has been its determined advocacy of human rights. People have a right to live, free from discrimination and injustice; in peace and with dignity. The SDLP's record in this respect is a proud one. We have consistently offered an alternative to paramilitaries; and we have advocated dialogue and negotiation as a means to end all violence and injustice. Similarly we have defended the rights of individuals, groups and communities when they were attacked by government. The SDLP's approach in this field is governed by the same principle as in everything else: people matter. Our campaign is for equality, freedom and peace. Our stand is against injustice, oppression and fear - from whatever source they emanate.

## **JUSTICE:**

At the heart of the conflict in Northern Ireland is the concept of justice. A concept that has been grossly distorted by government and blatantly ignored by all the paramilitary organisations. The SDLP's fundamental and unshaken declaration is that neither violence nor repression will solve our conflict. Only through the painstaking, meticulous political process will we find a lasting, just resolution of all of our problems. By consistent and comprehensive opposition to all forms of repression and injustice the SDLP will continue to draw attention at local, national and international level to the systematic erosion of human rights by governments and to the continuing breaches of every internationally accepted principal of civil liberties, by the paramilitaries.

We are committed to a system of justice governed by the rule of law and hallmarked by equity and fairness. The current justice system falls very short of that standard.

The basis of order and justice in every society is agreement on how it is governed. Where that agreement is absent there will always be problems in the field of order and justice. That has been demonstrated clearly in Northern Ireland, throughout its existence and continues to be demonstrated. It should never be forgotten that problems relating to security, justice and order are symptoms of the deeper problem. However while we concentrate as a political party on efforts to solve the deeper problems we must at all times ensure that international human rights standards are observed in the law and its application.

SDLP's policy documents on a wide range of human rights and justice matters have underlined our concern in those areas. The areas are well known to the public: the EPA and PTA, Emergency Powers, Diplock Courts, inquests, lethal force, holding centres, indeterminate sentences, internment, plastic

bullets, right to silence, broadcasting ban. The Party has also expressed its concern at the proposed changes in the legal aid system.

One area of particular concern is the persistently high level of harassment by the police and army particularly against young people in certain areas.

Our MPs, councillors and public representatives deal, on a daily basis, with the problems and consequences, created unnecessarily by members of the RUC and British Army. We demand an end to this harassment and call for a new truly independent effective complaints system.

The most fundamental right of all is the right to life. There is not a single injustice in Northern Ireland that justifies the taking of a human life. Paramilitary organisations who have killed 90% of all those who have lost their lives consistently breach international human rights standards. We welcome the fact that international human rights organisations are now investigating the major human rights infringements of paramilitary organisations.

The greatest contribution to civil and human rights in Northern Ireland would be an end to the paramilitary campaign. It would result in the removal of all troops and armed police from our streets and the ending of all the emergency legislation about which there has been so much complaint.

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood".

Article One, Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Events in recent months have confirmed that the world is becoming a global village: our neighbours live in Soweto, San Salvador and Phnom Penh as well as in Derry, Cookstown and on the Shankill and the Falls. The SDLP has been particularly successful at establishing and developing international links, aimed at building a better Ireland and building a better world. We join with our friends in the United States, in Europe and in Africa in campaigning for a world where difference is cherished and dignity recognised.

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## EUROPE:

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We have always recognised that the nation state is no longer a sufficient political entity to democratically confront the economic, technological, social and environmental issues which confront us in the modern world. We have always argued for growing co-operation and co-ordination between the countries of Europe to protect the common good of all Europe's people in a new unity.

We welcome the conversion of so many of the SDLP's erstwhile critics on Europe.

Our commitment to Europe is not passive but positive. We believe that European institutions and policy programmes offer vital opportunities in dealing with structural economic difficulties, human rights, pressures on social protection and common environmental challenges. Through our participation in the Socialist Group we have been to the fore in working for a Europe which is a community in the fullest sense rather simply a market.

The course set by the Maastricht Agreement is irreversible. Europe is now inexorably bound in the direction of political and economic union; there is no going back. We are committed to making up the gaps in Maastricht created by the British government's opposition to the European social dimension.

We were among the first proponents of the Social Charter and remain committed to the legal establishment of such standards through the European framework. This would provide the basis for protecting and promoting the rights of workers to adequate and fair earnings, proper and safe working environments and to democratically organise and represent themselves. It would enhance the position of working parents, particularly mothers. We will continue to work for the adoption of these provisions.

Economic and social integration on this scale must lead to the development of integrated political institutions in order to realise democratic control. It is the view of the SDLP that the central institutions of the European Community, especially the European Parliament, must be given ever greater powers to exert democratic control over the developing economic giant which is the European Community.

We in the SDLP have always believed in the "Europe of the Regions". We must seek to ensure that in the New Europe, the regions have a powerful role to play and therefore we also welcome the Maastricht Agreement decision to set up a Committee of the Regions. We in Northern Ireland must seek to play the fullest part in the growing regional dimension of European Affairs, and to forge the natural alliances with other deprived regions of Europe which will give us increased power and influence at the Centre.

We have been warning against an Eurocentric view of the world and have stressed to our socialist colleagues that pre-occupation with the Single Market and the transformation of eastern Europe must not distract us from the challenge to the new Europe of world co-operation and development.

We are happy to see progress towards democracy in the former Eastern bloc and look forward to welcoming many of those new countries into the EC. We are concerned, however, about the conflict, poverty and deprivation which abound in many areas. We support the involvement of the EC and the UN in trying to resolve these ethnic and national conflicts.

We welcome the development of the CSCE process which can provide a valuable framework for the development of a common European home and for affirming human rights. As we first pointed out many years ago such a framework can provide the best context for peace as it gives reality to the concept that it is better to find security with each other than against each other.

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## ENVIRONMENT:

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Like our sister parties in Europe we want a cleaner, greener planet. The sheer size of recent environmental catastrophes and the growing awareness of the danger of environmental abuse are good illustrations of the "global village" principle. Oilspills, nuclear fall-outs and noxious effluent recognise no borders; it is clear that action to confront environmental danger is only possible if done through international co-operation. The SDLP's analysis of the problems is that they result not just from environmentally unsound economic policies and practices in the developed world but also are rooted in the poverty of the third world and inequitable

development, trade and debt policies. We therefore believe that a revision of the international economic order is necessary for the protection of the global environment. In particular we:

- support a strong European Environmental Protection Agency.
  - demand a stronger role and greater resources for UNEP and other environmental initiatives.
  - support the promotion of aid, trade and development policies which are both environmentally sensitive and economically just.
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- demand the implementation of the "polluter pays" principle.
  - advocate the introduction of increased incentives to encourage the recycling of waste, the use of waste for energy production and the reduction of the use of non-recyclable materials.
  - support stricter international control of dangerous substances.
  - remain resolutely opposed to nuclear power and especially the Sellafield nuclear plant and its discharges into the Irish Sea. We remain in favour of its closure.

We believe that absolute priorities are the search for alternative cheap energy from renewable sources, the dismantling of all nuclear installations and the effective outlawing of the production of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

We will continue to press for a radical overhaul of our waste management processes and structures. We have previously submitted proposals for government led and funded initiatives as well as cross-border projects which would allow for proper co-ordination, investment and economies of scale in waste conversion and recycling processes.

The Tory government's rejection of an Environmental Protection Agency for Northern Ireland is deplored by the SDLP. We will continue to press for the establishment of such an agency with sufficient resources and powers. We have also proposed cross-border waterway commissions which would discharge EPA functions.

In our 1989 discussion paper 'Red and Green' and our 1990 Response to the Government's White Paper we outlined the depth of our understanding of the "Polluter Pays" principle. We believe that it means more than enforcing penalties against polluting industry or public utilities. We recognise that in our

market system the end-consumer is also the end-polluter and believe that fiscal measures such as environmental taxes on particular goods or processes are necessary. We will also continue to argue for subsidies and investment incentives as well as fiscal preference to promote the production and marketing of environment friendly goods.

We recognise that the ongoing degradation of our environment is a function of our economic behaviour. We are committed to measures, including regulation, market intervention and redirecting market forces, which would yield environmentally responsible economic activity.

Our 1990 discussion paper on a Bill of Rights identified the possibility of establishing environmental rights. We believe that the way forward lies in expanding the concept of civil liability to cover environmental harm or damages and affording standing to a wider range of plaintiffs than those who can show injury to their own economic or property interest. This radical step would bring development of environmental rights and a new body of environmental law. It would also serve to underpin the work of relevant statutory bodies or agencies and stimulate high standards of effectiveness by providing a "shadow" power for citizens. We aim to see the process of 'cumulative causation' which is sacrificing the environment replaced with a process of 'cumulative conservation'.

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## **WORLD DEVELOPMENT:**

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We will continue to try to win greater political priority here for the needs and rights of the developing world. We will continue to advocate that European governments - including Britain and Ireland - commit at least 1% of GNP to development aid. Having long advocated debt-cancellation, we welcome those steps which have taken place but believe that more radical action is needed. As a variation of debt cancellation in certain instances we have suggested credit-cancellation (whereby debts owed would be paid to a development fund for investment in less developed countries rather than paid to banks or western governments).

Our MPs have been involved in pressing the World Bank to alter its policies to specifically target poverty. We will continue to press for fairer trade relations with developing countries - including improvements to Lomé provisions. We have supported the WDM's proposals on debt, environment and development.

The SDLP recognise that the poverty, disease, malnutrition, illiteracy and underdevelopment which oppress so many of the world's people have their roots in an unjust international economic order, unequal power relationships and the absence of a realistic development co-operation framework.

## **INTERNATIONAL POLICY:**

In common with our socialist partners in Europe the SDLP advocates a world which is just, peaceful and free from poverty and fear. We are opposed to nuclear arms and firmly believe that social justice and peace - at home or abroad - are achieved not by weapons and armies, but by political representation, negotiation and a sharing of resources.

We have always been committed to the struggle for democracy and freedom in South Africa and Latin America. We welcome recent moves towards the establishment of a democratic South Africa, and believes that sanctions should only be lifted when this is recommended by those negotiating on behalf of the majority. We wish CODESA, and such transitional or interim arrangements which it establishes, well. We recognise that transition to democracy in South Africa has significance for the whole Southern Africa region where there is a growing movement towards multi-party democracy. We hope that a more democratic Africa will be in a stronger position to challenge the undemocratic nature of international institutions.

We look forward to a time when there is genuine democracy and freedom throughout Latin America and have supported peace initiatives such as the Arias plan in Central America. We are particularly proud of the role that Irish people have played in highlighting the concerns of the people of Chile, Nicaragua and El Salvador.

We note the UN Peace Plan in Cambodia and the prospect of UN administered elections. We continually lobbied the British Government and the EC on Cambodia's representation at the UN and the denial of aid to that country. Accordingly we cannot hide our reservations about the continuing role of the Khmer Rouge.

We are happy to see progress towards democracy in the former Eastern bloc and look forward to welcoming many of those new countries into the EC. We are concerned, however, about the conflict, poverty and deprivation which abound in many areas. We support the involvement of the EC and the UN in trying to resolve these ethnic and national conflicts.