
Material

Democratic Left

1996

Democratic Left Annual Delegate Conference, Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin 10th-11th. May, 1996

Democratic Left

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Democratic Left

Annual Delegate Conference

1996

Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire

Democratic Left Annual Delegate Conference 1996

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Social Policy

NOTES

Social Welfare

1) Recognising that about one million people in Ireland, and over 50 million in the EU as a whole, are living in poverty, this conference calls for the continued development and effective implementation of appropriate responses to poverty, both at national and EU level. Such responses should include the further development of Ireland's National Anti-Poverty Strategy, initiated by Democratic Left in government, as well as a specific commitment by the EU, through appropriate amendment of the Maastricht Treaty, to playing its part in tackling poverty effectively.

◊ Dublin West

2) This ADC commends Proinsias De Rossa for his work as Minister for Social Welfare, in particular the payment of equality arrears and the restoration of unemployment benefit to certain categories of part-time workers and welcomes the provisions of the 1996 Social Welfare Bill.

◊ New Ross ◊ Maynooth

3) That the full rate of Unemployment Assistance be paid to all people who are unemployed, irrespective of the means of their parents or where they live and that the system whereby a social welfare recipient loses the entire Adult Dependent Allowance as soon as his/her spouse earns over a certain limit be reviewed

◊ Cork North Central

4) This conference welcomes the commitment of the Minister for Social Welfare to ensuring adequacy for all pensioners, to improving their non-cash benefits and services, and to enhancing measures which will improve the security of vulnerable elderly people, especially those living alone or in isolated areas. Specifically, conference welcomes the establishment by the Minister, at the end of January 1996, of the Task Force on the Security of the Elderly; that it reported promptly within a month as requested; that its recommendations were endorsed by government soon afterwards; and that additional monies have been allocated to implement the key recommendations. Conference further calls upon the incoming Party Executive to arrange for the preparation of a discussion paper on how the changing needs of our growing population of elderly people can best be addressed in the future.

◊ Dublin North West

5) That this conference call on the Minister of Social Welfare to reinstate the Pay Related aspect of P.R.S.I.

◊ Bray West

6) This ADC welcomes the approval by the Minister for Social Welfare of grants for voluntary groups working to improve the quality of life for people in areas of Dublin North East.

◊ Coolock

7) Conference calls on the Department of Social Welfare to consider ways of protecting building workers who in most cases have no option but to work under the C45 system and who are prone to considerable seasonal adjustment without traditional social welfare protection.

◊ Naas

8) That the adult dependent allowance be raised to the same level as the adult allowance.

◊ Wexford

9) This ADC proposes that FIS be calculated on net pay rather than gross; that medical cards be allocated on the basis of net pay and that people on Unemployment Benefit qualify for fuel allowance and the Christmas bonus.

◊ Timahely

10) This conference welcomes the initiative of this government and particularly the Minister for Social Welfare in setting up a Commission on the Family. We recognise the need for new realistic policies and strategies to strengthen and support families in a modern context.

◊ *Leixlip*

11) This conference condemns the manner in which certain religious or socially conservative forces have attempted to represent themselves as having a 'pro-family' position to distinguish them from those seeking the liberalisation of the law on the family and sexual matters.

Democratic Left rejects the implication of anything less than full recognition of the importance of our society of loving and well-bonded family units in its campaign for a more compassionate and caring society.

While recognising the contribution of stable families of many difference stable societies, this cannot be a reason for turning away from those for whom this ideal is not achievable.

Furthermore, the arrogance of those who claim to have a monopoly insight into such values has been compounded by hypocrisy as continuing revelations confirm.

◊ *Bray East*

12) This conference

recognises that all children of the nation should be treated equally and the welfare of each child must be given first and paramount consideration.

believes that Minister Austin Currie's measure in advocating a multi-dimensional approach does not go far enough in ensuring the delivery of an efficient, effective child care service.

The answer does not lie in early implementation of the remainder of the Child Care Act and the New Juvenile Justice Act. The answer is putting the working mechanisms at ground level into legislation and policy.

This conference agrees that :

- ♦ Teachers, parents, foster parents, residential staff, social workers, public health nurses, GPs and Gardai need to cooperate, liaise with each other and be included in the daily care of the welfare of the child.
- ♦ All child care personnel should be licensed;
- ♦ A child abuse register should be established
- ♦ A register of abusers and perpetrators should be established
- ♦ All foster parents should be paid a proper fee, Foster parents contracts should include agreement for ongoing training;
- ♦ Eligibility to continue fostering should be reviewed every 5 years.
- ♦ recognises the need for more state intervention on behalf of physically and mentally disabled children and this should be given top priority.
- ♦ Opposes the Minister's recommendation that the Director of each detention centre be obliged to admit every child referred by the courts. This would result in a 'revolving door' policy and this is unacceptable if rehabilitation is the purpose of their incarceration.
- ♦ Agrees in principle to the Minister's proposal to have an Inspectorate for residential homes and schools etc. But it would not be good to transpose the one which operates in Mental Health to Child Care.
- ♦ Believes that there should be more than one Inspectorate and that they work on a rota basis in order to avoid complacency within the service. The persons appointed would not be medical personnel and would be child centered.

This conference agrees that we can no longer continue to be in breach of international obligations - we do not comply with Article 12 of the Convention on Rights of the Child. We recommend the creation of the Children's Legal Service Agency solely concerned with the representation and protection of children, recommends special education teachers with small class numbers in all schools in disadvantaged areas.

◊ *Sutton*

13) This ADC notes that in view of the increase in domestic violence in Northern Ireland as evidenced by incidences of homicide, domestic disputes recorded by the RUC, personal protection orders granted to women, exclusion orders and the number of women and children seeking sheltered accommodation, calls for

- ♦ Convening of a multi-disciplinary conference to raise public awareness on the extent of the problem.
- ♦ Dissemination of the findings of such a conference.
- ♦ Initiation of proper research facilities to determine the actual extent of domestic violence.
- ♦ Development of a central policy so that the appropriate Governmental departments can enable a coherent and co-ordinated strategy on tackling domestic violence to be put in place.
- ♦ Establishment of a working party involving statutory and voluntary agencies to address the issues highlighted by research and facilitate policy development in domestic violence.

◊ Northern Ireland Democratic Left

14) This conference demands that the Government properly fund an effective Teenage Fostering Programme.

◊ Bray West

Equality

15) This party is committed to introduction of Equal Status legislation and supports the right of minority groups - travellers, people with a disability, refugees, women, gay and lesbian community - to be named in such legislation in order to protect their rights as communities experiencing particular discrimination and to seek implementation of the recommendations outlined in the Task Force on the Travelling People.

◊ Limerick East

16) Democratic Left calls upon both the Irish and British Governments to immediately comply with International Law and enact legislation to protect Ireland's minority ethnic communities against racial discrimination, both North and South.

Anti-racism legislation must be in the form of a single Act and protect minority ethnic groups, and individuals, on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, national and ethnic origin; in employment and the provision of goods, facilities, services and premises, and protect against direct and indirect discrimination.

Such legislation must also include as criminal offences acts of racial harassment, threats, intimidation, dissemination of racist literature and direct violence against minority groups and individuals.

The Irish Travelling Community must be given recognition as an ethnic group for the purposes of any incoming anti-racism legislation.

◊ Northern Ireland Democratic Left

17) This conference supports the right of civil servants working in the defense forces, gardai and prison officers to join political parties.

◊ Dublin North

18) This conference calls on the Minister for Transport to make all public transport accessible to the mobility impaired.

◊ Bray West

19) This conference

recognises the progress which has been made under this Government in the fight against crime, and against bureaucratic delays in the administration of justice.

welcomes implementation of the 1995 Courts & Court Officers Act and the recent proposals for Criminal Law Reform, which will streamline the Criminal Justice System.

further recognises that crime and punishment are complex issues and a response to the genuine fears of the community about a breakdown in law and order must be based on a long term appraisal of the options. The civil liberties of the victims of crime, as well as those of an accused person, must be centre stage.

The lack of an independent Criminological Statistics Bureau to measure crime figures and their complex causes seriously hinders the fight against crime.

We recognise that the criminal justice system is not just about prisons. The problems of detection; use and efficiency of Garda resources; delays in criminal trials and the most effective use of financial resources in prevention, detection and punishment all have to be considered.

The causes of crime also have to be tackled. Serious drug abuse, endemic unemployment and lack of resources in highly marginalised areas, produce individuals who regularly become criminal offenders.

Preventative detention as a feature of our Criminal Justice System must be the last resort.

The problem of the commission of crime by offenders on bail must be tackled, but in a way that does not impinge on constitutional safeguards.

We therefore call for

Prevention

- ◆ early introduction of the promised Juvenile Justice legislation which will for the first time tackle the issue of parental responsibility;
- ◆ development of Community Drugs Teams incorporating expertise of the gardai, education, health and social services;
- ◆ expansion of community policing ;
- ◆ Further targeted employment creation measures focusing on the 18 - 35 age cohort of the long-term unemployed in the 18 - 35 age category;
- ◆ establishment of a Criminological Statistics Bureau to measure crime figures and their complex causes.

Detection

- ◆ A complete review of the operation of the Gardai Síochána with a view to increasing detection rates.
 - ◆ Increased resources to reduce current delays in the Forensic Laboratory.
 - ◆ Improved co-operation between the Gardai and the Revenue Commissioners (including Customs & Excise) to track down drug dealers;
- An immediate increase in the staff and resources available to the State Pathologist.

Justice Administration

- ◆ Establishment of a Restitution Fund;
- ◆ Reducing trial delays;
- ◆ Restrictions on bail for those given custodial sentences by the District Court after pleading guilty, but awaiting appeal to the Circuit Court; creation of a new offence of committing a crime while on bail; strengthening measures in Section 11 of the 1984 Criminal Justice Act (consecutive sentencing), incorporating an increase in the permissible aggregate number of years (currently 2); and Implementation of existing provisions regarding estreatment of bail.

Punishment

- ◆ That this conference calls on the Government to implement in full Para. 119 of the Programme for a Government of Renewal dealing with crime and justice, in particular ;
- ◆ Abolish imprisonment for civil debt where practicable;
- ◆ Wider use of non-custodial sentencing for all minor crimes

Minimum Income and PCW

29) This ADC welcomes progress being made towards a minimum income in respect of children, commits Democratic Left to working to secure a general minimum income, instructs the incoming Executive to further develop policy on basic income, and demands continued improvement of the Family Income Supplement as a step in achieving this. This ADC recognises that unemployment, and especially long-term unemployment, is a scandal, and is linked to a cycle of poverty and despair in areas worst affected.

◊ *Dublin South West*

30) This conference calls on Democratic Left to use its influence in government to set the agenda for any future national programme. This should include measures to improve workers rights in the areas of a national minimum wage, trade union recognition and the introduction of workers councils.

◊ *Dublin North Central*

31) This ADC calls upon the present Government to introduce a National Minimum Wage, on a phased sector by sector basis, so that there is adequate protection for the young and low paid, especially in this time of economic boom to ensure that all citizens partake in our growing affluence.

◊ *Dublin North West* ◊ *DL Youth* ◊ *Wexford*

32) This conference calls for the introduction of a minimum wage and Community Employment Schemes be paid the going rate for the job.

◊ *Bray West*

33) That in the negotiation of the next National Agreement to succeed the PCW, the issue of working time be given the same priority as pay.

◊ *Shankill*

34) That this government facilitate access back into paid employment for women who currently work in the home.

◊ *Bray West*

35) This Conference calls on the Government to set up, as a matter of urgency an inspectorate whose sole responsibility would be to ensure that legal rates of pay and working conditions are being applied in industry across the country - particularly, in the hotel/catering trade and in the construction industry.

◊ *Dungarvan*

Party Organisation

36) That this conference agrees to change Rule 37(a) of the Rules of Democratic Left, by inserting the following after PRO: "and two others, who will be elected by the Annual Delegate Conference, by PR, with regard to the gender quota"

Current Rule 37 A reads: "The NEC at its first meeting following the ADC shall establish a General Purposes Committee, to consist of Party President, Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Treasurer and PRO to implement NEC decisions"

◇ Dublin North Central

37) This conference calls on the incoming Executive to publish and distribute to members a record of all motions, including amendments carried, at the 1996 ADC, and that this become standard practice henceforth.

◇ Dublin South East

38) That conference recognises that motions accepted by Annual Conference delegates should be adhered to as party policy.

◇ Crumlin

39) This ADC recognises the need for development of far reaching policies geared to the needs of Irish, European and World society as we approach the 21st century, instructs the incoming NEC and relevant policy committees to review party policy in this regard and in this context to carry out an update of the 'Agenda 2000' document.

◇ NEC

40) This conference calls on the incoming Executive to place much more emphasis on the founding values of the Party - openness, participation, egalitarianism, radical idealism - and in particular to instigate an immediate programme for the development of party policies and membership participation.

◇ Dublin South East

41) In the next general election Democratic Left shall campaign on its own independent programme. We shall not enter into voter transfer pacts or any type of electoral arrangement with any party of the Right, in particular Fianna Fail, Fine Gael or the Progressive Democrats. Any voter transfer pacts or electoral arrangements with parties and independents that are politically compatible with Democratic Left shall be considered by the incoming NEC after full consultation with constituency organisations.

◇ Dublin South Central

42) This conference mandates the General Secretary and National Organiser to bring forward a programme of political activity for the next year and to initiate, organise and supervise at least 2 programmes including Long Term Unemployment and the provision of child care facilities, and also develop an educational and information programme for all constituencies.

◇ Trinity

43) This conference mandates the leadership of Democratic Left to establish formal support structures for the Youth section. These should include proper financial, personnel and education supports.

◇ Trinity

Housing

44) This conference commends the progress made by the Minister for Housing in housing provision and (a) recognises the right of tenants to participate in the management of their estates and urges Local Authorities towards greater involvement by tenants; (b) commits our members to respond positively to the National Strategy for the Accommodation of the Travelling Community recently announced.

◊ Bray East

45) This ADC calls for the introduction of a new Home Improvements Grants Scheme, with appropriate means testing arrangements.

◊ Cork East

46) In view of the spiraling increase in property values in the Dublin area, we urge the Minister for Housing to urgently amend the legislation to take account of these increases, with a view to increasing the ceiling on loans for Shared Ownership Schemes.

◊ Shankill

47) Conference calls on the Minister for the Environment to review the grant system to ensure the needs of both urban and rural communities are catered for.

◊ Kildare North

Planning/Rezoning

48) This conference calls on the Government, in the context of the reform of the Local Government system, to introduce strict guidelines that are binding on local government in relation to land use planning. In conjunction introduce a windfall tax for land which has as a result of zoning has become many times more valuable, payable to the relevant local authority.

◊ Kildare North

49) This Conference commits the party to highlighting abuses of planning and rezoning, particularly in the greater Dublin area.

◊ Dublin North

50) That legislation in relation to planning be amended to remove the right to apply for retention of a development with the exception of minor developments with a limited floor space.

◊ Donegal South West

Nuclear Safety/Radiation

51) Noting that April 26th this year was the 10th anniversary of Chernobyl - the world's worst nuclear accident, this ADC calls on Democratic Left to take action to ensure that there will never again be another 'Chernobyl'.

- ◆ In particular, the Irish Government, take every measure possible to guard this country against the risks, posed by the British nuclear industry and the many nuclear power reactors along the UK's west coast

- ◆ Take legal action to close all of these nuclear power stations, particularly the older Magnox reactor plants,

- ◆ ensure that Ireland does not agree to EU funding, through the EBRD, to prop up old Eastern European nuclear reactors, or to build new ones.

- ◆ Any aid given towards energy production should be directed towards

- ◆ reducing our dependency on fossil fuels

- ◆ look at more efficient energy use and conservation

- ◆ use cleaner renewable energy for power generation

- ◆ look at more sustainable development and energy use

Democratic Left will ensure environmental considerations are made a priority when considering the preparation of legislation.

◊ Environment Committee

52) This ADC calls on the Government to obtain the services of an internationally recognised independent body to monitor radiation levels from telecommunication masts with particular reference to masts which have equipment attached to beam an M.M.D.S. television signal.

◊ Donegal South West

General

53) That this party develop a more comprehensive Environmental policy.

◊ Bray West

54) This ADC calls for speedy implementation of the Electoral Bill.

◊ Dún Laoghaire

55) This ADC welcomes the drafting of legislation to curb wandering horses in urban areas, in response to the Government Programme commitment, and calls for early enactment of such legislation.

◊ Tallaght West

56) That this party condemns the running down of Dublin's Northside, particularly in relation to transport policy, cultural policy and the prioritisation of unemployment blackspots.

◊ Dublin North Central

Employment

57) This conference recognises the excellent achievements of Democratic Left on the economy while in government. The party's participation has imbued the government with a real concern for social justice while developing a highly successful, competitive economy. Economic growth this year, at 5% is more than twice the average in the EU and the OECD, and three times higher than Germany and Japan. Inflation is low, interest rates are low, investment is picking up, exports are booming, profits are booming. For the first time in years, high growth is being translated into jobs. Last year 50,000 net new jobs were created and this year the figure will be as high again. However, unemployment in particular, long term unemployment is far too high.

Democratic Left put this high on the agenda for the 1996 Budget, but far more needs to be done.

This conference affirms

- A. That long term unemployment needs special, radical attention;
- B. That market solutions are not working for the long term unemployed;
- C. That the state has the key and decisive role in the reduction of long term unemployment;
- D. That there should be both radical reform of the multitude of existing programmes for the unemployed and an expansion of well-directed resources to eradicate this scourge.

Conference confirms that Democratic Left will continue to seek to make the reduction of long term unemployment the number one priority of government.

◇ *Economics Committee*

58) This conference calls on the Government to prioritise the issue of job creation, particularly for the long-term unemployed. Conference recognises that a vigorous and imaginative job programme is needed to tackle the underlining problems of social exclusion, particularly in identified 'blackspots'.

◇ *Dublin North West* ◇ *Cork North Central*

59) While welcoming steps in the 1996 Budget to tackle the problem of long term unemployment, the ADC specifically demands:

- A. further measures targeted especially at unemployment "blackspots",
- B. a specific programme for all under 21's on the Register for over six months
- C. a comprehensive package of benefit retention and incentives to make work more attractive for long-term unemployed people, and
- D. an EU wide common jobs policy.

◇ *Dublin South West*

60) This ADC affirms the need to create more jobs as a result of our international trade performance.

International trade, both export & import, is of vital importance to the development of our economy and to the creation and maintenance of employment.

While this trade has shown an increase of almost 20% during the past year, an equivalent number of jobs have failed to be created. Export 80% of our goods on an 'ex works' basis and purchase 80% or imports on a 'delivered basis', the reverse of the situation applicable to a country like Japan.

We are not creating 'down the line' jobs e.g. shipping, insurance, packaging, finance etc. We need to address this situation and perhaps also promote an appropriate 'Irish Import Board'

◇ *Shankill*

61) Conference, while welcoming the government decision on URBAN funding for Tallaght West/Clondalkin, expresses concern that the monies have not yet been released and believes that there must be genuine consultation with the voluntary and community sectors.

◇ *Tallaght West*

Community Employment

62) This conference, while welcoming the development of Community Employment under this government, calls for action in the following areas

- A to restore the flexibility of Community Employment as regards age qualification
- B to change the qualifying rules to allow married women, who are not on the Live Register, but who are available for work, to participate in Community Employment Schemes.

◇ *Dublin North Central*

63) This conference supports the view that a fixed number of places on Community Employment Schemes should be reserved for those who are full-time homemakers and who wish to return to the workforce but who don't currently fit the qualifying criteria.

◇ *Kildare North*

64) This ADC notes that there are three schemes in Northern Ireland for what is statistically and actually a reducing number of long-term persons vis ACE, Jobskills and Community employment.

- ◆ Argues that there are too few links between such schemes and the actuality of moving the long-termed unemployed into jobs.
- ◆ Deplores the manner in which ACE schemes were cut.
- ◆ Sees no reason to place long-term unemployment in the context of the peace process.
- ◆ Calls for personal development to be incorporated in any proposed scheme.
- ◆ Proposes that no funding be made available to any sponsoring or training agency unless it can show user participation at every level in planning, negotiation, delivery and evaluation.
- ◆ Emphasises the need to break the barrier between education and training.
- ◆ Recognises that women have for various reasons broken into the labour market.
- ◆ Further recognises that the core problem is that most long-term unemployed are male.
- ◆ Calls for the adoption of a realistic educational and psychological resolution of the problem.

◇ *Northern Ireland Democratic Left*

65) That this Conference, while acknowledging the need to target the new Local Employment Service (LES) on high unemployment areas, believes that there should be an LES in Clondalkin.

◇ *Clondalkin*

Agriculture / Food

66) This ADC calls on the incoming NEC to produce a policy document on Rural Society, to include an assessment of the particular needs of families in rural communities, development of Irish agriculture and natural resources including land as we approach the 21st century and the related issues of food production, quality and marketing.

◇ *Cork East* ◇ *Dublin South East*

67) Noting the crisis in the Food Industry arising from alleged possible links between animal disease and food, this conference says that this is only the latest in a sequence of crises in that industry which are a direct result of the subordination of consumer interests to that of the producer. Democratic Left calls for a reversal of this policy to ensure an appropriate balance in the interests of

- A. safe and healthy food
- B. consumer confidence in that food
- C. the long term security of all those working in the industry as primary producers or in processing

In particular we call for:

- I. an immediate inquiry into the continuing compatibility of maintaining responsibility for both food and agriculture within the same Department,
- II. reconstitution of An Bord Bia to reduce the influence of the producer
- III. state promotion of reliable quality assurance programmes that can guarantee traceability, proper monitoring of all animal health programmes on the farm and throughout the processing stages.

◇ *Dundrum*

68) This conference calls on the party to promote as strongly as possible the reorganisation of Irish agriculture towards a genuine and properly accredited organic system of production; and demands that a Dept. of Food, separate from the Dept. of Agriculture and with a strong consumer orientation, be established.

further calls on the government to examine how the Department of Agriculture conducts its business, to ensure that a fiasco such as the current beef fines never occurs again

◊ *Dublin South East*

69) This ADC, noting the programme commitment of the Government of Renewal to 'maximise employment in the food processing industry through the promotion of high quality products' and considering that consumer confidence is essential if this aspiration is to be realised, accordingly calls for the responsibility for food quality to be removed from the Department of Agriculture and Food and brought under an appropriate other government department.

◊ *Wexford Branch*

Taxation

70) Conference calls for a radical approach to tax reform. There have been some constructive reforms recently, but incrementalism is not working. There are still too many loopholes which are exploited by the rich and powerful. The system of administration needs strengthening and big tax offenders should be jailed.

Democratic Left recognises that some of those seeking reform are really looking for tax reductions for the rich, and to reduce all areas of public spending, but particularly to emasculate the welfare state.

Democratic Left affirms its commitment to social solidarity, to a just and equitable society paid for by fair and reasonable taxes. Radical reform of taxation and social welfare is part of our mission.

◊ *Economics Committee*

71) This ADC condemns the fact that the Irish taxpayer is to be penalised for the irregularities of the beef trade.

◊ *Nuas*

72) This ADC calls on the government to ensure that the EU fine for the beef debacle is not paid solely by the Irish taxpayer, to ensure that the beef industry makes a significant contribution and to carry out an urgent investigation on how the beef industry can be made accountable in this regard.

◊ *Ballybrack / Loughlinstown*

73) This ADC calls on the incoming NEC and Economics Committee to investigate and cost the introduction of a middle tax band as a means of easing the tax burden on working families, as part of any development of the party's personal taxation policy.

◊ *Dun Laoghaire*

74) That Democratic Left seek the introduction of tax relief for Child Care.

◊ *Shankill*

Service Charges

75) This conference

- ◆ congratulates the party in government for ending the arbitrary cut-off of water for non-payment of service charges and introduction of tax relief for those who pay their bills on time,
- ◆ recognises that this was negotiated in a situation where every other party in the Dail is fully committed to retention of these charges
- ◆ notes the continuing arbitrary nature of these charges, from Limerick and Dublin cities where there are currently no charges to several hundred pounds in some local authorities
- ◆ confirms the party's policy of seeking an end to service charges and the introduction of a comprehensive reform of local government which will guarantee both adequate funding and democracy,

♦ calls on the incoming NEC to bring forward a detailed policy document in this context.

◊ *Limerick East*

76) That while this Conference acknowledges the improvements which this Party was responsible for including in the Programme for Government in the situation with respect to water taxes,

A. it reiterates its long-standing policy of total opposition to this inequitable form of double taxation and

B. that all elected Democratic Left council members be instructed to vote in their respective Council chambers in accordance with this party's policy.

◊ *Dungarvan*

77) We call on conference to continuously oppose service charges and that public representatives should adhere to party policy at their estimates meeting until this policy is changed.

◊ *Cumshingaing*

78) This ADC looks forward to the early reports of the Devolution Commission on Local Government powers, functions and finances and will agree in principle any proposals which devolve greater powers to the regions in Ireland.

◊ *Kilnamanagh/Kingswood*

79) Democratic Left reaffirms its commitment towards an equitable system of funding for local government. A system that achieves the aim of broadening the tax base without penalising the PAYE sector.

◊ *Leixlip*

80) That conference congratulates the party leadership on the cool, calm, manner and approach to the crisis in the peace process.

◊ Donegal South West

Political

81) This conference welcomes the joint communiqué of 28 February 1996 agreed by the Prime Minister, John Major and the Taoiseach, John Bruton, confirming June 10th for the start of all party negotiations and the creation of an Elected Forum in Northern Ireland.

Recognises that this elective process presents the people of Northern Ireland with a new and unique opportunity of replacing the tribal politics of the past.

Conference therefore calls on the new Elected Forum to create a new political agenda for Northern Ireland to include:

a commitment to building a new inclusive political culture and a pluralist secular society in Northern Ireland;

to act as a conciliatory body between polarised political positions in its plenary session;

to serve as a vehicle for transmission of ideas between public participation and political elites and discuss the serious social, economic problems confronting the people of Northern Ireland.

◊ Northern Ireland Democratic

82) This ADC appeals to the Government to work closely with the British Government and all other interested groups for durable peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland based on compromise and consensus.

◊ Ballybrack/Loughlinstown

83) This Annual Delegate Conference calls for the restoration of the paramilitary cease-fire so that inclusive all party negotiations can take place.

◊ Terenure

Policing

84) This ADC notes that in September of 1994, in its policy document "Setting a New Agenda", Democratic Left outlined its views on a Framework for Agreement in Northern Ireland. In this context it proposed the following structures for policing

a) A reconstituted unarmed police force to be known as the Northern Ireland Police Service.

b) Policing to be the responsibility of a Northern Ireland Assembly under a weighted majority decision-making system.

c) The police to be accountable at central and divisional level.

d) All reforms ensuring accountability to be implemented along with the abolition of Diplock Courts, the Prevention of Terrorism and Special Powers Act.

As part of the ongoing debate on Police Reform, Democratic Left

◆ Welcomes publication of the Police Authority's Community Consultation document "Everyone's Police - A Partnership for Change" and commits itself to continue discussion with the Police Authority on its contents.

◆ Notes that the Police Authority itself recognises the need to review methods used to select its membership, a key issue in accountability.

◆ Re-iterates its proposal that the Police Authority be expanded to allow for effective community representation through elected representatives of the Community Police Liaison Committees.

◆ Awaits publication of the Government's Reform of Policing Structures and the Fundamental Review of Policing currently being carried out by the RUC in consultation with the Police Authority and the NIO to which Democratic Left has made submissions. Accepts that the culture of policing in Northern Ireland is in the process of change which requires open mindedness and tolerance.

◆ Deplores the sacking by the Secretary of State of the two members of the Police Authority most associated in the public mind with opening out public debate on policing and by doing so weakening the credibility of the Police Authority.

- ♦ Condemns in the strongest possible manner the resumption of a bombing campaign by the IRA with consequent reversal of progress towards ongoing change in policing.
- ♦ Calls on both Governments to regard punishment beatings as breaches of cease-fires with all relevant implications.

◊ Northern Ireland Democratic Left

Prisoners

85) This ADC notes that in this current situation where it is generally accepted that, whilst the IRA has unilaterally broken its cease-fire, there is a mood amongst people for a rejection of violence and pursuit of political progress through peaceful, democratic methods. Democratic Left calls for an immediate transfer of prisoners from British jails, both on humane grounds of relief for their families and as evidence of a Governmental will to respond to legitimate requests which, when met, will help facilitate conversion of the peace process into political progress.

◊ Northern Ireland Democratic Left

Punishment Beatings

86) This conference calls on all paramilitary groups to fully and unequivocally embrace the principles of democracy and end all hostilities forthwith this includes ending of the barbaric punishment beatings which take away from the victim the most basic human right of parity of esteem.

◊ Democratic Left Northern Ireland

Sectarianism

87) Democratic Left expresses grave concern at the persistent failure of the British Government to recognise communal division in Northern Ireland and its implications for many public sector policies. In particular, we deplore the failure of the recent Housing Policy Review to even mention the fact of a physically and religiously segregated city in Belfast and the consequent assumption that such division does not exist, or if it does, has no impact whatever on public policies.

Given the capacity for such tensions to fuel renewed and even more intense sectarian strife in Northern Ireland, Democratic Left:

- ♦ Calls for a public recognition of sectarianism as an all pervasive ill in Northern Ireland society,
- ♦ Renews our own determination to identify, address and seek to eradicate such politics in our society as an integral part of creating conditions for the emergence of a new social direction within Northern Ireland.

◊ Northern Ireland Democratic Left

88) This Conference calls on the government to produce a national policy on the Marine.

◊ *Dun Laoghaire*

89) This Conference calls for the renegotiation of the EU Common Fisheries Policy.

◊ *Galway West*

90) That the Department of Marine and the local authorities put a plan in place to protect and save our beaches.

◊ *Donegal South West*

91) This ADC calls for the establishment of an independent Aquaculture Licensing Authority.

◊ *Dungarvan*

92) This conference, while welcoming the new drug measures announced by the government,

urges the Minister for Health to ensure provision of these services is not hindered by financial or decision-making considerations, and that waiting lists be reduced, particularly in the greater Dublin area. Expresses concern that most programmes focus on methadone maintenance, as opposed to total detoxification which should be the ultimate aim of all drug treatment programmes.

◊ *Dun Laoghaire*

93) This party acknowledges the failure of the police-centered approach to solving the drugs problem and should endeavour to create a realistic policy on drugs taking, a multidisciplinary approach incorporating health, education, community, legal, crime and lifestyle aspects into account. Realism should replace idealism on this issue.

◊ *DL Youth*

94) This ADC calls on the party to promote within Government a local area-based strategy to tackle drug misuse. In order to galvanise community and statutory efforts the government should establish locally based drug misuse partnerships modelled on those structures already established under the Local Urban and Rural Development Operational Programme.

◊ *Plúbsboro*

95) Democratic Left calls for the development of a drugs education programme for parents, to include skills in identifying the signs of drug abuse in a young person, such programme to be put in place through the schools and to be available to all parents.

◊ *Kilhamanagh/Kingswood*

96) This ADC calls on the Minister for Health to amend the eligibility criteria for awarding Medical Cards by having the applicant's entitlement based on net income rather than gross income.

◊ *Wexford*

97) This ADC calls on the Minister for Health to restore the system of Local Health Advisory Committees as provided for under the 1970 Health Act

◊ *Cork East*

98) This conference calls on the Government to review the anomaly that has arisen due to the proposals for the reduction of the cost of the G.M.S. service.

◊ *Maynooth*

99) This Conference applauds the government's document "*Challenges and Opportunities Abroad: White Paper on Foreign Policy*," and proposes the following:

♦ **Values in DL International Policy:**

support strengthening of international institutions such as the UN, WTO, International Court of Justice, World bank and IMF, especially in maintaining peace and promoting equal development. In particular DL calls for a new international financial regime based on the needs of development, fair trade, social equality and justice.

♦ **Ireland and Europe:**

DL supports creation of a 'Social Europe', which should be to the fore in the forthcoming Intergovernmental Conference. DL supports the creation of a Europe of the People, which defends and expands the rights of its citizens, minorities, refugees and non-EU citizens working in Europe, supports the development of an EU Common Foreign and Security Policy and calls on the state to join European Monetary Union. This conference also endorses the work of the New European Left Forum.

♦ **International Security:**

This Conference regards the United Nations as the primary organisation of international security. Within Europe we call for the foreign, security and defence of the EU to be sub-ordinate solely to the democratic structures of the EU and to accord with the principles of the UN and OSCE, we oppose moves to incorporate European security into the US led Atlantic Alliance including the 'Partnership For Peace' and are committed to further development of the Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) and to sensible nuclear and conventional disarmament, a final ban on landmine production and a scaling down of the arms industry.

♦ **The United Nations:**

This party will particularly support any moves to reform the Security Council and make the UN more genuinely representative and condemns undermining of the UN's security policy by certain powers withholding payment and attempting to force the agenda of NATO onto the UN.

♦ **Development Aid and Human Rights:**

Conference supports the government's combining its policies on human rights, democratisation and development aid and the shift to structured support for civil and social development in recipient countries,

further supports the inclusive definition of human rights in the UN Charter of Human Rights and the right of nations to self-determination, conscious that European standards cannot be arrogantly be imposed on other countries in a new colonialism,

supports the rights of peoples to seek self-determination, rights being infringed either directly as in East Timor, Tibet, Chechnya and the Kurds or indirectly, as in many states of Central America, Africa and Asia.

In this context Conference supports the right of Cuba to develop as a society, calls on the government to oppose the US embargo of Cuba and to establish basic diplomatic relations with that country as all other EU states have done.

♦ **The Irish Abroad:**

DL supports the notion of a voice for the Irish abroad in the Seanad, the concept of Irish citizens living temporarily abroad - sensibly defined - having a vote in Dail elections and the rights of non-nationals resident in Ireland to take full part in the democratic process in this state.

♦ **Public Control of Foreign Policy:**

This Conference calls on the government to institute an annual report of the Department of Foreign Affairs, to be presented to the Dail on submission of the Estimate to the Department, for a system of mandatory reporting to and scrutiny by the Dail Committees on European Affairs and Foreign Affairs and publication of a journal of Irish Foreign Affairs.

♦ *International Committee*

100) This conference, mindful of the increasing difficulties being experienced by non-EU nationals in the context of Fortress Europe, calls on the government to implement paragraph 75 of the Programme for a Government of Renewal so as to provide comprehensive legislation on the rights of non-nationals, with particular regard to:

1. The need to regularise the position of illegal immigrants and to grant an amnesty to those illegal immigrants who have been in this state for five years or more and who have committed no other crime.
2. The need to bring in race relations legislation similar to that operating in the UK.
3. The need for greater openness, transparency and accountability with regard to the granting of visas and citizenship; and the need for a charter of rights guaranteeing that such applications will be addressed within a specified time limit; and that explanations will be given for any decisions taken by the Department.
4. The need to safeguard the rights of non-EU offshore workers.

◇ *Civil Liberties Committee*

101) Given the growing evidence of companies and individuals of EU member states involved in selling implements and arms to countries with oppressive regimes and a history of human rights abuses, this conference calls on the Government to work with fellow EU member governments at Inter-Governmental Conference level to implement and enforce legislation prohibiting these practices.

Given that legislation, resolutions and agreements reached at EU level and contained in the Maastricht Treaty and other conventions now impact more and more on the daily lives of EU citizens and those outside the Community, in particular with regard to harmonisation of asylum policy, and mindful of Art. 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1951 Geneva Convention and 1967 Protocol to that Convention, this Conference calls on the Government to ensure that such legislation agreements and conventions are open, transparent and accountable and in drawing up such agreements or legislation that consideration for human rights is paramount.

◇ *Limerick East*

102) This conference

- a) supports the recent statement reaffirming the DL position that Ireland should not become a member of the NATO-sponsored Partnership for Peace and
- b) determines that in the absence of fully democratic political structures within the EU we should not consider membership of any European military alliance including the Western European Union.

◇ *Dublin South East*

103) Given that China has an appalling record of Human Rights abuses, this conference calls on the Government to work with member states of the EU, to formulate a resolution at the United Nations Commission for Human Rights, condemning China's Human Rights abuses.

◇ *Limerick East*

Education, Arts & Culture

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104) This ADC welcomes the statement in the White Paper on Education that it is to be a major policy objective of the Government to promote equality of access to education, irrespective of social class, age or disability, for all those who have a capacity to benefit from it, with particular reference to:

- A. development of a programme of universal and professional pre-schooling and Government support for properly organised community playgroups;
- B. special resources to be invested in adult literacy and adult education schemes;
- C. and a one year induction prior to university / third level for V.T.O.S students.

◇ Education Committee

105) This Conference calls on the Minister for Education to implement the proposals of the I.V.E.A with regard to local democracy in education in the forthcoming legislation on education.

◇ Waterford City

106) This Conference commits the party to working to achieve class sizes of 15 in the primary sector and the provision of related facilities, and instructs the Education and Economics Committee to bring forward a costing, involving necessary redistribution of taxation, to ensure that all children receive adequate primary schooling.

◇ Dublin North

107) That a more rapid and thorough user friendly complaints procedure be set up within the Department of Education for parents or students involved in disputes with local authorities.

◇ Bray West

108) This conference calls on Democratic Left in government to oppose the proposal in the Education Bill to give the Churches a sectarian control over the employment of teachers.

◇ Shankill

109) To assist development of a pluralistic society in Ireland this ADC demands that religious and non-religious ethics be taught as subjects, in the denominations required on the basis of each school population and the demands of the parents, and including the humanist ethos.

◇ Shankill

110) This conference noting that 1996 is the European Year of Life Long Learning, and the changing nature of work has emphasised the importance to society as a whole of the concept of continuing education, calls for the abolition of fees for all university students, without discrimination, whether full-time or part-time, toward the ultimate goal of equal access to education for all.

◇ Waterford City

111) This ADC urges the Minister for Education to focus on the adequacy of maintenance grants, so that access to education is increased.

◇ Maynooth

112) This ADC calls for the abolition of Junior and Leaving Certificate exam fees.

◇ Wexford

113) Iarann an Árd Fheis seo ar an Aire Oideachais Bórd Oideachais Gaeltachta a bhunú mar chuid den ath-eagrú riaracháin san Acht Oideachais atá le foilsíú I mbliana, 1996.

(This Ard Fheis requests the Minister for Education to set up a Gaeltacht Educational Board as part of the administrative restructuring to be included in the Education Act to be published this year, 1996)

◇ Dungarvan

114) The funding for voluntary schools be increased to the same level as that given to other state funded schools. That quotes for new buildings and extensions to voluntary schools should not include Value Added Tax in their final accounts.

◊ *Cork North Central*

115) This conference calls on the relevant government departments to put in place an action plan to address the growing problem of Early School Leavers.

◊ *Bray West*

116) Given the need for a more equitable education system, this ADC calls for a RTC to service the Finglas area.

◊ *Dublin North West*

117) This ADC welcomes the establishment of TEASTAS - The Irish National Certification Authority with the aim of creating a unified framework for the certification of vocational training.

◊ *Wexford*

Arts & Culture

118) This ADC calls on the Government to:

ensure that television viewers who have already paid their license fees have general access to broadcast coverage of events of major significance or of general public interest, including sporting fixtures.

Draw up, in consultation with broadcasters and sporting bodies, a list of events which will be classified as 'heritage events', the exclusive rights to full coverage of which may not be sold to any broadcasting organisation. Such a proposal is already under discussion in Britain. Ensure that where exclusive rights to full coverage of events are sold, this allows other broadcasters access to 'highlight coverage'

Ensure that no public funds are provided to any sporting organisation which sells exclusive rights for coverage of any event to any broadcasting, which charges viewers a premium rate either on a regular or a pay-per-view basis, to view such a coverage.

◊ *Ballybrack/Loughlinstown*

119) Go n-iarraidh an Comhdal Cionn Bliana seo ar an Aire Ealíon Cultúr & Gaeltachta deontais na mboithre aise sa Ghaeltacht a thabhairt arais.

This ADC calls on the Minister for Arts, Culture & Gaeltacht to restore Gaeltacht Accommodation Roads Improvement Grants.

◊ *Donegal South West*

120) That Democratic Left seek a change of National Anthem, with lyrics to reflect a non-militaristic theme.

◊ *Shankill*

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