



## **REAL LEADERSHIP . . .**

The SDLP since its foundation has given consistent and steady leadership. The SDLP was the only Party that published its analysis of our problem and the methodology for its solution and then used all our powers of representation and persuasion to concentrate minds, particularly the minds of Governments, on our approach. Central to our approach has been total and absolute opposition to violence from any quarter.

It was the SDLP who first called on the two Governments to abandon their megaphone diplomacy approach to one another and to begin to work together to solve our problems. We argued that the central nature of our problem is that we are a divided people and therefore that our problem cannot be solved by any form of coercion but only by agreement. Secondly, central to the divisions among our people are the three sets of relationships - within Northern Ireland, between North and South and between Britain and Ireland and that to solve our problem those relationships have to be resolved to the satisfaction of both sections of our community. We are pleased that both Governments together with all parties are now totally committed to that approach. In this election we seek a strong mandate to continue the talks process and to commit all our energies to achieving lasting peace and stability based on an agreement that has the loyalty of both sections of our community.

## **. . . REAL REPRESENTATION**

The SDLP provides effective representation, a solid constituency service and a range of policies designed to meet the needs and concerns of our people. The Party stands on a record of positive representation whether in local councils, the Parliaments in Westminster or Strasbourg or within the circles of power and influence in Washington and Brussels.

The public face of our constituency efforts are our MPs, John Hume in **Foyle**, Joe Hendron in West Belfast, Seamus Mallon in **Newry** and Armagh and Eddie McGrady in South Down, They, together with our councillors, provide an outstanding advice, information and advocacy service to their constituents.

The effectiveness of the SDLP does not begin and end at the constituency office door, but rests on the firm foundations of our belief in the primacy of politics and the political process, on our social democratic philosophy and on our commitment to build a New Ireland based on consent to meet the needs and aspirations of all our people. SDLP representatives combine service with analysis, hard work and vision.

The SDLP offers the politics of partnership and inclusion. We reject in principle the politics of violence and the politics of sectarianism. Our political programme is based on recognizing the realities of a divided society with different identities. It rests on the principles and values of community partnership and social inclusion. As a social democratic party we endorse social and economic rights, as well as political rights. Our representatives support quality public services in health, education and housing and policies to create full employment and our policies on these issues are spelt out in detail in this manifesto.

The SDLP rejects the Unionist principle of majoritarianism and proposes instead the principle of partnership as the only means to focus the energy of our divided people to build a better future. In this context it is clear that the "first past the post" voting system used in Westminster elections is completely unsuited to the circumstances of Northern Ireland. This has been recognised by every British government in recent times. Already local government elections and assembly style elections and elections to the European Parliament are held under PR. We believe that equity and fairness demand that PR is used in Westminster elections as well. The SDLP will be pressing the case for PR in Westminster elections very strongly with the next British government.

## ... REAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The creation of a wealth-generating economy is a political priority for the SDLP. The Party is aware however, that economic and social progress requires political stability and that developing and building our economy to its full potential can only come about if we have a genuine peace based on political agreement. Therefore a positive outcome to the talks process is central to any strategy designed to create the dynamic wealth-generating economy which will meet the needs of the citizen.

For the SDLP wealth is not an end in itself. It provides the individual with a passport to greater material comfort, whilst for society as a whole, it produces the resources necessary to build the social and economic infrastructure - part of the social contract of a civilised community and nation.

### **The SDLP has identified the following structural weaknesses:-**

- High level of unemployment generally, underemployment particularly in rural areas, persistence of unemployment **blackspots** and a large number of people who are long term unemployed.
- Extremely weak private sector.
- Under representation of potential growth sectors such as software engineering and bio-engineering.
- High level of underachievement in the education sector.

Northern Ireland's peripherality must be looked at in the context of modern telecommunications and the new global market. We must see ourselves as the gateway between the European Union and the United States and identify the opportunities that this provides.

## **Economic Development**

### **The SDLP believes that we need to approach economic development on the following strategic basis:-**

**Developing the economy is a long term enterprise requiring long term investment. To be successful it requires the following approach :-**

- A vision for the next twenty years and setting targets on which to monitor progress.
- A management framework to include the social partners - the unemployed, the trade unions and management.
- A rejection of short termism and quick profits as a strategic basis for economic development.
- Government intervention in the form of a hands on approach to economic management - leaving it to the market place is not an option. There is a need to identify regional specialisations which provide competitive advantage.
- Establishing a constructive and structured relationship between the public and private sectors.
- Nurturing enterprise in all sectors of the economy.

- An education system which is focused on enterprise and employability for the new high tech global economy.
- Quality training to provide the workforce with the skills required to attract foreign investment in the global market.
- Creating links between different sections of the economy, education and training as well as the community and voluntary sectors.

**Developing the economy means building on what we already have.**

**This involves the following approach:-**

- Supporting businesses already operating.
- Identifying and selecting industries for government and EU support. Helping to develop and focus companies with regard to international markets.
- **Building Up** industrial “clusters” on the foundations of the economic infrastructure already in place and developing new industrial/ service based clusters.
- A strategic approach to building North-South links.

**Developing the economy means building on the Social and Intermediate Economy.**

**This requires the following :-**

- A systematic approach to the sector to match unmet need to unemployed people.
- Working closely with the voluntary sector and community sector.

**Developing the economy requires a research and development capacity.**

**This involves :-**

- **Intervening** at the imitation, diffusion and adaptation stages in the development of new technologies. The initial innovative stage of research and development, because of the costs required, will remain with wealthy developed economies.
- Being aware of the new technologies that are useful and diffusing this knowledge throughout the economy and assisting with its adaptation by firms and sectors.
- Linking **new technology use** to training programmed.

**Within the context of the above strategy the SDLP propose the following:-**

- The development of marketing initiatives designed to sell goods and services throughout the EU and beyond.
- The development of special teams to promote the sale of services abroad in the EU, Eastern Europe and the developing world.
- The amalgamation of the IDB and LEDU to maximise and better focus the drive for industrial development.
- The development of specific measures to create joint North/South and Cross Border initiatives in tourism, agriculture and industry.

- Measures targeted specifically on job creation for the young and the long term unemployed.
- A minimum wage and a Low Pay Unit. Effective economic development means increasing the aggregate income.
- Measures targeted to ensure that every 16 year old school leaver has the right to continue education and training.
- Measures to ensure that effective training is available for those seeking to obtain qualifications and re-train for another job. The system of apprenticeships covering the change over from school to work has been ended, but something similar must be re-established.
- Better links between the Department of Education and the Training and Employment Agency need to be established and as part of this approach, the Training and Employment Agency must see its client as the worker/trainee as opposed to the Project management.

## **Agriculture and Rural Development**

Agriculture is our most important industry. Whilst it now employs a smaller proportion of the working population than was formerly the case, agriculture remains a major earner in the overall economy and is particularly important in rural areas.

The SDLP wishes to see farm incomes increase, but believes it is important that the industry is mindful of the challenges of the modern competitive global market and the need for diversification of the rural economy generally in the face of the next round of CAP reform and EU enlargement.

Supporting the case for rural development generally has long been a priority of the SDLP. We particularly welcomed the establishment of the Rural Development Council which we believe has a very important role to play in improving the rural economy.

### **The SDLP will pursue the following objectives:-**

- Ensure that further reforms of the CAP do not undermine agriculture incomes particularly those of smaller farmers or cause the destruction of rural communities.
- The elimination of BSE and the opening up immediately of markets for our cattle. The SDLP will pursue this objective by urging the British government to make Northern Ireland a "special case" on the strength of the very low incidence of BSE in the North.
- Diversification of the rural economy and adequate assistance in promoting diversification initiatives.
- The availability of proper advisory services in rural areas and for agriculture, to meet the needs of a changing world and a more competitive environment requiring new approaches.
- Adequate resources for the Rural Development Council.
- Adequate resources to tackle poor rural housing conditions.
- The completion of electrification and mains water schemes in rural areas.

- A development policy with regard to rural industry which is based on the “green economy” to ensure environmentally friendly industries in rural areas.
- Protection of the landscape and heritage of rural areas as a crucially important asset generally and for tourism in particular.
- Establishing strong links between rural development and tourism.

## Tourism

The SDLP believes that tourism offers very significant opportunities for economic development and job creation. For tourism to achieve its full potential will depend on real peace and agreement and on a carefully thought out strategy.

### The SDLP proposes the following approach:-

- The need to promote an integrated approach from the different parts of the tourism sector in order to market a coherent and attractive message.
- The need for a strong North/South, one island, approach so that both parts of the island of Ireland are working together to get the maximum benefit. Bord **Faite** and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board must act jointly.
- Identifying, preserving and protecting tourist assets and ensuring that their full potential is realised through strategic planning and sensitive development. This will include in particular, recognizing the importance of heritage, both the built environment and the natural environment, and through planning and good design, gain the maximum advantage of our own uniqueness.
- Developing tourism on the basis of the principles of the “green economy” - sustainability and bio-diversity.

## ... REAL SOCIAL INCLUSION

Creating a society of citizens participating on the basis of equality requires efficient and effective public services in health, housing, education and welfare being available in response to need. To achieve these objectives such services must be properly resourced, provided with the opportunity for long term planning and development and given a research capacity.

The SDLP is opposed to the Tory policy of undermining and fragmenting public services. Their arguments about providing choice in the public sector are simply a means to promote privatisation by stealth. The real and fundamental issue with regard to public services is that of access and the standards provided by those services.

As a party of social inclusion and social solidarity the SDLP acknowledges the political importance and necessity of social responsibility in providing for those in need. A wealth generating economy will find the resources to fund its public services but where economic growth is slower there will be increased demands on welfare and the SDLP will pursue the case for those in need. Spending of this nature is clearly a form of public investment, which provides for the very basic levels of existence and promotes social stability.

The SDLP is opposed to the regressive Tory tax policies of driving down direct taxation which benefits the better off, whilst increasing indirect taxation, which penalises the poor and the less well off and leads to an increased demand on welfare.

The SDLP is totally opposed to Government cutbacks in social and economic provision in Northern Ireland which effectively penalises innocent people for the political violence and intransigence of a few.

## **Health and Social Services**

In 1992 the SDLP manifesto highlighted four major problems facing the Health and Personal Social Services (**HPSS**) in the following decade.

- **Chronic underfunding**, especially when compared with other European countries; the growing number of elderly; inequalities in health and healthcare between social classes and the importance of income, education and housing in the prevention of much ill health.

Over the last five years there has been little progress in dealing with these fundamental issues. Administrative and organisational reform have created new inequalities and inefficiencies in the provision of Health and Social Care.

- The cumulative impact of underfunding, year on year, has had a deleterious impact on Health and Social Services available to our people.
- Links between poverty and physical and mental health are well documented. Real health and social gain can only be achieved by reducing poverty and inequality.
- The Social Welfare, Economic and Labour Policies of the Government, by creating and maintaining a low pay sector, characterised by job insecurity, with inadequate social welfare, benefits, have contributed to physical and mental ill-health.
- Waiting lists are again increasing.
- Old age has once more become a time of fear and potential pauperdom, as the boundary between health care and social services is increasingly redrawn to exclude respite and continuing care from free provision with the **HPSS**.
- Much health and social care is provided by 'informal' carers, (the majority of whom are women). Their contribution is neither recognised, nor supported by government, welfare, employment or social policies.

The Health and Personal Social Services are now saddled with the expensive overheads associated with a complex and increasingly inappropriate bureaucracy.

- There are now too many organisations, trusts, boards, GP fundholders and agencies with inappropriate or conflicting boundaries, which makes the concept of seamless care
- Scarce funds are being spent on numerous management boards.
- The internal market and the contracting process is proving to be complex, expensive and failing to deliver real benefits to patients and clients. Contracting on an annual basis is irrelevant to and fails to address the longer term strategic planning requirements of the HPSS and there is a failure to effectively co-ordinate the commissioning and purchasing decisions of Boards and GP Fundholders.
- Although the wishes of patients are supposed to be the driver in the internal market, the reality is, despite charters and other such initiatives, that patients views are not being systematically incorporated into the provision of Health and Social Care; money was supposed to follow the patient.

- **The new Regional Strategy lays great emphasis upon the development of primary care services, the prevention of ill health and the promotion of health and social gain through enhanced programmed delivered at the primary care level, but there is no very clearly developed or publicised strategy of investment in a primary care infrastructure to support the objectives.**

The most notable feature of strategic planning is the six hospital plan, which if executed in isolation from enhanced investment in a primary care infrastructure, will leave the population in parts of central and western Northern Ireland with inequalities of access to Health and Social Services.

#### **The SDLP's Programme of Action:**

- A radical overhaul of the internal market is required. 3-5 year commissioning plans should be developed to replace the annual contracting cycle. GPs and primary health and social care teams should focus these commissioning plans, commissioning services for local communities of around 100,000; within this context, the role and purpose of HSS Boards should be reviewed.
- An explicit clear strategy for investment in the physical and clinical infrastructure needed to support primary care should be developed. This should be complimented by a review of the present acute hospital strategy to ensure that equality of access is granted to all.
- A focus upon health and social care provision, will not on their own, produce significant health and social gain. All new policies, in all areas should be subject to a health and social gain impact assessment.
- Much health and social care is provided in Northern Ireland by a large community of informal carers. These carers should have a right to have a separate assessment of their needs carried out and appropriate services developed to support them.  
  
Policies should be developed to give enhanced employment and social welfare protection for all informal carers, through such measures as an increase in the invalid care allowance.
- A commitment should be given to increase domiciliary service provision to at least the level of the GB average.
- The Children (NI) Order was implemented in November 1996 and must be properly funded.
- A programme should be developed to reduce the number of HPSS organisations. The number of trusts should be reduced, and their organisational boundaries changed to ensure that they are integrated providers of health and social care. The present plethora of small agencies should be incorporated into a reconstituted HPSS Common Services Agency and all Board and non executive posts should be filled by open, public competition.
- The Department of Health and Social Services should develop a 3-5 year strategic plan to incorporate administrative reform, an investment strategy and a clear commissioning framework, tied to research based indicators of health and social gain.



## **Social Security**

Tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion by ensuring that everyone has a decent standard of living and access to services are of fundamental importance to the SDLP. Providing jobs with good wages and pursuing policies aimed at full employment, are two of the most important elements in any strategy designed to fight poverty and social exclusion. Another element in this anti-poverty strategy must be an adequate system of social security to assist the unemployed and those in need.

For the SDLP the social security system does not stand on its own. We believe it must be part of a package of policies designed to create wealth and jobs and ensure that people are in a position to take up employment. Creating wealth means creating jobs which provide good wages and security of contract with a fall back position of a minimum wage. Within this context the social security system must achieve a number of objectives. It must provide adequate resources to those in need and the unemployed. Secondly, it should not create situations which undermine choice between various lifestyles. Thirdly, it must not prevent people taking up employment. In the view of the SDLP meeting the latter two objectives means a minimum wage, a relationship between the tax system, the social security system and the pricing policy in public services, such as public sector housing rents, that does not create a poverty trap.

### **The SDLP commits itself to support the following:-**

- An increase in the basic Retirement Pension, with the restoration of the link between inflation and average earnings.
- The restoration of the value of Child Benefit in real terms to what it was in 1987 when it was frozen.
- The restoration of the right to Income Support for 16 to 17 year olds.
- The replacement of the Social Fund by a system of grants as a legal right linked to an appeals system and discretionary grants for emergencies.
- A Comprehensive Disability Income scheme.
- An end to the capping of Housing Benefit.
- Access to adequate support with mortgage re-payments immediately to mortgage holders who become unemployed.
- An end to the Job Seeker's Allowance.
- An end to the restrictive points system used in assessing Incapacity Benefit.
- The continuation of the Independent Tribunal service and the rights of the individual to appeal to the service.
- The SDLP opposes the privatisation of the Social Security Agency.

## Education

The SDLP regards education as a necessary foundation for an active responsible citizenship. The education system should be based on principles of equality of opportunity, respect for children and learners and parental rights. The objective of policy must be the establishment and maintenance of a flexible system which achieves quality education and training for children and adults and within that context, provides for parental rights and parental choice.

In assessing the output of our education system one of the most striking and worrying features is the high level of underachievement. The SDLP is aware of the importance of high standards in education and training in ensuring economic development, attracting foreign investment and contributing to general prosperity. The economy of the future will be knowledge-based and therefore from an economic viewpoint as well as a citizenship perspective, underachievement is a priority educational issue for the SDLP. Education should therefore have three broad aims - personal development, social development and economic development.

### **The SDLP supports the following strategy in education:-**

- Early learning measures designed to assist mothers develop learning for new born infants. This would be part of an “education for life” approach and is a way to tackle disadvantage and the education gap which may develop in later years.
- Comprehensive nursery education. This is essential to tackle underachievement.
- Lifelong learning strategies. This approach would target parents, the unemployed, the poorly qualified and requires a more flexible education system.
- Developing community education initiatives.
- Improving links between business and second level schools and third level education. The system of apprenticeships has been lost. This proposal is designed to ensure that schools and the business world develop mutual links and gain mutual benefits.
- Ending selection at 11. The great majority of children, around 75%, are penalised by selection at this age, when children are effectively sent to two different school systems - Grammar and Secondary. The Common Curriculum undermines the case for selection between systems. The present system condemns the great majority of children to underachievement.
- Targets for schools assessed on a baseline are essential.
- Minimizing elitism in the education system and improving school and university links. Universities should be networking with schools, providing help with teaching and with courses.

### **In addition to the above strategic approach designed to tackle underachievement the SDLP:-**

- Calls for the abolition of student loans to be replaced by a proper grants system,
- Calls for small rural schools to be kept open given that they are an important component of the local community and are working effectively.
- Opposes the publications of “League Tables” for schools. They have no educational validity, are misleading and with regard to targets, provide no information on pupil progress from an agreed baseline.
- Opposes the excessive emphasis on pupil-weighted formula for funding as inequitable.

- Calls for a higher priority to be given to **Education** for Mutual Understanding initiatives.
- Calls for realistic funding for in-service courses for teachers.
- Calls for a realistic budget for research by our universities.

## **Housing**

Housing must be part of any serious plan designed to tackle poverty, marginalization and social exclusion. An effective housing strategy will address three broad areas, housing policy, funding and housing administration.

The SDLP believes that the system of housing administration, centred on the Housing Executive, has been fair and effective in the delivery of a housing service.

### **The Party will support the following:**

- The Housing Executive to remain as the single comprehensive housing authority for Northern Ireland, accessing need and building, managing and allocating houses on the basis of need and priority.
- Effective regulatory control of housing associations by the Housing Executive to cover rent levels, the allocation of houses and standards and quality of dwellings.
- The allocation of all public sector housing, including that of the housing associations as well as those of the Housing Executive through a single waiting list and single selection scheme controlled and managed by the Housing Executive.
- **Policies** to ensure high quality and standards in the building, maintenance and improvements of all dwellings .
- **Restoration of the Housing Executive budget.**
- **An adequate new build budget for the Housing Executive.**
- Adequate help with mortgage re-payments for owner-occupiers who become unemployed.
- Increased security of tenure in the private rented furnished sector.
- policies and programmed to improve rural housing conditions.

### **The SDLP is concerned with some recent policy proposals and will continue to oppose:-**

- Mixed funding for housing associations because of its potential negative impact on rent levels and the quality and space standards in housing.
- A high rents policy in public sector housing.
- Plans to dismantle the existing legislation on homelessness.
- **The transfer of Housing Executive new build schemes to housing associations.**
- **Compulsory competitive tendering of Housing Executive housing management.**
- **Capping of housing benefits for private sector tenants.**

## ... REAL EQUALITY AND PARTNERSHIP

The SDLP is founded on principles of equality of opportunity, civil liberties and social justice for all. Indeed the Party is defined by its commitment to these principles and to the struggle against poverty and exclusion.

By equality of opportunity we mean the right to a good education, to participate in society, to live independently, the right to adequate health-care, to have a fair opportunity of a job and to a reasonable standard of living if unable to work. Through active representation at all levels, we are dedicated to gaining effective recognition of people's rights regardless of wealth, ability, gender, age, faith, sexual orientation or race.

The SDLP will continue to lobby for a Bill of Rights for the North; it is our view that achieving the objectives set out above requires a dynamic, inclusive approach based on promoting social integration, challenging negative stereotypes, working towards a change in the kind of mindset that tolerates the current widespread discrimination and ever-increasing wealth differentials.

### Women

The SDLP is deeply concerned by the fact that after twenty years of sex discrimination and equal pay legislation there is still a need for a strong lobby on women's issues. Legislation alone is not enough, and affirmative action is required to allow women equality of opportunity in the job-market. Given that women are over-represented amongst part-time and low-paid workers, we are particularly committed to arguing for the implementation of a minimum wage and better childcare facilities to facilitate women wishing to train or work.

The SDLP is arguing for independent legal status for women married to working men and that strenuous efforts be made to rectify the other inequalities experienced by women in the social security system. In terms of public life the Party believes that there will continue to be a serious democratic deficit until women are enabled to take their positions and participate at all levels. We see these not just as women's issues but as society's issues. It is our view that when women are enabled to contribute their talents and energies on an equal basis then society as a whole will benefit.

#### The SDLP is campaigning for:

- A major overhaul of the law on sex discrimination and equal pay, to produce a single comprehensive piece of legislation, with simplified provisions on procedures, and reform to allow case law to act to its full capacity in establishing policy on particular types of cases.
- The adoption of the Social Chapter, the implementation of a minimum wage and guaranteed rights for all workers, regardless of contractual status.
- Better rights and conditions for all parents in the workforce.
- Universally available childcare.
- Increased confidence-building and training opportunities to be directed at women wishing to enter or re-enter the job-market.
- A co-ordinated childcare-training strategy to enable parents to train while childcare is available.
- New **Sex Offences** legislation.

- The implementation of the 5 strategic objectives on Women's Health in the Global Platform for Action agreed at the United Nations'4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995.

## **Senior Citizens**

The SDLP believes that the good health, independence and well-being of senior citizens must be a top priority. We have often expressed our anger at the fact that today's pensioners are now being forced to live on such meagre pensions, to pay VAT on whatever fuel they can afford and, possibly, have to sell their homes to pay for care.

The SDLP wants to see an end to the discrimination against older people in the workplace. As well as being grossly unjust, such discrimination is costly and inefficient, forcing many people into early retirement. Studies show that older workers often have lower rates of absenteeism and are felt to provide good service to employers. To tackle this problem, the SDLP will continue to argue for more training opportunities for all.

### **The SDLP is campaigning for:**

- An immediate increase in pensions, and a government commitment to assess the needs of senior citizens and abolish age-limits on benefits.
- An end to VAT on heating fuel, and in the interim, exemption for pensioners.
- High quality health-care provided free to all pensioners.
- Free travel passes and television licenses for pensioners.
- **Subsidised electricity and telephone rental and rates and a new offence to make it illegal to disconnect the telephone or electricity supply of pensioners without getting a court order.**
- Free security chains, door and window locks and alarms for senior citizens.
- Training schemes for people of all ages, and new legal provisions to outlaw discrimination in the job-market solely on the grounds of age.
- **An awareness raising scheme to deal with the *one third* of pensioners who are not claiming all the money they are owed.**

## **People with Disabilities**

The SDLP is committed to campaigning for recognition of the needs of disabled people as rights. We believe people with disabilities are entitled to education, work and a chance to live independently. Society should provide the necessary training, facilities and transport to ensure that there is genuine equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

The Party notes the recently enacted Disability Discrimination Act legislation. If this is to be effective it needs a properly resourced and empowered commission along the lines of the Commission on Racial Equality. The SDLP will continue to campaign for legal aid to be made available to claimants.

### **The SDLP is campaigning for:**

- **A single, comprehensive and simplified benefits scheme and a guaranteed reasonable standard of living for all those either partly or totally prevented from working with as much independence as possible.**
- **A Commission on Disabilities with the power to take individual cases, and legal aid for claimants.**
- **Improved access for children with disabilities in schools, to ensure that they are given the education they deserve to enable them to fulfil their potential.**

## **Children and Young People**

The SDLP does not accept that there can be any compromise or two-tier system where the rights of children and young people are concerned. The SDLP is committed to the principle that regardless of the wealth of the family all children must be guaranteed a good minimum standard of living, and given the best possible education, health-care and opportunities to develop their potential. Children represent the future, and we must invest in them, and work to build the kind of future they deserve. The Party believes that children also have the right to recognition for what they are now, as individuals with rights, views and preferences; we endorse the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and we support the appointment of a Minister for Children and Young People.

### **The SDLP is campaigning for:**

- **A commitment on the part of the government to tackle child poverty and disadvantage as a key priority.**
- **Proper funding to ensure the effective implementation of the new Children's Order.**
- **The DHSS and DENI to co-ordinate efforts in relations to youth needs including a strategy on lone-parents, benefit levels, benefit to work transition, and training and employment.**
- **Urgent action to deal with the dramatic inequalities in child health in Northern Ireland.**
- **Ex gratia payments for victims of child abuse who come forward after the three year deadline from their 18th birthday.**

## Race Relations

The SDLP is committed to the creation of a pluralist society which respects and cherishes all cultures. We believe the ethnic minorities in our society are entitled to protection from discrimination and measures to guarantee equality of opportunity in terms of jobs, accommodation, education and health-care in line with international obligations.

The Party welcomes the new and long overdue Race Relations legislation, and in particular the fact that it specifically protects Travellers; we believe that nomadic lifestyle is a fundamental freedom to be vigorously defended.

The SDLP believes that legislation cannot eradicate discrimination; an active and dynamic approach is required.

### The SDLP is campaigning for:

- **Proper** funding to ensure the effective implementation of the new Race Relations legislation
- A radical re-think on site-provision for Travellers to ensure that all families have their right to basic amenities guaranteed.
- A government commitment to adding an ethnic grouping question to the next census form for the North in order to make an accurate assessment of the needs of the various minority ethnic communities.
- The introduction into Northern Irish law of the **offences** dealing with racial violence and harassment contained in the British version of the Criminal Justice and Public Order legislation.
- The provision of adequate resources to meet the needs of the minority ethnic communities, particularly in the fields of health, education and social services.
- The lifting of the government's veto on the establishment of a European Union **Centre** to monitor racism.

If equality of opportunity is to become a reality, it is vital that these principles are built into all levels of policy-making. For this reason the issue of "Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment" is extremely important. '**PAFT**' is intended to operate at the formulation stage of policy-making so that each decision or piece of legislation would be assessed for the likely impact it would have on the various groups in society. The SDLP wants to see '**PAFT**' enshrined in law with published guidelines for all government departments. We believe that, if implemented effectively, this could be of considerable benefit to many of the groups in society, and go some distance towards gaining recognition of the 'double disadvantage' suffered by, for example, people from ethnic minority communities who have disabilities.

Our policies on equality of opportunity represent the core beliefs of our party. They form the credo of the SDLP - the founding principles which inspired the creation of the Party, and which have driven us ever since.

## **Fair Employment**

Since its formation the SDLP has highlighted employment differentials as a fundamental cause of the social division in the North. We are proud of our record on representing the community in the quest for equality of opportunity. Unfortunately much still needs to be done; the Fair Employment Commission's Annual Report highlights the fact that Catholics are still hugely over-represented amongst the lowest paid, the unemployed, and particularly the long-term unemployed.

The ongoing Employment Equality Review, co-ordinated by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, has highlighted the growing consensus around the need for attention to be focused more on equality-related measures than on the Fair Employment legislation itself. The SDLP is concerned by reports consistently suggesting that the government's 'Targeting Social Need' policy is not being funded or implemented in such a way as to make it at all effective. There needs to be stronger commitment to implementing the "Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment" guidelines. The SDLP would like to see these enshrined in law, to require policy-makers to assess the likely impact of laws and decisions on various groups in society. The SDLP is also campaigning for legal aid for applicants and targets for redressing the inequalities in the job-market.

## **... REAL JUSTICE AND POLICING**

The SDLP sees human rights and justice issues as central elements of our problems in Ireland. Since our inception we have campaigned on this basis and we have argued for a fresh initiative, a settlement that would place respect for the rights of all traditions at the centres of power in our society, and uphold the right to participate of all sections of the population. We want to see an end to the culture of fear and domination which has oppressed every individual during these last decades. We are convinced that upholding the rights of all sections of the community is the way to a just and lasting peace. We are confident that on this foundation we can negotiate an agreement for a new Ireland, a settlement that would be reinforced by the support it would attract from all sections of the population north and south. The incorporation of a bill of rights must be a key aspect of that agreement, as well as a representative and accountable police service.

We have long argued against violence, repression and harassment from all quarters as totally unjustified and counter-productive. This society has seen the proof that violence and repression - from the worst aspects of an unjust criminal justice system, to the horrors inflicted by the paramilitaries - bring only further conflict in their wake. The ongoing violence is used as an excuse not to negotiate while the lack of progress allows paramilitaries an excuse not to call a cease-fire. We must have a cease-fire and we must have serious negotiations.

While persevering in our work to bring about peace and in our efforts to make progress in negotiations we will continue campaigning for the victims of injustice, for the repeal of emergency legislation, and for the transfer of prisoners. The SDLP is proud of its record of active representation of our constituents, and of the influence that we exercise at all levels of decision-making.

The events of last Summer have served to increase the concerns of the SDLP with regard to policing in our community. Yet again nationalists witnessed their rights violated, their views ignored, their freedom curtailed, and all of this justified in the language of 'rights'. With public confidence in policing at an all-time low, the argument for piecemeal reform is thoroughly discredited.

The SDLP fully appreciates the complexity of the parades issue in both political and policing terms. Rights entail responsibilities. The problem arises out of two sets of competing but not irreconcilable rights: the right to freedom of expression and the right to freedom of movement, freedom from terror, intimidation and domination. Our concern is not to exploit



but to resolve problems, to use our leadership in the interests of conciliation rather than confrontation. In this spirit we know we represent the views of a huge majority of the nationalist people who desperately want to see dialogue so as to avoid the recurrence of any such unrest.

**The SDLP is campaigning for:**

- The full implementation of the North Committee's Report and an independent international inquiry into the events of last Summer.
- The Secretary of State to accept the government's responsibility in relation to situations of fundamental threat to the rule of law.
- The repeal of all emergency legislation.
- The withdrawal of plastic bullets.
- An independent police ombudsman to deal with complaints against the police.
- The restoration of the right to silence.
- A transparent and accountable inquest system.
- The transfer of remaining prisoners in Britain.
- A new civilian Northern Ireland Police Service with new structures, accountability and ethos capable of commanding the support and allegiance of all sections of the community.

## **. . . A REAL EUROPE**

The SDLP strongly supports our membership of the New European Union.

The SDLP is fully aware that the European Union is both a political project and an economic one. The new Europe seeks to establish a different set of relationships, based on co-operation and integration, designed to end once and for all the causes of the conflicts that led to two World Wars this century and to the Cold War.

The SDLP believes that the success or otherwise of this historical development will determine the question of war and peace in Europe in the next century. The SDLP deplores the disruptive role that Britain has played with regard to the development of the EU.

Economically European integration offers the benefits of a single market, a stronger economy in Europe and one that is better placed to face the increased competition that will arise from the emerging trading blocs in Asia, Latin America and North America.

The SDLP acknowledges the important role that the EU plays and has played in Northern Ireland. This is particularly the case with regard to agriculture and the well being of our farmers, and the whole area of rural development. The SDLP has led the drive to secure funding from Europe and is proud of the results achieved through the use of the Social Fund, the Regional Fund agricultural support measures, the Peace and Reconciliation Fund and the International Fund for Ireland.

The SDLP is fully committed to the European social dimension and to the Social Chapter. We support the establishment of a legal basis for the promotion and protection of the rights of workers to adequate earnings, safe working environment and to democratically organise and represent themselves as well as the enhancement of the position of working parents.

As part of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, the SDLP will work to strengthen the European Union. In putting forward proposals the SDLP believes that the European Union must set itself a number of objectives. The Union must be inclusive, it must be competitive, it must address the lack of democratic accountability of its institutions. As part of this, the citizens of Europe must be more involved in the development of the Union.

- The SDLP will continue to fully support and develop the European social dimension and the Social Chapter.
- The SDLP will pursue measures designed to ensure greater democratic control over the European institutions. We will support greater powers for the European Parliament in order to exert democratic control over the European Community.
- The SDLP will continue to support a “Europe of the Regions” and to ensure that Northern Ireland plays its role in this development and benefits fully from it.
- The SDLP will play its full part in the process leading up to another round of Structural Funds and in the debate on the further reform of the CAP. We will work to ensure that Northern Ireland benefits fully from both the Structural Funds and the CAP.
- The SDLP supports European Monetary Union as essential for the fair and effective operation of the Single Market and for European integration.
- The SDLP will approach the enlargement of the EU on a case by case basis, but always within the context of greater integration in the Union.

## ... REAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

The SDLP believes that it is necessary to first of all establish a number of fundamental principles on which to build environmental policy. The SDLP is fully aware that policy on the environment raises many complex inter-related social, economic and political issues concerned with development and underdevelopment, individual rights and responsibilities, the exploitation of natural resources such as fish stocks, the importance to be given to wilderness, the protection of natural habitats, the economic impact of changing modern farming methods, the necessity of international co-operation and more intensive hands-on environmental management, the protection of health and amenity and the type of countryside we wish to maintain. It follows on from this that policy on the environment is not something which is “tagged on” at the end - for example, if a few trees are planted, the environment is “taken care off”.

**The SDLP proposes that environmental policy at national and international level must be based on the principles of sustainability, bio-diversity, social justice and harmony. Policy development must be integrated and mainstreamed to ensure that environmental objectives run through all policy areas.**

**Within the context of the above approach the SDLP:-**

- Calls for effective international co-operation to underpin sustainability and bio-diversity and the implementation of the conclusions of the Rio Conference.

- Supports a stronger role and more resources for UNEP
- Supports a strong European Environmental Protection Agency.
- Supports the implementation of the “polluter pays” principle
- Strongly supports incentives to encourage re-cycling of waste.
- Remains resolutely opposed to nuclear power and to the **Sellafield** nuclear plant and demands its closure.
- Supports stricter control of dangerous substances.
- Supports the search for alternative cheap and clean energy sources.
- Supports the outlawing of the production of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.
- Supports an Environmental Protections Agency for Northern Ireland with cross-border links where required.
- Calls for improvements in waste management processes.
- Supports subsidies, investment incentives and fiscal preference, to promote the production and marketing of environmentally friendly goods.
- Supports intervention by regulation to ensure environmentally responsible economic activity.
- Supports the concept of environmental rights to cover environmental harm and damage, so as to afford a standing to a wider range of plaintiffs than those who can show injury to their own economic or property interest. This would provide a power to the citizen to protect the environment. We believe that “cumulative causation” must be replaced by “cumulative conservation”

## **. . . REAL INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

A more equal and peaceful world will not be built on the basis of crisis management of the consequences of war and famine. Our approach as a party to world development and to world peace is founded in our view that both are linked and that poverty, disease, malnutrition, illiteracy, and underdevelopment, which oppresses so many, have their roots in a complex set of global economic, political and institutional problems. These include an unjust economic order, the absence of a realistic framework for development co-operation, unequal power relations between the developed and developing world and corrupt governments which have characterised the developing world and their clients relationship with and support from Western powers.

The SDLP deplores the often negative role that the major powers played and still play in opposing the struggle for democracy and political reforms in developing countries. Part of this involves the arms trade in which enormous amounts of scarce resources are used to purchase weapons and in the process, line the pockets of arms dealers and the coffers of Western and other Governments. Of particular concern in this context is the trade in landmines which years after wars have ended are still killing and maiming thousands of people and “sterilising” large tracts of land.

### **The SDLP propose the following strategic approach:-**

- Institutional reform of the UN to make it more effective in dealing with ongoing political and economic problems as well as emergencies of a military or humanitarian kind. Reform of the UN must take account of the new political and economic context that has emerged in the 1990's.
- A more equal and balanced economic relationship between the developed and developing world is required. This must cover trade relations as a priority. Other issues are foreign aid, World Bank policies and debt and credit canceling. Reform must be designed to allow developing countries the opportunity to upgrade their economies in the direction of "added value". The next GATT Round has an important role to play in this approach. Finally, it is essential that developing countries are connected to the latest information technology networks.
- Greater involvement of the EU in dealing with these matters.

### **In addition to the above strategic approach the SDLP:-**

- Calls for a ban on the production, stockpiling, sale and use of landmines.
- Calls for Britain and Ireland to each commit at least 7% of GNP to development aid.
- Calls on the British Government to establish a realistic Development Education Fund for use in Northern Ireland.
- Calls for improvements to the Lome provisions in order to facilitate fairer trade relations between the European Union and Africa.

## **... REAL CULTURAL POLICIES**

One of the objectives of the SDLP is the promotion of culture and arts with a special responsibility to cherish, develop and enhance understanding of all the diverse aspects of our national cultures.

For the SDLP the context of these objectives lies in our understanding of culture, not as something to be imposed but in essence a people's way of life expressed in the attitudes and values of a community as transmitted through language, design, music, and literature. Culture is the sum total of what we are as formed by our past and informed by our vision of the future.

There is a diversity of cultural tradition on the island of Ireland. Culture policy must acknowledge the importance of tradition and heritage and aim to ensure that diversity is recognised and its expression encouraged.

It is the view of the SDLP that the objectives of culture policy must be to assist in the creation of a New Ireland, socially, economically and politically. To achieve this, culture policy must be creative and integrated so that it contributes to social well being and economic development. The SDLP believes that the economic potential as well as the social significance of cultural policy, has so far gone almost unrecognised. In the modern world of rapid technological change, cultural initiatives can help us identify more effectively opportunities for creative expression, including building on our own unique traditions in the development of "cultural industries" with all the benefits of linkages, job creation and wealth-generation which that opens up.

In keeping with our respect for diversity and for partnership between both communities, cultural initiatives should be de-ghettoised and non-sectarian, be accessible to everyone and based on a concept of "Irishness" which is inclusive, non-sectarian and which values diversity.

**The SDLP proposes the following strategic approach:-**

- The continuation of public funding of the arts with attention to the need to ensure that the participation level of the economically deprived is improved from its current low figure.
- A greater effort must be made to attract private sector money into the funding of the arts.
- The economic development aspects of culture need to be taken more seriously by Government than is currently the case. The Department of Economic Development review "Growing Competitively" does not mention the arts.
- Culture and arts policy must develop effective links to education policy in particular. Other important links must include heritage, conservation, tourism and Irish culture.

**The SDLP makes the following specific proposals:-**

- The establishment of a cultural corridor or corridors, which would include a mix of cultural industries, performance arts, design, fashion, film, a mix of technological services - multi-media and other relevant technologies to facilitate exchange between different users. The corridor should include a flagship project, such as an inter-active Children's' Museum.
- The establishment of an Irish Cultural Institute, which could be part of a cultural corridor, to promote all aspects of Irish culture.
- pro-active policy on the part of Government with regard to supporting and promoting the Irish language.
- Legal recognition of the importance of the Irish language schools system.
- Relaxation of criteria for funding of the embryonic Irish language schools system.

**The SDLP supports public service broadcasting and calls for the following:-**

- The democratic control of the cable and satellite systems.
- Broadcasting media should provide equal representation to both traditions on their controlling bodies.
- More air time to be given in the broadcasting media to Irish Language Programmed.