



General Election, November 1992

**A Programme
for Change
and Progress**

DEMOCRATIC
left

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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INTRODUCTION

The collapse of the Fianna Fail/Progressive Democrat coalition brought an end to a government of failure. A government which added over 70,000 people to the dole queues. A government which lacked either the vision or the courage to tackle our social and economic problems.

Democratic Left is Ireland's newest political party. A party which combines radical politics with democratic action. A thorn in the side of a smug political establishment. A beacon of hope for the future.

Democratic Left works with people in communities all over Ireland. We understand their problems and share their hopes and aspirations.

In raising the problems of the people we caused problems for the establishment. They didn't like it. Too bad. Because we'll be back in the next Dail talking about the real issues that concern people. Issues like jobs, housing, social welfare cuts, health, education and the environment.

And we will continue to set the agenda for change. We stand for an open, tolerant society, based on the equality of all citizens. For peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. For a united, democratic Europe. For a world free of wars and a Third World free of famine.

After the election we will not be scrambling for cabinet seats. Our priorities are houses for the homeless, jobs for the unemployed, a just system of social welfare, a fair deal for PAYE workers and a better education for all our children.

JOBS

As a small, open economy, Ireland is subject to international developments - the fall in sterling, the US recession, uncertainty in the European money markets, low levels of world trade. However, this does not mean that we are helpless in the face of increasing levels of unemployment. It simply dictates the type of strategies and instruments which we use to reduce unemployment and poverty. While we must seek co-operation at the EC and international level to combat common obstacles to full employment, we must begin the work here and not wait for outside agencies to bail us out.

Ending unemployment is primarily about creating viable new jobs. The changes which are needed in order to get Irish society back to work can be brought about if two vital ingredients can be combined : political will and people's involvement. This in turn requires the abandonment of the failed ideology of Thatcherism and the adoption of an active role by the state in job creation. It further requires the introduction of real industrial democracy whereby people's collective intelligence can be harnessed and developed through new and better forms of work organisation, full disclosure of financial and corporate information, and extensive consultation and participation in decision-making.

Any serious consideration of job creation must also extend to consideration of the kind of tax and social welfare reform suggested elsewhere by us. It must look at personal taxation and income support, as well as company taxation, grants, subsidies and other incentives.

Our objective is to harness market forces on behalf of ordinary people - workers and consumers - and use them for the greater good of society. This also requires social ownership, in various forms, of many of society's resources, as an alternative to the concentration of wealth, power and privilege in the hands of a small elite.

Our jobs programme can be summarised as follows :

Reinvestment : Profits made in Ireland must be reinvested in Ireland. The aim is to increase investment in job creation.

Major Projects : Extensive urban renewal is urgently needed. So too are rapid rail, house building, major construction projects to create new facilities for our citizens, and increases in tourism and related services.

EC Industrial Policy : An effective EC industrial policy which decentralises investment, industry and services is vital. It must protect the peripheral regions and locate economic activity where people are available for work.

New Ways of Working : Irish companies must be democratised to give workers and consumers greater influence. There must be new ways of working, greater accountability and increased responsibility for everyone at work.

Local Industry : State resources must be focused on indigenous industry. We need companies which will form a strong industrial base with maximum local involvement and commitment to developing the Irish economy.

Public Sector : Revitalisation of public sector companies is required and an end to privatisation and restrictions on investment. Appropriate support must be given to all employment initiatives, public and private, and corrupt business practices must be rooted out.

Community Jobs Programme : In the short term, Democratic Left proposes a Community Jobs Programme, to be operated through local 'Partnership Schemes' under the PESP. Such schemes already have built-in trade union, employer and community participation.

The Community Jobs Programme would

- create 50,000 jobs, 25,000 full-time and 25,000 part-time. These jobs would last from three to five years and would be confined to the public and voluntary sectors.
- involve a strong training and education element, including both on and off the job training.
- give priority to job creation which has long-term economic development potential, which seeks to establish new services or improve existing services. Jobs would not be established in competition with other services, or be used to undermine existing or future employment in the public and voluntary sectors.
- ensure that employees would be full workers in every respect : holiday pay, disability benefit, protective labour legislation, pay income tax and PRSI contributions etc
- operate at a net cost of approximately £50 million after social welfare savings, tax revenues and EC subsidies are taken into account. This expenditure would be financed by the re-introduction of a strengthened Wealth Tax.

Aer Lingus : Many of the leading figures in Democratic Left are among those who in the 1970's were largely responsible for developing the policy of promoting state enterprise as the engine of economic growth in Ireland.

During the decade of Reagan/Thatcher, that view became rather unfashionable, but as the chickens come home to roost on the failed policies of those years it is time to review the role of the state sector. *Aer Lingus*, long regarded as the jewel in the public sector crown, it is probably the most successful and valuable Irish company, bar none, when account is taken of its social as well as economic contribution to the state. Nowhere is this remarkable contribution to the Irish economy better catalogued than in "The Plane Truth", an *Aer Lingus* staff publication.

Now that the very survival of *Aer Lingus* is under threat as a result of the prolonged recession, which has severely affected almost all international airlines, it is entitled to our full support. Democratic Left supports the demand that the state as sole shareholder should provide a capital injection to reduce the company's appalling debt/equity ratio and its annual interest bill currently running at £58 million.

It is obvious that in the new deregulated state of European aviation *Aer Lingus* needs to make an alliance with one or more airlines to ensure that they are not completely squeezed out by the mega-carriers. However, reducing their debt is a prerequisite to entering meaningful negotiations and procuring the sort of agreement that would ensure its development and expansion. The national interest demands that we do no less.

Agriculture and Rural Development : The recent reform of the Common Agricultural Policy has created some problems for Irish agriculture but it has also created new opportunities. We believe that the emphasis must now be placed on diversification in agricultural production with crops being developed in response to identified market needs, e.g. quality vegetables, organic food production, industrial crops for the food processing industry, increased afforestation in areas of poor agricultural land and an intensification of horticultural production.

Farm based production must also be supported by more rural development activity to integrate social tourism, wild life management, environmental protection and related activities which help the rural economy. Democratic Left wants to see a major expansion of the EC LEADER programme to stimulate a whole range of integrated rural development schemes.

TAX AND SOCIAL WELFARE

The tax and social welfare systems must be radically reformed. They must be harmonised with each other. At present they often operate at cross purposes, creating poverty and unemployment traps. They must also be made to serve our priority objectives of job creation and income equity. At present, they don't always do so.

This means three things :

- everyone should be in the tax system and should pay tax on all income, whatever its source, once it exceeds a certain amount.
- the social welfare system must ensure that all individuals have an adequate personal income, whatever their sex, marital, occupational, family or other status.
- the tax thresholds must coincide, broadly, with the minimum income levels and PRSI must not upset the balance.

An Integrated System : Integrating tax and social welfare so as to provide minimum incomes and remove poverty traps would indicate a real social commitment to ending poverty, to sharing wealth and to removing the biggest barrier to women's equality - the absence of financial independence. It could also contribute, in a small way, to job creation.

A system which guarantees minimum incomes would do more than just liberate unemployed people from the present perverse requirement that they must not work - an important objective in itself. By providing all citizens with a basic level of financial security it could also act as a launching pad for new economic activity and non-traditional ventures, encouraging individual creative activity.

Recent social welfare changes have moved the system in completely the wrong direction - away from comprehensive income support at adequate levels, towards more and more means-testing and reductions in benefit levels. This year alone, Fianna Fail minister Charlie McCreevy has cut maternity benefits for the lowest paid women workers and stopped it for others; reduced injury benefit from £65 to £53 per week; started means-testing deserted wives; scrapped pay-related benefit for people who are sick; abolished the 'alleviation payments' for men instead of extending them to women as recommended by the European Court of Justice, and discouraged the unemployed from taking up any casual work that might be available (by reducing their dole even for days not worked).

What is this victimisation supposed to achieve ? A greater incentive to work - despite the lack of jobs ? A greater incentive to emigrate ? Or descent into ever greater despair ? It certainly will not save money.

Long Range Accounting : Democratic Left has major criticisms of the present national accounting methods. They should be reviewed, restructured and required to take into account the full, true cost of unemployment and poverty in our society. Social welfare expenditure, for example, must be examined in the context of the health, housing, policing, education and other costs which are affected by high unemployment and prolonged poverty. Keeping people in poverty, in order to keep the social welfare budget down, isn't necessarily going to keep budgets down in other government departments, certainly not in the long run.

All the recent cuts in social welfare should be reversed and other planned changes (such as giving part-time workers lower benefits than other insured workers, or taxing certain payments) should be reviewed carefully and perhaps halted.

Fair Tax Increases : If every citizen is to enjoy an adequate income, more wealth must be created and more taxation raised. If all incomes, and all forms of income, were brought into the tax net, fairly large amounts could be raised. Corporate bodies should also have to pay more : we believe they should be required

tax at a minimum rate of 10% - most pay far less. There should be no question of reducing employers' PRSI, which is often the only contribution made by certain companies towards the Irish Exchequer and the social protection of workers in Ireland, unless and until an adequate contribution is made through another mechanism. An Energy Tax, geared to encouraging conservation and creating extra jobs, could also help raise additional monies while achieving desirable social and environmental objectives.

Future governments face a challenge to change popular perceptions of both the tax and social welfare systems as simply punitive burdens, respectively, on the rich and on the poor. The only way of doing this will be to demonstrate that taxpayers' money is being used efficiently and effectively for a combination of economic and social purposes with which they can positively identify.

WOMEN

Equality for women is a priority for Democratic Left. Equality issues are at the heart of how our society is structured and must be a prime concern of any party committed to change and progress.

We propose

Department for Women : A portfolio with full Cabinet status and a realistic budget should be established to monitor and encourage progress towards equality.

Charter of Equality Rights : A clear statement of women's rights should be incorporated into the Constitution to redress the present situation in which women are not recognised as equal and independent citizens. All legislation would then be supported constitutionally.

Employment Strategies : An analysis of the phenomenal rise in women's unemployment over recent years is needed to underpin an employment action plan which would include the removal of existing discriminations against women. Economic independence is fundamental to equality and can only be achieved with the tax and welfare reforms which will ensure a minimum income, and genuinely equal opportunity in the workplace.

Legal Reforms : Existing equality legislation must be strengthened and extended to areas such as access to goods and services, sporting and other facilities and training and apprenticeships.

Family Law Reform : We support the right to divorce, protection against domestic violence and full equality of access to the law.

Education : Adult and continuing education for women must have the funding and support services to allow women to avail of opportunities.

Health : Cost cutting in services very often hits women first. We need to put special measures in place to ensure that women receive the health care they need, including the restoration of full maternity benefits.

ENVIRONMENT

The world is facing an ecological crisis. The developed world has abused the earth's resources; poverty and debt is forcing the underdeveloped countries to destroy resources which are essential to the planet's survival and to its ecological balance. The destruction of rain forests, global warming, ozone depletion and desertification are all manifestations of a crisis which threatens the future of the globe. We all have a part to play in averting it.

Protecting the environment and repairing the damage already done requires balancing the need to use the earth's resources for survival and our obligation to conserve and renew those resources for future generations; balancing the distribution of wealth between rich and poor, between the developed world and the developing countries; balancing the social environment and the physical environment.

People are part of the environment and their needs to survive, to have work, to have dignity, to have a home cannot be separated from the need to protect the environment.

National Policy : We insist that this country adopts a responsible international position on the environment. We should be leading the drive to save the world, not trailing behind. We must address our own environment, putting emphasis on preventing pollution rather than just controlling it; adopting a national waste management plan instead of ad hoc measures, and developing our economy on the basis of clean technology.

Devolution of Power : We want to restore people's power over their own environment on the principle of subsidiarity. Local government must be strengthened and reformed so that local communities can exert real control over their own areas.

Nuclear Waste : Sellafield must be phased out. No further expansion, especially for nuclear fuel reprocessing of international nuclear waste, must be allowed. An all party agreement on implementation of this objective will be a priority for Democratic Left.

Waste and Recycling : An objective for the 90s must be an end to all waste and sewage dumping in our watercourses and seas. All waste must be recycled and put to good use. Our waters - a vitally precious asset - must be protected.

HOUSING

Every person is entitled to a roof over their head. Good quality, suitable, affordable housing for its citizens must be a primary social objective of modern government.

Public Housing: An expanded local authority Community Housing Initiative must aim to reduce the housing list significantly each year and eliminate it completely by 1997. The target must be at least 35,000 dwellings per year with a wide range of construction forms and tenure options.

Housing Maintenance Policy: A programme must be set up to provide the technical and financial framework for the repair and maintenance of all housing sectors. An emergency programme is needed to meet the accommodation needs of elderly people and people with disabilities. This must provide a broad range of community, sheltered and full care facilities, warden-managed and connected by audiolink to the housing management section of each local authority.

Mobility in public sector housing is far too restrictive. National, regional and EC-wide mobility and exchange schemes should be developed.

Private Housing: Full defects protection legislation is needed for both owner-occupiers and tenant purchasers against longer-term design and construction defects on behalf of the developer and local authority. There must be legislation to ensure that house and flat construction is of the highest standard and that it complies with international standards with regard to materials and safety.

Mortgages: The currency situation and associated sharp rise in interest rates has created a crisis for many homeowners whose monthly mortgage repayments have rocketed, creating a fear of losing their homes.

As an emergency measure, there should be a restoration of full tax relief for mortgage interest payments. For those who lose their jobs, these reliefs should be converted to a housing subsidy. Government intervention is needed to ensure that no homes are

lost through repossession during the current crisis. These exorbitant interest rates must be reduced anyway because otherwise they will cripple the entire economy. This can only be done through a concerted European strategy which brings down German interest rates and concentrates on promoting growth and employment.

Tenant Rights: A Charter of Tenants' Rights covering tenure, repair, space provision, sanitary services and fire safety in both the public and private rented sectors is a matter of urgency.

Refurbishment : A refurbishment programme for older housing stock, together with suitable in-fill schemes, should be set in motion and aided by appropriate fiscal policy to enable and encourage people to live in inner-city areas.

EDUCATION

Education is central to the democratisation of society. As the first political party to respond to the recent Green Paper, Democratic Left calls for a continuation of the process towards a legislative framework for education in Ireland by the next government and Dail.

While the Green Paper was welcome in some of its targets and educational aims, the lack of a resource commitment and the FF/PD government's failure to meet education commitments in the PESP indicates that a strong campaign for free, democratic and high quality education must be maintained.

Resourcing: Democratic Left supports :

- A plan to bring per-capita spending on education up to OECD average levels;
- The establishment of free education up to and including third level which requires planning now;
- An increase in capitation grants to primary and post-primary schools and the closing of disparities between funding at primary and other levels;

Failure to fund schools results in huge pressure both on parents and in areas to fundraise, thus reinforcing inequality. More than 25 million is now being spent by the state on elite fee-charging secondary schools which must be re-directed into public education.

Participation: Inequalities in participation, most marked in social class disparities in third level colleges must be tackled in Irish education.

We propose:

- A gradual expansion of pre-schooling, integrated with the primary schools (after some 20 years there is still only one state pre-school - Rutland St. Dublin.)

- Reduction of the compulsory schoolgoing age to 5 years, thus reflecting current practice and ensuring greater resourcing to the vital area of early childhood education;
- Reduction in class size to EC average levels within five years, starting with a maximum class size of 25 in infant classes.
- An inter-Departmental taskforce to tackle all aspects of 'disadvantage';
- A guarantee of quality for parents/pupils - effective schools must cater at a minimum for literacy/numeracy needs and remedial teaching should be available in all schools.
- Financial support for families with students at post-compulsory schooling and special programmes for early leavers. At present, a Youthreach group of 25 attracts £35,000 in public funding, money which might be better spent earlier as an investment against early leaving due to failure.
- Expansion of the grants system at 3rd level and costing of a 'student wage' concept;
- A statutory authority for adult education and education access schemes for adults without formal school qualifications;
- An end to the scandal of waiting lists for places in special education.

Democracy: The education system should be properly accountable and democratic. We propose

- State grants to schools to be linked to regulations on access and management.
- Democratic school boards with equal representation of interests
- School ownership be vested in the funding interests, in proportion to their investment;
- A stronger schools inspectorate;
- An intermediate structure, similar to the VECs to oversee education on a regional basis;

General

- Broadening of the range of competences which are assessed since schools tend to be guided by terminal assessment systems;

- A broad curriculum for the compulsory period not omitting the arts/humanities as well as scientific/technological education;
- An apprenticeship system which has sufficient educational content to ensure versatile, multiskilled workers;
- Entitlement to regular (obligatory) teacher in-service training.

HEALTH

Health care should be available to all and access to care should be based on need rather than ability to pay. Democratic Left recognises that social factors play a major role in determining the health of both individuals and the population as a whole. Health policy must, therefore, address these issues as well as purely medical issues.

We believe that the positive promotion of health is as important as caring for those who are ill. Democratic Left believes that health care should be based in the community and that general practice and other primary health care services should play a pivotal role in the provision of health care.

Access for All: There is clear evidence that poverty, unemployment and poor housing have an adverse effect on health and virtually all forms of ill-health are commoner in the unemployed and the poor. The current government has encouraged the development of private health care by subsidising the VHI through tax relief while making drastic cutbacks in the public health services. The GMS Scheme must be properly funded which, as the current dispute clearly indicates, it is not at present, and it should be extended to the whole population.

The current ratio of hospital consultants to junior doctors is too low and many public patients are being dealt with by inadequately supervised junior doctors. We believe that the number of consultants should be increased so that the system becomes a consultant-based service. Where waiting lists exist there should be no distinction between public and private patients and all should be on the same waiting list.

Community Base: The health services in Ireland are dominated by the hospital sector and there has been chronic underfunding of general practice and other primary care services. Democratic Left believes that resources should be redirected into general practice and other community services. General practice plays a pivotal "gate keeper" role in providing access to hospital services and, as well as improving quality of care, investment will be cost effective.

Investment in Prevention: Democratic Left recognises that the promotion of health is as important as the treatment of illness. We support the provision of comprehensive health education and appropriate screening and preventive services. However, the most important determinants of health are poverty and unemployment and determination to tackle these issues is vitally important for the future health of the country.

PERSONAL SECURITY, JUSTICE AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Policing : To provide protection from crime it is essential to have a police service which commands wide community support and respect, and which has the resources to carry out its duties effectively.

Accountability at local level is an important element which can be developed effectively, within the framework of existing Garda organisation, through local Garda Liaison Committees, democratically appointed and with a consultative role. There is a need also for a Garda Authority which would remove the Garda Síochána from immediate political influence.

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 Association for Victim Support should be supported financially to carry out its valuable work. The powers of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal should be fully restored to allow it to meet more adequately the needs of crime victims.

Civil Liberties : It is fundamental to our view of civil liberties that freedom of the individual shall be respected and supported. Those freedoms and rights should be based on a secular foundation, respecting private views of morality and ensuring a distinct separation of church and state in administrative matters.

Access to the Law : All citizens must have access to the law, regardless of their income. The scandalous financial neglect of the Civil Legal Aid scheme must be ended and guaranteed funding put in place for this fundamental of democratic society. The process of litigation must be simplified and rendered less costly. We welcome the introduction of a Small Claims Court and urge that it be extended at the earliest opportunity.

Law Reform : A criminal law reform division of the Law Reform Commission should be established. The Oireachtas should be required to address each report and set of recommendations from the Commission within six months of publication.

Reform of the Law on Homosexuality : Ireland is in breach of international human rights standards through its failure to decriminalise homosexual acts between consenting adults. The law in this regard must be amended without delay in order to end legal discrimination against gays. The government's prevarication on this issue, including their recent application for a further extension is shameful and damaging to Ireland's reputation abroad. Democratic Left will continue to pursue the government on this issue in the new Dail and also in the European Parliament where it has already raised the issue on several occasions.

Prison Reform : The Whitaker Report on prison reform is a humane and respected document, the full implementation of which would do a great deal to solve the deplorable situation in many prisons. A timetable for the implementation of its recommendations should be agreed as a matter of urgency by the incoming minister responsible.

Penal Policy : The use of non custodial penalties for non violent crime should be the first resort. Imprisonment for civil debt and inability to pay monetary fines should end.

THE ELDERLY

The elderly share many needs in common but they are not a one-dimensional mass of people. Democratic Left commits itself to an ongoing dialogue with the representative organisations established by the elderly themselves, e.g. The Irish Association of Older People, Active Age groups, Federation of Retired People. We must ensure that our older people do not become mere clients of the political process but shapers of that process. In order to achieve this certain policies must be put into action.

Homes and Housing: To ensure that, to the greatest extent possible and for as long as possible, older people should be able to live in their own homes in comfort, dignity and safety. This will require resources for renovations and adaptations, a better home help service and aid to community activity. The standards and costs of nursing homes must be rigorously maintained at the best achievable target, by the state, for those who cannot remain at home.

Health Care : Chiropody services, dental services, optical and ophthalmic services must be geared to the special needs of the elderly and funded and made accessible accordingly.

Transport : All public transport must be accessible to the elderly and discriminatory exclusions must be abolished .

Income: Pensions for elderly must be increased to realistic values and maintained in purchasing power.

Voluntary and Community Groups: There must be greater state support for befriending and companion services for the elderly, particularly in isolated situations in both rural and city areas.

Democratic Left is pledged to seek the implementation of the recommendations contained in the definitive document 'The Years Ahead'- the report of the task force on services for the elderly.

CULTURE AND THE ARTS

The purpose of a cultural policy is to produce conditions which encourage genuine self expression by the people of a society and offer democratic access to a shared culture to all. It is not to dictate the content of cultural life or the guidelines for creative and artistic work. The arts have a crucial and critical role to play in giving society a sense of itself, but that sense must be informed by visions of reality, freely expressed. Thus, though the funding of the arts is the responsibility of the state, there is no place in democratic society for "state art".

Broadcasting Of all the cultural outlets, broadcasting has perhaps most impact on our lives. Notwithstanding the advent of commercial radio stations, RTE continues to play a unique role providing necessary but unprofitable services of quality, catering for minorities while serving the community as a whole. RTE has the right to attract advertising without curbs, to keep licence fees low, and to plan appropriately.

Film Despite some spectacular international successes, the Irish film industry has been badly neglected. It is clearly time to re establish the Film Board, create a tax-based incentive scheme with monitoring controls, and invest in the supportive infrastructure, including training, and the other necessary facilities. The object is not to create an 'Irish Hollywood' but to facilitate the cinematic expression of the Irish experience in a way which informs and entertains.

Literature Our literary heritage has been undermined by multinational publishing control, inadequate library funding and a growing problem of illiteracy due to educational neglect. Policy should take account of the class character of contemporary society, and be encouraged by democratically controlled state bodies.

Performing Arts A National Performing Arts Authority should be set up to develop theatre policy generally, to supervise funding and encourage access to the performing arts with a strong educational component. This Authority should work with a body comprised of professionals on the model of Aosdana, but expanded and democratically based.

Visual Arts : State support for the visual arts must link education, the Arts Council, local authorities, and artists' representative bodies. The integration of artists' studios/small factories with housing has been successful in most European cities and more regional arts centres are required in an overall plan of coherent development.

Music : An independent council should be set up with state funds to advise, assist and encourage musicians in all genres. The council should run performance centres to provide exposure for high quality bands.

Heritage : Our heritage, both natural and built, has been savaged for far too long by commercial interests. The unique features of land, waterways and buildings, including those of industrial and local as well as architectural or historic interest, must be protected by adequate legislation.

NORTHERN IRELAND

This election takes place at a time when the Inter-Party talks on the future of Northern Ireland have come to a temporary halt. Twenty-three years have passed since British troops arrived on the streets of Belfast and Derry and more than 3,000 people have lost their lives while tens of thousands have suffered severe physical and psychological damage. At the same time the society in the north faces severe economic and social problems with the highest rate of unemployment of any region in the UK and the worst rates of long-term and youth unemployment.

Realistic and Magnanimous Policy: The negotiators from the Official Unionist Party had gone a considerable way to accepting the need for new structures of partnership government in Northern Ireland plus the need for real institutions of North-South co-operation. Parties in this state should have responded with more magnanimity than our negotiators displayed. Articles 2 and 3 are perceived by northern Unionists as an offensive and undemocratic refusal of their national identity. De Valera's nationalism has nothing to offer the Catholic population of Northern Ireland.

Their identity and rights can best be effectively ensured through structures of government in which their political representatives participate. It would be much easier to build these structures if parties like Fianna Fail and the SDLP dropped their continuing emphasis on the need for some grander 32-county 'solution'. Any settlement in Northern Ireland will entail the agreement of the government of this state and new and imaginative forms of co-operation between the two states are more necessary than ever in a common European context.

Non-sectarian Commitment: We should stop participating in the structures of the Anglo-Irish Agreement as defenders solely of the interests of northern Catholics. This is a sectarian approach and only confirms unionist suspicions of north-south links. Our commitment should be to neither Catholic or Protestant but to doing all that we can to foster peace and a democratic political culture. The people of Northern Ireland must decide their own future democratically, free from coercion.

Articles 2 and 3: An aspiration to unity by consent should replace Articles 2 and 3 in the constitution.

New Channels: New forums of co-operation between the two states on this island should be developed in a European context.

Devolution: Substantial powers should be given to democratic institutions within Northern Ireland

A Bill of Rights: Fundamental rights and liberties guaranteed them within the law should be codified in a single document.

Job Creation; A plan must be devised to deal with the task of economic and social reconstruction throughout Northern Ireland. The 'Social Europe' dimension of the EC provides an important context for such reconstruction.

Integrated Education: A unified and integrated education system must be developed and supported.

EUROPE

As a European party and part of the United Left Group in the European Parliament, Democratic Left is working with other European socialists to build a better Europe for all EC citizens and to close the huge gap in living standards between Irish citizens and most of our European counterparts.

Incomes in Ireland, per person, are only 63% of the EC average. The gap has narrowed by only 2% since we joined in 1973. Why? Partly because of internal economic problems but also because of the sheer strength of market forces which pull jobs and profits to the centre of what is now a European economy.

- Left to themselves these market forces can only accentuate the main economic divisions and conflicts of our time:-
- Division within our country of class, gender and unequal access to employment and educational opportunities:
- The global North-South divide which can only be overcome by responsible, concerted action at European level to stop the economic exploitation of poorer countries:
- The world-wide conflict between unfettered production and ecological preservation which can only be resolved by internationally co-ordinated action.
- The cyclical crises generated by international market forces which result in periodic recessions and large-scale unemployment and for which no effective controlling or even moderating mechanisms have yet been devised.

To address these inequalities we want:

Strong EC industrial policy. We must reduce subsidies and incentives to industry at the centre of the European market and increase them to industry at the edges. Our aim is to bring jobs to people in Ireland rather than keep bringing people from Ireland to jobs at the centre.

At 1.15% of Europe's GNP, the EC's 1992 budget is a pathetically inadequate basis for a real 'People's Europe'. But simply increasing structural funding is not enough either. A range of far-reaching social, industrial and economic changes are needed

if the poorer regions, such as Ireland, are to become full and equal partners at every level.

Social Charter: This must become a reality rather than a mere pious aspiration. In particular, it will contribute to a strengthening and broadening of EC equality law, which has been a valuable weapon in the struggle of Irish women for equal treatment in all spheres of life.

Co-operation: In the European Parliament we are well placed to learn from and work with the many European Socialists, Greens, and other progressive people who are seeking to end global North-South divisions and the world-wide destruction of the environment by uncontrolled market forces. We are committed to joining with others of like mind to harness economic capacity, national and global, in the interests of those who have traditionally been weakest and have benefitted least.

This means action together with, and on behalf of, the unemployed and underprivileged, especially at the margins of the European economy; the women and young people who tend to be at the fringes of the labour market; the pensioners and other people who are no longer in the labour market.

This also means democratising industry and increasing workers' ownership as well as control over vital economic resources and introducing democracy, equality and social responsibility into the world economic order, to achieve a better North-South global balance and world-wide ecological sanity.

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The recent catastrophe in Somalia (resulting from the combined effect of fractured civil society and famine) has illustrated once again the continuing anguish experienced by the people of the Third World. The structural injustice of global economic relations is reflected in the absurd reality that the resources flowing from developing countries to the richer nations (primarily interest payments on debt) exceed resources flowing the other way (aid etc.).

Ireland's expressions of concern about the dehumanisation of the world's poor at UN and EC level ring hollow in view of the savage cuts in official development assistance since 1987 under Fianna Fil and the PDs which has left us, in proportionate terms, at the bottom of the OECD league table.

Furthermore, Ireland's membership fee for international agencies (UN, FAO, WHO etc.) are a 'first charge' on the meagre aid budget which means that the core bilateral aid programme has been disproportionately eroded to a mere 10 million in 1992.

Democratic Left, in the next Dail, will work energetically towards the following objectives:

Immediate Restoration of the Aid Budget We want to see it at the 1987 value, i.e. 0.25% of GNP and achievement of the UN target of 0.7% of GNP within 7 years.

Restructuring the channels of administration of the Bilateral Aid Programme must be improved to utilise Irish expertise more effectively and reduce agency proliferation.

Accountability Public funds going to world bank and international agencies must be closely monitored.