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A Strategy for The 90s

Workers Party of Ireland

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A STRATEGY FOR THE '90s

- 1 This Party Programme is being produced at a time of massive political transformation of the world order. Yet in spite of the many political realignments, the opening up of dialogue and debate about the future of socialism, the development of the global economy and the great hope for peace and a new world order, we find that exploitation, poverty and war are still endemic in our society.
- 2 In Ireland we still have sectarian political alignment, outdated political divisions, gross inequalities, emigration, mass unemployment and widespread exploitation and poverty. Yet none of the major political parties have even attempted to challenge the power of the vested interests who perpetuate inequality and privilege in Irish life.
- 3 The Workers' Party believes that only a radical, structural transformation of our society can hope to bring about lasting equality and justice or provide for the needs of all our people. We see that transformation as the democratic socialist task.
- 4 Our analysis and our political practice is firmly rooted in the reality of our own society. It springs from the actual and changing experience of our people, from our understanding of our economy, our growing social divisions, the limitations of our political system and of our place in the emerging European Community and the wider global economy. It takes account of the historic experience of our own party, the world socialist movement and its successes and failures, the changing nature of modern capitalism and the persistence of privilege and poverty, of wealth and waste, in a society of great scientific achievement.
- 5 Within our society there are many emerging forces for social progress and many entrenched elites holding onto power and privilege. We must hold out to the people a radical concept of a more democratic state, a democratised and dynamic economy, a dominance of social rights over individual greed - an open, democratic society which is built on the rights of free citizens, not powerful elites.
- 6 We will have to socialise the market mechanism, using it to serve a wider social interest than hitherto been the case. Our belief is in co-operation, rather than competition, between people, states and communities. We reject all forms of exploitation and racial, religious or sexual discrimination. We are international in outlook but equally proud of our own social progress here in Ireland.
- 7 Our political agenda is one of pushing out the frontiers of democracy and leading our society towards a new social order. We must help to empower people to control as much as possible of their own lives. That means responding to their needs at many different levels, in the community, in local government, in national or local organisations, in the Dail or the European Parliament. There is no single organisational form for such responses but there can be a consistent socialist analysis and strategy which links all these struggles.
- 8 The following elements will be central to our strategy as we develop our party as the major force for socialist transformation in Irish society.

Party Organisation

- 9 The Party must become a vibrant centre of analysis, education, organisation and political strategy. It must never be simply an electoral machine. Party membership must be widened and drawn from all levels of Irish society. Membership must be about participation, with others, in developing ourselves as human beings, in addressing our own concerns and those of others. People's politics are determined by their own experience and their political battles are generally fought at a place and a level that they can cope with and understand. Very often, it is single-issues campaigns which lead them to a more global understanding of society as a whole.

Democracy

- 10 The democratic ideal is the driving force for political transformation and must be pursued in politics, in the economy and in social life. Our own practice of democracy must be characterised by the highest level of participation. We have something to share with others, but we must also learn from the people and never stop listening to their responses to their own exploitation or oppression.

Practical Politics

- 11 Our vision of society must extend from current realities to a set of realistic objectives which focusses our direction and determines our pace of struggle. Our practice must address the immediate needs of people but also lead on to the wider political agenda. We are about change but recognise that that must grow from the immediate experience of people and from their ability to change their own world.

Integrity

- 12 The quality and integrity of our representatives at all levels must distinguish us from our opponents. We need high standards in our organisation and must win confidence and trust of people by the quality of our representatives. Great care must be taken in selecting people to represent the party.

Change

- 13 Change must be accepted by us as normal, necessary and nothing to be feared. Our party must develop the organisational flexibility to respond to a rapidly-changing world while maintaining our fundamental values. Hostility to change is the hallmark of conservatism and has no place in a radical socialist party.

Progressive Alliances

- 14 Our strategy must adapt to many new forms of co-operation, short-term alliances for progress and the achievement of strategic goals, North and South. Such alliances have already emerged on the issue of peace in Northern Ireland and the struggle against poverty. There is tremendous potential for further alliances on the issues of women's rights, environmental and ecological protection, democratisation of education, the issue of low party and minimum income and world peace. We should enter such alliances on a principled basis, recognising both their value and their limitations.

Public Representation

- 15 We must continue to expand our public representation but also develop more and more direct action initiatives outside of the parliamentary forum. There is no conflict between the two and they should never be counterposed. Our party is

about a total change in society and is not simply a parliamentary support organisation. We see campaigning and the struggles of people as crucial elements in our development and ultimately, the way in which the majority of people are politicised. Public representatives are the voice of the party and an integral part of it.

Economic Policies

- 16 Our economic and social policies must be credible and relevant to people in this society. Our demands must be based on the need for the sustainable development of an efficient, modern economy, capable of surviving in a competitive world market. We do not endorse capitalist property relations or the economic warfare that characterises free market capitalism, but we do recognise the need to develop our economic potential in the prevailing competitive international conditions.

The Wider Agenda

- 17 Our Party must incorporate in its agenda the most progressive tendencies of the women's movement, the environmental movement, civil liberties, the peace and social justice movements, the anti-poverty lobby and the many democratic people's organisation from the trade unions to the more localised community groups.

A People's Europe

- 18 Our party can play an increasingly important role in the debate on the development of a new, social Europe which hopefully can extend beyond the present European Community. In overcoming the traditional, nationalist analysis of politics, we are well placed to provide a more international perspective on this development. We recognise the limitations of the nation-state and the emergence of the large trans-national power-blocks. We see tremendous possibilities in the campaign for a 'People's Europe' which can bring together the citizens of so many countries in a fight for democracy, peace and economic and social cohesion.

FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

- 1 The Workers' Party is a democratic socialist party which is based on the belief that people are the central element in society and not capital.
- 2 Democracy and socialism are inseparable elements of our philosophy. We see democracy as the full and active participation of all citizens in decision-making and in exercising control over their own lives. For us socialism is the political, economic and social development of society to achieve the greatest possible degree of personal freedom, equality of citizenship and social solidarity within that democracy.
- 3 Our ideology is that of human liberation, for the individual as well as for our society. We believe in liberating each human being from all forms of exploitation, from class distinction, deprivation and want, from all the fear and insecurity which inequality creates. We seek to remove as many as possible of the economic and social obstacles which prevent people from achieving their full personal fulfilment in society.
- 4 We are committed to developing a society in which all citizens are full and equal partners, free from discrimination on the basis of class, creed, sex or racial origins. We wish to give equality of citizenship a new and expanded meaning in a truly democratic society.
- 5 We recognise that women suffer under particular forms of discrimination, some of it open and obvious, others more hidden in attitudes and custom. In that sexism and its patriarchal manifestations are oppressive, in that they impact unequally on men and women, and in that they are exploitative of women, their elimination must be a central concern of any socialist programme.
- 6 Social solidarity for us is the co-operation of all men and women in an effort to transform society from one based on unrestrained competition and individual greed to one built on mutual respect and collective responsibility. We value the individuality of each human being but reject the philosophy of individualism which advances the rights of some individuals at the expense of others.
- 7 Our political analysis is derived from our understanding of the total human experience, of our own history and all the political, economic and social realities of modern Ireland. We oppose all class and social divisions which maintain the exploitation of people as workers, as consumers, as taxpayers; which ruthlessly exploit our resources and destroy our environment; which deny so many citizens their full dignity as human beings; and which have in each decade denied many of our people, young and old, the right to live and work in their own country.
- 8 We particularly value the democratic political achievements of our own country, which have been won over many generations by the efforts of ordinary people. Their struggles have improved immeasurably the quality of life for most of our people, even within this unequal society. This has helped to create the conditions upon which we can build our future social progress.

- 9 We welcome the development of the political and social movements in this country and abroad, which challenge the many elite groups who retard the progressive advance of democracy. We particularly value the growing strength of many organisations which seek to expand the frontiers of our democracy and increase the active participation of people in the improvement and control of their own lives.
- 10 The Workers' Party wishes to work constructively with all these progressive organisations to achieve a truly democratic transformation of our society.
- 11 Further social progress requires also that we develop an efficient, modern economy capable of providing sustainable employment for all and producing the highest quality goods and services in harmony with our natural environment. We recognise that equality and social justice can only be achieved if we tackle the many structural problems in our economy which inhibit the development of our full productive potential. We see industrial and economic democracy as essential elements in a true democracy and increasingly a vital necessity for any dynamic competitive modern economy.
- 12 We espouse the cause of peace everywhere and reject the various racial, sectarian and anti-democratic doctrines which lead inevitably to violence and war. The future of society requires that we struggle continuously to achieve justice and peace and eliminate the social evils which make wars unavoidable. We accept also the need to assist the legitimate struggles of people who are denied the democratic means to achieve progressive change or who have to resist naked oppression.
- 13 In this country we reject the politics of sectarian bigotry and support the right of all people to express their particular identity as free and equal citizens. We are committed to working for a sustainable unity between the people on this island on the basis of their common interests and not on the basis of domination by any particular sectarian group.
- 14 We also reject the view that the best global economic or political order should be one of unrestrained competition for resources and markets. Such 'economic warfare' inevitably destroys communities, damages our environment, strengthens the strong at the expense of the weak and frequently creates the conditions for war.
- 15 In our view we are all interdependent and must work to achieve a new world order based on justice and peaceful co-existence.
- 16 We believe in effective economic and social planning and the democratisation of all state institutions, the devolution of power and the involvement of people in controlling their own destiny. For us, socialism has nothing to do with an over centralised bureaucratic state nor has it anything to do with a crude command style economic organisation.
- 17 We support the development of our own state institutions and the European Community as vital democratic institutions for protecting the rights of citizens and ensuring that all our people share in the benefits of our economic progress. We aspire ultimately to an egalitarian, tolerant and pluralist society within which

everyone is afforded the means and the opportunities to participate as an equal citizen.

- 18 This survival and liberation of the human race is dependant not only on peoples' relationships with each other, but also with their environment.
- 19 The future of life on this earth is threatened by the exploitation of the environment on a global level, which has given rise to an ecological crisis.
- 20 The causes of this crises emphasise the interdependence of the human race and the solution to the crisis requires a collective international approach.
- 21 For the Workers' Party ecology is a central element of our ideology. We believe that ecological principles must be an integral part of economic and political decision making at all levels.

CLASS AND INEQUALITY IN IRISH SOCIETY

- 1 The occupational structure of Irish society has undergone profound change since independence, and particularly over the last thirty years. There has been a massive decline in the numbers working in agriculture. While the numbers of manual non-agricultural workers has not changed much, the level of skill in the manual workforce has greatly increased (due mainly to the growth of modern manufacturing industry). The number of non-manual workers has more than doubled since independence, with most of the growth taking place among salaried employees (mainly teachers, health workers, public servants and other office workers).
- 2 Government statistical publications normally refer to manual workers as "working class", and non-manual workers as "middle class". In general, non manual work is "cleaner", less strenuous and better paid than manual work, and as a result, a certain status value has become attached to being "middle class". However, the fact remains that most non-manual workers are employees who work for somebody else, and who have little direct control over their workplaces.
- 3 Outside agriculture, only just over four per cent of the Irish labour force are employers. A similar proportion are successfully self-employed. These are the groups which control the bulk of the country's wealth (apart from big farmers and foreign firms). There is also a small and highly-paid managerial elite which exerts a major influence over the use of the country's resources, but whose ability to accumulate wealth is constrained by a tax system which favours property-owners over salaried employees.
- 4 Irish society, therefore, is very unequal in terms of the distribution of income, wealth, and consequently, power. Furthermore, this inequality is embedded in the class structure of society and reinforced by a state apparatus which is mainly responsive to the interests of the dominant classes. As a result, access to higher incomes and better life opportunities is heavily restricted to the members of already privileged groups. People from disadvantaged backgrounds have greatly reduced opportunities of personal achievement.
- 5 Gender inequality exists in women's unequal access to paid employment, to economic resources and to the political and economic institutions of our society, in the distribution of work in the home, in the limitations placed on their personal autonomy, and in social subordination; it is underpinned by sexism which limits women's freedom of choice and enables them to be exploited.
- 6 Not only is this situation patently unfair, but the development of the community at large is held back due to the suppression of the abilities of a large proportion of its members.
- 7 In Ireland, the top one third of income recipients account for 60% of all disposable income, whereas the bottom one third have a share of just over 10%. The top one third represent employers, the wealthy self-employed, salaried managers and professional workers; whereas the bottom one third are drawn from the unemployed, small farmers, and unskilled manual workers.

- 8 Wealth is even more unevenly divided, with a mere five per cent of the population owning up to two thirds of all wealth. The concentration of wealth in the hands of a small group of employers and self-employed is facilitated by a state distribution system which delivers large amounts of economic assistance (grants, subsidies) to the owners of property, while subjecting the same property owners to low levels of personal taxation.
- 9 Thus, large proprietors pay income tax at a lower rate than most groups in the PAYE sector (including salaried employees) and very little by way of wealth or property tax. Tax on property accounted for 17% of total tax revenue in 1965 and only 4% in 1984. Company tax as a proportion of the total fell from 9% to 3% in the same period. In Britain, these taxes account for one quarter of the total. As a result, a disproportionate amount of tax is paid by the PAYE sector.
- 10 While taxation has grown considerably in Ireland over the last thirty years and is high by European standards, it has had little effect in terms of reducing income disparities which, in fact, have been widening in recent years. This is partly because most of the tax burden falls on middle income groups, while much of the resultant revenue goes to higher income groups in the form of economic assistance (which in total is equivalent to three quarters of the amount spent by the state on social assistance).
- 11 While there has been a concentration of wealth at one end of the class spectrum, there has been a concentration of poverty at the other end. One third of the Irish population have been classified as being poor by the Combat Poverty Agency. These include not only the unemployed, but over half of the farming population, and large numbers of those in employment, especially part-time workers (mainly women) and those in dead-end service jobs. There has been a significant growth in recent years in the number of those in "middle class" occupations who have fallen below the poverty line due to loss of employment.
- 12 While the number of better-quality jobs has expanded enormously over the last three decades, access to these jobs has been largely restricted to members of the already well-off. The chances of upward social mobility in Ireland are considerably less than in most other European countries. This is mainly due to the extremely unequal distribution of educational opportunity here.
- 13 Students from semi and unskilled backgrounds, boys and girls, are much more likely to leave school earlier than better off students and much less likely to participate in higher education.
- 14 State spending on education makes little provision for positive discrimination in favour of schools which cater mainly for disadvantaged children, while the schools of the privileged can draw on considerable extra funding from parents, thereby further sharpening their level of advantage. The almost total absence of students from disadvantaged backgrounds in the very expensive and mainly state-funded university sector simply reinforces the extent to which state expenditure favours the well-to-do.
- 15 However, the problem of educational disadvantage cannot be solved simply by providing additional funding for disadvantaged students. Students whose

parents are unemployed or in poorly paid jobs tend to be constrained by poor levels of motivation in school. Hence, ultimately, any programme to tackle fundamentally the problem of inequality of opportunity in Ireland must tackle the underlying problems of high unemployment, low skill and low pay.

- 16 It must also tackle gender inequalities. Women are concentrated in low skilled, low paid and unpaid employment. Women are still very poorly represented in technological education at both secondary and third level and therefore have little access to much of the best paid employment on offer.
- 17 No Irish government has ever seriously addressed the question of providing adequate employment opportunities for the country's population. Down through the years, the main priority of government policy has been to protect and develop the interests of established elite groups. Where it has occurred, employment expansion has been an incidental offshoot, instead of being the primary objective of government policy.
- 18 An entrenched system of social inequality constitutes a fundamental obstacle to building a truly democratic society in Ireland. Effective democracy requires active participation on the part of all citizens. This will not be possible so long as the privilege of the few is based on the alienation of the many. A profound restructuring of Irish society is therefore required in order to confer on all citizens the opportunity to develop their own personal capabilities. While this may have the short term effect of upsetting the privileged position of a minority, in the long term everyone will benefit from the fuller development of individual talents.
- 19 It is necessary, therefore, to secure a broad social consensus in favour of both economic policies capable of securing effective full employment and social policies devoted to equality of educational and career opportunity. Entrenched inequalities deriving from the existing concentration of ownership of wealth and property must also be tackled through policies whereby forms of social ownership of national resources can be expanded. Mechanisms for achieving the latter are outlined in the section of this document dealing with economic policy.

DEMOCRACY, CITIZENSHIP AND THE STATE

Democracy

- 1 Democracy is a fundamental principle for the Workers' Party. It is our view that democratic values must pervade all spheres of life and that representative democracy must combine with participative democracy if citizens are to exert control over the society in which they live.
- 2 Genuine democracy cannot flourish in a system based on various forms of exploitation. The central economic fact of advanced capitalism is private and every more concentrated economic power. Political equality is not possible in those conditions. The democratic freedoms we cherish are hard won and even harder defended. They remain vulnerable in a society structured by a profoundly anti-democratic economic framework and an authoritarian social system. Parliament is not the only seat of power and a democratic strategy cannot be confined to purely electoral politics.
- 3 The Workers' Party will pursue a vigorous programme of democratic reform aimed at developing a democratic, pluralist culture in this country. This will involve constitutional, legal, electoral and local government reform as well as the development of economic democracy. The European dimension and specifically the 'democratic deficit' must also be addressed.
- 4 The Workers' Party is democratic also in its own organisational structure and practice. Decisions are made democratically and there is collective responsibility for implementing those decisions. The leadership of the Party is elected democratically by the members and is accountable to the members.

Citizenship

- 5 Citizenship is about the involvement of people in the community in which they live. The Workers' Party seeks to base its politics on the expanded rights of citizens within our class-based society. The State must become an enabling institution which gives people the power and opportunity to pursue their own initiatives and assume their responsibilities as individuals firmly rooted in the community. The concept of civil society as distinct from the State must be strengthened.

The State

- 6 The State is not a neutral instrument, a simple tool of whichever political party happens to be in government. The State is sensitive, and responsive, to organised external forces, especially where these forces represent the dominant interest groups in society. This is particularly the case where the State, as embodied in politicians and higher public servants, has internalised the ideologies and values of these groups.
- 7 The modern State is also a complex organism comprising various institutions and agencies whose influence pervades society. As bureaucratic organisations, the State and its constituent components have their own agendas, quite apart from those of outside forces. It is not simply a medium through which outside political and other social forces compete. It is a force in itself.

- 8 The Irish State has grown rapidly in the last 30 years and has consequently supported elites and subsidised privilege, blocking social mobility and reinforcing class divisions. It has fostered a culture of dependency which impoverishes the social, economic and cultural life of the country. Its policy on industry and agriculture has been irrational and wasteful and has marginalised small farmers and many urban workers while heavily subsidising large farmers and the private commercial/industrial sector. Health, educational and social welfare policies have reinforced inequality and given rise to an underclass subsisting at the margins on meagre state handouts.
- 9 It is our view that growth of the state apparatus itself will not solve our many social and economic problems, and in many instances will make them worse.
- 10 A transforming dynamic can be introduced into the State through the continuing growth and expansion of the Workers' Party and other progressive political forces. Reform of the State is necessary to promote choice, freedom, equality and an end to poverty. The State must make a strategic retreat from those areas which shore up inequality.
- 11 The Constitution must be radically reformed so that it becomes person rather than property centred. Oireachtas procedures must be recast in ways to make them more responsive to the needs of a rapidly changing and modernising society. An electoral system preoccupied with local issues must give way to one which can give priority to issues of national importance. A court system laden down with pomp, privilege and restrictions must be made much more accessible to the citizenry at large.
- 12 The bureaucracy must become more flexible and attuned to the needs of society through the creation of open government and the introduction of a freedom of information act. There must be devolution of real powers and responsibilities to local authorities and communities by adherence to the principle of subsidiarity (i.e. that decisions be made and implemented by the lowest effective level possible). This will require the dismantling of the most centralised governmental system in Europe.

Northern Ireland

- 13 Central to the Workers' Party programme is the establishment of a new democratic, devolved Northern Ireland Government. We recognise and welcome the introduction of various forms of progressive legislation in voting employment, housing and support for localised integrated education. However we remain convinced that a Bill of Rights (now accepted by all Northern Ireland parties) would provide both the political and psychological conditions for permanent progress.
- 14 The party will therefore continue to campaign for all forms of democratic progress, political, economic and social and against terrorism, sectarianism, discrimination and exploitation.
- 15 We equally recognise that all form of the achievement of our longterm goal of a democratic, secular socialist unitary state depend on winning the support of democratic majorities in both States in Ireland and we remain committed to that process.

PRINCIPLES OF A SOCIALIST ECONOMIC POLICY

- 1 The main function of the economic system must be the fulfilment of human and social needs. The private enterprise system which has obtained in Ireland until now has clearly failed in this respect. Over the years, millions have had to emigrate in order to find employment elsewhere. At home, unemployment has reached the highest levels in the history of the state, while the distribution of income and opportunity is among the most unequal in Europe. A new strategy, based on the co-ordinated and democratically planned development of the country's resources, is required in order to realise the hitherto unfulfilled potential of the Irish economy.
- 2 We reject the simplistic idea that socialism involves the equal possession of personal economic resources, but we do believe that all citizens must have equal access to basic economic necessities and reasonable access to non-essential goods and services - and that the distinction between these must be decided democratically. This basic economic equality can be brought about through a range of social, redistributive measures including a basic income system and free, comprehensive health and education systems.
- 3 The market is an important mechanism for ascertaining consumer demands and preferences and allocating resources. However, it does not necessarily allocate resources in accordance with social needs and priorities - and may often positively impede this. To the extent that it is limited or deficient in this regard, its operation must be democratically directed, controlled and, where necessary, curtailed. Mechanisms for performing this important function are still relatively under-developed and require careful nurturing.
- 4 The purpose of re-ordering and democratising market relationships is the more effective fulfilment of individual and social needs. There must be no question of it limiting individual or collective initiative, or efficiency, or consumer choice.
- 5 The main ways in which we envisage democratisation of the market - or markets - occurring (and indeed, democratisation of economic activity generally) are through (i) redistribution of wealth and income, (ii) reorganisation and development of all forms of work, and (iii) re-ordering of relationships between decision-makers and those who are presently outside the decision-making processes.
- 6 Such democratisation can be achieved through a variety of processes (outlined below) each designed to empower people in their own particular areas of work, activity and involvement. Any one process may, in itself, seem limited in its impact; but taken together, they can serve to transform our present society into a democratic, socialist one in which the full and free development of all individuals becomes a real possibility.
- 7 Traditionally, socialists have seen the social ownership and control of resources as fundamental to the achievement of economic equality. While accepting this, we must stress that we see a very wide variety of forms which social ownership and control may take; and do not at all equate it with ownership or control by the state. Nor do we believe that ownership; automatically empowers those who formally hold it - be they workers, employers, or the citizens of any given state.

Structures for democratic participation are therefore required in order to ensure that effective control accompanies formal ownership.

- 8 Public ownership and development of resources is envisaged by us where this is deemed to be in the broad social interest - where particular tasks can be carried out more effectively, efficiently or equitably than by private interests, or where the latter is unwilling to perform them at all. Partial state participation in the private sector is also envisaged (e.g. in sectors of strategic importance and in return for state investment in private firms). Existing state enterprises must be reviewed and where necessary reformed, to ensure the maximum efficiency, accountability, social responsibility and 'user-friendliness'.
- 9 The development of worker ownership and participation in all economic sectors is fundamental to progress. This can take many different forms and the key to success will be the ability of all concerned to recognise what particular forms of participation, and what structures for democratic decision making, are most appropriate in each situation. The strategies for democratising economic life, by strengthening workers' and consumers' rights and controls and developing social ownership of certain resources, will include:
 - 10* the extension of workers participation and directorship in both the public and private sectors; full worker involvement in the strategic planning of enterprises, either as part (or full) owners, or through trade unions or other worker organisations;
 - 11* the strengthening of consumer rights and organisation so as to maximise consumer controls in relation to marketed goods and services; and the development of consumer participation in decision-making, especially in the public and private sector service industries, e.g. through greater decentralisation and increased representation at board and sub-board level in hospitals, supermarkets, the ESB, Telecom, the Gas Co., etc.;
 - 12* community ownership or part-ownership of enterprises (e.g. through local/regional authorities or other community-based organisations), especially where socially-necessary or desirable services, or environmental considerations, are involved;
 - 13* encouragement of worker, producer, consumer, community and credit co-operatives;
 - 14* direct participation by investors and savers - particularly pension scheme members - in the trusteeship and investment of their funds;
 - 15* encouraging both national and international links between workers' and consumers' organisations, and strengthening the supervisory role of supranational agencies, so as to monitor and develop the international dimension of economic activities;
 - 16* democratising trade unions and public service bureaucracies by reforming their internal structures and increasing their accountability, to make them more dynamic and ensure better representation of the interests of workers - and of the whole community - in the economic planning process;

- 17* reform of political structures to facilitate this decentralisation and democratisation while strengthening the role of central government in relation to issues of broad, national importance;
- 18* reorganising and redistributing both paid and unpaid work in society so as to remove discriminatory gender-based differences and help erode traditional sex-stereotyping at home, at work and in the education system;
- 19* remove all remaining barriers to equality between the sexes, through reform and extension of the equality legislation, provision of community and workplace childcare facilities, reforms in social insurance and pensions provision, introduction of minimum wage legislation and a minimum income system, and full social and legal protection for part-time and other 'atypical' workers.
- 20 In order to provide for the full development of the personal potential of all individuals, as well as a reasonable living and working environment for everyone, a high priority must be given to both cultural and ecological development, in the allocation of state resources and supports.

GLOBAL POLITICS

- 1 There is now a greater awareness than ever before of the interdependence of all people in all countries and interdependence which is economic, political and ecological.
- 2 Probably the greatest single event which brought about this consciousness of interdependence was the Chernoble nuclear disaster.
- 3 That awareness, coupled with the far reaching and global impact of Glasnost and Perestrioka in the Soviet Union, which brought about the unity of Germany, and the end of the 'Cold War' has literally changed the political map of the world.
- 4 With the end of the 'Cold War' the people of the world began to breath easily again because it was felt that the threat of a nuclear holocaust has been lifted.
- 5 A search began to construct a new basis for international relationships, to replace the confrontational model which had persisted since the end of World Ward II. Everyone was talking about 'a new world order'./

Ongoing Ideological Conflict

6. It is now clear however that the end of the 'Cold War' should not be mistaken as an end to ideological struggle, or be assumed to mean that powerful forces would no longer seek to dominate the world.
- 7 The 'Gulf War', launched by the U.S. and its allies, one year after the euphoria of the revolutions in Eastern Europe is a clear grab for superiority in that region and for control of its oil wealth. The new world order they seek is intended to maintain the old economic order of exploitation. The privileges of wealth and the developed world will be maintained at any cost it seems.
- 8 The party programme outlines its position and attitude to these forces and expresses its belief that socialist values are the only real alternative to the politics of greed which is the driving force of capitalism.
- 9 In addressing global politics and deciding on our attitude to events, states and parties we must be conscious that
- 10 (a) Capital continues its merciless drive to exploit the people and the resources of the world. The so called 'invisible hand' of capitalism is also cruel and blind to the needs of human beings.
- 11 (b) Despite its apparent triumph and its obvious powers, capitalism is abusing the discoveries of science, robbing the people of the third world of the right to life, and pushing the world towards extinction.

Collective Security

- 12 As Socialists therefore we must campaign in Ireland for a policy of international collective security, denuclearisation, banning of chemical and biological weapons, conversion of the arms industry and to establish Ireland as a centre for peace and against war; a new world economic order based on sustainable

development, the sharing of scientific and technological knowledge, the protection of the ecological system, and of cultural diversity.

- 13 Socialist objectives clearly imply an active role for Ireland in international affairs and not one of passive alignment with the most powerful or the most profitable.
- 14 It important therefore that 'positive neutrality' be developed as a policy position which sees us taking such an active role at international fora such as the U.N.O., Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and European political co-operation.
- 15 However, in order for Ireland to play a full role in all the decisions, we must insist as other countries are doing that the balance of power in such fora is not weighted in favour of the most powerful, and that the now redundant cold war balance be replaced with a balance in favour of the dispossessed of the world.

European Union

- 16 This clearly requires changes in how the U.N. Security Council reaches its decisions, and in how it reaches its decisions, and who is represented on it and also a greater role for the General Assembly. It also means a much clearer definition of the commitments which are being demanded by the EC states under European Political Union and the evolution of the Conference on Security and Co-operation (C.S.C.E.) in Europe as a Pan-European security forum.
- 17 The most immediate issue is that of European Political Union and proposals that such a union should have a defence dimension. There are pressures for the establishment of a European Army and even voices calling for such an army to be sent to the Gulf. Ireland should oppose any development, which sees European Community as a superpower helping to police the world and protect its interests outside its own borders.
- 18 A defensive dimension is only acceptable to defend the member states against aggression and could not be countenanced as an aggressive force. It would have to be a non-nuclear defence and its aim would have to be to build confidence between states and to prevent war. Decision making would also have to be by unanimity with the right to a veto built-in.

International Party Relations

- 19 The first principle would be that relations are decided by the Ard Comhairle on advice from the Party's International Affairs Committee. The Ard Comhairle would decide on establishing, breaking or suspending relations
- 20 These should be seen on three levels and should be inclusive rather than exclusive.
 - (1) Diplomatic
 - (2) Party to Party
 - (3) Trade

- 21 Diplomatic: Would cover virtually all states, particularly those with ambassadors accredited to Ireland unless specifically decided by the Ard Comhairle. Reasons for not having relations could be based on criterion such as human rights abuses; suppression of democracy; international terrorism;

aggression against another state. The guidelines of U.N., C.S.C.E. or other fora could be adopted as basis.

- 22 **Party to Party:** As an independent socialist party we have traditionally sought friendly relations with a range of parties including the Socialist International excluding only fascist, terrorist and ultra-left groups. This practice should continue but with a more formal and carefully respected procedure to ensure that there is no misunderstanding publicly or within the party on the nature of the relationships. A party bulletin on international affairs should be published at least annually outlining our position on various issues.
- 23 **Trade:** In the course of diplomatic and Party to Party contacts opportunities for developing trade between Ireland and other countries often arise. It is in the interest of working people everywhere that such trade should be encouraged where it is beneficial to each country. Trade of course would not be encouraged by us with parties or states where the people there are struggling against oppression e.g. South Africa. Again however decisions should be made by the Ard Comhairle based on consultation with the International Affairs Committee and in line with the expressed needs and wishes of progressive parties in those countries.

European Policy

- 24 The Workers' Party favours, in principle, the moves towards European Union and believes that it offers an opportunity to overcome both the inherent limitations of the nation state and its inability to deal with powerful global institutions which have evolved and which make national boundaries almost irrelevant.
- 25 The party is fully committed to participating fully in the continuing debate on European Union. There will be a more unified Europe in the short-term and its level of democracy will be determined by the extent to which its institutions are amenable to democratic control.
- 26 In particular the European Parliament, as the democratically elected body representing the citizens of the EC, must be given an adequate role in Community decision making, particularly in relation to the unelected institutions. This must be accompanied by the development of closer links between the EP and the national parliaments and the devolution of power to the maximum extent possible to empower the citizen in the local community.
- 27 The recent changes which have taken place in the world order offers the Left in Europe an opportunity to make democracy the issues and to put forward proposals for structures at local, regional, national and European level which are accessible, effective, and responsive to the need of its citizens.
- 28 The development of a more truly democratic Europe must also involve a greater opportunity for input by representative organisations and non-governmental organisations and priorities the development of a social Europe and the concepts of a civil society.
- 29 The Workers' Party favours the development of broad co-operation among the parties on the European Left, and commits itself to furthering such development.

Third World

- 30 The human and material resources of the developing countries continue to be exploited by the developed world, in particular the 'Group of Seven' leading industrial countries.
- 31 Developing countries now have overt political sovereignty, but their efforts to achieve fuller development are frustrated by a web of interlocking economic power structures, which enable the 'First World' to perpetuate its control over terms of trade, the flow of capital, commodity prices, exchange rates, communications networks and technology.
- 32 Ireland must play its role in fulfilling obligations towards the estimated 3,000 million destitute people on the planet.

This should involve:

- * a substantial increase in this country's bilateral aid programme, slashed by 50% in the past three years, to achieve the UN target of Official Development Assistance within a five year period.
 - * the adoption of development strategies which not only promote sustained economic growth in the third world, but also distributional equity, social integration, pluralism and care for the environment.
- 33 Within the EC and international institutions in which we participate, Ireland should demand:
- * equitable terms of trade and market access for Third World producers.
 - * effective measures to resolve the international debt crisis
 - * promotion of South-South trade and co-operation.
 - * implementation of a New International Economic order.
- 34 The truly internationalist nature of the effort to overcome poverty is illustrated by the fact that, just as the poorest countries in the Third World have their wealthy elites, so even the most affluent countries continue to tolerate conditions of squalor and deprivation among a substantial minority of their own populations. There is a close link between the efforts to achieve social and economic justice in Ireland and throughout the Third World.