

1997

Introduction	1	Health	10
.....		
A Real Political Choice		Community Health Care	
Principles of the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas		Children at Risk	
		Complementary Medicine	
Economic Change	2	Education	11
.....		
Economics As If People Mattered		Education for Freedom	
The Wrong People Paying the Wrong Tax			
Community Approach to Employment			
Beyond Partnership 2000			
Guaranteed Basic Income for All			
People Friendly Technology			
Good Housekeeping of the Public Purse			
Ethical Investment			
Public versus Private - The Issue of Naked Greed			
A Third Banking Force or a Second Banking System			
The Headlong Rush Towards EMU			
The Social Economy			
The Non-Stop Economy			
Food and Agriculture	4	Equality	12
.....		
Bringing the Culture back to Agriculture		Celebrating Differences/Diversity	
Ghettoisation of Nature		Women	
The Real Cost of Intensive Farming		Disability Rights	
Buy Local Buy Organic		Travelling community	
Reversing Rural Depopulation			
More Broadleaf Forests			
Coastal Communities and Fisheries			
Environmental Protection	6	Transport	13
.....		
'Treading Softly' on the Planet		From Road to Public Transport	
Environmental Action Plan		Extended Rail Services	
Tackling Animal Rights and Welfare			
Crime and Drugs	8	Energy	14
.....		
A Considered Response			
Helping the Crime Fighters			
Prison and Court Reform			
Improving our Systems			
Northern Ireland	9	An Teanga	14
.....		
Unconditional Talks			
		Arts and Culture	14
		
		Tourism	14
		
		A New Politics	15
		
		Decentralisation	
		Restructuring Local Government	
		Open Government	
		Dail Reform	
		One Person One Job	
		Political Funding	
		Voting Regularly Voting Often	
		Ireland and the Wider World	16
		
		The European Union	
		The United Nations and Foreign Aid	
		Refugees and Asylum Seeking	
		Defence and Naval Systems	

A Real Political Choice

The General Election of 1997 will involve the deepest inspection of the Green Party / Comhaontas Glas ever. We are looking forward to the challenge because we feel that we are the only political party which can offer Irish voters a true political alternative for a sustainable future.

Since 1989, five of the six political parties represented in Dail Eireann have participated in government. In that time they have shown themselves to differ little from each other, in their policies, in their philosophies, or in their practice of government. They have been shown to be pale imitations of themselves, and have deprived the Irish electorate of a real political choice.

A vibrant democracy depends on the discussion and examination of competing ideas and differing visions of society. Through this manifesto the Green Party / Comhaontas Glas offers Irish voters that choice.

Contained here are policies we will aim to implement when in government. We will look for Economic Change and ways to bring about A New Politics, leading to a major improvement in the Quality of Life for all Irish people. Our policies also take into account Ireland's role in the Wider World.

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas is more than a one issue party. *Is gné glas gach gné.* We are an every issue party which offers Irish people an exciting and sustainable programme for government. The Green Party plans for the future, other political parties plan for the next election. We want you to be part of our vision for the future in Ireland.

The Principles of the Green Party

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

Economics As If People Mattered

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas economic policies have much to offer in overcoming many of the economic inequalities that have been allowed to develop and have remained untackled in Ireland. We would like to challenge the consensus that economic growth as measured by GNP is intrinsically a good thing.

For all the talk of economic prosperity in recent years, there has been very little evidence that added prosperity has been redistributed to those most in need. Unemployment constitutes a enormous waste of what is our greatest resource - human activity. At the global and the national levels, the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots" continues to increase at an unacceptable rate. Our ability to determine our own economic prosperity is becoming ever compromised by international factors.

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas believes in sustainable economic activity. Where economic growth is achieved and does not result in social or environmental degradation, it can be welcomed. Where it is pursued for its own sake, we may all be poorer as a result.

The Wrong People Paying the Wrong Tax

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas agrees that our taxation system is unfair. It isn't that too much tax is being collected, but that the wrong people are paying the wrong tax, with people on low incomes paying tax at too high a rate. The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas believes in a radical transformation of the system, shifting taxation from income onto resources.

Instead of continuing to tax labour unfairly, we propose the introduction of an Energy Tax, levied primarily on industrial and transport fuels. We will consider a tax on land use to discourage speculation and dereliction, and taxes on negative consumption such as on waste production and packaging. We will work to abolish PRSI and to restructure tax allowances into a single personal allowance only, with widened tax bands and an income tax at a starting rate of 10%, as part of a more graduated, progressive system where rates will progress to a 25%

rate, a 33% rate and onto a top rate of 50%. These measures will help transfer tax payments from those who bear the burden too heavily to those who should pay more, ensuring true tax equity.

Community Approach To Employment

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas favours a change in approach to employment creating initiatives. Greater support will be given to small scale, indigenous companies. We favour the introduction of a progressive form of Corporation Tax, which takes into account the level and scale of business, the stage of development and the proportion of employment being provided. Specific tax breaks will be given to service industries and to promoting 'green' industry. The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas support community-based skills exchange programmes known as Local Employment Trading Systems.

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To redefine work the Green Party / Comhaontas Glas will promote the introduction of a shorter working week, will encourage job sharing and breaks from employment for education, re-training or family purposes. We discourage overtime and we will work for early retirement programmes for stressful occupations.

Beyond Partnership 2000

We welcome Partnership 2000 but would like to highlight that negotiations were only extended superficially to include representatives of the unemployed, consumers and social and community groups. The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas in government will work towards implementing national economics agreements that include measures to tackle social exclusion as well as defining jobs targets and consumer safeguards.

Basic Income For All

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas proposes the introduction on a phased basis of a Guaranteed Basic Income payable to every adult citizen, either in the form of a direct payment or as a tax credit.

This would remove many of the contradictions that currently exist within the social welfare system. Means testing would be abolished. Recipients would be free to earn additional income which could be taxed. Valid work such as parenting or caring which at present is not given an economical value, could be pursued with greater dignity and security.

People Friendly Technology

We see great potential in innovative technologies which are friendly to people and the environment. We encourage the uptake of modern information-technology (e.g. the Internet) to enable people and organisations to communicate and gain access to relevant information. We also note the low level of State expenditure on scientific research and development and want greater investment in vocational and technical training.

Good Housekeeping Of The Public Purse

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas wants good housekeeping with public money. We will ask the National Treasury Management Agency to produce a programme to eliminate the National Debt over an agreed long term time period.

Ethical Investment

We will ensure that the colossal spending and investment power of the government, and of all state agencies is ethically-audited. Private investment funds and companies will have to follow similar criteria. We will legislate against Irish-based companies investing in the arms trade. The involvement of Irish funds or Irish based companies in the arms trade will be ended.

We will seek stronger regulation of the financial services sector to protect the individual investor and the funds of charitable organisations. Fraud and white collar crimes will be treated as the serious crimes that they are.

Public Versus Private - The Issue Of Naked Greed

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas will work towards

ensuring that all state-owned and state-run companies operate at the most efficient level possible. Privatisation will be examined cautiously case by case. We do not believe that privatisation inevitably leads to improvement of services to consumers. We believe that management/worker buy-outs should be the first and overriding option for privatisation and believe that utilities should remain in public ownership, even if this challenges EU competition regulations.

A Third Banking Force Or A Second Banking System

Instead of forming a major state bank to compete with the commercial banks on their own terms, a parallel banking system should be promoted which would run on a philosophy other than a pure profit motive. Such a system already exists in the form of the Credit Union movement. The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas would seek to promote and develop this movement, including legislative measures to place the Credit Union on a par with all other financial institutions giving it cheque clearance facilities and credit creation capacity.

The Headlong Rush Towards EMU

We will pursue policies that will seek to maximise local economic activity. We seek to change any provision resulting from EU or GATT commitments that stifles local economic activity and encourages environmentally unfriendly practices. We view with disquiet the headlong rush of various governments in pushing this country towards European Monetary Union, without any real debate as to its economic consequences and the effective surrender of our economic independence. We advocate holding a referendum on entering a Single European Currency.

The Social Economy

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas recognises that the voluntary and community sector is an important and growing part of the overall economy. This sector will receive every support it deserves.

The Non-Stop Economy

We are concerned about the 24 hours, seven days a week commercial economy and will examine legislative means to restrict the Sunday opening for large retail outlets.

Food and Agriculture

Bringing The Culture Back To Agriculture

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas believes that ecologically sound and socially fair agriculture is still possible. A viable agricultural policy must allow each region to have its own rural culture, suited to the needs and conditions of that area.

Bureaucrats and big business are acting together with the Common Agricultural Policy to reduce the numbers of small farmers and to replace them with large farming enterprises. A telling statistic is the fact that on joining the Common Market in 1973, 35,000 family farms were rearing 2 million pigs. In 1996, twice as many pigs are being reared on as few as 700, largely factory farms.

Ghettoisation Of Nature

European schemes under CAP reform are merely partial compensation for losses elsewhere. They are only stop-gap measures designed for damage limitation purposes. They have helped to introduce the concept of 'ghettoisation' of nature by taking some land out of production while intensifying production on the remaining land. Only the larger operator can get into supplementary activities, while the smaller farmer is deprived of the primary activity of producing food. Artificial competition for land use has driven prices beyond the reach of small to medium sized, young or first time farmers.

The Real Cost Of Intensive Farming

Agriculture is now on an artificial treadmill with intensification leading to unpleasant side effects such as salmonella, pesticide and antibiotic residues, BSE, the concentration of animal waste, loss of habitats, and increased animal suffering.

Agribusiness tries to cover up these warning signals with quick-fix solutions such as food irradiation, genetic engineering and hormone injections. Labelling, which would allow the consumer to have a free choice about what they buy, is obstructed by the same powerful groups.

Ireland is one of the few countries with the ability and potential to produce genuinely safe and natural food in a clean, green environment. But this ability has been systematically betrayed for short-term gain by other political parties and vested interests.

The lessons of BSE must be learned. Cheap food is cheap because the real cost is hidden. We believe that if you break the laws of nature, nature fights back.

Buy Local, Buy Organic

The link between the consumer and producer must be restored. Small scale producers must be protected and the dual role of rural women recognised. People must be encouraged to buy direct, to buy local, to buy organic produce, or to grow their own.

Reversing Rural Depopulation

We will restore the balance between our over-populated urban areas and our depopulating rural communities. We will halt the closure of rural facilities and will re-open closed ones. We will ensure that statutory services are located so that they are within a defined distance of even the most remote dwellings. Rural decline and depopulation can only be reversed by genuinely recognising the extent of the problem and by funding organisations such as Rural Resettlement Ireland adequately.

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Agriculture And Food Action

In Government, the Green Party / Comhaontas Glas will

1. Ensure the Food Safety Council, first called for by our party, operates independently, openly and effectively.
2. Set up a Land Use Forum.
3. Bring into being an Oireachtas Committee on Food Safety.
4. Support small food producers by re-balancing regulations in their favour.
5. Seek to end live animal exports.
6. Bring an end to monopolistic practices in the agricultural sector.
7. Put into place an Agricultural Monitoring and Inspection Force.
8. Establish a consumer's right to know through honest and effective eco-labelling.
9. Insist on appropriate funding for organic research and production, as a means of increasing and promoting organic practices within the agricultural sector.
10. Fine-tune the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme.
11. Insist on a 50% reduction in pesticide use by the year 2000, as a first step to eliminating their use completely.

More Broadleaf Forests

We strongly support the policy of increasing the percentage of land to be afforested, which in itself should be a focus of a national Land Use policy. Trees are living environmental monitors. However, trees must not replace people indiscriminately. We favour the reallocation of forestry grants to favour the planting of deciduous, hardwood forests, instead of current planting that has concentrated too much on evergreen, softwood forests, at the risk of acidification and dangers to surrounding waterways.

Coastal Communities And Fisheries Policy

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas believes that we must protect our coastal and island communities. While strongly agreeing with the need to preserve fishing stocks, we feel the EU fishing agreements must be altered to allow for a greater balance in terms of the size of Irish waters and the percentage of fish allowed to be caught by Irish fishermen. This balance should be directed towards small fishing vessels.

The Green Party plans to:

- Introduce a policy of Coastal Zone Management.
- Give statutory recognition to the Council of the Islands.
- Maintain opposition to seal culls.
- Review the practice of fish farming and mariculture enterprises.
- Give additional powers to Regional Fisheries Boards to put an end to water pollution.

People must be encouraged to buy direct, buy local, buy organic produce, or grow their own.

Environmental Protection

'Treading Softly' On The Planet

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas continues to campaign about environmental dangers - the waste crisis, rezoning scandals, water pollution - so that Irish people and the natural world are put before damaging economic growth.

Despite growing public awareness, many of our environmental problems have worsened.

We will not just give lip service to environmental concerns. Protecting our environment will form an integral part of every policy we pursue.

On a global scale, it is now practically certain that the problems identified by environmentalists many, many years ago, are real and are growing worse. Global warming and climate change, the depletion of the ozone layer, the rising of sea levels, the disappearance of eco-systems, and many other serious warning signs are finally being acknowledged.

Irish governments have failed miserably to meet our international obligations in relation to impending worldwide environmental catastrophes. The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas will not only ensure that these obligations are met, but will endeavour to establish and implement new national guidelines in excess of international agreements.

Environmental Action Plan

In Government, The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas will:

- Seek a cabinet portfolio for a Department for Sustainable Development which would work closely with all other government departments to ensure that all policies adhere to strict principles of sustainable development.
- Restructure and properly resource the Environmental Protection Agency, which has been ineffective since its inception.
- Ensure that local authorities in co-operation with NGOs draw up plans for Agenda 21 - recommendations of 1992 Rio Earth Summit.

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- Put in place a national Waste Reduction Programme aiming at capping any increase in waste production, and reducing waste to 1990 levels by the year 2000, as a first step.
- Put in place recycling and composting infrastructures, ensuring that government and state agencies purchase re-usable and recyclable materials.
- Introduce regulations limiting the size and duration of waste disposal facilities and insist on the pre-treatment of any disposed waste. We will seek large scale investment to secure existing landfill facilities.
- Maintain our opposition to incineration.
- Use all international agreements to close the THORP reprocessing plant (including the transport of spent nuclear fuel on the Irish Sea), the Sellafield nuclear power plant, as well as nuclear plants along the west coast of Britain, in particular the decommissioning of the ageing Magnox installations.
- Make full use of the Anglo-Irish conference to have this issue raised as a primary issue of concern about the relationship between both nations.
- Critically examine the role and functions of the Radiological Protection Institute.
- Establish a national regulatory body responsible for monitoring and controlling the risks posed by non-ionising electro-magnetic radiation (arising from mobile phone masts), fulfilling international obligations.

- Demand that the Electricity Supply Board does not construct new pylons, and instead installs all new cables underground, while phasing out existing pylon structures. Communications companies will be required to share infrastructural facilities.
- Provide more funding to identify and alleviate concentration of naturally occurring radon gas.
- Extend the introduction of Smoke Free Zones to the cities of Limerick, Galway and Waterford. We will improve air monitoring facilities in all urban areas and will alter air quality regulations so that daily peaks, rather than daily averages of pollutants, are recorded.
- Require local authorities to draft and implement Air Quality Management Plans for their areas and ensure that the EU and World Health Organisation guidelines, and not just limits, are adhered to.
- Proceed with the full implementation of the European Union directive on waste water treatment ensuring that plants are not sited in sensitive locations. We will ensure that treatment of such waste water in Dublin and in Cork be done to a tertiary level, with Dublin Bay and Cork Harbour being declared sensitive areas under the terms of the directive. We oppose the siting of a waste water treatment plant at Mutton Island in Galway Bay.
- Require local authorities to draft and implement Water Quality Management Plans for their rivers, lakes, harbours and bays and insist that EU drinking water and bathing water standards are rigorously met.
- Introduce greater fines and other penalties under the Water Pollution Act, and increase the powers of the regulatory bodies to prosecute under that act.
- Commission an independent review of the Health (Fluoridation of Water Supplies) Act 1960 with particular reference to its health and environmental implications.
- Demand that crude oil is conveyed in our waters in double hulled tankers to avoid the risk of oil spillages to our coastlines and to strengthen harbours legislation to further reduce this risk.
- Introduce national maximum levels for noise in residential areas and plug loopholes where existing legislation does not apply, such as airports.
- Insist on strict implementation of the 'Polluter Pays' principle in all aspects of environmental legislation, ensuring that those convicted of pollution offences will not receive government grants, payments or

subsidies. We will extend punishments under pollution offences to include suspension or restriction of activity likely to lead to further pollution risk.

- Rationalise the status of areas of ecological importance, through the immediate introduction by legislation of National Heritage Areas.
- Strengthen legislation regarding the preservation of buildings of architectural merit and importance
- Seek support for a large scale social housing programme that would place infill before green field housing.

Tackling Animal Rights And Welfare

In Government, the Green Party / Comhaontas Glas will:

- Legalise the status of animals as sentient beings, and seek to have the Treaty of Rome altered accordingly.
- Introduce legislation to make illegal activities where animals are set against other animals for example hare coursing, fox hunting and stag hunting.
- Provide funding for research into alternatives to animal testing.
- Phase out the sow stall system.
- Phase out the use of battery cages for hens.
- Lobby all EU Member States intensively to introduce EU legislation banning the use of veal crates.
- Oppose any attempt to patent animal life forms or the process of creating animal life.
- Provide local authorities with resources to provide secure paddock facilities for roaming horses and for courses in the care and maintenance of horses for young people interested in being responsible for these animals.
- Introduce programmes to deal with abandoned or feral domestic animals in urban areas.
- Remove state support to Dublin Zoo and install an independent monitoring commission to oversee all operations in the zoo.
- Introduce legislation to prevent local authorities from hiring out council-owned land to circuses which use wild animals in their acts.
- Ratify the UN Convention of the International Trade in Endangered Species.
- Strengthen the 1976 Wildlife Act and the 1911 Protection of Animals Act.

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Crime and Drugs

A Considered Response

Irish society has undergone profound and traumatic change in recent times. Over the past few years we have been shocked by numerous reports of murders, violent attacks and sexual abuse. This change may seem to have been sudden, but it has been ongoing for several years and has prospered because of political indifference and ignorance.

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas will focus on the reasons for crime instead of simply dealing with the consequences. We will place a greater emphasis on social and economic measures as a means of fully restoring public security. Those who advocate a 'war' on crime, while ignoring underlying causes only help institutionalise the crime culture.

The return to a less frightened society will not be simple, nor will it be quick. It requires considered changes not glib solutions. It needs a bottom-up, community response; not a top-down government reaction. A considered and well co-ordinated approach to the crime problem is the only way in which it can be tackled in the long term.

The trend towards repressive legislation shown by both governments since the last General Election is deeply worrying and suggests that they are incapable of anything but a knee-jerk reaction to crime. Curbs on the right to silence and the introduction of seven-day detention without trial for suspected drug dealers raise serious human rights questions and are unlikely to have a significant impact on those who control organised crime and the drugs trade.

Panic measures to deal with crime and drugs are smoke-screens for the Government's failure to deal with these problems in an enlightened and progressive way. Panic measures can lead to the introduction of flawed legislation, designed to excuse previous Government inaction on crime.

Helping The Crime Fighters

- We will seek to establish a Department of Community. This department will identify and support initiatives at a local level aimed at reforming and renewing communities, helping to address social exclusion, community breakdown and crime.
- We will restructure the Gardai. Continued resources need to be given to the Gardai with new technology to help make Garda work more effective. We propose the establishment of a separate traffic police,

freeing valuable Garda time to deal with crimes of a more violent and serious nature. We will seek to re-open rural Garda stations and will encourage regular patrolling of communities by means other than cars.

- We will seek added resources for the successful Juvenile Liaison Scheme and the Community Garda Programme.
- We will give greater resources to the Probation Service to effect greater use of probation and community service orders.
- We will provide additional resources for local authorities and tenant-run projects for better estate management as

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Prison And Court Reform

Our prisons don't prevent crime, they foster it. Overcrowding, alarming suicide levels, rampant drugs problems and unacceptable rates of HIV and AIDS have become serious problems in some of the country's main prisons. Our prisons have been criticised repeatedly by monitors both here and internationally.

The Visiting Committee for Mountjoy Prison in Dublin has, in its most recent report, stated that the prison is facing "certain disaster" unless remedial action is taken. The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) has catalogued poor conditions of detention in major Irish prisons and in several Garda detention units.

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas will push for thorough improvements in the State's prisons, so that the dignity and human rights of detainees are respected. By improving facilities and improving services such as drug rehabilitation we feel confident that we can reduce the number of prisoners re-offending.

Improving Our Systems

We will aim to introduce the following improvements in our court and prison services:

1. Reform the legal statutes so that imprisonment cannot be an option for petty crimes, freeing prison space and ending premature release.
2. Ensure more remand prison places so that these prisoners do not share space with convicts, reducing the risk of bail being granted because of lack of space.
3. Remove any constitutional doubt that exists over the freezing and seizure of assets and wealth gained through criminal activity.
4. Introduce a Witness Protection Programme.
5. Introduce Criminal Immunity legislation to allow criminals to give evidence for immunity against those accused of more serious crime.
6. Allow use of audio and video monitoring of suspects in custody as safeguard.
7. Strengthen legislation on the use and ownership of firearms.
8. Place greater emphasis on restitution to victims of crime.
9. Carry out a review of the Courts Act to make them work more efficiently and to ensure that court proceedings are more people friendly.

Northern Ireland

Unconditional Talks

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas has always been open to and available for talks with any of the protagonists in Northern Ireland's dispute, without setting any pointless or counterproductive restrictions. Our party lacks the historical baggage that bedevils many and gives us an opportunity to play a positive role.

We propose the following towards helping to end the senseless violence in the North :

1. The peace process must involve all the people, not just the politicians.
2. The ultimate compromise will best be identified through the use of a multi-choice preferendum of all the people involved, rather than the rubber-stamping of a deal cut by the political parties.
3. Peace talks need peace now. We call for an immediate and unconditional restoration of the IRA ceasefire.
4. Immediate entry of all parties to talks must follow.
5. Peace now requires the dismantling of military installations, the disarming of the police force, removal of troops to barracks and an early release on licence of political prisoners.
6. International monitors of the demilitarisation process and the policing function should be introduced immediately.
7. Introduce a Bill of Rights in advance of any settlement.
8. A Northern Ireland Citizens' Forum should run alongside the talks process.
9. Both governments must commit to a healing Truth Commission to follow the achievement of a new constitutional consensus.

The ultimate compromise will best be identified through the use of a multi-choice preferendum

Health

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas believes that the emphasis in health care should be preventative rather than curative. We believe that bad health can be linked directly to lifestyle and can be counteracted by an expansion of health promotion and education.

Community Health Care

Community health care services are the most effective means of protecting and preserving good health. We feel that a focus on Community Health Care would create more local clinics and community hospitals, in addition to protecting existing local hospital facilities and reversing the trend towards amalgamation. Financial recognition should also be given to the many voluntary agencies which provide social services.

Drugs - Primarily A Health Issue

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas wants 'Demand Reduction and Harm Minimisation', instead of failed policies of deterrence and control of supply. 'Demand Reduction' would be aimed at the population in general and would seek to reduce the demand for drugs through education, recreation opportunities and job opportunities. 'Harm Minimisation' would be targeted at groups already using drugs to mitigate the physical harm that can be caused to individuals who are using drugs in an unsafe manner. This would also include education and the provision of materials to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. In the short-term there is a need to establish and resource of drug treatment and rehabilitation centres.

We also feel that we need to confront the moral hypocrisy that downplays the addiction and health risks posed by legal drugs such as alcohol and tobacco. We will look for an end to the advertising of tobacco products.

Children At Risk

Studies indicate that close to two-thirds of drug users come from family environments where abuse already exists. Children at risk, over the age of 8 years, should be able to avail of non-interventionist counselling in schools. These programmes should be provided by professional counsellors and supported by an integrated second level schools programme - The recent pilot life skills

programme 'On Your Own Two Feet' should be adopted and included in the national curriculum.

Complementary Medicine

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas strongly supports complementary medical practices in the delivery of effective health care. We will have such practices fully integrated into the medical card and health insurance systems. We will work to augment the ongoing work in preparing commonly accepted codes of practice for complementary medicine practitioners.

Health Notebook

- **Medical Card Entitlement**
We will extend medical card eligibility regardless of income entitlement to all people living with a registered disability and all those with life threatening conditions.
- **The Hospice Movement**
The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas fully supports this growing and largely voluntary movement, and will seek to ensure that it is properly resourced.
- **Suicide**
The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas views with concern the increasing incidence of suicide in our society. Research will be undertaken to examine the causal factors behind this phenomenon, and resources will be made available to improve psychiatric and counselling services.
- **Screening**
We will promote full medical screening for women with a minimum delay in obtaining results.

We also feel that we need to confront the moral hypocrisy that downplays the addiction and health risks posed by legal drugs such as alcohol and tobacco. We will look for an end to the advertising of tobacco products.

Child And Sexual Abuse

We support the introduction of mandatory reporting for suspected cases of child abuse and will examine carefully the Child Care Act, looking at where it can be strengthened to prevent paedophilia.

We note that a 1993 ISPCC commissioned survey indicated levels of child sexual abuse in this country to be running as high as one in every eight children. We are committed to ensuring that all suspected cases of child abuse are dealt with fully and promptly; that therapy and protection are given to all child victims; and that all state agency involvement is child centred, giving full support to the needs and rights of the child victim.

We believe that the treatment of incest as a 'family problem' results in the neglect of the child victim. Child abuse is not a family problem, it is the cause of family problems. We will give additional resources to organisations such as the Children At Risk In Ireland Foundation and to the country's Rape Crisis Centres to increase and improve counselling services. We will examine the law as it relates to Child Sexual Abuse and Adult Rape, and see how it can be improved in terms of the conduct of court cases and the severity of sentencing.

Education

Education For Freedom

We view education as a lifelong activity, and believe that it is the duty of the state to provide for a basic education for all its citizens. Our aim is to ensure that adequate facilities and resources are available for a strong basic education and life-long access to learning opportunities.

We support the aims and aspirations expressed in the White Paper 'Charting Our Education Future' (1995) and support the proposed legislation to establish Regional Education Boards but we would exempt Gaelscoileanna from this structure. We believe that the projected decline in the student population provides a unique opportunity for improving education in Ireland.

In order that changes are meaningful and effective, we actively support the development of 'collaborative cultures' in our schools, in which a genuine partnership is

created between students, teachers and parents.

We will give priority to the primary and the secondary sectors. We believe that those who benefit from third level education should at every possible level re-invest that benefit into their local community and economy. Further education in vocational, technical, scientific and entrepreneurial skills will be fostered.

We support:

1. The extension of infant education in primary schools and the provision of 'Early Start' conditions to all schools.
2. Large scale increase in capital expenditure and maintenance grants for primary schools.
3. Improvement in language teaching facilities at primary level, including Irish.
4. Encourage choice at all levels of education, facilitating the growth of project schools, multi and non-denominational schools, Gaelscoileanna and Waldorf schools.
5. A meaningful reduction in the teacher/pupil ratio.
6. A reduction of the maximum size of the larger second-level schools to between 350 and 500 pupils.
7. The provision of adequate psychological, remedial and counselling services to all schools.
8. The provision of a dignified retirement package to all teachers over the age of 55, and the active recruitment of younger teachers into the profession.

We view education as a lifelong activity, and believe that it is the duty of the state to provide for a basic education for all its citizens. Our aim is to ensure that adequate facilities and resources are available for a strong basic education and life-long access to learning opportunities.

Equality

Differences Should Be Celebrated

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas feels that differences between people should not only be acknowledged, they should be celebrated.

While Ireland has moved closer to becoming a pluralist and more tolerant society in recent years, many remain marginalised. The changes of recent years have only been of slight benefit to them, but have left them short of the human rights entitlements they should expect as Irish citizens. The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas commits itself to removing many of these final barriers, and will support Equal Rights and Anti-Discrimination legislation.

Women

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas believes that Irish society can only benefit from a true gender balance in all aspects of life.

More women should be encouraged into the work-force and be paid decent wages and salaries for doing so. Many of the economic barriers that discourage women taking this step are institutional. The responsibility for child care still weighs too heavily on women's shoulders. While the introduction of Guaranteed Basic Income will ultimately make stay-at-home parenting a viable option for both men or women, a nation-wide network of crèches and child care workers nevertheless needs to be encouraged and supported.

We also feel that women should be represented fairly in political life at the levels where real decision making is made. By seeking to legally ban the 'dual mandate', we will enforce the recommendation of the second Commission on the Status of Women, facilitating participation of more people in politics especially women. Other barriers also need to be examined; for example, political structures should be arranged - meeting times, duration etc. - so that they also suit women who are caring for children.

We will advocate the promotion of more women to top level civil service positions and similar management positions in semi-state bodies and state agencies.

The security of women in our society in recent years has taken an ominous turn, with increasing attacks on women, rising numbers of disappearances, sexual assaults and murders. We intend to seriously examine the measures necessary to eliminate this trend.

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas political philosophy is informed through a feminist perspective.

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas feels that differences between people should not only be acknowledged, they should be celebrated.

Disability Rights

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas is committed to implementing fully the Report of the Council for the Status of People With Disability. We will seek to give legal effect to the O' Donoghue court case decision obliging the State to provide primary education to all children of the country without distinction.

Irish people with disability represent a significant proportion of the population. One in every eight Irish citizens lives with a disability of one type or another. Disability groups represent the many different forms of disability, and also represent the family and carers of those who live with disability. The claims of neglect brought by many support groups must be tackled during the lifetime of the next government.

To facilitate the greater independence of a large percentage of society, the Green Party / Comhaontas Glas supports the call by the Centre For Independent Living for a fund to be established to enable people with disabilities to avail of Personal Assistance.

We will work to ensure that the Council For The Status Of People With Disability contains a majority of members who personally live with disability.

We will make mandatory the three percent quota for employing people with disability in the public sector, and will introduce a similar quota for the private sector.

We recognise that:

- The autistic, the severe and profoundly intellectually disabled need to be catered for in appropriate settings.
- There is a need for short and long term respite care; and the need to provide support structures and counselling services for carers.
- The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas undertakes to ensure that all public buildings including schools will become wheelchair accessible, and that Part M of the building regulations is rigorously enforced. Public transport vehicles must be accessible to the entire public.
- Wheelchair accessible taxis should increase as a proportion of the total taxi fleet.
- There should be broader criteria for access to the Disabled Driver Grant Scheme.

The Travelling Community

We believe that all travellers should have access to the basic amenities, services and human rights to which they are entitled as Irish citizens. Services and goods should be provided in such a way as to respect their culture. In concrete terms, this means that their accommodation needs be fulfilled as a first step, with Travellers included in the decision-making processes.

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas commits itself to:

- The provision of sufficient halting sites by the year 2000.
- Local consultative committees to help avoid discord in the selection of halting sites and foster good community relations.
- The introduction of Anti-Discrimination Legislation.
- Recognising and enhancing the role of recycling in the traveller culture.

Transport

From Road To Public Transport

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas policy emphasis will change from new road construction to road repairs. Public transport will be given the highest priority, cutting fares to encourage usage. Responsibility for the roads programme will be transferred from the Department of the Environment to the Department of Transport which will develop an integrated National Transport Strategy. A national annual testing programme will be initiated for all cars to control vehicle emissions.

Extended Rail Services

The Dublin Light Rail System (LUAS) will be proceeded by the Ballymun line and the South Dublin line, extended to Sandyford. The system will be integrated with Heuston and Connolly stations. Swords via Dublin Airport will be connected to the City Centre by rail link. Studies will be undertaken to examine the feasibility of similar public transport options in other Irish cities. The national rail system will be given large scale investment to reopen railway stations and rail lines, particularly throughout the West of Ireland. Additional resources will be made available for urban authorities to provide allocated road space for public transport and cyclists.

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas policy emphasis will change from new road construction to road repairs. Public transport will be given the highest priority, cutting fares to encourage usage... A national annual testing programme will be initiated for all cars to control vehicle emissions.

Energy

We will seek to stabilise energy usage with the introduction of an Energy Tax (instead of tax on work). We will establish a target to substantially increase the production of electricity through renewable resources by the year 2005.

We will encourage greater use of bio-fuels in energy generation, and make more effective, efficient use of our natural gas resources. We will equalise the payments for energy supply to domestic and industrial users and will discontinue the practice of discount pricing for additional energy use.

An Energy Conservation Bill, to define energy efficiency standards for buildings, machinery and vehicles, will form an important part of our legislative programme. Regulations will be put in place to ensure the effective introduction of wind turbines. We will re-introduce the grant scheme for energy efficient housing and will encourage the practice of energy audits.

We will deal with fuel poverty where those in need can meet their heating needs using heat and cost efficient fuels. We will introduce energy taxation at a level directed at people best able to carry this taxation. We will also review mining licences and will remove so-called environmental tax incentives.

An Teanga

We strongly welcome the growth of the Gaelscoileanna movement and will ensure that it is better resourced so that the movement can develop at second and third level. We support Teilifís na Gaeilge as an important means of fostering the Irish language. We will campaign for full working status for the Irish language within Ireland and the European Union. We will introduce a Bill of Rights for Irish speakers and encourage the growth of Gaeltachtaí.

Arts & Culture

We will encourage the development of a regional arts policy that will enable more people to participate in arts activity. We will work to develop an indigenous Irish film industry that produces work which reflects the real-

ities of modern Irish life. We will establish a national school for performing arts and provide funding for a national arts and disability centre. We will review broadcasting policy and we will work to ensure that people have more access to radio and television, including opportunities for community broadcasting. We will support the Architectural Heritage Legislature.

Tourism

Tourism can bring much needed revenue into the country, as well as provide thousands of valuable job opportunities. The success of the tourism 'industry' depends on high levels of environmental protection. But unfortunately this has not been widely practiced.

Just as we must protect the environment for tourism, we must also protect the environment from tourism. The scale of tourism must be closely monitored, and the environment must never be manipulated to conform to a 'tourism product'. We remain opposed to the idea of interpretative centres in any area of ecological importance, most particularly the Burren.

There is a pace of life in Ireland which cannot be artificially created once destroyed - it is one of the great attractions of Ireland. If we build wide roads, build interpretative centres and vulgar attractions, we are destroying that which is attractive to the visitor. Eco-tourism is a growing area, that should be encouraged. Eco-tourists wish to enjoy our environment in its natural state for its own sake. It should be left so for our own sakes as well as theirs.

The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas wants an increased emphasis on activity holidays, such as walking and cycling holidays, outdoor pursuits centres, cruising and sailing, educational/study tours, and special interest holidays. We propose carefully planned development of the walking 'Ways' of Ireland and restoration of ancient castles/great houses throughout Ireland. We want a shift away from interpretative centres in wilderness areas to more appropriate urban locations. We support the continued development of the inland waterway systems and want more independent hostels and tourism co-operatives.

We will ensure that ecological audits are carried out automatically on all major tourism developments so that the environment is protected, giving Ireland an ecologically and economically sustainable tourism industry. The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas will ensure acceptable rates of pay and job security within the tourism business.

A New Politics

Decentralisation

In Ireland too few people are making significant decisions that affect the lives of far too many other people. For a democracy to exist, there must be a sense of ownership of the decision-making process, not just participation in irregular elections, but popular active involvement in decision making structures.

We believe in decentralisation, not shifting a government office from one part of the country to another, but empowering people to make decisions about local issues. Real decentralisation means the surrender of power and devolving revenue-raising capacity to local government.

Restructuring Local Government

We will conduct a major review of all existing local government legislation, and will introduce a Local Government Bill that will create a three-tier system of community, district and regional government. The powers of existing regional authorities and 'quango's will be streamlined into the new system of local government and local communities will have the right to enact bye-laws and legislation appropriate to local situations. Local government will be given constitutional status with frequent regular elections and revenue-raising powers and the Irish government will sign the European Charter on Self-Government.

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas advocates local taxation which would be fully discountable against central government taxation. We believe that tax should be collected by local government and spent locally, with a small proportion being sent to national government, to help pay for its own administration and to counteract population and economic imbalances between local areas.

As a natural consequence of devolution of powers to local communities, Dáil Éireann will of necessity become smaller with fewer members. The number and size of government departments will also be reduced. We will work towards the establishment of fixed term Dáils. The continuing status of Seanad Éireann will be debated and reassessed.

Open Government - More Than A Slogan

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas is committed to open government. Legislation on Freedom of Information and the Declaration of Interests will be brought into line with the highest international standards. Rules in relation to political fund-raising will be made watertight. The Official Secrets Act will be reviewed, and the laws on libel will be loosened to allow for the more effective practice of investigative journalism. We are committed to minimising the use of cabinet confidentiality, and will move a necessary constitutional amendment. Legislation will be drafted to set controls on public inquiries - their length, their structure and their cost.

We believe in decentralisation, not shifting a government office from one part of the country to another, but empowering people to make decisions about local issues.

Dáil Reform

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas will increase the length of time the Dáil sits and improve the style of working within the Dáil so that it becomes less confrontational and more consensual. We will introduce strict regulations regarding the use of civil servants doing constituency work of Government Ministers. Legislation will be debated on its merits and not on its authorship. The roles of government and opposition will be re-defined and legislation promoted by backbench or opposition TDs will be treated more seriously and will have greater opportunity to become law. There will be an increase in the number of parliamentary draftsmen, and the Law Reform Commission will be given greater resources to produce finished bills to be presented directly to the Oireachtas. The powers of the Ceann Comhairle will be strengthened so that s/he can insist that Ministers give answers consistent with the questions asked and the information sought. The rules of procedure will be re-drafted to allow for discussion and debate of current and relevant topics. Members of the European Parliament will be allowed to attend and contribute to all working committees of the Oireachtas.

One Person One Job

We believe in maximising participation in the democratic process. Our first Public Office bill sets out that nobody can hold more than one public office at a time. We will support additional back-up and research assistance for elected public representatives. We will also examine the nature of public appointments and put safeguards in place to end political appointments to semi-state and government agencies.

Political Funding

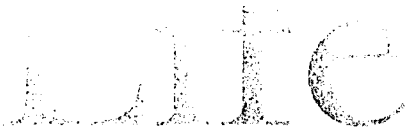
If private donations to political parties are allowed to continue, all such donations should be revealed. Limits to the amounts of money that can be donated should be made. The current system allows unseen people and institutions to wield undue influence on the political process. We will also work to limit the amounts of money that political parties can spend in their day-to-day operations and on elections.

Voting Regularly and Often

- We want regular local, regional and national referenda, and the introduction of a petition system to initiate policy to bring about legislation and to undertake constitutional change.
- We will promote the mechanism of a referendum as outlined in Peter Emerson's book 'The Politics of Consensus' as an alternative decision making method. The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas will insist that elections cannot be postponed.
- We will uphold the importance of the McKenna Judgement, ensuring that public money can never be used to influence constitutional questions.
- We will seek to have all local government decision-making positions publicly accountable through elections.
- Nomination procedures for Presidential elections will be reformed to allow for greater candidate choice.
- We support the call of the Constitutional Review Group that by-elections to fill vacancies to Dáil Éireann be held within a ninety day period.
- We will consider alternative methods to fill vacancies on Local Authority Councils.

- We totally endorse the principle of emigrants fully contributing to the election of members of the Dáil in the constituencies at which they were last resident, and will work towards enshrining this right through legislation.

We believe that this country has a role to play, in the practice of an independent foreign policy, in helping to achieve world peace and the achievement of human rights for all. This we can do by firmly rejecting militarism as a means of settling international disputes, and by guarding our independence and our freedom to speak on world events.



Ireland and the Wider World

We believe that this country has a role to play through the practice of an independent foreign policy, in helping to achieve world peace and the achievement of human rights for all. We can do this by firmly rejecting militarism as a means of settling international disputes and by guarding our neutrality and our freedom to speak on world events.

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas believes that the principle of neutrality should be enshrined in our constitution. We will reverse the trend of recent years where we have been dragged towards renouncing a policy that has served this country well and has enabled us to serve the world better in a non partisan way.

The European Union

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas will resist any further attempts to bring Ireland into a common Foreign and Defence Policy. We will seek an end to Ireland's observer status at the Western European Union, discourage involvement with NATO's 'Partnership For Peace', and call for the strengthening of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

We believe that new applicant states to the EU should only be admitted on the basis of their social and human rights records, rather than strictly on economic criteria.

We welcome additional members to the EU, but oppose the centralisation of power. We will seek to have power transferred from the Council of Ministers and the European Commission to the popularly elected European Parliament, except in areas where we believe that the European Union should not have competence, e.g. Foreign Policy. We will work for the creation of a 'Europe of the Regions' and oppose the creation of a European Superstate.

We will seek and promote the use of a neutral language to conduct the workings of the European Union.

The United Nations And Foreign Aid

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas will campaign for the democratisation of the UN, through the removal of

the five permanent vetoes of the Security Council. We will ensure that the Irish Government restores respect for the UN and increases its effectiveness as an organisation.

We will bring the level of this country's international development aid, to the level recommended by the United Nations. We will continue to speak out on issues of greater democracy and human rights worldwide, whether that be Palestine, East Timor, Tibet, Kurdistan, Myanmar/Burma, Bosnia or Rwanda/Burundi.

We oppose Ireland contributing to the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility of the International Monetary Fund, because of the unnecessary pressure it and that organisation place on countries in the developing world. We support the campaign of the Debt and Development Coalition to alleviate majority world debt.

Refugees And Asylum Seeking

We are committed to the full and speedy implementation of the Refugees Act and further believe that the status of environmental refugees should be included in this legislation.

Defence And The Naval Service

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas is a party of non-violence, but we recognise that our defence forces have served this country well.

The army has performed peacekeeping duties with distinction throughout the world. The present review of resources within the Defence Forces must be done in full consultation with representative bodies, and in full consideration of its effect on forces morale.

The Naval Service has also served with distinction. After 50 years of operations it now needs to be redefined as a coast guard service. Plans should now be put in to place to update the present fleet to a 12 ship fleet by 2010.

The Air Corps also needs additional resources. It is more than an air ferrying service for Government Ministers. It needs additional helicopters to assist the Naval Service in its fisheries protection role and anti-smuggling role.

The Civil Defence plays an important role in the event of this country ever operating its national emergency plan. We will see that it is properly resourced and prepared to perform this task.

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas asks the other parties

Will you

- Introduce taxes on carbon and energy use to alleviate employment taxes and to fulfil our commitments to reduce global CO2 emissions reductions?
- Introduce a Guaranteed Basic Income payable to every adult citizen as a means of eliminating the poverty trap?
- Reduce pesticide use by 50% by the year 2000?
- Adopt a policy of decentralisation of health care facilities such as clinics and district hospitals to make health a locally provided service?
- Ban advertising of tobacco and tobacco products?
- Introduce mandatory reporting of suspected cases of child sexual abuse?
- Implement a National Waste Reduction Programme to reduce waste to 1990 levels by the year 2000 ?
- Use the Anglo-Irish agreement to close Sellafield?
- Insist on strict implementation of the principle of the "Polluter Pays" withholding Government grants, subsidies and payments to those convicted of pollution offences?
- Oppose the patenting of animal life forms or the process of creating animal life?
- Ban the exploitation of live farm animals?
- Ban attempts to release genetically modified organisms (GMOs) into the Irish environment.?
- Give constitutional recognition to local government with autonomous tax raising power?
- Develop an all Ireland network of cycleways with special attention to cities and towns?
- Remove Dual Mandate to facilitate greater participation in politics particularly for women?