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STATEMENT BY MR. AUSTIN CURRIE, PARTY SPOKESMAN ON NORTH SOUTH AFFAIRS,
ON DR. GARRETT FITZGERALD'S COMMENTS ON R.T.E. RADIO YESTERDAY.

The SDLP sees Dr. Fitzgerald's remarks in the context of its long held position on a pluralist Ireland and changes in the Constitution. We welcome without reservation the Taoiseach's commitment to pluralism, and we share in the vision of a New Ireland based on the non-sectarian republicanism of Tone and Davis. We share in the belief that changes are required in the constitution but believe what is needed is a totally new constitution which would principally emphasise the rights of minorities rather than majorities.

But, as we have learned from tough experience, idealism unfortunately is not enough, and must be tempered with practical considerations. The present Irish constitution shares with other written constitutions and particularly that of the United States, a deliberately in-built resistance to change.

For this and other reasons the SDLP would favour an all party approach to these matters and would particularly welcome an opportunity for all groupings in the North to contribute directly to the discussion.

At the very least, Dr. Fitzgerald's remarks present an opportunity to lift republicanism from the gutter through which it has been dragged for the past number of years. He deserves our thanks.