

1987

Ard Fheis Annual Delegate Conference - 1987 : General Secretary's Report

Workers' Party of Ireland

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THE WORKERS PARTY

**Ard Fheis
Annual Delegate
Conference 1987**

*General Secretary's
Report*



General Secretary's Report

INTRODUCTION

Few would now deny that the Workers' Party has established itself as the party of the Irish working class, particularly coming after the results of the recent general election in the Republic and the steady growth and activity of the Party in Northern Ireland. We have demonstrated over the past years in very practical and positive ways what the Workers' Party stands for. In and out of Parliament we have consistently upheld the interests of the working class. The struggle to build and expand the Workers' Party is not an easy one. We need only look back over the past fifteen or so years to see the progress we have made. In the February election of 1973 we put forward 10 candidates and received a total of 15,000 votes. At that time we were still in the process of developing and strengthening our ideology and programme and laying the basis for the revolutionary party. We had fought many internal and external battles, and at that time were engaged in a major internal struggle against the corrupt and opportunistic ultra left elements who sought to divert the Party from political struggle into support for terrorism. We won these battles but it is clear as all members and supporters know from attacks over the past year that we have many more battles to fight and win to achieve our aims.

The building of the revolutionary party is, as we have stated, a continuous struggle, to strengthen our ideology, to expand and increase our influence and numbers. The key to winning our objective is class politics. If we are to transform this society, if we are to win the majority then we must have the Party organised throughout the whole country. We must have strong and active branches in every town and village in the country. We have succeeded in doing this in many constituencies but we still have a considerable distance to go. It is, as we all know, a long and difficult struggle but we have recognised it as such and we have made it our central task for today and tomorrow to build such a party. It is a fundamental of class politics that the working class needs and must have its own party, separate and distinct from all the other parties who represent different class interests than those of the working class. The Irish working class is only now beginning to recognise its own strength and to develop an awareness of its own class interests. Over the next years we must heighten this class awareness and sharpen the class conflict and in that struggle demonstrate that only the Workers' Party stands for a new society, stands firmly on the side of the working class, voices their demands and insists that bankers, ranchers, builders, publicans, auctioneers etc. do not and cannot because of their class interests act for or on behalf of the working class.

It is by our work on the ground, our contact with the people in their

everyday struggle, that enables us to survive and grow stronger every day and this allows us to state that we are making substantial and major gains with the working class. We must also remember the climate in which we work and organise, the kind of society in which we live, a society dominated by conservative and at times even reactionary forces. It is the Workers' Party which is breaking the long established cosy conservative mould of Irish politics. Irish political life, North and South, has been dominated for too long by the sterile petty squabbling of parties which have no essential or basic difference in their ideology or political programmes except a difference of names and individuals. None of these parties wants to raise or face the issue of class. They want to submerge the class question in a mishmash of clichés and meaningless slogans with no relevance or meaning for the working class whose interests they have consistently ignored. This is why they fear the rise and growing strength of the Workers' Party, this is why they resort to slander and libel because they cannot answer our programme and demands with reasoned argument.

Let us be absolutely clear on this point for as surely as the grass grows, the more we grow, the stronger we get, then the more will the class that has dominated this country for so long resort to more scurrilous and extreme lengths to destroy the Workers' Party and hold on to their power and privileges.

It has become clear that the new Party structures put in place some years ago have for the most part played a significant role in developing policies and activity. There are still unfortunately some cases where the committees are not operating efficiently and to the best advantage of the Party.

All committees must be continually assessed to see what way they can be made more effective. There is a review committee established by the Ard Comhairle which is presently doing this and it is hoped that it will deliver its report to the first meeting of the CEC after the Ard Fheis.

The Political Committee has itself suffered from an over emphasis on routine matters and in common with all other committees lack of resources has prevented it from following through on decisions. It is not yet fully functioning as the political strategy committee and developer of Party politics which was intended.

For the coming year it is proposed to work to a pre-planned programme, with documentation prepared in advance. There will be a number of week-end meetings to ensure that there is in depth discussion on key issues. It is hoped that this process will feed into the CEC and ensure that the Party develops a more ready organisational response to current political events, and that to a greater extent we will be able to anticipate political development. This in turn should enhance our ability to intervene in events more effectively both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland.

ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

The Management Committee has been examining the activity and effectiveness of the various specialist committees. It is concerned at the uneven development of committees and is seeking ways in which the Party can derive full benefit from the committee system. Over and over again the main problem confronting the committees and indeed the Party generally is that of resources. The Management Committee has devoted a great deal of time and effort in attempting to ensure that the Party's finances were adequate, not only to maintain the Party, but to expand it throughout the country.

The EMC has for many years attempted to establish regional areas which would be active and viable. In the major population areas we have been successful to a large degree in developing an efficient and effective regional structure. We have been unable as yet — again due mainly to lack of resources in personnel and finance — to establish regional structures in many other parts of the country which would be viable. The review committee is studying this problem and will be putting some proposals to the next CEC which hopefully will go some way towards solving this problem.

In order to keep pace with modern developments the EMC has undertaken a thorough examination of all aspects of Party organisation. It has commissioned a consultant to examine head office and general organisation whilst the review committee looked at Party committees and structures. Given the immense task the Party has to accomplish it is essential that we use our time and resources to the maximum possible advantage. Very often, as we all know too well, time spent at many meetings at all levels of the Party could be more profitably spent if the meetings were better organised and properly structured.

ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

The Ard Comhairle/CEC met on five occasions (two of which were two day events). At the initial meeting the following officers were elected, Alderman Tomás Mac Giolla TD, having been elected Party President at the Ard Fheis.

PARTY OFFICERS

Sean Garland, General Secretary; Peter Kane, Administrative Secretary; Tony Heffernan, PRO; Padraig Mannion, Treasurer; Gerry Doherty, Finance Officer.

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS & SECRETARIES

Ard Comhairle/CEC Chair: Tomás Mac Giolla. Secretary: Peter Kane.

Political Committee Chair: P.DeRossa. Secretary: Sean Garland.

Management Committee Chair: Tomás Mac Giolla. Secretary: Sean Garland.

Specialist Committees

International Affairs	Sean Ó Cionnaith	Economic Affairs	Eamonn Smullen
Finance	Oliver Rogers	Health & Social Services	John McManus
Women	Margaret O'Leary	Local Gov.& Environment	Eamonn Gilmore
Electoral & Recruitment	Peter Kane	Publications	Tony Heffernan
Youth	Des Geraghty	Art & Culture	Liz McManus
Justice & Civil Liberties	Triona Dooney	Northern Ireland	Seamus Lynch

The EMC and EPC are elected at the initial Ard Comhairle/CEC meeting.

(E denotes excused, e.g. 2E means two attendances and one excuse.)

ARD COMHAIRLE/CEC ATTENDANCE RECORD

The following members served as the Ard Comhairle/CEC for 1986–1987.

Year denotes year in which elected.

	Tomás Mac Giolla	5
EPC	Jimmy Brick 86	3EE
	Rosheen Callendar 85	5
EMC/EPC	Proinsias de Rossa 85	5
EMC	Gerry Doherty 86	4E
	Francie Donnelly 85	2E
	Philomena Donnelly 85	4
EPC	Triona Dooney 85	5
	Tom French 86	4E
EMC	John Gallagher Co-op	4
EMC/EPC	Sean Garland 86	5
EPC	Des Geraghty 85	5
EPC	Cathal Goulding 85	2EEE
	Eamon Gilmore 86	3E
EMC/EPC	Seamus Harrison 85	1EEEE
EMC/EPC	Tony Heffernan 86	4E
EMC/EPC	Peter Kane 86	5

	John Kelleher Co-op	3		
EMC/EPC	Seamus Lynch 85	3EE		
EPC	Mary McMahon 85	2EEE	Regional Delegates	
	John McManus 85	2EEE	John Lowry	3EE
	Liz McManus 85	3EE	Tommy Owens	4
EMC	Padraig Mannion Co-op	5	Kevin Smyth	3EE
EMC/EPC	Des O'Hagan 86	2E	Maura McInerney	2E
	Sean Ó Cionnaith Co-op	4E	Oliver Rogers	5
	Margaret O'Leary Co-op	2E	John Ryan	2E
	Henry Patterson Co-op	4E	Bernard Lynch	5
EPC	Pat Rabbitte 86	3E	Joe Butler	1
	Seamus Rodgers 85	2	Ger O'Quigley	3
	Joe Sherlock 86	4E	John King	4
EMC/EPC	Eamonn Smullen 86	5	Kieran Connolly	1
EPC	Sean Walsh 86	1	Tom Crilly	3

The Workers' Party in the Dáil

It is now almost six years since The Workers' Party had deputies elected to the Dáil and it is therefore opportune to appraise our role there, and how effectively we have fulfilled that role.

There is an infantile view amongst some on the ultra left and some nationalist elements that it is 'unrevolutionary' to enter parliament. Such a view, as we know from experience, as well from revolutionary literature is isolationist and fails to use every opportunity to win the working class from their allegiance to the parties of capital.

Our role in parliament is to clearly demonstrate by our contributions and activities there, the fact that Irish society is a society divided on class despite their attempts to deny or hide this fact.

Our role is to clearly articulate The Workers' Party view and analysis of events of legislative proposals and motions while exposing abuses where they occur, and to build support for the Party among the working class and its allies.

Even our political opponents have acknowledged that the performance of The Workers' Party TD's in the last Dáil was exceptional and that we had an impact far out of proportion to our small numbers.

This has been possible because The Workers' Party is quite different to any of the other political parties in the Dáil and because Tomás MacGiolla and Proinsias DeRossa brought new levels of honesty, integrity, courage, commitment and efficiency into the Dáil Chamber. All of the other parties tend to be 'catch all' parties who try to be all things to all people — to support the exploiter and the exploited. The Workers' Party in the Dáil has made no secret of where it stands — firmly on the side of the workers and their families, the unemployed and others on social welfare. We have been proud to champion the rights and interests of the majority of people in this country — the working class.

Our two TD's were the most active deputies in the 24th Dáil. Between the November 1982 General Election and December 1986 more than 1,200 Dáil questions were tabled by our TD's. These have not been questions simply asking when Mr So and So is going to get his grant, but serious political questions aimed at pressurising the government into changing its policies or extracting information to strengthen the case for better treatment for working people.

It was for instance a series of Dáil questions from The Workers' Party which first exposed the scandal of the payment of Ministerial pensions to TD's and other office holders.

Other Dáil questions from The Workers' Party revealed the full extent of the unfair burden of taxation being carried by PAYE workers. Another Workers' Party question forced the disclosure of the cost of running state

cars for Ministers and Ministers of State. It was a question from The Workers' Party which set in train the events which led to the dismissal from office of Minister of State, Eddie Collins. These questions show that a small party in the Dáil can be an effective party.

In the course of the last Dáil, The Workers' Party tabled nine Private Members Bills — far more than any other party. These covered such areas as the provision of postal voting for disabled, the termination of ground rents, the abolition of local water charges, the prohibition of the use of Irish ports or airspace by any craft carrying nuclear weapons, a referendum to remove the constitutional prohibition on divorce, the removal from the Minister of the power to abolish local authorities, and the prohibition of the importation of nuclear devices (Reagan's black box). None of these Bills were supported by any of the other parties in the Dáil.

Our deputies have been among the most frequent and effective contributors to Dáil debates. The Workers' Party tabled amendments to more than 60 pieces of legislation during the life of the last Dáil. In the dying days of the Dáil, the casting vote of the Ceann Comhairle was needed to save the government from defeat on a Workers' Party amendment on the Extradition Bill.

The Workers' Party vigorously opposed the economic policies of the Coalition government because they were not in the interests of working class people. But our TD's have never believed in a policy of opposition, just for the sake of opposition. Each item of legislation has been considered on its individual merits. The Workers' Party has not been afraid to vote with the government on the few occasions on which they propose something worthwhile, such as the land tax or the Family Planning Bill. The Workers' Party has also used the Dáil to highlight the hypocrisy of parties who preach one thing in opposition and as history shows, do the exact opposite when in government. On many occasions in the Dáil, The Workers' Party has stood alone in opposition to Coalition, Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats.

The hard work put in over the past four years contributed to the improved Party vote in the February general election. The election of Pat McCartan and Joe Sherlock has strengthened the Dáil team and with four Deputies we will clearly be able to cover items that it simply was not possible to deal with when we had only two TD's.

However, members should also appreciate the difficulties that our Deputies face in the new Dáil. For most of the life of the 24th Dáil, we were the only party in opposition apart from Fianna Fáil. In this Dáil there are four parties in opposition, and the other three have a larger number of Deputies than The Workers' Party. Their spokespersons are likely to be given priority in all debates, they have sufficient numbers to qualify for private members time and 'priority' questions, both of which will be denied to us. Even though we now have four Deputies, they are likely to have to fight for every

Environment & Local Government Committee Report

INTRODUCTION

Following the Party's successes in the 1985 local elections, the demands on and the role of the Environment and Local Government Committee have greatly increased. During the year, the Committee has concerned itself with three main functions:

- (a) the co-ordination of the Party's efforts at Local Government level,
- (b) the development of policy, and
- (c) the identification of campaigning issues and the making of policy statements.

CO-ORDINATION — COUNCILLORS

1. The Committee decided to convene two national meetings of Party Councillors. The first of these took place on September 20th 1986. The second was scheduled for January 30th, but was postponed due to the General Election. A new date is being set.
2. The Committee recommended that an Environment and Local Government sub-committee of the Northern Ireland Committee should be established. It was decided that initially this would be convened by Cllr Tom French and would be composed of the Party's Councillors in Northern Ireland.
3. At the request of the EPC, the Committee prepared a set of guidelines on the relationship between the elected public representatives and the Party at local level. The guidelines provide a procedure for the resolution of any difficulties which arise in this area.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The Committee was responsible for the preparation of three sections of the Party's General Election Manifesto:

- (a) Local Government
- (b) Environment
- (c) Housing

(a) LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Party's policy on Local Government structures, power and funding is well developed, having been thoroughly considered by the Committee prior to the 1985 Local Elections. A comprehensive policy document was prepared at that stage.

(b) ENVIRONMENT

The Party's policy on Environmental issues is less comprehensive, and the Committee decided to address this during the year. Units of the Party were

invited to nominate members who would constitute a working group on this area. To date, the response has been poor. Some members were nominated, and it was decided to convene the group following the Ard Fheis, to allow for increased participation.

The Committee has corresponded with *Earthwatch* and with *Crann*. The Committee was represented at a Conference of Environmental Groups in Malahide last July on the subject of nuclear energy. The Chairperson of the Committee addressed the Dublin public meeting organised by *Greenpeace*.

(c) HOUSING

Government propaganda that 'the housing crisis is over' prompted the Committee to up-date the Party's policy on Housing Assistance and advice was given to the Dublin Regional Council in the organisation of a seminar on this issue.

The Committee prepared documentation on housing conditions, and a CEC resolution to this Ard Fheis summarises the main points of the up-dated Housing policy. It is intended to shortly publish a document on Housing.

CAMPAIGNS/POLICY STATEMENTS

The following work has been carried out by the Committee:

- (a) Sample Council Motions and Questions regarding *Water Charges* were drafted and circulated to Councillors and EMC. Specific advice was given to the EMC regarding the continuing campaign on the charges.
- (b) The Committee made proposals to the EPC regarding a campaign on the *Rent Increases* announced by the government in July. The emphasis in the campaign was to restore national negotiating rights to NATO and to freeze rent increases in the interim. A draft Council Motion was circulated in connection with this.
- (c) A detailed response was prepared for the organisers of the *Dublin in Crisis* conference to a questionnaire which they issued regarding Environmental issues in Dublin. This conference was re-convened on February 8th to consider the response of the political parties. The Workers' Party's response was given favourable press comment.
- (d) A questionnaire from *An Taisce* regarding planning issues was completed and returned.
- (e) A statement was issued regarding the major *flooding* which occurred in August and highlighting the inadequacy of road/street drainage.
- (f) A number of statements were issued regarding *mortgage* increases. The Committee submitted information to the Dáil office for use during the debates on the Building Societies' Bill, and for use in a Mortgage Leaflet which was published before Christmas.
- (g) A statement was issued regarding the Supreme Court decision on compensation for a developer who failed to get planning permission (the *Ravenshill* case).

- (h) A statement on the *Kowloon Bridge* disaster highlighted the danger of TNT, but only received scant coverage — although the TNT danger subsequently became a major concern in press feature articles on the issue.
- (i) A recommendation was made to the EPC that a campaign to *Save the Irish Sea* be launched by the Party. This would highlight the combined problems of Sellafield, nuclear subs, pollution and inadequate coastline facilities. It is intended to activate this campaign after the Ard Fheis.

Finance Committee Report

At the beginning of the year the Finance Committee set two tasks for itself. First we needed to ensure that the Party had sufficient income to meet all budgeted needs within reasonable limits of overspill. Within that context we also needed a reserve fund for planned expansion, emergencies or whatever might be decided. Our other objective was to help each individual constituency to establish solvency, to clear outstanding debts, pay its minimum guaranteed levy to Head Office and be able to fight an election.

In the first instance therefore the Finance Committee drew up a budget of current Party expenditure and income based on comparable figures for 85/86, and also taking into account all relevant policy decisions of the Ard Fheis, e.g. that 100% of Party stamp money be returned to the Party centre. The question of the Party reserve fund was then linked to developing reserve funds at local level. Both of these objectives were met, in part at least, by the establishment of the Workers' Party Development Fund. As was explained in the promotional literature, the total balance of the income over expenditure in the Development Fund draw will be in the region of £16,000. Our analysis of the participants and their constituency of origin show that the £16,000 will be divided almost equally as between Head Office Reserve Fund and credits to local constituencies.

From feed-back which we have received from constituencies it is clear that the credits available were a major incentive and selling point in various local areas. Depending on certain levels of recruitment, constituencies were given 25% — or 33 1/3% of the total subscriptions gained against general election printing. At least two constituencies — both high spenders — have broken the back of their general election printing bills by these credits. Working forward from the success of this draw it is planned that next year we will organise a similar draw with more participants, larger and more attractive prizes and an equally generous initiative scheme for local areas.

Other joint ventures in the fund raising areas have also been undertaken. This year for example each constituency from the Dublin/Kildare/Wicklow area was allowed to run its own stall at our annual Irish People sale of work. This again put constituencies in a no loss situation where all their income was actual profit and available to go into the funds for the then imminent general election. This year's Ard Fheis draw is a further example of the same principle. Here local areas retain 50% of gross sales, with Head Office paying printing, prizes and administration costs out of its 50%. This is an idea that could be taken up and developed into a regular quarterly or monthly event.

Since last year's Ard Fheis the Party has fought a referendum campaign and a four week general election campaign in the south and is facing a

general election in Northern Ireland within the next few months. All of this has, and will, put very great strains on the financial resources of the Party. Despite intensive fund raising efforts for many months prior to the election, we were still forced to borrow very heavily — £20,000 from our bankers to tide us over the election period. This money must now be paid back with interest, along with substantial outstanding bills to printers and suppliers and at the same time facing the prospect of the Northern Ireland general election.

The Committee, or members acting on its behalf, has already met most constituencies to attempt to work out a local strategy for fund raising and to emphasise the importance of sending whatever money is raised both regularly and frequently to Head Office. Two disturbing features also emerged from our local meetings. Many constituencies felt a much greater sense of urgency in clearing local bills than in attempting to discharge their responsibility to Head Office. The other worrying feature is the number of constituencies which have contracted local bank loans without any reference to Head Office. In some instances, to make matters worse, much of this cash was essentially dissipated on non-essentials throughout the election campaign. From now on it must be clear that local areas should only contract bank loans for a specified budgeted purpose and after prior consultation with the finance committee. Otherwise some areas will sink into a mire of local and national debt and won't be able to avail of any credit facilities when a real crunch comes.

One of the single largest recurrent items of expenditure both locally and nationally is the Party's annual Ard Fheis. Especially now at a time of very high unemployment it is essential that delegates to meetings are picked on their suitability and not on their ability to pay their own way.

Branches therefore must start thinking in terms of having funds available to meet travel and attendant expenses and people are already aware of the cost to Head Office in terms of hire charges, insurance, printing, etc. for the Ard Fheis. This year, for the first time, money generated by the Ard Fheis draw will be available to branches to fund their delegates if the need arises. Alas, this is a very haphazard kind of arrangement, and it is an area to which the Finance Committee, in consultation with the local organisations, intend to devote more time next year.

National collections are, in many areas, the only sustained finance raising exercises engaged in throughout the year. The Finance Committee organised the permits for the vast majority of collections and helped out with advice and personnel in all areas where this was requested (and indeed in some areas where it was not requested).

It is still a fact, indeed a sad fact, that despite ten years of experience

many national collections are worfully organised and unprofessional, while most of the rest, while being organised, are organised on a purely mechanistic level. With a minority of notable exceptions the political role and the political possibilities of our national collections is being totally ignored. The Party's national collection, or May Day collections organised in conjunction with the youth movement, offer us an ideal opportunity to be on the streets, meeting people, propagating our political message and making money. Easter collections organised in association with the National Commemoration Committee, where permits still exist, are also a most lucrative source of finance and should be vigorously pursued. While most areas have been diligent in paying their national levy from the collection funds, there are still large sums outstanding.

In Northern Ireland we are faced with a situation where the law does not allow for political parties gaining a permit for any sort of public collection. This obviously creates difficulties and places restraints on the ability of the local organisations to generate funds for the party. While most areas have surmounted this difficulty, we would call for a greater effort from those constituencies outside of Belfast in the fund raising efforts for the Party Centre. We ask in particular, that the Regional Representatives to the CEC would follow up those areas which have not met their target and ensure that money which should go to meet the National Collection/Levy is not otherwise spent on local campaigns, paper bills or whatever.

Over the course of last year the Finance Committee had hoped to produce a standard budget plan for use by all constituencies and branch treasurers. Unfortunately, for various reasons this did not happen. It is now our objective that this document will be available within a few weeks — in time for branch AGMs and for use from then on in. The role of branch and constituency treasurer is also an area that needs to be clarified. For example, branch treasurers cannot be directed to spend Irish People money, or party stamp money, on anything other than the above two items, no matter what the perceived urgency of something else at local level. Similarly, the treasurer, or the treasurer in consultation with any other branch/constituency officer, cannot arrogate to themselves the right to contract for materials or purchase items on behalf of the local party without express authorisation from a properly convened party meeting.

One of the important functions of local treasurers is to ensure that the branch is affiliated, members registered, and that party cards are stamped up to date. On the latter item, and to ensure that members do not slip seriously into arrears, we would suggest that the treasurer be allowed a float, say perhaps £50, for the purchase of stamps, and this would greatly streamline and simplify the situation for all concerned.

Health & Social Services Report

Context

It was another year of turmoil in the health and social services. Hospital cutbacks continued; eight hospitals were closed; and three new, luxury, private hospitals opened. The deficiencies of the social welfare system were, for the first time, 'officially' analysed and documented; and remedies proposed. But the mammoth Report of the Commission on Social Welfare found little favour with the conservative parties or the establishment economists and was hastily consigned to oblivion. Meanwhile more and more people were forced to depend, for longer and longer periods, on social welfare payments which the Commission had clearly shown to be utterly inadequate.

The main developments of the year were the continuing, steady increase in poverty in Ireland; the publication of the Commission's Report (and the various reactions to it); the climax of the long-running saga about implementing 'equality' in the social welfare system (and the Coalition's hasty retreat once the massive cuts involved brought forth some effective protest); a number of significant court cases — most notably the Hamilton judgement on SPUC v the Clinics, with its frightening implications for women's health and for civil rights generally; the defeat of the divorce referendum, which also had major social implications; and, of course, Fianna Fáil's savage Budget in March 1987.

COMMITTEE'S WORK

In this situation, the amount of work that the Committee felt it *should* have been doing was simply enormous. Committee members would have to have dropped all other Party work — and more — in order to make any major impact on it. This was not possible; and so, inevitably, there was a degree of frustration and irritation at the lack of time and resources available to tackle the many issues requiring attention.

The Committee met on only four occasions during the year; but in between it produced a reasonable amount of material, especially in the run-up to the Feb. 1987 General Election and during the campaign. It also kept in regular contact with the Party's TDs and PRO — particularly during the 'equality cuts' fiasco and the post-Budget debates.

In Nov. 1986, the Committee prepared a Response to the Commission on Social Welfare. It prepared detailed notes on the social welfare 'equality' cuts, which were circulated widely within the Party; and it drafted a leaflet about the cuts which was distributed at Labour Exchanges and a protest march organised by the Dublin Council of Trade Unions.

In the run-up to the election, material on the Party's health and social

welfare policies was prepared for inclusion in the Manifesto and a special leaflet for the Employment Exchanges was drafted. Material for press statements was also provided.

Work also continued on the compilation of a major document on the health services. This was interrupted by the election but it was almost completed by April 1987.

In the wake of the disastrous Fianna Fáil Budget of March 1987, the Committee provided reactions and information for use in speeches, press statements and a post-Budget leaflet; and, in early April 1987, began drafting a leaflet on 'The Future of the Health Services', hopefully for wide distribution in the subsequent 4—6 months.

Other work included meetings with the National Association for Mental Handicap, the National Campaign for Welfare Reform, and one or two Party branches seeking discussions about health policy.

NORTHERN IRELAND

The Party has maintained its high profile on health-related matters in Northern Ireland over the past twelve months. In Nov. 1986 a Party delegation met with Health Minister Mr Needham to discuss the implications of the proposed regional strategic plan for Health and Social Services over the five years 1987—1992 and, in particular, to ascertain the level of financial support which would be made available to the four Boards to achieve the objectives of the strategy.

Subsequent to that meeting a meeting took place with officers of the Eastern Health and Social Services Board to discuss their proposals for the incoming year and, elections permitting, it is hoped to arrange similar meetings with the Southern, Western and Northern Boards in the next few weeks.

It is now evident that the government are hell bent on funding any much needed and progressive changes and developments in the health service (such as comprehensive cervical cancer screening and breast cancer screening) from reduced spending on existing services, especially in the acute hospital sector. This is a proposition which this Party rejects and over the next year much attention will have to be given to ascertaining the impact of such provision on patient care.

New public health legislation, for which the Party has campaigned for many years, is now being drafted and the Party will be responding to the draft proposals when published.

An area where much vigilance will be required in coming years is the growth of private nursing homes for the elderly. It is not inaccurate to describe this as one of Northern Ireland's 'growth industries'. But the quality of care, pay and conditions of staff and physical environs for the inmates must be continually monitored. It is apparent that the Boards cannot, and

will not, impose the sanctions they could and should for breach of regulations as they would then have to take responsibility for care.

April 6th 1987 was also the day when the first major changes from the Fowler Review of Social Security Benefits took place. These changes cannot be reversed until there is a change of government. But Workers' Party branches will be alert to the impact of such sweeping changes and withdrawal of grants from the least well-off sections of the community.

FUTURE WORK — Health & Social Welfare

The immediate future will be dominated by Fianna Fáil's budgetary strategy and the need for our Party to spell out its social, economic and political consequences. On social welfare, Fianna Fáil is intent on making further cuts (e.g. in pay-related benefits); on making life more difficult for social welfare recipients; and on burying the recommendations of the Commission on Social Welfare. On health, it has embarked on a systematic dismantling of the health service, forcing more and more people into VHI through the introduction of new hospital charges and thus paving the way for the introduction of even more charges in the future. This policy also reinforces the 'two-tier' health care system, starving the public one further and driving a higher and higher proportion of the population away from its increasingly inferior services into expensive, private medicine, which most can ill afford.

These lessons have not yet been widely learnt and a great deal of work will have to be done to convince the general public that the cuts, closures and charges are in fact false economies for which future generations will have to pay dearly.

THE HAMILTON JUDGEMENT

The long-term implications of the Hamilton ruling, in the High Court case brought by SPUC against the so-called 'abortion referral' Clinics, are also grave. A precedent has now been set which removes the constitutional right to information — not merely about abortion but also quite probably about certain forms of contraception (because of Hamilton's definition as to when life begins).

The ruling also gives grounds for concern about the constitutional right to life of *all* pregnant women in Ireland (not just those with unwanted pregnancies) because this right now appears to be less than that of a foetus. Furthermore, the ruling undermines the traditional, unique and confidential doctor—patient relationship. Many doctors will now be afraid to discuss unwanted pregnancies with their patients; patients will be afraid to seek advice when they need it, or counselling after having abortions (which they will continue to do); and backstreet abortion, with its dangerous implications for women's health, is likely to increase.

The Committee believes that the Party should be more actively involved in

condemning this ruling and in campaigning for its reappraisal and reversal; but its resources have not stretched to undertaking the necessary work.

RESOURCES

This is also the case in a number of other areas. The Committee would like to initiate major campaigns on social welfare, on health cuts and the future of the health service, on the plight of the elderly, on the state of the psychiatric hospitals, on the right to all information relevant to people's mental and/or physical health, and on several other important issues.

At present, however, the Committee's resources appear (to itself, at any rate) to be insufficient. It needs more people with time, commitment and if possible some expertise, to contribute to its work — either through membership of the Committee or by working with Committee members in smaller sub-groups to tackle particular areas of concern; or simply by channelling information and ideas to the Committee via any of its members.

In other words, the Committee believes that there are untapped resources within the Party — people with important contributions to make in this large area of everyday experience — and appeals to these people to come forward with those contributions.

National Women's Committee Report

This year's National Women's Committee comprised MARGARET O'LEARY /Chair, VALERIE DESMOND (Cork), ANGELA CASSIDY (Leixlip), TRIONA DOONEY (Dublin), MARY BUNTING (Northern Ireland Region), ELAINE RUSH (Belfast) and JANE FOREMAN (Dublin).

The National Women's Committee was unfortunately not finally ratified until the CEC meeting in September which gave us a brief working year. However the Women's Committee met on five occasions during the period from September to March. The initial meeting was open to all members particularly interested in the work of the NWC and 17 areas around the country were represented at which consensus was reached on a programme of priorities for the coming months. We will be continuing our practice this year of having each alternate meeting of the NWC an open forum to which all present can contribute and at which time is allowed for educational discussion on topical matters.

Since last year's report there has been a steady increase in the numbers of women members joining the Party and we expect women supporters who were active during the election campaign to follow up their commitment by applying for full membership.

However, the unequal development of the Party throughout the country is an issue that is permanently on the agenda. There are still, unbelievably, some areas without even one woman member. With the help of local branches we will initiate a programme of positive action in these areas for recruitment.

Last year's Ard Fheis made it clear that the Party's commitment for full human dignity and rights for women is a central part of our struggle for socialism.

We would like to be confident that all branches are convinced of the necessity to develop and adapt flexible methods of organisation to allow us to tap the reserve of commitment and talent among women. Though it is a matter for concern that some branches have a very low percentage of women members, there *are* many areas however where the ratio of women members has levelled out in recent years and it is a fact that women share a fair proportion of responsible positions within the local organisation.

Although some members were a little disappointed that only four of our general election candidates were women, this was a considerable improvement on the last time round when we had none at all.

The blame for the lack of female contenders for the position of candidate, whether for elections or as nominees to Party committees, must lie squarely with the branches. If our organisational structures are flexible enough at

local level, women will be able to play their full role as full Party members and use their talents at any level on behalf of the Party.

There was, naturally, disappointment last year at the few women who were elected to the Ard Comhairle but again this is a reflection on the branches. Progress within the Party must commence at branch level and permeate throughout all the structures of the organisation. In this respect it is urgent and vital that all women members who are nominated to positions of responsibility in the Party should accept such positions.

Internal Education is essential to the growth of political consciousness and the Women's Committee will be working closely with the Education Committee to this end as we have on other matters during the year with the Health & Social Welfare and Local Government Committees. We will be co-operating during the coming months on a campaign to be spearheaded by our TDs and Councillors to highlight the need for free and easily available facilities for screening for cervical cancer — a disease which causes the unnecessary deaths of many Irish women each year.

The National Women's Committee welcomes feed-back from branches on any area related to our work on their behalf and suggestions as to how we can best serve areas in their work locally. We are at present compiling an education and information pack which will be useful to any member called upon to represent the Party at public meetings, seminars or local groups.

We intend the special Womens View supplement marking Women's Day to be followed by others during the year with a view to re-launching the magazine this time next year.

On the broader front the Women's Committee had a useful meeting with Council for the Status of Women. This meeting was of mutual benefit and contact at different levels will be maintained on an ongoing basis.

The Party was represented at last September's Council of Europe Conference on Women in Local and Regional Life by Councillor Liz Hackett from Galway. It is important that the Party send representation next June to the World Congress of Women for Peace and Disarmament which will be held in Moscow.

Economic Affairs Committee Report

Since the last Ard Fheis the Economic Affairs Committee has engaged in a variety of activities in the areas within the terms of its brief.

The Committee's activities were mainly concentrated in three areas:

- ★ Research and the presenting of material with a view to publication by the Party.
- ★ Organisation and discussion with a view to working out in detail and putting into operation various aspects of Party policy.
- ★ Research carried out with a view to supplying information to various local areas and for our TDs.

THE SINGLE EUROPEAN ACT

Economic Affairs helped in the research and putting together the EEC study — *Ireland and the Single European Act*. It was a contribution to our Party's campaign against the signing of the Single European Act in an unamended form. Economic Affairs for several years carried out continual research on developments in the EEC. We are still engaged in this work.

The Single European Act, when fully implemented, will bring about serious change in some areas of our economy.

THE NATIONAL DEBT

Economic Affairs has carried out research on the National debt, borrowing, foreign and domestic, and presented an alternative policy to the 'cuts policy' advocated by all other parties with varying degrees of agreement.

The Party now has at its disposal a wide range of information on the subject of the National Debt, Borrowing, The Black Hole, the Irish Stock Exchange and The Irish Money Market. This information is being put together and will be submitted to the Party in the form of a study suitable for publication.

FARMING AND THE FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRY

The proposals put forward in last year's Farming and Food Industry Study are now being justified by developments in those industries. We said that intervention payments would be cut back and this is now happening. We said that farmers would be forced to develop in new directions and this is now beginning to happen. Organisations related to farming and progressive parts of farming organisations are now beginning to take note of Workers' Party policy on farming and food.

There is evidence of an increasing public awareness of the Party's contribution to this side of industrial life in the fact that bodies connected with farming have sent invitations to the Party to attend functions connected with farming.

THE 'LEISURE SOCIETY' and 'UNEMPLOYMENT WITH DIGNITY' PROPAGANDA

Economic Affairs in the past year has been engaged in efforts to combat

propaganda in favour of a so-called 'leisure society' and 'unemployment with dignity' propaganda. We regard both propositions as two sides of the same coin and both arguments are a part of the establishment's efforts to escape responsibility for present high levels of unemployment. We regard this as a necessary part of the battle against mass unemployment and the human misery which it causes.

Job creation plans are the only means which we can use to combat establishment propaganda designed to escape responsibility for the present economic mess.

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS WORK NOW IN THE COURSE OF PREPARATION

Work is now in preparation on the Northern Ireland Economy. Special attention is being given to job creation based on the natural resources or prospective natural resources which exist or can be produced within Northern Ireland. This work will be completed soon and will be submitted to the Party for publication.

Two other bodies of work are almost completed in research form — one on the fishing industry and the other on forestry. Work is also in progress on an updated edition of *An End to the Crisis*. This work should be ready for submission to the Party in the not too distant future. This document will take into consideration the economic plans of the new Fianna Fáil Government — when they are announced. So far they have published little material on what they plan to do in government.

From what little they have published it is important to note that the percentage increase in the value of the Gross Domestic Product that they are talking about will — even if the targets are reached — fall far short of what is needed to make any real impact on our problem of mass unemployment.

In our propaganda it is important to remember that Fianna Fáil is the traditional party of emigration. They will, no doubt, hope that emigration will come to their aid again. If the Party wants to hit Fianna Fáil on their emigration record the information is available. It is unlikely that the British supply of jobs will equal the supply of the 1950s and '60s. Maggie Thatcher is following the same policy as both Fianna Fáil and the Coalition adopted here — attack the Public Sector and look after the interests of the Money Market and the property speculators.

THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The Public Sector is under increasingly bitter attack by the establishment. It is sometimes forgotten that the Public Sector is a productive sector and employs many productive blue-collar workers as well as, of course, white-collar workers.

During the past year a number of Worker Directors have talked to our Party and all were aware of our Party's record of defence of the Public Sector of the economy. These workers are to an increasing extent coming to

accept our proposition — that the Public Sector must become the engine of growth in the economy. The Trade Union Movement is becoming increasingly active in this area.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

This year the various specialist committees have been asked to suggest ways in which their activities can be improved and their input into the Party increased.

Our Party is at present organised in various ways but by far the greatest of the collective effort goes into local organisation. This is as it should be because local organisation is our means of direct contact with people at local level. These people elect our Councillors and Dáil Deputies.

However, for many years it has been Party policy to encourage our Party members to be active in 'organisations of the people'. Organisations of the people are used by ordinary people to defend their interests; to agitate on matters concerning their interests. People in organisations of this kind constantly examine the political struggles which have an impact on their daily lives. Our Party's voice must be heard in mass organisations of the people. We must recognise that a lot more than talking to citizens through our propaganda or to people as individuals in social surroundings is needed if we are to hope to influence events in this time of very serious economic crisis. We must meet with and talk to the organised people as well as to the individual citizen.

The specialist committees of our Party are best suited — because of the nature of the work the Party has directed them to perform — to advise on and to develop this work. Work of this kind makes a substantial contribution to the development of our Party's influence in society.

The economies on the island of Ireland are in total a very extensive subject. It is for this reason that the Research Section of Economic Affairs and its various project workers are kept constantly busy. The Party's response to some crisis in a particular part of the economy needs to be delivered quickly, in an educated manner and in detail.

It is for this reason that an appeal is made for volunteers for this work at every Ard Fheis and this appeal has been made for the last ten years. Appeals for volunteers made in this way have produced little or no result. People have responded better to personal approaches and to a low-key explanation of what is required of them if they agree to do this work.

This work, in progress all the time, comes to the surface when some part of it — usually to meet a pressing Party political need — is studied in detail, passed and published by the Party.

I mention this method of work for two main reasons. It is a method of work which could be adopted, with political profit to the Party, in other areas. We need to quote our own research efforts because they are, in fact,

our policy, rather than the production of others, and they are usually establishment research groups. Our Party members must get into the habit of doing this on the media. We have no reason to be other than confident of our research material and it is better than anything else on offer.

It is beyond doubt that economic issues — taxation, jobs, markets, the Public Sector, farming, the money market, the food industry, the black hole, and various economic aspects of the EEC, will assume an ever increasing importance in the lives of all who live on this island. They will have an ever increasing importance in the political life of this island.

Publicity and Communications Committee Report

The Publicity and Communications Committee did not operate during the last twelve months, mainly because the members of the committee were so involved in the day to day work of publicity and the production of our own publications.

The high volume of press statements from the national press office continued during the past year with an average of almost 30 press items per month being issued, covering all aspects of Party policy and commenting on almost all major political, social and economic issues.

The effort put in to publicity was not, with a few exceptions, reflected in column inches in the papers. All of the national papers continued to reflect a clear right wing orientation, with the Progressive Democrats being the flavour of the moment for most of the national papers. In this situation, it was more and more difficult for parties on the left, or the trade union movement, or anyone who attempted to articulate the case for the working class, to get fair and reasonable coverage — a phenomenon which was most evident in the coverage of the general election.

A major effort was put into preparations for publicity for the general election. Training sessions on publicity techniques were included in all the pre-election seminars for election officers. Most of the candidates in the key areas received some coaching in radio and television techniques, and this was reflected in the very effective performances by most of our candidates on radio and television during the election campaign. The aim must now be to ensure that all candidates for the next election, and indeed anyone who is likely to be appearing on behalf of the Party on radio and television, gets the training and advice necessary to enable them to take full advantage of the opportunities created by appearances on these media. The days of sticking people before a mike or television camera and hoping for the best must be a thing of the past.

During the course of the election campaign 103 separate press statements were issued from the national press office. The coverage we got in the national press was most disappointing, and there was clearly an attempt to write The Workers' Party out of the picture altogether. Two examples of this will give some idea of the picture. The *Evening Press* on the eve of the election, and the *Irish Press* and the *Irish Independent* on polling day all carried major articles summarising the policies of the parties on most major issues. The Workers' Party was the only party in the Dáil to have been excluded from all three articles. Nor was the *Irish Press* much better. In the last week of the campaign the Party organised three major events — the launch of a comprehensive policy document on job creation, the Party's final

press conference, and an enthusiastic, well attended final rally in the Mansion House. 'The paper of record' did not consider it worthwhile to send anyone to cover any of these events. *The Irish Times* is clearly the paper of record if you want a record of the racing results but not, if you want a record of significant political events.

We have reason at Ard Fheiseanna in the past to be strongly critical of RTE, but it must be said in all fairness, that there was an attempt by RTE to ensure that smaller parties, like The Workers' Party received reasonable and fair coverage during the election campaign. There were of course programmes from which we were excluded, which we felt we should have been involved in, but in general the RTE coverage of the election was far fairer than that of the printed media.

The difference between RTE and the printed media is, of course, that there is an obligation on RTE under the Broadcasting Authority Act to be fair and impartial in political coverage. No such obligation exists in relation to the printed media. The freedom of the press, which we hear so much about in this country, also clearly includes the freedom to discriminate, the freedom to ignore, and the freedom to reflect the commercial and political interests of the proprietor.

With the return of the Fianna Fáil government, there is likely to be an attempt again to legislate for some sort of commercial radio. It is vitally important that any such legislation should include the obligation of political fairness and impartiality on any radio stations which may be set up.

One of the outstanding successes of our general election campaign was the party political broadcast. This was produced for a fraction of the money Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael were spending on broadcasts of similar length. There was a great response among our members and supporters, and indeed the general public to the originality and wit of the broadcast. It was an attempt to catch the public attention by doing something completely different and it succeeded.

The election focussed attention once again on the growing influence of paid advertising in the electoral process here. The Workers' Party did no advertising in the national media and very limited advertising in the provincial press, simply because we do not have the money for it, but the conservative parties spent literally millions of pounds on advertising. This clearly given an unfair advantage to the conservative parties who have the wealthy backers to fund their advertising campaigns. Any reform of our electoral law should include a restriction on the amount of money that any party can spend on paid advertising.

NORTHERN IRELAND

During the past year our relationship with the various media in Northern Ireland has continued to provide very mixed results. There has been

frustration and annoyance when we see the Party's views and efforts ignored or distorted, but there have been a number of occasions when the meticulous work and unique class perspective which the various Workers' Party departments and spokespersons have brought to political, economic and social issues, have paid off in terms of coverage, and a public profile for The Workers' Party much higher than a hostile sectarian establishment would wish.

Such inroads can only be made by forceful presentation and vigorous lobbying of the journalists, producers, editors etc., who work in the various media outlets. The Party's coverage on local radio, in Northern Ireland in particular, has been notable: We continue to lose out in terms of TV coverage, where standard sectarian nationalist/unionist confrontations tend to be the order of the day. In the local newspapers a continuing stream of press releases has partial success in keeping the Party's views before the public. In the *Belfast Telegraph* and the *Newsletter* we receive reasonably fair coverage, even if somewhat low key. In the other major daily, *The Irish News*, we consistently find our Party's statements and activities written out of news stories and political matters reported in a manner slanted heavily towards nationalist politicians and to the detriment of The Workers' Party.

PUBLICATIONS

In the situation where it is so difficult to get decent coverage in the national press, our own publications take on an added importance. The importance of the *Irish People* as an organiser and as a vehicle for raising the political consciousness of the people has been proven over the years. The role of the paper is restricted by its limited size, which is of course dictated by financial constraints. Over the past years there have been a number of attempts to get around these problems. Two supplements were produced with the *Irish People* — one a report dealing with last year's Ard Fheis and the other dealing with women's issues to mark International Women's Day in March. One of the most significant developments in relation to the *Irish People* was the launch last September of a Cork issue of the paper. This has been an outstanding success, and the staff of the paper, as well as the members in Cork who have been supplying the material for the issue, deserve all credit for its success.

The first issue of *Report* was produced in November last. *Report* was produced to fill a need which many people had long felt existed for a magazine aimed primarily at members and supporters which would inform readers of the Party's position on various issues and stimulate thought and political discussion. The first was very well received, but unfortunately the second issue which had been prepared for publication in January was delayed due to the general election. At the time of writing the second issue is now ready again for publication and should be available in time for the Ard Fheis.

Justice & Civil Liberties Committee Report

Since the last Ard Fheis the Justice & Civil Liberties Committee has considered a number of issues arising in the Dáil. These include:

Status of Children Bill

Children (Care and Protection) Bill

Adoption Bill

Extradition Bill

(allowing Ireland to accede to the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism)

Referendum on Divorce

(The Committee prepared substantial amounts of briefing material and press statements)

Courts Bill

(Which proposed the abolition of juries in Civil cases).

Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill

RAPE CRISIS CENTRE

The Committee examined proposals put forward by the Rape Crisis Centre for major reform of the law relating to rape and the procedures by which rape cases are prosecuted through the Courts. The Party has given its support to these proposals.

IRISH ASSOCIATION FOR VICTIM SUPPORT

A submission from this Association was discussed and a detailed report is being prepared by a Committee member.

IRISH COUNCIL AGAINST BLOOD SPORTS

This group contacted the Party seeking support for legislation to ban enclosed hare coursing. The EPC accepted the Committee's recommendation that such legislation should have our support.

SMALL CLAIMS COURTS

The Committee have examined the possibility of Small Claims Courts being set up and feel that this is something that is long overdue. During the year the Committee discussed Civil Liberties in general and it was felt that branches should try and pinpoint areas in their own locality where Civil Liberties may be eroded and at some stage it was felt that a Seminar could be organised in this regard.

The Committee, in conjunction with the National Women's Committee, held a Seminar in April on the general theme of "Women, Violence and the

Law" which focussed on aspects of violence against women which were of increasing public concern and tried to identify the most urgent and effective legislation and other measures required to combat them. The report of this Seminar will be discussed by the Committees concerned with a view to formulating proposals to be raised by Party representatives at local as well as national level.

RAPE CRISIS CENTRE

The Committee examined proposals put forward by the Rape Crisis Centre for major reform of the law relating to rape and the procedure by which rape cases are prosecuted. The Party has given its support to these proposals.

IRISH ASSOCIATION FOR VICTIM SUPPORT

A petition from the Association was discussed and a similar petition being prepared by a Committee member.

IRISH COUNCIL AGAINST BLOOD SPORTS

The committee welcomed the Party's strong support for legislation to ban blood sports. The Bill, introduced by the Committee, will ensure that such legislation should have our support.

SMALL CLAIMS COURTS

The Committee have examined the question of Small Claims Courts. The Committee have agreed to set up a sub-committee to examine the question of Small Claims Courts. The Committee have agreed to set up a sub-committee to examine the question of Small Claims Courts. The Committee have agreed to set up a sub-committee to examine the question of Small Claims Courts.

Cultural Committee Report

The Committee met at regular intervals once it was established. We had a certain amount of difficulty attracting members. However we established our brief to be firstly the drawing up of a policy document on Arts, Culture and Sport. This policy document is now in the process of being edited and revised. We hope that publication of same can be carried out before the Summer. A later project was to organize some cultural activities and seminars. At present our attention has been on the drawing up of the document as the first step.

The main point which we will emphasise in the policy document is that the aim of the Workers' Party cultural policy is to establish democratic access to the richness of cultural life. Our task is to change the situation where culture is identified with a narrow elite who are interested in the arts and in doing so encourage the development of a radical culture of change.

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

CULTURAL WORKERS

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

DEMOCRATIC ACCESS

There is a need to ensure that cultural activities can be participated in by all, particularly at local level. This requires greater access to culture for all through the lowering of the cost of cultural activities. Public funding of the arts must be based on allowing greater accessibility and in eliminating elitism.

The recent decision to charge entry fees to the National Museum is an example of how the poor are being squeezed out of cultural life. It is a move to which we are vehemently opposed.

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

We will be proposing the following:

1. Under local government —

- ★ The employment of local arts officers.
- ★ The inclusion of facilities for exhibitions and cultural events in leisure and community centres.

2. At national government level —

- ★ The establishment of a new and specific welfare category of artist.
- ★ Increased funding of the Arts Council.
- ★ Trade union representation on the board of the Arts Council.
- ★ The mandatory inclusion of one Arts subject in every school curriculum and an end to the principle of adult education as a self-financing exercise.
- ★ The establishment of an Irish national committee of UNESCO.

PHYSICAL CULTURE AND SPORT

In Ireland the lack of co-operation among the various sporting organisations has led to the proliferation of sub-standard sporting facilities. The introduction of the National Lottery and its subsequent financing of sport should be conditional on greater state and community involvement to allow for the full and planned use of sporting facilities.

“Sport for All” and competitive championship sport should be seen as twin pillars of the same entity under the title of Physical Culture with the popular profit — making sports make a contribution to minor but culturally valid sporting disciplines.

All forms of discrimination in sport against women and the working class must be brought to an end through the extension of anti-discrimination legislation.

RESEARCH

Research into contemporary culture, particularly among working class youth is ignored. The Workers’ Party calls for a school of research to tackle contemporary artistic and recreational problems.

CINEMA AND VIDEO

The creation of a national film industry and the development of a video industry is culturally and economically of prime importance. The opportunities for job-creation exist in these areas yet Ireland is notorious for having the least developed film industry in all of Europe.

The potential here is hopelessly under-utilised. Ireland has, per capita, one of the largest cinema-going populations in the world to provide a home market and the burgeoning interest in Irish culture particularly in continental Europe would ensure a valuable export market for films and videos produced in Ireland by Irish artists.

BROADCASTING

Television and Radio, while remaining in public ownership must be expanded.

- The government should appoint a Community Radio Authority and set up locally-based boards subject to the same obligations as RTE with regard to impartiality.

- ★ The membership of the RTE authority should be drawn from a broad section of society and include directly elected representatives of RTE workers.

ARCHITECTURAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

While the National Monuments Bill has brought improvements, the Office of Public Works needs far greater resources to protect our archaeological and architectural heritage for the future at a time when its destruction has become a major problem.

There are fine examples of State involvement in conservation such as the restoration of the Royal Hospital in Kilmainham but much of our heritage is still in private hands and under threat.

Once again access by the public to its own heritage should be a major criterion for any assistance given by the State towards the preservation of sites of archaeological or architectural importance.

LEISURE

Even under conditions of full employment, leisure will become increasingly important. For many, particularly those living in the sprawling new suburbs, leisure facilities are minimal or even non-existent.

A leisure plan should be adopted by each local authority and should be properly funded by Central Government. Existing leisure resources, including those under private control, should be mobilised to expand and democratise the range of leisure activities open to the public. Swimming pools, leisure centres, outdoor pursuits centres, etc. should all be provided as an essential need in modern society. The provision of proper public leisure facilities would greatly reduce alcohol and drugs abuse among the young and ultimately contribute to a reduction in the crime rate.

An increasing danger is the exploitation of young people by a new breed of entrepreneur in the areas of leisure and recreation. This Party led the successful campaign for the outlawing of gaming machines in Dublin and other areas of the country, and will continue to fight against other forms of exploitation of this nature.

Electoral & Recruitment Committee Report

Since our last Ard Fheis the Party has been almost totally immersed in election contests and preparations. The recent general election in the Republic saw our vote increase once again, and our number of deputies increase also. There will likely be Westminster elections in the coming months and we will make gains here as well.

What we have said time and again over the years proved true in the recent Dáil contest — we will only make gains where the work has been done. There are particular factors which interfere with this maxim but nevertheless there is no substitute for a good organisation. We should have made substantially better gains in some constituencies than we did, and we must examine in depth our strategies in these areas. We made substantial gains in others and it is more important to examine these and learn from them.

A thorough examination has begun of all aspects of the recent campaign. Meetings have taken place or are being organised for all constituencies to discuss all factors from material to canvass. Lack of thorough canvassing is a weakness in many areas.

We endeavoured to once more improve on the quality of material and to a large extent achieved this. Over 2½ million pieces of material were distributed centrally which was no mean task for a Party of our size.

The campaign committee aimed to keep our profile up front and this was achieved. We aimed at specific sectors of the community and to a large degree succeeded, even if it now means 'we told you so!' rather than first preference votes. It is important to note that we can't do or undo twelve months' work in three or four weeks. The creation of a class conscious electorate is a slow, arduous task which will only be achieved over months and years of class conscious political activity.

While there is no room for complacency in any of our general election results, the public perception has been overwhelmingly positive and we must build on this. Many constituencies have now set about building on this reaction and branches are sprouting up in many new areas. A systematic approach is required to go back through the Register of Electors and identify geographical areas of support. These contrasted with tally results should make the task of building considerably easier. Commence door-to-door paper sales, if not already being done, in our areas of strength. In short, copperfasten support and use it to build in other areas. Remember that if we can identify our strong areas so can the opposition. Preparations should commence for the next local elections and we must be fully confident that we have a full picture of our strength and required vote in each ward or local electoral division.

The 'nuts and bolts' of Party building remain to be local political campaigning, well run advice centres, paper sales, and regular communication with supporters. Trying to live through the local or national media or flying visits to areas are largely a waste of time. Most of our constituencies are at differing levels of development but the work required to be done remains constant whether in Northern Ireland or in the Republic.

THE SENATE

We decided to contest the Senate elections for our second time. We have now learnt a lot from these contests and with greater preparation we can do much better in future. At time of writing we are confident of making a substantial impression in this contest. It is obvious that we must be active and seek representation in all spheres of political life. No doubt, the manner in which candidates are chosen and elected to the Senate requires urgent consideration.

A statistical unit (as a sub-committee of the Electoral Committee) has been established which has analysed the results in our 'targeted' constituencies. However, constituency results never give the whole picture and what each area must do is to continuously utilise the tally results. It will be ensured that each constituency has proper tally results which are a key to future preparations. Having analysed the remaining constituencies we will proceed to develop an opinion polling resource.

Communication with the electorate and particularly our supporters is a must. Some constituencies, and in particular those in Cork City, have adopted a system of redistributing national statements and local comment to supporters on a regular basis. While realising the expense involved, the results obtained in Cork City show that this practice pays dividends. Supporters are required to give the Party point of view on issues to the general public probably more often than members, so it is obviously crucial that they be fully versed in policy. This practice has shown that some supporters realised they had to do more and in fact many joined. To create a class conscious electorate we must ensure our supporters are class conscious.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

While understanding that most areas were more concerned with the Dáil elections over the past months than with organisational matters, Associate Membership or Constituency Membership remains an untapped area. Some constituencies have worked hard on the issue while most haven't done anything pending getting their branches in order etc. This level of membership must be seen in a positive light — a half-way house to full membership. These supporters must be invited to all events.

There is still a passive attitude to recruitment and the 'penny hasn't

dropped' in many sections that we will remain static unless we recruit. It is true that we haven't had a National Recruitment Campaign but the recent general election served as a platform to build the Party, and we must now build on this.

Over the months of May and June members should get back on the doors explaining to the working class why they should join up. We have specified that to us the working class comprises all who earn their living, or would do if work were there, by hand or brain. This obviously includes those who work in the home. No amount of posters or advertisements will bring workers into our ranks.

The work of members has also been outlined to include a wide variety of activities which range far beyond contesting elections. We must recruit at our places of employment or unemployment, at recreation or wherever the working class congregates. The tried and proven method of bringing people to the Party has been through local political campaigning. When interest is shown, political education should commence — this is not always the case. There should be a co-ordinated approach by the education and recruitment officers at all levels. Many times the attitude is "get them out to work and we'll test their mettle". Education may have to be on a person to person basis, but it must be treated as a priority and a job for mature members.

For May and June, the Party centrally will provide material to include a combination of the *Introduction to the Party* leaflet and *General Election Manifesto*; a shorter leaflet, posters and possibly a car sticker. Central representatives will be available, but only when an area has been canvassed and the meeting properly organised. A public meeting is not the first step. A co-ordinated canvass of estates must commence and be repeated a few times a year. Trying to live through the local or national media is not good enough. No constituency has reached its fullest potential and we require at least one hundred members in each one.

Finance is a major obstacle and is dealt with elsewhere in this report. However, because it is so crucial to both our election and recruitment efforts, we must adopt a radically different approach than heretofore. We will likely be faced with another general election within two years if not sooner, so relying on traditional methods of collections and draws will not be enough to realise the amounts we will require. An increased membership is obviously the key to increasing our inflow of funds so investment in this area at local and national level is a must.

National Youth Committee Report

Steady progress has again been made by Workers' Party Youth in the past year in organising young people. New youth groups have been registered and activity stepped up. The ANC solidarity campaign was successfully continued and in Northern Ireland the *Youth Against Sectarianism* campaign was an attempt to break down the sectarian barriers dividing the young working class. Workers' Party Youth was also active, north and south, on the issue of job creation for young people and the exploitation of young people in low paid jobs and training schemes. A Workers' Party Youth bulletin, *Socialist Youth* was also published, though not as frequently as was desired due to financial problems, and had a circulation of over 20,000 in schools, youth clubs, training centres etc throughout the country. This is an important means of building Workers' Party Youth and a serious commitment must be given to it by Party branches and constituency councils in the coming year if it is to come out on a regular basis.

Last August saw the first Annual Summer Camp organised by Workers' Party Youth, and it was held in Navan in Co Meath. A smaller camp was also held to coincide with Bodenstown in June. The Summer Camp was a highly successful mixture of recreation and politics, and attracted young people from as far apart as Dublin, Belfast and Cork. Both camps are being held again this year, and every area should ensure that they are represented, in particular at the Summer Camp. As well as being an enjoyable and educational event the Summer Camp also performed an organisational role in that it laid the basis of youth groups in areas where Workers' Party Youth had not been previously organised. So any area that is wondering what they can do about youth organisation in the short term should organise young people to attend.

A range of recreational activities has also been developed by youth groups on a local level in the past year. Workers' Party Youth has at all times sought to create a good balance of recreational and political activity, and where possible, to combine the two. For the youth movement should not simply be a younger version of the Party, a carbon copy, but rather an organisation with its own distinctive style of work, geared to the needs of young people, and with its own methods of attracting and organising young people. We need a youth movement that will complement, not imitate the work of the Party.

Workers' Party Youth has also been responsible for organising Party members in the third level institutions. In the past few years the general swing to the Right in the country has been particularly marked among the student population. The class structure of the student population has changed and the small number of working class students are being squeezed out. However, we have still made progress and have recruited new members

to the Party and become active in many smaller colleges as well as the large universities.

The further growth of Workers' Party Youth will require a lot of work by the youth movement itself but also by the Party. So far a strong commitment to the youth movement has not been forthcoming from some branches and constituency councils. It is necessary here to state again that the building of a strong youth movement is vital to the growth of the Party. Ignoring this is ignoring the future of the Party. The Party is currently not reaching enough young people through its traditional activities, i.e. paper sales, advice centres, campaigns. While we have a good level of support among young people it is not reflected in the percentage of our membership under 21. Many young people do not feel ready for party membership or see it as an attractive proposition. It is vital that in their formative years young people are aware of the Workers' Party, what it stands for, and that we are there challenging the ideology of the Ruling Class which they receive through the education system and other agencies. That is why we need a separate organisation for youth within the Party and under the direction of the Party, and that is why every Party member and every unit of the Party has a responsibility for building it.

The role of the youth-officer is vital here. The task of the youth-officer is an organisational one — to organise young people into Workers' Party Youth. This is the primary function of youth-officers as Party members and they should be exempted from other Party work to enable them to concentrate on this. If the position is taken on seriously they will have little or no time for other Party work. However, some areas have not even gotten to this stage of appointing youth-officers yet, even though that has been the instruction of the last two Ard Fheiseanna. Every branch and constituency council must ensure this year that youth-officers are appointed, that the position is taken seriously and isn't just handed out to the youngest looking person at an AGM and then forgotten about. A handbook for youth-officers will be available shortly and a training weekend will be held in September so those taking on the position will not be left on their own.

Finally, an important development in the youth movement after the Ard Fheis will be the setting up of branches of young party members in Dublin and Belfast to work exclusively on building Workers' Party Youth in these regions. It is not envisaged that these will be permanent structures but that they will be the motive force in building the youth organisation in these areas for the immediate future.

In the next year we must ensure that our youth movement is organised and active in every area where the Party is organised. Everyone in the Party has a responsibility for this task — it cannot and will not be done without the active co-operation of all units of the Party.

Education

Party Education

During the year the Party's political education committee, chaired by Proinsias de Rossa, was more active than in recent years and organised a number of regional and constituency education sessions. These were generally successful both in terms of attendance and response to them. Based on this experience and the needs that members recognised, the committee is now organising a summer school for Education Officers and Organisers. At the time of preparing this report full details are not available but will be circulated at the Ard Fheis.

This committee like many others, suffers from lack of resources for the production of education material but plans are advanced for the production of a standard set of lectures for new members; an ABC of Class Politics and discussion notes to accompany the Party history video.

The committee is concerned that a small number of areas still do not give political education the priority which is essential to ensure the proper development of the Party as a revolutionary party of the working class. It is hoped therefore that every area will enthusiastically support this year's summer school which will deal with both the practice and theory of the Party's politics.

The education committee is also responsible for the production of the Party's theoretical magazine 'Class Politics'. However despite the availability of a number of articles it has not been possible to publish due to lack of funds. At this stage it is hoped to produce an edition in time for the summer school.

STATE EDUCATION

Despite a strong presence of teachers and parents in Party membership, the Party's state education committee in the Republic of Ireland lay dormant for a number of years up to last year. In the past year Mary Diskin undertook to try and pull together a committee although she already had a very heavy workload. There is a need to ensure that this work continues in the coming year as it is clear that there is a continuing trend towards dismantling the limited free education system that had been built up. In addition the decline in the involvement of religious at classroom level and their inability to maintain their position at management level is ushering in new moves to develop new forms of religious control of our education system.

The Party must gear itself to be in the vanguard of the struggle to bring real democracy, coeducation and integration to our education and the provision of 100% state funding. In this regard we must study carefully the development of parents' councils and new developments in management boards to ensure that they represent the best and most progressive trends in

education and are the partners of teachers and not surrogate bishops.

During the year the committee produced a discussion document for the Central Executive Council which forms the basis for our discussion on education at this Ard Fheis. In addition it provided material for a 'Back to School' campaign last September on the cost of 'free' education. This campaign should be expanded into every area this year, and planning for it should begin in June before the school holidays.

Pat Rabbitte was appointed by the Political Committee as spokesperson on education in the Republic of Ireland, while Tom French continued his role as spokesperson in Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland sub-committee on State Education has been active over many years and produced a number of important documents on the development of education there which is facing major changes under Thatcher. The documents deal specifically with proposals to reorganise secondary schools in West Belfast and government proposals to reorganise education across Northern Ireland and cover also the 11-plus.

They have also been actively involved in the campaign for teachers' rights to a salary increase and opposing government attempts to deny teachers negotiation rights.

Our campaigns North and south are guided at all times by the fundamental Party demands that State education must be democratically controlled and non-sectarian. For the coming year we must strengthen the State education committee, giving it the status of a full Party committee and ensuring that it has the back-up services it needs to fulfil the tasks ahead.

Northern Ireland Committee Report

The continued political stagnation in Northern Ireland is not only of grave concern to the Party but also to all democratic and peace-loving forces throughout the country. The Party has sought both publicly and privately to bring about democratic discussions between the constitutional political parties to secure a new democratic devolved government.

However both the attitudes of the Unionist parties and the SDLP indicate that talks are unlikely in the near future. Once again we stress that if the Anglo-Irish Agreement is to be in any way really fruitful then it is the clear obligation of both the British and Irish Governments to take all necessary steps to bring the constitutional political parties round the table.

The Party has suggested and reinforced this at a recent meeting with Secretary of State Mr King that the Agreement could be placed in cold storage and the Maryfield Secretariat moved to a non-contentious location to enable talks to begin.

The absence of viable central political institutions in Northern Ireland is not only undermining the whole concept of democracy but is also fuelling the rising sectarianism and leaves a vacuum occupied by terrorist murder gangs.

We can see no good reason why both the British and Irish Governments cannot take steps to end this deadly political stalemate.

The serious economic situation with over 130,000 unemployed is also of grave concern. The Party has stated publicly that unless immediate and drastic state intervention takes place in the engineering industry and in support of the manufacturing base, then the drastic levels of unemployment will rise even higher. Since 1981, 4,000 jobs have been lost annually in manufacturing; the present workforce is less than half a million. It requires little understanding to see that the entire economy is virtually in a state of collapse.

Once again we urge the convening of an all Party jobs conference to confront and propose methods of dealing with the critical situation. Such a positive initiative would have the support of the majority of citizens in Northern Ireland.

Equally we feel that decisive steps should be taken to integrate the education system on a comprehensive basis. The Party is not satisfied with the response of the Minister, Dr Mawhinney, to the proposals put to him earlier this year that a working party should be established to prepare a timetable for integration. And we look forward to a change of government at Westminster which would be prepared to tackle this vital issue.

The Party continues to campaign on a wide range of issues in Northern Ireland and there are clear signs not only of a growing recognition of our contribution but also of a small but significant development of class

consciousness as a result of our political work.

That work is carried on extensively throughout Northern Ireland. It engages our Party personnel in advice centres, in some cases almost on a full time basis, and in our campaigns currently directed at the unemployed and soon to be extended to youth, women and retired workers.

The Party programme of Peace, Work, Democracy and Class politics is being presented to the people at every opportunity and come the Westminster elections we will be fighting in a larger number of constituencies than ever before. Our progressive programme is seen by a greater number of people from all walks of life to be sensible in the face of the impossible solutions being peddled by the SDLP, the Provisionals and the Unionists.

We take this opportunity also to totally condemn all forms of terrorism as not only being incapable of solving any political problem, but as being directly counter-revolutionary and serving the interests of imperialism.

There are no short cuts, no instant solutions to the deep-rooted political and economic problems of Northern Ireland. To suggest that there are is to hinder political and revolutionary progress. The Party will continue to maintain its clear revolutionary ideological understanding of the situation and will also maintain its efforts to build working class unity and will resist all efforts to divert us from that goal. For without that unity we cannot achieve peace, democracy, socialism and freedom.

International Committee Report

The past year has seen the issue of Irish neutrality being raised increasingly. The most significant development was the adoption by the Dáil of the Single European Act, which creates additional obstacles and question marks over the future of our neutral status.

The Workers' Party, while actively in favour of co-operation between progressive and left wing parties and groups to counter the ever increasing unity of Eurocapitalism, opposed the Single European Act as constituted on the grounds that it does not provide adequate guarantees for our status as the only non-NATO state of the 12 member EEC.

The Workers' Party has pressed for closer relations between Ireland and the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as neutral European states and countries such as India and Greece which have made positive proposals aimed at nuclear de-escalation. These proposals were generally not taken up by any of the other Dáil parties, and combined with regular statements from these parties, such as the call by Fine Gael Euro MP, Chris O'Malley, earlier this month for Ireland to drop its 'permanent' objection to discussion of military matters, suggests that threats to our neutrality are if anything being formalised to a greater extent.

In the area of international solidarity, the Workers' Party has retained and developed contacts with liberation movements throughout the world, particularly in support of the ANC, SWAPO and PLO. Workers' Party Youth have run an ongoing campaign highlighting the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, and at Party level, meetings have been held with the ANC.

An international solidarity fund has been launched in support of the democratic Sandinista government in Nicaragua, which Party members are asked to assist in whatever way possible.

On the invitation of the Nicaraguan government, the Workers' Party was represented in Managua last Autumn at special celebrations marking the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship by Party Vice-President Seamus Lynch. Seamus Lynch also visited Cuba where he had a number of official meetings.

The Party's International Affairs Committee continued to be active. The main event organised was a highly successful conference on the theme of 'Towards the year 2,000 — the Century of Peace'.

This conference was also attended by representatives from the ANC, PLO and Chilean exiles, who spoke at a special solidarity session. The Party's international publication, *Ireland* continued to be published and circulated widely internationally.

The Workers' Party was represented officially for the first time at the British Labour Party Conference over the past year by Party President Tomás Mac Giolla, Vice-President Seamus Lynch, and Ard Comhairle member Des

O'Hagan. The visit marked an important further step in the development of relations between the Workers' Party and communist, socialist and workers' parties throughout Europe. It was additionally important in terms of highlighting the Workers' Party's anti-sectarian policies among the British Left, and in Britain.

During the year the Party continued to develop and strengthen international contacts and relations with other revolutionary parties and movements throughout the world. In some areas of the international situation there has been some slight improvement, notably in the area of nuclear missiles. We welcome and support the proposed discussions to eliminate medium range nuclear missiles from Europe.

There are nonetheless still too many areas of tension and possible conflict in the world — it is not alone regrettable but indeed criminal that the Khomeini regime in Teheran still refuses to make peace but continues to prolong a senseless war that has already caused so much death and destruction in the two countries, Iraq and Iran.

The continued United States occupation and domination of South Korea is another flashpoint for possible world war. The continued refusal of the United States and its puppets in South Korea to react positively to the many constructive proposals of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to solve the problems of division of Korea, the de-nuclearization of the Korean peninsula makes it clear that it is Washington which is imposing its will on the Korean people to satisfy its own policy of aggression and world domination.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the Great October Revolution and the International Committee will be organising a major conference to celebrate one of the greatest events in world history.

At youth level, Workers' Party Youth participated in the first ever official visit to the USSR as guests of the Committee of Youth Organisations of the USSR, where a number of important discussions were held. This was followed by a return visit of the CYO earlier this year, and again reflects the growing international contacts of the Workers' Party.

Relations with Party support groups in Britain, the US, Canada and elsewhere were strengthened in the past year, particularly in view of the renewed emigration wave of young Irish people to these countries. Discussions were held with Clann na hEireann (The Irish Workers' Organisation) in Britain, while the Workers' Party International Secretary, Sean Ó Cionnaith, recently undertook a one month tour to the US to contact supporters and publicise the Party's policies for peace and socialism in Ireland.

Late last year we made proposals to other parties of the Left in the EEC to convene a conference to discuss possible areas of co-operation. Un-

fortunately other events made it impossible to proceed with this conference but it is our firm intention to pursue this proposal and to hopefully have such a conference organised before the end of the year.

For the coming year the Party will continue its work at international level on the twin issues of solidarity and working for world peace and disarmament, as well as developing further our relations with other progressive forces, particularly in Europe.

Conclusion

The existence of the Workers' Party at this point in time is a decisive factor in the history of the Irish working class. We have arrived at an historical point in time when the class lines are being clearly drawn, when the working class has begun to develop a consciousness of its own role and place in society, to develop an awareness of who the enemy is and of what is required in order to win this war. The past years have taught the working class that every class struggle is a political struggle and that every political struggle is a class struggle.

The results and fruits of today's battles lie not in their immediate result but in the ever expanding influence and unity of the working class led by the Workers' Party.

A decade ago we took the decision to add the title The Workers' Party to our name. This was a reflection of the many changes that had taken place within our organisation over the previous decade and a firm recognition of the political ideology to which we subscribe, and a public and lasting demonstration of the class interests that the Party represents. There are as we know many more difficult tasks to be overcome, many, many more vicious attacks to be met and defeated but compared to a decade ago it is possible to state that the ground held by the Workers' Party is now incomparably greater.

As the vanguard party we must continually act as the vanguard. It is not enough, as Lenin has said, to attach revolutionary sounding names or labels to ourselves. We must be with the people in every area of struggle.

In these difficult times when the ruling class of these islands are making concerted and vicious attacks on the working class, it is essential that the ties between the Party and the working class expand and strengthen. It is vital in this struggle to develop class consciousness and unity, that we centralise and direct all local struggles into one national struggle between the classes. Again and again the lesson of revolutionary struggle is that only a united disciplined class conscious party of the working class, organised on the principles of democratic centralism, can organise and lead the working class to victory.