

Progressive Unionist Party of Northern Ireland



MANIFESTO

The Union

The Progressive Unionist Party is fully committed to maintaining and strengthening the present constitutional position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom. The Party will actively work by all democratic means to ensure that there will be no constitutional changes which either diminish the constitutional position of Northern Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom or which dilute democratic structures and procedures within Northern Ireland.

The Party is fully committed to the development of a new era of peace and stability in Northern Ireland based upon the principles of democracy and consent.

The Return of Power

The Progressive Unionist Party believes that the form of devolved government to take Northern Ireland into the 21st century is one of Sharing Responsibility. Our party has promoted the concept of Sharing Responsibility since 1979 and it is our belief that this could provide the blueprint for the return of power to local government. Central government will only restore power to local authorities when it is convinced that power will not be abused. We believe that Sharing Responsibility is the form of government that could convince Central Government that power could be restored to local authorities in the Province without fear of abuse.

It is the belief of the Progressive Unionist Party that the cementing of a peaceful future can be advanced by the diverse traditions within our society together administering for all the people in an atmosphere of **honour** and transparency.

Conflict Transformation

The Progressive Unionist Party is committed to facilitating a conflict transformation process to allow politics in Northern Ireland to progress to the stage where Central Government would restore power. Progressive Unionists will play their part to the full in order to achieve a way that will take the gun out of unionist politics. We talk about transformation rather than resolution because the party would claim that resolution is not possible between unionism and nationalism as they are diametrically opposed. However, we do believe that the conflict can be transformed from one of violence to one of constructive dialogue and that out of this transformation can come a respect for diversity.

Human Rights

The Progressive Unionist Party is committed to working for the establishment of a just, equitable and pluralist society in Northern Ireland. To this end the party is endeavoring to facilitate the social, economic and cultural transformation of the Province.

The first prerequisite for a just and equitable society is mutuality, and the Progressive Unionist Party positively upholds the right of each individual regardless of gender, race, **colour**, religion, political opinion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, prison record or social background to be treated with equality, **dignity** and justice in all aspects and spheres of human life.

The party is committed to campaigning for a written Constitution for Northern Ireland that will embody a Bill of Rights along the lines of the European Convention on Human Rights. Such a Bill of Rights would include guarantees against discrimination. In order to ensure a working of the system in both minority and majority interests there should be a broad committee of eight judges - two from the United Kingdom, two from the Republic of Ireland, two from Northern Ireland and two from the European Courts - to oversee any Bill of Rights.

The Progressive Unionist Party welcome the fact that a Revised Order on the Draft Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 has been laid before Parliament and is to be debated as soon as possible. We regret that this could not have happened sooner as Northern Ireland is the only region in the United Kingdom that has been without proper Race Relations legislation. The Party is dismayed by the refusal of ministers to adopt the amendments proposed by other concerned parties and ourselves.

The party calls for a local office in Belfast where Human Rights issues could be discussed with some urgency, with a view to local conciliation, in much the same way that the Labour Relations Agency is able to conciliate in a reasonable time on matters of importance in the commercial and industrial areas. Human Rights issues, in particular those surrounding Courts and Court procedures, could be handled with a greater urgency and in so doing prevent local conflict on serious issues.

Economic Strategy

The Progressive Unionist Party calls for a multiple strategy approach, which should include both medium and long term goals across the following sectors:-

- Selective intervention to retain and expand the indigenous economic base of Northern Ireland based companies.
- Target setting for inward investment by the IDB and encouragement of companies to disadvantaged areas.
- Risk support for entrepreneurial development.
- Creation in the medium term of a community based social economy with jobs of added community value, matched to local need, i.e., Poverty Support Teams, Environmental Task Forces, Sports Development, Community Care.
- Establishment of local capital finance funds.
- Financial support for research and development.
- Implementation of an integrated planning approach.

The Party believes that Northern Ireland needs economic growth so that we can create sustainable jobs that will reduce long-term unemployment and enhance the quality of life. Growth alone will not achieve this, it must be accompanied by development if we are to tackle the problems of the disadvantaged.

The Party will focus on social inclusion and the eradication of deprivation as well as on economic growth. We believe that we must develop the skills base, innovation and the education system if we are to sustain growth and build an environment for investment.

Health & Social Services

The Progressive Unionist Party repudiates the values and ethos of the New Right which now permeate the social services and which have led to a contract culture amongst those responsible for the provision of health, education and social welfare services. The party demands a strengthening, not a weakening, of the Health Service. In particular we demand that patient care is based on medical prognosis and not made subject to profit motivation.

The party strongly opposes any lowering of health standards as a result of the implementation of Trust status and the "Americanisation" of the Health Service. We view with grave concern the unrepresentative nature and lack of accountability of the Trusts, which, we believe, are tearing apart the very fabric of the Health Service.

We acknowledge and support the many positive aspects of Community Care but, at the same time, insist that this be properly funded to enable professional standards of caring and support for both patients and carers.

The party calls for a review of all Social Security benefits and demands an end to the policies and strategies of the New Right which seek the erosion of the Welfare State.

In particular we call for

- Properly funded services directly governed by elected local authorities.
- Services that are geared to facilitate community needs and not limited to the needs of stigmatised individuals.
- Local community social work teams and Family Centres as the main base for social welfare activity.
- Social policies that are geared towards equipping families and individuals with the resources and information to enable them to cope with their own lives.
- An end to managerial social work and the overthrow of the contract culture.
- A revamping of the CSA.
- An end to the Social Fund
- An increase in benefit for lone parents.
- The abolition of VAT on fuel and other necessities of life

Education

The Progressive Unionist Party believes that education is a fundamental human right which government is obligated to provide from **pre-school** to university level.

The Party opposes the local management of schools where Heads and Teachers are more and more regarded as glorified administrators. This tends to place the focus more on budgeting than on education and attempts to shift the blame for bad management from central government to individual schools.

We demand a full return to Student Grants, the abolition of the iniquitous loan scheme and call for the scrapping of the 11+ together with the introduction of non-selective co-education.

The Party calls upon government to provide more financial and practical support for the development of integrated education at both primary and secondary levels and party members will work to make integrated education a real viable alternative for those parents and children who wish to avail themselves of it.

We demand a radical reappraisal at primary level to ensure a fair and equitable education for all pupils and call for the abolition of testing for eight-year-olds.

The Party calls for increased funding for the provision of **pre-school** education in all areas,

Housing

The Progressive Unionist Party supports the government's recognition of employment and education as tools for regeneration, and calls for equal emphasis to be placed on housing as the provision of adequate housing is an integral part of the regeneration process.

We call upon government to make available adequate funding to tackle the problems of homelessness, disrepair, overcrowding, dereliction and blight within the inner city and urban areas. We further urge government to establish a special fund to rehabilitate and refurbish the inordinate number of occupied but uninhabitable houses in rural areas.

Having witnessed the widespread destruction of traditional communities in urban areas the party calls for a development policy which is properly informed by the community and which sees a shift from consultation to participation. We call upon government to consider proper methods of planning for interface areas based on the principle of community representation and community participation at all levels of planning.

Progressive Unionists believe that while there is vacant land available within inner-city areas suitable for housing development it is unnecessary to build beyond the **greenbelt**.

Environment

The Progressive Unionist Party believes that environmentalism, which is based on a fundamental understanding of the interaction between the human and the natural, is vitally important to modern society and that environmental concern ought to inform our political philosophy as democratic socialists. Environmental politics is not just about conserving natural resources, it is also about enriching and enhancing the fundamental welfare of people and the communities in which they live.

The party believes that the environment is a natural and common resource which must be protected by all of us acting in concert and insists that proper safeguards for the conservation of natural resources should be of paramount importance when considering economic development.

To this end the party calls for:-

- the concept of environmental issues being incorporated into economic policy and planning.
- tighter controls on the dumping of toxic waste together with stiffer penalties for those convicted of river pollution and illegal dumping.
- an improvement in the physical appearance of inner city areas, peripheral housing estates, main arterial routes and thoroughfares.
- the development of open space amenities for local communities.

Equality for Women

The Progressive Unionist Party is conscious of the gross under-representation of women in positions of power and influence within our society, and is mindful of the fact that women have a vital role to play at all levels of activity in the social, political and cultural development of our Province.

Consequently the party actively encourages the nomination and acceptance of women as party delegates, office 'bearers and candidates for election and wholeheartedly endorses the following principles as being essential to securing justice for women in our **society**:-

- Equal pay for work of equal value and an end to women being regarded as a source of cheap labour in low-esteem part-time jobs.
- Improved rights for part-time workers, including the right to be represented by a trades union and the right to equal status in Law regarding pay and employee benefits.
- Creche and nursery facilities to be made available in the workplace to help facilitate the right of working mothers and other single parents to take up employment opportunities.
- More benefits for working married mothers such as **Childcare** Allowance, Flexible Working Hours, Reasonable periods of emergency leave, training schemes and further educational opportunities.
- Childcare** to be accepted as a universal right and to be looked upon as a partnership approach involving local authorities, schools, the voluntary sector, trades unions and parents.
- Adequate levels of welfare benefits to ensure realistic financial maintenance for children and for single-parent families.
- The legal right of non wage-earning women to adequate financial support.
- More financial and material support for women who have taken responsibility for households due to the imprisonment of their partner.
- Full and complete health checks for women of childbearing age with particular reference to screening for breast and cervical cancer together with the right of women to have intimate examinations carried out by a women doctor.
- A more open and adequate sex education programme backed up by a free comprehensive family planning service for all.
- Acknowledgement of an individual's right to control one's own body irrespective of marital status together with an acceptance of a woman's right to choose whether to continue with or whether to terminate a pregnancy.
- The extension of the 1967 Abortion Act to Northern Ireland together with a confidential and **non-judgmental** advisory service on abortion and related issues together with access to free confidential treatment as urgently as required.
- More adequate provision of facilities and support for victims of domestic violence, rape, sexual assault and incest, and a strengthening of the law in relation to rape and all forms of sexual assault.
- More stringent endeavors to tackle and eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace.