

M

1987

EDITORIAL COPY

Price: thirty pence

A GREEN MANIFESTO

FOR A SIMPLY BETTER IRELAND

THE POLITICS OF PERSONAL GROWTH

In this manifesto we wish to put before you some of the significant factors which indicate that a major crisis exists, politically, economically, environmentally, socially and spiritually. It does not make pleasant reading. However, the outlook is not entirely bleak, and we go on to outline briefly some policies which we believe offer you and us the best hope of escaping from the disastrous cul-de-sac into which traditional politics and technologically oriented economics have led us.

The energy crises; incurable unemployment, mounting incidence of corporate fraud and corruption; chronic economic dislocation; increasing degradation of the quality of urban life; the relentless assault on non-human species and the environment in general; the ruthless exploitation of the Third World, leading to political, economic and social disintegration; institutionalised terrorism and criminality; the notion that violence solves problems; the growing list of disasters attributable to technological giantism ('Torrey Canyon', Seveso, Flixboro, Three Mile Island, Bhopal, Chernobyl...); the escalating balance of terror, euphemistically called "peace", arising from failure to conduct meaningful disarmament negotiations: all these signals are finally beginning to convince people that: you cannot trust existing power structures; the policies of traditional left, right and centre have been abject failures; the promise of unlimited growth, a technological 'fix' for all problems, and universal affluence is a lie; the system is running out of control; the unbridled consumerism of the developed countries is the root cause of the poverty of two-thirds of the world's human family; conventional politics cannot supply an adequate answer to our dilemma; if planet Earth is to have a future, a totally new, radical, spiritual approach will have to be adopted.

We believe the Green philosophy to be the best basis for this approach.

The Green Alliance / Comhaontas Glas interprets Green philosophy by means of the following Seven Principles, which underpin all its policies:

- 1) The impact of society on the environment should not be ecologically disruptive;
- 2) Conservation of resources is vital to a sustainable society;
- 3) All political, social, and economic decisions should be taken at the lowest effective level;
- 4) Society should be guided by self-reliance and co-operation at all levels;
- 5) As caretakers of the Earth, we have the responsibility to pass it on in a fit and healthy state;
- 6) The need for world peace overrides national and commercial interests;
- 7) The poverty of two-thirds of the world's family demands a redistribution of the world's resources.

The following pages include outlines of policies which you will find are a recipe for forms of growth far more worth having than the merely economic kind with which contemporary politicians are obsessed. For if we are to achieve a sane, humane and ecological society, we must accept that the finite resources of our planet will not allow conventional economic growth to continue indefinitely.

The new frontiers of growth are not technical and economic, but social and psychological. Future growth must meet the criteria of providing satisfying and rewarding occupation (good work), and of meeting people's higher-level needs for belongingness and love, esteem and self-actualisation. In short, what we need is politics of personal growth.

When you have studied our manifesto we hope you will agree that the Green approach provides the best hope of achieving the sort of future you really want for yourself and your children.

We do not inherit the Earth from our parents, We borrow it from our children.



INTRODUCTION

This manifesto is in no way a definitive document, nor does it even cover all those aspects of society for which we believe there to be specifically ecological approach. We think, however, that you will see in it something distinctly different

Decentralisation

As proposed by this Party, decentralisation is about a community-based way of life in which people would have real control of the government of their own lives with an increased self-reliance and self-determination. No matter how brilliant, inspired and socially aware centralised government is, the ability to make correct analysis and seek solutions to problems in a variety of places is inevitably doomed to failure. Even where the decisions are acceptable to the people, the resentment felt locally at having these decisions imposed on them from outside drastically reduces the effectiveness of centralised control. The situation is worsened by the centralisation of power in Brussels through legislation such as the Single European Act, which will give people even less say in their affairs.

Centralised systems are in fact inherently undemocratic, and even in our own small country Local Authorities and Health Boards have very little real power. As a reaction to these problems, pressure groups are formed, large portions of the electorate do not vote, laws are openly flouted, and people extract what they can from an alien system. Residents' associations, neighbourhood watch schemes, community radio, credit unions and such, all represent attempts to circumvent the problem and create a real level of local autonomy. We believe that these developments should be built on, but more especially that statutory recognition and authority must be granted to properly structured community councils. It is only in such circumstances that ordinary citizens will begin to become the rightful arbiters of their own destiny; but this end will not be achieved without much freer access to information.

from the traditional political manifesto. It is hoped that those who recognise it as the right kind of document but in need of improvement will themselves become part of the improving process. (The length of each policy statement does not necessarily indicate the relative importance which we attach to it; nor, except for the first, does its position in the manifesto.)

It might be thought that the primary policy of an ecology party should concern the environment. One reason for not making it so is that popular use of the word 'environment' arrogantly implies that non-human life on earth has value only in so far as it affects the human race. In particular, however, we wish to stress that our destructive impact on the planet will only cease when we humans as individuals are again able to do things on a scale appropriate to our species; this in turn will be possible only when we fully appreciate and act upon the need for decentralisation.

Freedom of Information

Access to information is a neglected right. There should be an enforceable right of citizen access to public records, embracing central and local authorities, state-sponsored bodies and other bodies with public functions. We believe that, in order to achieve this in a comprehensive way, a Freedom of Information Act is a prerequisite. The terms of the Act should be as broadly based as possible. It follows from this that the Act would incorporate the repeal of Section 4 of the Official Secrets Act 1963, which invested officialdom with sweeping, and totally unacceptable, powers of non-disclosure of information.

The new Act should also make it mandatory that all meetings of public bodies be advertised, and that the public should be entitled, and encouraged to attend.

It is a reflection of the power we have placed in the hands of others that we are calling for the establishment of the right to freedom of information. If our right to know proves to be an unachievable objective we should be seriously concerned about the nature of our democracy.

Education

We believe that if we are to have a sane education policy we must begin at the beginning. If young children learn how to learn, they will be able to take charge of much of their own education later on. They need adult time: the time of parents, older people, younger people, who are willing to listen and talk with them. They need space to make their own choices and follow them up.

When they go to school, children still need to be able to exchange ideas with their teachers, they still need space to work, time for concentration. They do not need long bus journeys to crowded classrooms every day.

Schools are at present made responsible for supervision as well as for teaching. To make the best use of our teachers, however, they should be able to meet children in small groups, while the child population as a whole is looked after by others, principally in the home. (The provision of Basic Income, discussed elsewhere in this document, would make this a possibility even for families of limited means.)

If children attended school only for as much time as permits each teacher to care for a small class, teachers would have more energy for teaching and pupils more enthusiasm for learning; and the great variety of information technology now at our disposal would make 'homework' more rewarding. Green policy therefore proposes - and it's possible for many parents and teachers to make the change now - less time in school, more learning outside school.

We claim that every child at primary level should have a good idea of what kinds of information there are and how to use them: nature, their surroundings, people with different skills; books, libraries, cassette tapes, videos, radio, television, databanks, ...

This means that each child must be given all the help it needs to master reading and writing in good time. With adequate support for parents, followed by really small classes, this should not be a problem. As for art and other forms of creativity, these are not merely a part of education, they are a part of life.

Such a change would radically alter second and third level education; the distinctions might vanish. In the meantime we would wish to remove the unbalanced pressure of examinations on adolescents; make them aware of the consequences to the whole environment of changes in the eco-system; give them a deeper understanding of Europe's role in world history; encourage independence.

We are concerned that university study is heavily subsidised by tax-payers who for the most part have no opportunity to receive this form of education themselves. In the long run, Basic Income would assist change; meanwhile, we would favour delayed entry, sandwich courses, and encouragement for mature students.

Work

True work is primarily desirable not because it serves to redistribute wealth but because it both provides useful goods and services to society and is creatively satisfying to the worker. As long as such work is ecologically sustainable, we consider it good; but much of what passes for work

in contemporary society is mere drudgery, and often ecologically destructive as well. Our party therefore believes that there is an urgent need to replace such drudgery by good work, as defined above, and that this would be greatly facilitated by the provision of Basic Income to all citizens. (See the next section.)

Our Party sees many fields of activity which, especially in a decentralised society, could provide opportunities for far more good work than is enjoyed at present, and some of these will be mentioned in other sections. It is natural for people to provide for themselves either by self-sufficiency, a cash income or a combination of the two. In addition, everyone should have the opportunity to provide for him- or her-self, through access to land, covered space, tools and training, together with finance where appropriate.

Basic Income

As a result of the development of technology, most of our wealth is produced not by human labour but by machines. For this reason employment, never an entirely satisfactory way of distributing income, is now less appropriate than ever. In response to this situation Basic Income schemes are under consideration in several countries; these aim to guarantee to each man, woman and child the unconditional right to an independent income sufficient to meet basic living costs.

Such a scheme was proposed in Ireland in 1979, under the title of the National Dividend, as a solution to the poverty trap; but it was not followed up. Had it been adopted at that time (when the cost could have been met from Income Tax plus Social Welfare contributions) the formerly unemployed would now be free to accept any full-time or part-time job that came their way, or to work for themselves, alone or in co-operatives. The alternative is our present system, under which an employed person is free to take on two or three extra jobs (time permitting), whereas someone labelled unemployed is not allowed to take even one: a ludicrous state of affairs.

Basic Income could become a positive force in many fields. Women would be less dependent on men, and thus relate with them better; mothers would be free to be just that, if they wished it, instead of having to forsake parenthood for wage-earning. Basic Income would allow energetic young people to work for themselves in their native counties, thus halting urban growth. It would put the equivalent of a grant at the disposal of those who, at any age after leaving school, wished to take on further education.

Above all, Basic Income would release an immense amount of good will, and result in far more good work being done: this is why money released to make it possible would more than repay itself. But Basic Income would also result in a great devolution of power from Government to ordinary citizens: perhaps that is why the authorities have not been prepared to try it.

Agriculture

We reject the agri-industrial approach to farming prevalent today because it adversely affects our rivers and lakes, wildlife, the soil, and indeed the very quality of the food itself. Since, in addition, the quantity of some items produced is vastly excessive (due largely to centralised decision-making) radical changes are necessary.

We actively support the organic farming movement and wish to see it become the norm. We appreciate the fact that its methods are labour-rather than energy-intensive, and that it is more appropriate to the smaller farm: in view of the energy crisis and the large number of people who would like to work on the land if they could, these seem to us to be advantages.

We believe that the land is a common resource and that all who wish it should be given the opportunity to earn a living from market-gardening or farming, whatever their background. For this reason, land should be made available to them as cheaply as possible; by restoring the Land Commission or a similar body, it would be possible to put to far better use farm land that is now lying idle.

When large estates or farms come on the market, these should be purchased by the State and used for teaching farming methods to people from both farming and non-farming backgrounds. In poorer areas of the country, where small farms are finding it difficult to survive, the establishment of agricultural co-operatives should be encouraged.

We maintain that each household and community, whether rural or urban, should provide as much of its own food as possible. More allotments should be made available for gardening and horticulture, and public and private waste space utilised for this purpose.

We reject all forms of agriculture which treat animals as mere items in an industrial process, for it is profoundly unecological to exploit other species in this way; the damage to human health caused by the consumption of meat impregnated with synthetic hormones, antibiotics and other drugs is also to be noted. We further point out that any form of food production which involves obtaining protein by first feeding it to animals is an extravagant use of such resources in a world where so many people are starving.

Although Ireland was once covered in forest, it has now the lowest tree-cover of almost any region in Europe. We therefore urge the establishment of an intensive tree-planting programme and the need for the rehabilitation of neglected broadleaf woodlands. In addition to environmental considerations, we must also remember the value of wood as a highly versatile raw material which for years we have been importing at enormous expense.

Industry

We believe that the starting point for industry must be local production for local needs, realising that this will be fully possible only as the need for decentralisation is understood and acted upon.

Recognising the undesirable conflict of interests of management and workers in so much of industry (and nowhere more so than in large concerns), we urge the need for the establishment of workers' co-operatives, and for an end to the bureaucratic obstacles put in the way of small enterprises.

It will be understood from statements elsewhere that we do not see employment as the only nor even necessarily the primary way of making work available; but in so far as people seek it, and as long as the redistribution of wealth demands it, employment should be shared as fully as possible, for example by two or more people sharing the same job; double-jobbing is the exact reverse of this.

Labour-intensive industries should be encouraged as long as the work is not degrading, the product socially desirable, and the result not ecologically harmful. Import substitution projects, as well as providing additional work, are also usually in the planet's interest, as of course are the many jobs that would become available by taking recycling seriously.

The activities of multinationals are seen as most undesirably centralised and unecological, as well as needing to be distrusted for other reasons.

Services

What is sometimes known as the Service Industry plays an increasingly important part in our society. While we recognise the value of much of the work done under this heading, we cannot help noticing both that many important services do not seem to be done efficiently and that some of the most valuable services (for example, in the home) are best done by those who are not paid to do them at all.

The Basic Income scheme, as previously defined, would be of enormous benefit to many kinds of service, especially those which, like help with the elderly and handicapped, depend as much on compassion as on skill. Other services, such the tidying of litter-ridden areas and the beautifying of countless neglected gardens, would doubtless be done for a modest sum by the jobless if the substitution of Basic Income for the dole meant that to undertake them would not involve the loss of other benefits.

Leisure

As good work replaces drudgery as the norm in an ecologically sane society, the rigid distinction between work and leisure will disappear: far more work will be done, yet it will be invigorating in

Pollution

Modern society has come to accept pollution as an inevitable by-product of "progress". It is still widely believed that the earth, sea and air can be treated as limitless receptacles for all kinds of waste materials, and that the natural balance cannot be tipped over by such practices. We reject this attitude as dangerously short-sighted, and believe that the only acceptable level of pollution is no pollution at all.

We see three main areas of pollution - Domestic, Agricultural and Industrial - and believe that in every case the costs of pollution control and of cleaning pollution up must be borne by the polluters themselves. Examples of domestic pollution include refuse (much of it in the form of unnecessary packaging), fossil fuel emissions, and motorcar exhausts; in agriculture, synthetic fertilisers, pesticides, and slurry from intensive animal farming are the chief offenders; industrial pollution takes many forms, of which toxic waste dumping, emissions into rivers and the air, and the noise and fumes produced by road haulage are among the most obvious.

We believe that individual solutions can be applied to many of these forms of pollution, and that the setting up of an Environmental Protection Unit would speed up their application; but we are convinced that, like so many of the problems facing us, pollution has become a major threat because of the centralised nature of our society.

Health

We believe that we each have a duty as individuals for maintaining our own health, using that word in its broadest sense. We see the person as a unity of spirit, mind and body, and believe in promoting the well-being of this unity rather than merely treating symptoms of dis-ease.

To promote this well-being we advocate the ready availability of wholesome food, free from harmful additives, good housing, and an unpolluted environment. Furthermore, we recognise the need for people to be more aware of the benefits of good nutrition, healthy exercise and positive relaxation. To this awareness should be added an understanding of the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse.

We would like to see official recognition of proven alternative therapies, and a more holistic approach to the treatment of chronic ailments; and we believe that small, well-staffed community hospitals are more likely to respond to human needs than large high-technology institutions.

Housing

It is natural for people to take best care of things they regard as their own. For this reason we support home ownership; and we believe that it

could be encouraged by the formation of building co-operatives, and by the availability of low cost housing loans and of building land at agricultural prices (as is proposed in the Kenny Report).

Agricultural land itself, however, should not be used for building, except as part of rural development plans approved by the community for reasons other than financial speculation. Where possible, old property should be renovated rather than knocked down in the interest of speculators; indeed, the making of profits merely out of changing site values, as distinct from improvements to property would seem to be inherently against the interests of the community.

Concerning council houses, while a sufficient stock of these should be kept for those needing permanent residence, it would certainly be in the interest of both decentralisation and the care of the fabric if these were to be bought by the sitting tenants.

Planning restrictions should be revised to allow people to work from home. There is nothing intrinsically wrong about a suitable mix of shops, offices, light industry and houses, and such a situation both reduces commuting and adds to a sense of community. Where possible, future housing developments should contain a mix of differently priced houses, to assist the dismantling of the class system.

Energy-conscious house designs and building materials should be promoted; and provisions should be made wherever possible for the communal use of labour-saving devices, in so far as these are really necessary.

Urban Conservation

Many of the problems of modern urban living can be traced directly to the destruction of community spirit. Sensitive planning and an intelligent urban conservation programme are essential to the health and happiness of those who live in towns and cities, and these can only be achieved if decision-making is decentralised.

We therefore propose that: a) the power to deal with environmental matters be returned to local authorities through the provision of strong planning laws and an equitable local tax; b) the growth of local groups be encouraged in order to give people a greater say in environmental matters affecting them, including the drawing up of Development Plans; c) the preservation of the unity and integrity of communities be protected against pressure from the car lobby and commercial developers; d) the whole planning process reflect the change from large scale to small scale development, and provide for the growing recreational, artistic and educational needs of the people.

We believe furthermore that the character of local areas and the architectural integrity of our towns and cities must be protected through the rigid enforcement of preservation orders on worthwhile

a way that, for many, only leisure activities are at present.

The growth of the so-called Leisure Industry, we consider to be a very temporary phenomenon, and something that will doubtless make as little sense to our descendants as it would to our ancestors.

Finance and Taxation

We believe that a radical reappraisal is needed of the role of the banking system, and in particular that there must be an end to the monopoly that the banks have in the creation of credit. Ultimately we seek an inflation-free world in which people will not need an income from savings, and in which workers' co-operatives, small businesses and individuals will be able to get loans for productive purposes at very low interest rates, as will those in need of housing. We see banking, insurance and stockbroking as separate activities, which should not overlap since this causes increasing risk and losses.

Regarding taxation, the present system is cumbersome, inequitable and extremely complex. A totally new philosophy of taxation is needed, and the following is an outline of a system we would like to see introduced. Whether collected locally or nationally, taxation should be based primarily on non-renewable resources and energy, and for social reasons on such items as alcohol and cigarettes. A tax could also be levied on the unimproved value of the land, including land already built on. The effects of this fundamental shift in taxation would be to encourage the use of labour and to husband our non-renewable resources.

Until such a system is introduced, however, there are urgent priorities relating to the collection of taxes under the present one. In particular we recommend that failure to hand over PAYE and VAT on collection be treated much more stringently. Businesses should be required to lodge VAT and PAYE into a separate bank account pending payment to the Revenue Commissioners. Businesses which fail to comply with this requirement should be closed down. As a counterbalance, PRSI contributions by employers, which are a tax on labour, should be abolished.

Concerning the enormous variation in income between the richest and the poorest, it needs to be pointed out that, while our Constitution guarantees the right to private property, it qualifies the statement by saying that this right should be "regulated by the principles of social justice". It would therefore be reasonable to put an upper as well as a lower limit on the annual income of the individual.

Regarding the International Debt, we do not believe the repayment of this external debt to be a moral imperative. Serious consideration should be given to the cessation of interest payments. At the very least, negotiations should be initiated to re-schedule it, to enable the outflow of interest and repayments to be substantially reduced. If this were successful, the enormous budget deficit would be virtually eliminated.

Energy

The knowledge that the resources of the Earth are limited is fundamental to our Party, and we realise that we, the human race, must act upon it. This means that eventually all our energy must come from renewable resources; only then will we be able to live in harmony with the planet that is the source of our wealth.

We reject the ESB's centralist approach to energy supply, with its emphasis on gigantic, massively polluting showpieces; and we deplore its 66% over-capacity, its 35% thermal efficiency, and its continued reliance on ships like the 'Kowloon Bridge'.

Instead, we propose: a) large-scale investment in energy conservation in homes and industry, since energy saved is cheaper than energy generated; b) thermal efficiency standards for new buildings, and grants and incentives for thermal efficiency in old ones; c) the immediate establishment of a wind energy programme, and investment in renewable energy production techniques using solar, wave and biomass sources; d) the setting up of District Energy Commissions to implement a rational energy policy for each district, including small-scale community generation of electricity.

Nuclear Affairs

Our approach to this policy is comprehensive and unequivocal, and we were the first political party in Ireland to call for the closure of Windscale/Sellafield.

Concerning nuclear weapons, we look for: a) a universal ban on the production and testing of such weapons; b) the destruction of all existing stocks; c) effective, independent policing, under UN aegis, to ensure these steps are carried out; d) universal abandonment of SDI-type research; e) prohibition from Irish air/sea space of any craft which are nuclear-powered, carry nuclear weapons or refuse inspection.

Regarding nuclear power, we look for: a) the closing of Windscale/Sellafield, and cessation of the construction of THORP (Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant) on the same site; b) meanwhile, the immediate cessation of the discharge of radioactive waste from Windscale/Sellafield into the Irish Sea; c) an open-ended ban, to replace the present moratorium, on the dumping of radioactive waste at sea; d) much-intensified research on methods for the safe disposal of the waste accumulated to date throughout the world; e) the phasing-out of nuclear power production, on a time-scale laid down and enforced by the UN; f) an immediate end to the foisting of nuclear power plants on Third World countries; g) a phased transfer of resources from nuclear power activities to research into, and production of, means of generating power from renewable sources of energy; h) rigid control of radioisotopes used for medical or other research.

buildings and valued aspects of the environment, while at the same time ensuring that all new buildings be required to blend in with the existing fabric.

We therefore further propose that: a) property speculation be eradicated; b) owners be encouraged to preserve existing buildings through the provision of financial inducements and expert advice; c) parks, harbours, canals, river-banks, wildlife habitats and other amenities be protected and expanded where possible, with special emphasis on tree planting; d) effluents that threaten the health of humans and the survival of animals, plants, buildings and monuments be strictly controlled and if possible banned; e) laws dealing with the nature, weight, noise, routes, speed and time of movement of heavy loads be introduced to ensure that urban dwellers are not endangered or inconvenienced by these loads; f) further growth of Dublin be halted, and the proposals of the 1985 ERDO study be rejected.

Transport

In accordance with our Principles, we aim to reduce commuting and promote walking and cycling, the healthiest and most ecological modes of transport.

Walking and cycling should be encouraged by the creation of pedestrian zones in urban areas, permanent cycle-ways on main roads, and facilities for parking bicycles in urban areas and in all public buildings. VAT should be removed from bicycles and spare parts. The implementation of our Housing policy would further encourage walking; so too would financial incentives for those willing to live within walking distance of their work places.

Public transport needs to be greatly improved. We urge that: a) buses be given priority over private cars, and fares reduced; b) local communities be involved in transport planning; c) the trend to one-man buses be questioned, as they hold up traffic, cause stress to the driver, and deprive the passengers of help; d) the railways be revitalised for the transport of both passengers and goods; e) DART be extended to Tallaght-Clondalkin and, where feasible, to other inland suburban areas.

Since road construction involves enormous capital investment, and as motorcars are energy-intensive and environmentally damaging, we recommend that: a) social and environmental considerations be included in assessing all proposals concerning future roads and by-passes; b) the use of vehicles with a long life be encouraged; c) the present speed limits be rigidly enforced and not increased; d) dangerous and drunken driving be treated with the seriousness that it deserves; e) city-centre parking be strictly controlled, street parking severely curtailed, and the provision of parking space near certain suburban stations and bus-stops be considered.

Ireland's inland waterways should be used for transportation wherever feasible. The use of

horse-drawn traffic should not be forgotten, and facilities for this should be provided wherever there is a reasonable demand.

Women in Society

In the history of Europe, society has virtually never acknowledged the importance of women, either as individuals or as a group that constitutes about 50% of the population (and indeed much more than 50% after each of those many wars that have been started and fought by men and in which men have sometimes been the victors, but women never.)

We strongly welcome the move away from this disastrous imbalance, and we condemn contemporary activities that run counter to it, and in particular sexist advertising and the pornography industry.

Concerning the regrettably small part which women at present play in this country's decision-making processes, we believe that only when the latter have become properly decentralised will the balance be restored. Regarding the Green movement itself, women have from its beginning been as involved in its decision-making as have men.

Discrimination

The human tendency to discriminate against certain groups normally results from ignorance, and it is heightened by fear of the unknown. When the discrimination is largely unconscious (as in the case of discrimination against women) much can be done by the passing of specific laws; but when fear of the unknown enters the equation (as in the case of discrimination against the Travellers), such laws on their own may actually increase prejudice. In fact the latter can wither away only as people from each group get to know one another as individuals, but this is unlikely to happen as long as the groups feel mutually threatened by each other.

To take the case of the Travellers a step further: when there is a sufficiency of dwelling sites suitable to their needs, each with a caretaker whom they themselves have elected, the Travellers will feel less threatened by the rest of the community, and consequently vice-versa. The permanency of such sites (offering the advantages of settled residence without any obligation on individual Travellers to become less itinerant) would gradually allow the majority population to know and appreciate the minority, and then willingly to share educational and other facilities with them.

Language

We value the variety of cultures and languages in the world as an expression of ecological diversity. Here in Ireland we are in a position to treasure a very ancient language, An Ghaeilge, through which most of our national identity, place names, music, mannerisms and so on have developed. Although English is now very widely spoken, a

(continued overleaf)

large majority would still nevertheless like to see Irish used more, and equity for speakers of our two languages.

We propose political autonomy for Gaeltacht communities, and positive discrimination in favour of Irish generally. We believe that all public agencies such as An Post and libraries should foster the conduct of business in Irish by making it clear which members of staff are willing and able to do so; and further, that private businesses should be encouraged to provide similar bilingual facilities, and to use both languages on stationery, signs and packaging and in advertising.

We fully support the recent rapid growth in Gaelscoileanna as an example of community-based initiatives in education. We urge that priority be given to establishing a Teilifís na Gaeltachta to serve Irish speakers throughout the country.

On the international scene we deplore the linguistic imperialism which results from the importance attached to a few widely spoken languages, and we welcome the development of Esperanto as a language which allows speakers of different mother tongues to meet on equal terms.

Foreign Policy

Ireland's foreign policy, indeed every country's, should be based on constructive non-interference. Most conflicts are caused or worsened by the interference of nations in the internal affairs of others. Where exceptions have to be made to this rule they should be carried out through the United Nations.

Ireland's neutrality has amounted, in reality, to no more than non-membership of a military alliance. As a result we have been unable to fulfil our potential as a conciliator between developed and non-developed nations and between East and West. Any co-operation in foreign policy within the EEC can only draw us closer to NATO, at least as long as all the other EEC states are members of that military bloc.

We are committed as a Party to the pursuit of change by peaceful means. We recognise that violence can often take the form of economic exploitation (in particular by multinational companies and by banks), and of the destruction of traditional living patterns, not least through the bad example of our extravagant lifestyle.

We believe that international bodies such as the United Nations and the EEC should be more active in tackling human rights violations and problems such as trans-boundary pollution. Their dealings in other areas should be based on co-operation rather than centralisation of decision-making.

To a Party committed to decentralisation the very existence of superpowers, whatever their actions,

is ecologically unacceptable. In particular we deplore their tendency to treat bordering and other countries as puppets, and believe that Ireland should use its neutrality to pressurise both blocs to cease their interference in countries such as Nicaragua and Afghanistan.

We insist that Ireland ratify, and act on, the UN International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination. Our Party supports any peaceful campaign to secure a democratic future for all in South Africa.

Northern Ireland

We welcome the positive aspects of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, in particular the willingness of the British Government to co-operate with the Republic of Ireland in an attempt to solve some of Northern Ireland's problems, but we regret the lack of consultation with the Unionists which has hindered progress.

We recognise that the system of majority rule in Northern Ireland has been much abused, and we urge the need for a Bill of Rights guaranteed by some body outside Northern Ireland, London and Dublin, whether at European or United Nations level.

We accept the concept of two traditions in Northern Ireland, and we have no desire to incorporate the people of Northern Ireland into a United Ireland against their will. We reject the narrow nationalism of the past which saw a United Ireland as essential to our cultural identity.

We believe that the only long-term solution to the problems of Northern Ireland will involve compromise by both communities there. This could be arrived at by use of a Referendum (i.e. a referendum in which the voter expresses support for several options in order of preference), which would oblige people to think beyond the straight yes/no answer to a United Ireland. A prerequisite to the holding of the referendum would be a statement of intent by the British and Irish Governments that they would abide by the result.

Animal Welfare

As a political party with humane principles we cannot accept without question the exploitation of other creatures. Other animals cannot be thought of as mere means to our ends. We must remember that for each individual animal its own life and welfare are paramount. We therefore believe that we cannot lightly continue to cause suffering to animals in the name of food production, of medical research and of leisure pursuits, but must learn, in the words of Albert Schweitzer, to extend the circle of our compassion to all living things.