

## **MAKING THE VITAL DIFFERENCE Labour Party Manifesto - Key Points**

### **Vision And Challenges**

1 Our priorities are:

- permanent peace in Northern Ireland based on an inclusive settlement rooted in consent;
- a wider sharing of the benefits of growth;
- an intensified fight against poverty and long-term unemployment;
- effective tackling of crime and of its causes.

2 We have other major tasks of economic management, tax reform, education, public service reform, environmental enhancement, cultural development and strengthening our role in Europe and the world. And we have unfinished business in key areas of social reform.

3 Major challenges still remain to be confronted:

The breakdown of the IRA cease-fire shattered hopes. It means that efforts must be redoubled to achieve peace and reconciliation. Long-term unemployment remains a social and economic challenge that demands radical policies. Serious crime demands strategies which balance tough measures against the criminal, and targeted actions to tackle the causes - drugs and poverty.

4 We will be campaigning in this election as part of an out-going Government. When the election is over, we will sit down with our partners and negotiate an agreed programme for the next five years. In that sense, this Manifesto is the set of proposals that we will bring to those negotiations.

5 We want to listen. We face a period of exciting change, and many challenges. We are setting out our stall - the building blocks to construct an ever more confident, just, inclusive and tolerant Ireland.

6 And we do it with confidence. The track record of the last four years, the hope for the future. Visions and challenges, combined with practical policies. A slate of candidates that is second to none. Deep roots in the community, and a total commitment to its future. That's Labour's promise.

### **Managing a Growing Economy**

7 We are going to build on the successes of the last four years - almost 200,000 net new jobs and national wealth up by over a fifth - through:

- prudent management of the public finances;
- a partnership approach to the economy and social policy;
- more enterprise, more innovation and more investment in education and skills development;
- a shared discipline and fairness.

8 There will be new challenges - EMU and the re-negotiation of the Structural Funds.

### **Spending and Taxes**

9 We need to tackle the problems of poverty and social deprivation. We need quality health and education services. We reject the ideology that public spending is too high. In fact, public expenditure in Ireland is relatively low by EU standards./P>

10 Our approach is to seek a fair balance between public spending and what is taken from the

pay packet in taxes./P>

11 We have to be prudent: to plan for surpluses on our current budget as at present; to use that money for essential capital investment - in infrastructure, in supports for the different economic sectors and in necessary social investment in housing, schools and hospitals; to keep our national borrowing within limits sustainable inside EMU./P>

- Side by side with that, we plan to reduce what the Government takes in tax from your pay packet: from 27p now to 22p for the single person, and from 20p to 14p for the married person on average earnings.
- People on low wages will benefit even more - indeed everyone will gain from labour's tax proposals. Before the end of 5 years, no person on the average wage will pay the higher rate of tax.

## **Work and Enterprise**

12 Labour is the party of work and the party of enterprise. We advocate:

- Practical measures to get a national minimum wage.
- Strengthened partnership structures at the level of the individual firm.
- Strong support for our State-sponsored companies and " stake-holding" for employees in them through partnerships and share-participation schemes.
- A major review of key aspects of the financial system.
- Continued support for industry, tourism, agriculture, services industry, forestry, fishing and our marine sector through prudent use of Structural Funds, a good corporation tax system and appropriate supports from State agencies when necessary.

## **Cohesion Through Partnership**

13 We fully support Partnership 2000, and a determined attack against poverty through the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. We will tackle the major problems of educational disadvantage, long-term unemployment and income inadequacy.

14 As specific measures for families, and especially mothers, we aim to:

- Increase child benefit further for mothers, as we have in the last four years.
- Introduce a double monthly payment at times when need will generally increase - August and December - to cater for children going back to school, and for Christmas.
- Significantly expand child care facilities in the community, to a nation-wide service.

## **Social Guarantee**

15 An abundant economy must be able to accommodate a society where choices are made, and rights are exercised, on the basis of hope and dignity, and not on the basis of dependence or charity.

16 In the short to medium term, we propose to apply the Social Guarantee to three groups of people: Young people from 18 to 21; People with a disability; and People who are elderly.

17 Our objective is that every young person will have a worthwhile offer of education, training, conventional employment or community employment. As places become available this will involve raising the age limit for unemployment assistance.

Our aim is to ensure that 100% of our young people complete second level education. When they do, the options open to them should include:

- going on to third level;

- taking up training, traineeships, or apprenticeships;
- getting conventional paid employment;
- doing combined training/work or working in their community for pay.

18 For older people, a Social Guarantee would aim to ensure:

- Counselling and retirement preparation services are readily available.
- Accommodation needs are fully met.
- No elderly person would be forced to live in isolation from the community.
- No elderly person would live in fear, or be forced to hide modest assets through fear of excessive claw-back by the State.
- Illness would not lead to the elimination of life-savings.
- Recovery from illness would be supported, at home when possible or through decent recuperation facilities.
- We are proposing that a Minister of State would be appointed to the Departments of Equality and Law Reform, Health and Social Welfare in the next Government, with specific responsibility for further developing the Social Guarantee for Older People.

19 A Social Guarantee for People with Disabilities would seek to ensure that, from the moment of birth, diagnosis, or onset of the disability, the following services would be guaranteed:

- Diagnosis and assessment.
- Counselling (including counselling for carers where necessary).
- A full range of medical services as required.
- Education and training based on the right of the individual to aspire to his or her full potential, and to live and work in mainstream society.
- Open, supported or sheltered employment as appropriate, in a decent environment and within reasonable access from home.
- Residential care when needed, and the guarantee of a home life in proper and supportive surroundings.
- Respite care when required
- Accessible public transport.

20 In addition, we will ensure:

- The implementation of the Report on Violence against Women.
- That victims of Hepatitis C are provided with a comprehensive health care package and support services.
- That GMS services are extended as rapidly as possible to younger children.
- That hospital waiting lists continue to be tackled, by ensuring that levels of investment in this initiative remain a priority, and by setting out maximum waiting times for different treatments.
- That there will be an effective drug treatment service which will offer a broad range of options to addicts according to their needs.
- That there will be a gender equality policy in all areas of education policy, and the continued enforcement of the gender balance policy for state boards and agencies.
- That a continual programme of family law reform, including placing the Family Mediation Service on a statutory basis, will remain a priority.
- That a comprehensive package of actions and services in response to the Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community is implemented.
- That there will be an increased supply of housing to meet rising demand without placing undue pressure on the environment.
- That all Local Authorities will draw up a five-year energy plan providing for improved insulation and ventilation and for the provision of full central heating in all local authority houses.
- That an Ombudsman for Children will be appointed.
- That a Green Paper on basic income, involving full and open consultation, will be published within one year.

## **A Safer Place to Live**

21 Crime divides societies. It damages the quality of life of those who feel threatened by it and

can often make them retreat from the wider communities in which they live. To be effective, we require a two pronged approach. We need to deal with existing crime in a resolute and determined fashion. But, as importantly, we need to tackle now the conditions that cause the crime of the future.

## 22 THE GARDA.

We propose the establishment of a Commission on Policing to forge a modern role for the police force. The Commission should involve the Gardai themselves, community and voluntary groups, residents' groups, appropriate experts and other interested parties. Issues to be addressed include: the merits of establishing an independent police authority; the relationship between the Gardai, the Oireachtas and local authorities; internal Garda management structures; the role and responsibility of the individual member of the force; the appropriate functions for civilian staff; the interaction between Gardai and other agencies such as Customs and Revenue; Garda/Community relations (including the role of community policing); the role of specialist units within the Gardai, and the potential for part-time policing.

## 23 TACKLING CAUSES OF CRIME.

We advocate the following: Community-based support for families in disadvantaged areas, specially targeted at those families whose needs have not been met by the education system. Community-based high quality pre-school facilities, similarly targeted. A revamping of the School Attendance Service to become an Education Welfare service. Financial support for attendance at post-Leaving Certificate Courses.

## 24 DRUGS.

The fight against drugs is both essential for the overall welfare of society and a key component in the task of combating and preventing crime. There are three key elements: policies aimed at supply reduction; policies aimed at demand reduction; proper treatment facilities. In reducing the demand for drugs, school programmes, the provision for parental education, the work of Community Drugs Teams and training in community leadership in enhancing the role of estate management in a community based response to drugs are essential.

## 25 THE PROSECUTION OF CRIME.

We propose amalgamating the DPP's Office and the Chief State Solicitor into an efficient Unified Prosecution Service, with direct Information Technology contact with the Gardai. The prosecution of drugs-related offences will be fast-tracked by giving them priority in the Prosecution Service. The necessary support services including the Garda Forensic Unit will be upgraded. The need for preliminary investigations of all charges in the District Court should be re-examined; some offences could be designated as going straight to trial. The court system should share with the Gardai and the prisons an extensive information technology facility whereby detailed information would be available on warrants issued, failure to turn up for trial and related matters.

## 26 PRISONS.

More prison places are needed, both to accommodate additional prisoners and to improve conditions. Consideration will be given to the establishment of a district court within Mountjoy itself, to minimise transmission of drugs. The relevant health board in each case should be given the responsibility for developing health care strategies within the prisons. The choice between prison and payment of a fine will not rest with the convicted person; the appropriate penalty should be decided by the courts. Offenders assessed as suitable for transfers to "open" prisons, where they would enjoy a higher rate of remission of sentence, will not be allowed to refuse to take up such a transfer in the knowledge that, by remaining in Mountjoy, they are likely to be released much sooner, for reasons of overcrowding. Offenders should serve out their sentences in the institution to which the authorities wish to send them. We support the establishment by statute of an independent Prisons Agency, with the function of managing prisons coherently and in a planned and effective manner. We also support the establishment of an independent Inspector of Prisons.

## 27 SENTENCING AND PROBATION.

We support the establishment by statute of an independent Parole Board. Sentencing policy and the desirable duration of sentences will be urgently addressed in a Sentencing Bill. Community service orders should be made to the greatest extent possible. Unsupervised early releases should be ended as quickly as practical.

The Probation Service should be the primary target for additional resources in the area of sentencing.

#### **28 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.**

Labour will implement the recommendations of the Task Force on Violence Against Women. We will ensure there is a proper network of services for women and their children. We will put in place treatment programmes for men which confront the root causes of abuse. We will ensure the justice system will treat a violent assault on a woman by someone she knows as seriously as a violent attack on her from a stranger.

#### **29 VICTIMS OF CRIME.**

A case management system will be introduced for the purpose of keeping victims informed as to the stage in the criminal justice process which their case has reached. Additional funding for the work of the Irish Association for Victim Support will be allocated. A court accompaniment service to provide assurance and information for victims facing unfamiliar and intimidating court surroundings will be introduced on a pilot basis. Labour will examine carefully the issue of ensuring victims rights to legal advice or representation in certain situations.

### **A Better Place to Live and Work**

30 Ireland is now a booming economy. That means it is even more necessary that we should give increased attention to the quality of life; the type of environment that is evolving; and the inclusion of all citizens and communities in the sustainable and balanced development of our country. To meet these objectives, we propose:

#### **31 PHYSICAL PLANNING**

A National Convention on Planning and Development. A sustainable balance between rural and urban development. An integrated approach to local, regional and national planning, taking account of land use policy, road networks and the railways, industrial development, housing needs and population growth, tourism, forestry and agriculture. A new public procedure for local plans - greater community involvement. Reform in the procedure for Environmental Impact Assessments and better co-ordination between physical planning and environmental protection. Pursuit of the goals of decommissioning Magnox reactors in the UK, and the threat to Ireland from the storage of highly active liquid waste in tanks at Sellafield.

#### **32 TRANSPORT**

Increase the availability of rural public transport services. Complete all three light rail lines in Dublin (LUAS), extend the DART north and south, and commuter services westwards. Plan for more quality bus corridors and develop facilities for cycling as an option. Increase investment in primary and secondary roads, and get and keep county roads up to standard.

#### **33 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy across the economic sectors, and in relation to water resources, landscape and nature, waste management and air quality.

#### **34 FOOD SAFETY AND CONSUMERS**

A central food safety laboratory. Better enforcement of food standards. More testing for drug residues in animals, and better controls on the use of fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides. Comprehensive labelling information on foods. A licensing system for genetically engineered materials on foods.

### **Arts, Culture, Heritage**

35 The Arts Plan will be completed. Work on the regional network of theatres, art galleries, museums and art centres at thirty locations throughout the country will be completed by 1999. The initial success of Teilifís na Gaeilge will be built on, and further initiatives taken to foster and develop the use of Irish. RTE will be strengthened legally and financially as the national broadcaster. We will set up by statute a Broadcasting Commission along the lines published by Michael D. Higgins. We will sponsor legislation to establish Natural Heritage Areas throughout the country. A Music Board will be established in partnership with the industry to provide

supports for developmental projects. At present about 0.9% of public expenditure is allocated for cultural purposes. Labour proposes to raise this steadily.

## **A Lifetime of Learning**

### **36 THE INFORMATION AGE**

We will set a target of universal IT literacy, and achieve it through:

- implementing the Schools Information Technology 2000 Programme thereby achieving a major leap in the provision of Information Technology in our schools;
- training programmes for teachers in the skills necessary to use the Internet and other new technologies in agreement with the parties concerned;
- installing the Internet in our public libraries;
- taking advantage of the new Freedom of Information Act to open access to all forms of Government publications.

### **37 THE EDUCATION SYSTEM** We believe that the educational system is the key to eliminating disadvantage throughout society. As part of a comprehensive approach:

- Through the Education Boards, Labour will empower local communities within the regions. This will be a staggering change in the way education is planned.
- We will continue to support and expand the Early Start Pre-school Programme, and the Breaking the Cycle Primary School Programme.
- Other successful measures such as Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), and the Adult Literacy Community Education Scheme will be enhanced.
- Labour will continue to improve the teacher/pupil ratio, especially in special schools and classes.
- We will develop an integrated professional psychological service for primary and secondary schools, and will appoint one psychologist for every 5,000 students.
- We will expand the remedial teaching service.
- We will ensure that every student will have access to the study of a modern European language.
- We will encourage all students to follow courses of the highest level indicated by their capacity,
- We will aim to ensure that no young person drops out of school without qualifications. We will increase and focus Youthreach places for those who have already left school early.
- We will increase maintenance grants at a faster rate than inflation and introduce a special maintenance scheme so that students from lower economic groups will be supported and encouraged in third level education.
- We will extend Higher Education maintenance grants to PLC students.
- We will prepare legislation to regulate private commercial colleges.

## **In the World and in Europe**

### **38** The cornerstones of our approach to foreign policy are these:

We advocate a positive foreign policy based on our membership of international organisations. We will uphold Ireland's neutral status and will not support seeking full membership of the WEU nor will we join NATO. Ireland could undertake certain tasks related to its observer status in WEU and could legitimately participate in the Partnership for Peace (PfP), already joined by the other European neutrals. The PfP is not a military alliance and Ireland would be free to negotiate its own terms for participation. We will promote policies designed to achieve total nuclear disarmament, enhance conventional disarmament, rid the world of landmines and chemical weapons and curtail international arms trading. We will establish an authoritative and independent Irish Human Rights Commission, and a programme of ratification of relevant international conventions.

39 With Labour in Government Official Development Assistance (ODA) has increased from £40 million in 1992 to £122 million or 0.31% of GNP in 1997. We will increase ODA by 0.05% of GNP each year until the UN target of 0.7% of GNP is reached. Ireland will work for an effective mechanism to deal with the debt crisis of the poorest countries.

40 We will work for the development and enlargement of the European Union along lines designed to deal with the challenges of long-term unemployment, poverty, security and stability, the fight against crime and drug abuse and a successful outcome to the Intergovernmental Conference.

41 Ireland will seek policies which can achieve high levels of employment while protecting the rights of workers. Progress must be made towards a successful launch of EMU and the reform of the Structural Funds must be achieved in a balanced and equitable fashion.

42 In the context of the IGC, Labour is pressing for:

- A specific Employment Chapter in the Treaty.
- A commitment to combat Social Exclusion.
- Treaty changes to fight discrimination of all kinds.
- We will seek to ensure that the Union's institutional balance is maintained and that each Member State retains its right to nominate a member of the European Commission.

43 We are committed to the creation of a new and effective regime in Ireland for Citizenship and Immigration. A proper legal framework must be set down. We favour the establishment of an independent Immigration Authority which would also have responsibility for the law on naturalisation. The Refugee Act must be fully implemented. We favour steps to reconcile the common travel area with the UK and the emerging system of freedom of travel and access within the EU.

## **A Better Way of Doing Things**

44 Our objectives are: to enhance the quality of our democracy; to provide opportunities for greater participation by local communities; and to ensure that the political system and the public service is responsive to the needs of all citizens, including those who are not normally in a position to assert their rights.

45 THE CONSTITUTION. We will propose for adoption by way of constitutional amendment the replacement of the outdated reference in Article 41.2 to woman's "life within the home" with the following: "The State recognises that home and family life gives to society a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. The State shall endeavour to support persons caring for others within the home." We are fully committed to removing the ban on revealing Cabinet discussions, in clearly defined circumstances. The minimum qualifying age for membership of the D#225;il, at present 21 years, will be reduced to 18 years. We will oppose a further constitutional referendum on the abortion issue.

### **46 HUMAN RIGHTS.**

We will establish an authoritative and independent Human Rights Commission whose function would be to promote public and official awareness of human rights and the State's international commitments in this area, and to examine individual complaints with a view to assisting complainants in securing their rights.

**47 GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SERVICE REFORM.**

We support the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) process, which was launched last year. Its broad object is to renew and reform the management performance and efficiency of the public service to ensure a better delivery of public services. It is important to view public service reforms as being based on citizens' entitlements to quality service delivery. We are dealing in the case of many services with citizens' rights, not with "customers" or "clients", and the underlying philosophy of the providers should reflect this.

**48 ENHANCING CITIZENSHIP.**

Labour will promote an active public information policy and will ensure the widest possible access to information, using modern technology to develop interactive information access points through public libraries and public offices. We will repeal the Official Secrets Act. We will offer legal protection to those who blow the whistle on official malpractice. We will legislate for the protection of journalists' sources, and reform the laws of defamation in conjunction with the enactment of a new Privacy Bill to protect citizens from unwarranted intrusion into their private lives. We will also extend the data protection laws where appropriate.

**49 DEFENCE.**

We support the preparation of a White Paper dealing with the issues and challenges - including investment and recruitment - facing the military and civil defence forces. Following the White Paper, a comprehensive and up to date Defence Bill would be introduced.