

GREEN PARTY COMHAONTAS GLAS



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INTRODUCTION

Many politicians from the established parties have tried to give their own interpretations of Green politics. They believe they can 'capture the Green vote' by making statements on the 'environment'. This fashionable 'environmental' approach to our present pollution problems deals merely with the symptoms. But truly Green politics goes much deeper than that. The Green approach is an ecological one — it goes back to the root causes.

All of the Green Party's policies acknowledge the vital importance of Ecology, that is, our whole environment. Our whole future is vitally dependent on that environment. We depend upon a network of links with the rest of creation. Green politics acknowledges the reality and importance of that web of life.

Over the years human beings have set themselves up to dominate and exploit the planet. Many of the problems which the Greens have long predicted (they were called 'alarmist' for doing so) are now coming to pass. It is now clear that if our warnings are ignored much longer humankind will destroy the planet.

The potential catastrophes which we face are finally beginning to convince people that the existing power structures cannot be trusted. The policies of traditional Left, Right and Centre have been abject failures. Their promises of unlimited growth, a technological 'fix' for all our problems and universal affluence are false. 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 — an approach which holds that the fundamental problem is our materialistic society. We can no longer ignore the spiritual dimension of our lives in the interests of selfish consumerism.

In this manifesto you will find well-thought-out policies on the environment, agriculture and urban conservation. But these policies are fundamentally linked — in a truly ecological sense — to our policies on employment and economics.

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.

BACKGROUND

In recent times the very survival of planet Earth has become a matter of grave anxiety to vast numbers of people. Acid rain, the destruction of our forests, the projected Greenhouse Effect, the threat to the ozone layer, have all reached world headlines and become topics of daily conversation in millions of homes. At the same time people are fearful about purely economic affairs: unemployment and the erosion of security; unfair forms of taxation and so on. We believe there is a strong link between our economic and ecological problems: both are due to the excesses of the system of industrialism.

The system of large-scale, industrial factory organisation has helped to despoil the planet of its mineral and energy resources, is at the root of widespread pollution and ecological destruction, has caused us to feel we are not at home in the world, has led to the widespread regimentation of social life, and currently threatens the Earth with destruction. While we condemn the excesses of industrialism as a "wrong turn" in human development we do not condemn technology itself — merely inappropriate technology and its wasteful and dehumanising use.

We are therefore fundamentally opposed to the following: growth economics; consumerism; the worship of technique; and the state of mind which

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holds work, regardless of its quality in practice or product, to be an end in itself. Growth economics values growth in the quantity of goods produced over growth in the quality of life; consumerism places "having" over being; the unthinking worship of technology means that no thought is given to the bad effects of technological development; and the "work ethic" in the negative forms it takes in our society means that, for example, a nine-to-five job helping to produce nerve gas is valued more highly than the unpaid work of a child-minder. Clearly there is something wrong with a society which has its values in such a mess. Only a society organised according to spiritual rather than material values can offer a real alternative.

We live in a society where the values of quantitative, material growth hold sway over the values of qualitative, personal growth. We want a basic change of direction: away from consumerist values towards a society where the values of nurturing, caring, sharing, simplicity and respect for nature are foremost.

We interpret Green philosophy by means of the following seven principles which are at the root of all our 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.

As Greens, our main concern is to combat the importance placed on growth in the quantity of goods produced with a new approach which places the prime emphasis on growth in the quality of life. We could sum up the case against growth economics as follows:—

(a) Traditional methods of measurement do not distinguish between good and bad forms of growth; an increase in the production of e.g. armaments or pornography would register as an increase in economic growth.

(b) The planet's resources — including minerals, energy, and land — place natural limits to growth.

(c) The philosophy and practice of economic growth have led to devastating forms of pollution which ultimately threaten life itself.

(d) Farming has more and more come to depend on artificial fertilisers and machinery to the detriment of the ecological balance found in traditional forms of agriculture.

(e) Stable rural communities have been replaced by large urban concentrations — such as Dublin in its

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present form — with little sense of community. People have lost a sense of belonging, of feeling "at home in the world". Only a radical shift away from the values of industrialism can restore for us a sense of belonging to the community and the world. An end to the pursuit of quantitative economic growth does not mean a downgrading of the quality of life. The emphasis on work and productivity in industrial society has eroded family life and the quality of life for individuals. A Green world will place a much greater emphasis on personal development, lifelong education, creativity and the strengthening of community and family life.

In the following pages we shall try to show how our environmental, economic, social and political problems are interlinked and how they can be solved by a rejection of the causes, causes which are rooted in the system of large-scale industrial factory organisation.

ENVIRONMENT

The major global environmental problems are as follows:—

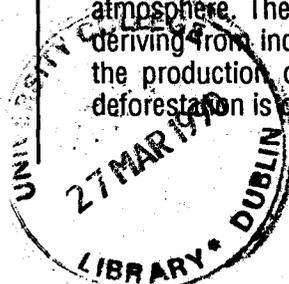
Deforestation:

About 200,000 square kilometers (80,000 square miles) of rainforest are cleared every year. This is an area approximately the size of Great Britain. The main cause of deforestation of tropical zones in Central America, parts of the Amazon and Southeast Asia is the build-up of the livestock and crop-production sector aimed at export. Large areas are also being cleared for the production of food products for the world market by multinational corporations.

The second major reason for deforestation is commercial wood production, which claims about 5 million hectares (12 million acres) of rainforest annually. For every ten trees cut down, only one new tree is planted.

In order to exploit their mineral resources, to carry out infrastructural, agricultural and forestry projects Third World countries went into billions of dollars of debt (debt which the banks were only too eager to help them incur). Because of the decline in world commodity prices, they soon faced severe repayment problems. Third World countries are forced to produce in order to service their debts. Their forests, the tribal people who live in them, and the world ecosystem and its population suffer as a result. It is a generally ignored fact that tropical rainforests, in which up to 50 per cent of all known species of living organisms exist, can be regenerated only with great difficulty — if at all.

There is also danger to the global climate. The destruction of the forests can alter solar radiation, cloud formation and rainfall. There may also be a link between rainforest destruction and the projected "Greenhouse Effect" — the heating of the earth's atmosphere. The rainforests convert carbon dioxide deriving from industrial emissions into biomass and the production of oxygen. Clearly, the problem of deforestation is one of appalling magnitude.



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The following measures must be taken: the process of deforestation; the comprehensive cancellation of debts to countries so affected; the setting up of nature conservation areas; the compulsory identification of wood from tropical countries so consumers can make an informed choice; the withdrawal of the World Bank from projects that contribute to the destruction of the natural environment. The Irish Government should use its influence in international fora to combat deforestation, and should set an example by refusing to use wood and its products from tropical forests in State structures, furnishings etc.

Greenhouse Effect

The burning of biomass in the form of coal and oil releases large amounts of carbon dioxide (CO₂). It takes a long time to convert CO₂ back into plant tissue and for it to dissolve in the oceans. The result is that CO₂ is building up steadily in the earth's atmosphere. CO₂ dominates the thermal balance of the atmosphere, which determines the temperature of the earth's surface, where the winds blow, and the amount of rain or snow they can carry. The more CO₂ builds up in the atmosphere, the more radiant heat from the earth's surface is absorbed to be radiated back to the surface: the "Greenhouse Effect". It is believed that this will cause a rise in average global temperature, change the seasons and raise sea level, interfere with food production, and produce massive flooding and extreme weather conditions.

While not all scientists are agreed as to the threat of the "Greenhouse Effect" there is sufficient informed concern for us to be very worried indeed. In order to slow down the process of climatic change we must convert the excess CO₂ back into biomass by growing trees. At the same time we must reduce our levels of consumption in order to reduce the effects of industrial emissions.

Those who defend the excesses of the industrial system say that nuclear fission is the only alternative to the use of coal and oil. This may well be the case if one accepts the priorities of industrialism: that "more and bigger" is what is needed. On the contrary, we argue for a return to a simpler, more natural lifestyle. This would include a switch to renewable energy sources, an emphasis on conservation, and an end to nuclear power production, giving present technologies at least. Regarding nuclear fusion, it is interesting that the same arguments are being made for this as were made for fission several decades ago. While we do not at this time reject the use of fusion we believe that serious consideration must be given not only to its ecological effects but also to the effects on society of the use of advanced technology as the primary producer of energy. If this leads to control by a technocratic elite with totalitarian powers the cure may be worse than the disease.

The Threat to the Ozone Layer

Chlorofluorocarbons — CFCs — are used to propel

and aerosols. They are also used in the making of fridges and as foam expanders. Like CO₂, CFCs absorb heat and re-radiate it — they thus also contribute to the warming of the atmosphere. CFCs penetrate to the top of the stratosphere where they break down the ozone layer. (The ozone layer filters out the dangerous ultraviolet rays in sunlight). We call for a complete ban on the use of CFCs except in cases where they are essential and cannot be replaced by another substance.

Acid Rain

Polluting gases like sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and nitrogen oxides (NOx) make rain more acid than it naturally is. Much of the acidity in rain comes from SO₂ emissions from power stations, though this can be reduced by fitting 'flue gas desulphurisation' equipment to chimneys.

Industry, power stations and vehicle exhausts also contribute to acid rain through emission of nitrogen compounds. In 1985, 52% of trees in German forests showed damage from acid rain. Acid rain contributes to soil acidification, releases harmful chemicals in the soil, damages trees, kills fish and insects and thus the animals that feed on them, harms buildings, and can also harm humans through water pollution.

The remedy for this problem is the fitting of appropriate equipment to power stations that contribute to this problem, the use of alternative and non-polluting energy sources in production, and curbs on the use of private transport.

The following are some of the major Irish environmental concerns:

Pollution

In recent years problems of air, soil and water pollution have been highlighted in Ireland. This organisation played a major role in bringing these problems to public attention, particularly through the Environmental Emergency Conference which we organised in 1987.

We see three main areas of pollution — Domestic, Agricultural and Industrial — and believe that in all cases the costs of pollution control and of cleaning up pollution must be borne by the polluters themselves. Example of domestic pollution include refuse, fossil fuel emissions (a major cause of the deadly smog problem in Dublin) and car 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 the most obvious. (Moneypoint on full load has resulted in a 50% increase in SO₂ emissions from this country).

In the long term the above problems would be dealt with by: smaller-scale disposal of domestic refuse; reduction of organic waste through reduction in the use of packaging and biodegradable material; the use of non-polluting forms of heating and heat-conservation



(e.g. CHP — Combined Heat and Power) as well as the generation of heat from renewable sources such as solar energy, windpower, hydroelectric systems etc.; a much greater reliance on bicycles and public transport; a return to small-scale, labour-intensive, organic farming; the establishment of small-scale, local, non-toxic industries. The transport of all but the most urgent of raw materials would be by railway, canal or sea. Getting rid of most road haulage would put an end to a great deal of pollution. There would also be a return to the use of natural, locally-found raw materials in industry.

In the short term we propose radical changes in the pollution laws in an attempt to tackle the dangerous state of our present environment. This would be coupled with a changed attitude to pollution and polluters. Industry would be monitored carefully and breaking of anti-pollution laws would be heavily penalised. We advocate the setting up of an Environmental Unit whose function would be to enforce a new Environmental Protection Act. It would be able to classify industries, firms or individuals as 'potential polluters'. This category would have to apply for operating licences which would be given only to those using the best available pollution prevention technology. The Act would insist that operators of industrial and agricultural plants disclose their production processes when called on to do so by local bodies.

We also call for:

- An Environmental Levy on industry to pay for environmental research.

- Immediate availability of natural gas for cars and the urgent phasing out of all leaded fuels.

- Massive investment in public transport which would have an immediate effect on urban pollution.

- The introduction of smoke-free zones in urban areas and the promotion of smokeless fuels.

- The recycling of waste materials wherever possible.

- An immediate ban on all dangerous and untested pesticides.

- Organic farming methods which would help phase out the use of artificial fertilisers.

- The release of all pollution reports by state bodies and public access to the associated files.

- The display of all emergency disaster plans.

- An embargo on new toxic industries and the immediate closure of existing chronically polluting plants.

- The ending of all grants and subsidies being paid to those found polluting the environment.

- An end to the dumping of toxic waste. We insist that all hazardous materials be detoxified before disposal at the expense of the originator.

We are not willing to accept the concepts of 'acceptable risks' or 'safe levels of exposure' in dealing with the effects of pollution and health hazards on people. We look for the implementation of the 'precautionary principle'. In other words, 'if you're not sure about the consequences, don't dump or pump.'

Our environmental problems cannot be viewed in isolation from our economic problems. High levels of

taxation and low social welfare levels result from the pressure to repay debts incurred through reckless government borrowing. At the same time an antiquated social welfare system results in the well-known 'poverty trap'. Our economic problems are made worse by outdated and bureaucratic methods of wealth collection which inhibit economic enterprise. One result of the above is a very tangible one; poor people cannot afford to buy smokeless fuel, so the smog problem in Dublin continues unabated. Perhaps if the well-off continue to suffer from the smog problem long enough something will be done to tackle the underlying economic causes. Since they control the economy and the media (which define our problems) it will hardly be done otherwise.

Another symptom of the excesses of the industrial system is the desire for 'jobs' at any cost even when job-creation means more pollution, as it frequently does in the realms of "agribusiness", pharmaceutical and chemical industries and others. We do not see how anyone could achieve true work-satisfaction through a harmful and polluting job. The way to tackle poverty is through changing the method of wealth-distribution so that people receive a substantial portion of their income through national dividend or guaranteed basic income — a basic sum paid to each citizen as of right every week. This would leave them free to earn additional income through individual and cooperative enterprise, rather than relying on multi-nationals or the state to provide them with employment.

The Nuclear Problem

We look for: (a) The closing of Sellafield to be pursued through the Euratom Treaty and cessation of the construction of THORP (Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant) on the same site; (b) the cessation of the discharge of radioactive waste from 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 U.N.; (f) an immediate end to the foisting of nuclear power plants on Third World countries; (g) a phased transfer of resources 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. We also look for the prohibition from Irish air/sea space of any craft which are nuclear-powered, carry nuclear weapons or refuse inspection.

We call for the passing of a Nuclear Free Zone Act by Ireland as a matter of urgency.

Urban Conservation

The quality of life is being eroded in most Irish cities and towns. Dublin has been particularly badly hit in this regard. The Green Party is seeking the following changes on the way towards positive urban conservation and urban renewal:

- There should be an immediate move away from the

disastrous strategy of the early-1960s which saw inner city communities uprooted and re-housed in new, often faceless and under-serviced suburban environments. The population of Dublin's inner city (i.e. between the two canals) has been halved in twenty five years as a result of this policy. The first step in getting people back into the city is to accept that mistakes were made and to begin to undo the social and physical damage which the inner city has experienced.

- The scandal of land and property speculation must be highlighted and then eradicated. It has brought to our cities some appallingly ugly developments; it has made many speculators wealthy overnight; it has left Dublin in particular scarred with derelict and dilapidated buildings.

- Planning must aim to retain the character of local environments through the retention of what is worthwhile in the old buildings and streets, while at the same time encouraging integration in the designing of new buildings. Financial and advisory assistance should be provided for renovation and conservational improvements to existing property, particularly in the badly run-down areas of our inner cities. Cities like Galway and Kilkenny have shown what enlightened urban planning can achieve.

- The interests of local communities must no longer be ignored in the creation of Development Plans for our cities. The dismissive attitude the County Councils, City Corporations and Government Ministers have shown to the wishes and needs of local communities is a scandal.

- Without an efficient and inexpensive public transport system the car lobby will continue to expand and more unnecessary roads to cater for the extra volume of traffic will be built. Through effective barring of cars from many city centre areas, together with a greatly increased and much cheaper public transport system the cities will function properly. There will be less noise, less chance of road accidents, less pollution, less stress. It needs an imaginative plan but is entirely feasible and is the most sensible solution to the traffic chaos which reigns at the moment in our cities. The European move is away from traffic-congested cities — this is one area where the example of Europe should be followed.

- Existing local authorities must be given the power to work towards urban conservation. New local authorities should be set up to work with local communities in other areas, helping to achieve this goal. The Green Party advocates the making of decisions at the lowest practicable level. This would ensure that local communities have an effective input into decision-making.

- Education should play a key role in making people aware of their environment and how it can be improved. Education in schools and universities should strive to emphasise the value of aesthetically-pleasing buildings and environments.

- The movement of heavy loads and articulated vehicles within urban boundaries must be strongly

controlled as regards the nature of the load, the weight, the routes, the speeds and the times.

- Buildings and streetscapes of historical and aesthetic importance which are placed in jeopardy by Government and/or developers' plans must be highlighted and those plans stopped. We propose the demolition of the worse examples of modern architectural barbarism (this would help to provide satisfying and useful employment). At the same time all efforts must be made to preserve and if practicable reconstruct our urban architectural heritage.

Rural Architecture

Ireland has been brought to international shame through the destruction and dereliction of many fine old country houses. It should be remembered that these involved the work of Irish builders, architects and craftsmen and are part of our national heritage. At the same time the 'bungalow blight' continues apace spoiling the countryside for visitor and native alike.

We propose that imaginative use be made of existing country houses of architectural and historical value through social employment schemes focussed on renovating them as community centres, art and craft centres, educational and residential centres etc., under community control. The potential of restored country houses as hotels and as sources of income from tourists is great and should be fully exploited. Planning laws regarding the construction of private houses in the countryside should be much more stringent and rigorously enforced. Architects and publishers have the responsibility to provide designs in accordance with the Irish native tradition.

Conclusion

The above sets out the general environmental problems of our nation and how they might be addressed. In the following sections we shall show how misguided agricultural and economic policies are contributing to our environmental problems in specific ways; and most importantly, how this situation can be changed through a radically different approach.

ECONOMY

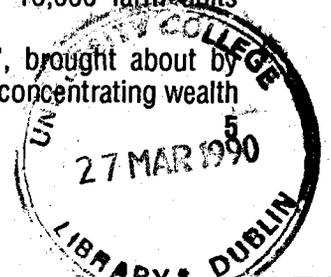
In the following section we shall deal with economic matters under the headings: Agriculture; Resources; Energy; Industry and Industrial Relations; Work; Banks, Finance and National Debt; Alternative Taxation; Basic Income; E.C./1992.

Agriculture

While overall productivity and income in the agricultural sector is rising, 75 per cent of farmers are earning the equivalent of or less than the average industrial wage and one third of these are living below the poverty line.

There are roughly 100,000 farm-units in the Republic, little over half as many as there were in 1973. In 50 years time, there may be only 10,000 farm-units remaining.

This ongoing 'rationalisation', brought about by steadily falling profit margins, is concentrating wealth



in the hands of a few, while the traditional family farm seems doomed to extinction.

Environmentally, the outlook is bleak with the increasing application of chemical fertilisers, pesticides etc., the continuing destruction of hedgerows to facilitate large machinery, a massive increase in the land given over to pine afforestation and many more factors which tend to seriously pollute the local environment. Already river pollution has become commonplace. In the future, our countryside threatens to become sterile and devoid of wildlife. Ultimately our ground water is likely to become contaminated as is already happening elsewhere.

The quality of food has seriously deteriorated since we joined the EEC in 1973 and if present policies continue, so will this trend. Further standardisation, increasing levels of chemical residues in fruit and an ongoing deterioration in the health of animals in factory farms will further reduce the quality of food products.

A factor which may be expected to intensify all of the above trends is the introduction of genetic engineering into agriculture. Moreover, the release of genetically manipulated organisms into the environment poses an incalculable risk.

The only beneficiaries of the above developments are big business interests, industry and large farmers.

We advocate the abolition of the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) and its replacement by a system of grants to small and medium sized farms for producing high quality food by ecologically sound methods. Demand would once again determine what is to be produced. Such a system would cost only a fraction of what the CAP is costing.

Organic and bio-dynamic methods of farming should be actively promoted — as well as being labour-intensive and ecologically sound, there is a massive export potential for food produced by such methods. Research in other countries indicates that such a change is economically and technically feasible, but it will require a transformation in university agricultural departments towards the study and promotion of more natural methods of farming.

In common with Green parties in other EC countries, we believe that livestock numbers should be limited to what the individual farm-unit can itself support. This would prevent surplus production (i.e. food mountains etc.) in the EC which could not come about were it not for the massive imports of animal foodstuff, much of it from Third World countries.

We believe that the State should play an active role in facilitating landless people who wish to enter agriculture, through the provision of credit on favourable terms and by providing training in ecologically sound methods of agriculture and horticulture. The equitable distribution of land should be a matter of concern for society as a whole.

We believe that planning should take place for the main part at regional level. From the points of view of farmer, consumer and environment a large degree of self-sufficiency at local level is essential. Already much damage has been done but this can be reversed.

The fate of the family farm and of the ecology of the countryside are interlinked — labour-intensive and small scale production structures are essential for ecology. As consumers, taxpayers and as tourists, the urban population has a vested interest in the survival of the family farm. In global terms, ecologically sound agriculture is essential for the long-term solution to the problems of hunger and the threat to the global environment. In countries such as West Germany, the above problems have led to a 'rainbow coalition' between farmers, consumers, environmentalists, Third World solidarity organisations and animal rights groups in favour of ecologically sound agriculture. We look forward to similar developments in Ireland (including perhaps large numbers of students, unemployed, and people tired of the urban rat-race who wish to work at farming).

Because it depends on high energy inputs from fossil fuel sources, our agricultural system is unsustainable. We therefore need to move quickly to a system of working with nature rather than using the soil simply 'to enable the plant to stand up'. As recent events have shown, factory farming leads to the spread of disease among the animals and birds and tends to entail a high dosage of drugs — besides, of course, frequently involving cruelty to the animals themselves. All of these systems involve taking foodstuff which can be used for human consumption and feeding it to animals. This is inefficient from a protein and an energy balance point of view, and robs the people of the Third World of food which should be theirs.

We regard salmon farming as another form of factory farming. It involves keeping migratory fish in a cage, causing them stress which can lead to outbreaks of disease. We are also concerned with the chemicals used in salmon farming and the risks to the wild fish from fish which escape from farms. We therefore want a ban on any further development of salmon farming. We are alarmed at the spread of mono-culture sitka spruce plantings, a development which has been made possible by ill-advised tax incentives. Sitka spruce is of very low value. Consequently, very little labour can be afforded in its cultivation and harvest, and in Scotland forestry of this type has actually destroyed communities. Monoculture increases the risk of disease and pests. We would encourage the planting of broadleaf trees instead. We are using vast areas of peatland which is more valuable as a fuel source if it is to be productive at all.

In conclusion, for a wide range of reasons we advocate a return to a simpler, more natural, less damaging agricultural system in which people will once more live a life in accordance with nature rather than exploiting nature for private greed, an exploitation which will inevitably turn on us all — perhaps sooner rather than later.

Resources

The earth's resources are not our property, to use or squander as we wish. Instead, we hold them in trust for future generations. We therefore have no right to build

our economy around the use of oil and consume it at such a rate that all known and anticipated reserves will be exhausted within fifty years. The Greens believe that oil and other fossil fuels should be taxed heavily to stimulate the development of renewable sources of energy, based on tides, wind, solar and geothermal power. A rapid switch to these sources is necessary in any case to prevent the drastic climatic changes and the rise in the sea level as a result of the projected "Greenhouse Effect". Cheap energy from fossil fuels has distorted every area of human life. It has made transport easy and inexpensive, and so allowed the growth of massive manufacturing businesses, drawing their resources from all over the globe and distributing their product internationally. The growth of these organisations has had the following effects:—

(a) Multinational companies have enormous economic power, often greater than individual governments. As a result, individual employees or members of the public count for very little. Moreover, these firms have demanded the construction of free-trade areas and customs unions, so that they may distribute their product even more widely. However, the effects of this have been to accelerate the concentration of economic power in their hands and to take political power further from ordinary people, as the political unit grows.

(b) Massive companies entail massive waste, particularly in transport, advertising and packaging. Every study shows that they use capital and resources less efficiently than smaller firms. Since they finance most research, they have developed technologies which suit them.

The Greens believe that decisions should be made and things should be done on the smallest scale or the lowest level possible. This means that communities should aim to produce as much of their own requirements for themselves as possible from their own resources and that they should have political power over those areas which affect them most closely.

Industry and Industrial Relations

The economic policies pursued by successive governments both of Left and Right have sprung from certain beliefs that grew out of the Industrial Revolution. These beliefs were:—

•That nature was there to be conquered and controlled and that we were masters of this planet and not stewards. Therefore, we are not accountable for our use (or abuse) of natural resources. This mind-set must be related to the dominance of 'masculine' values and the repression of 'feminine' values in society.

•That all human problems could be solved by technological 'progress'.

•That anything of a social nature which could not be measured was of no significance. This meant that human needs, e.g. for self-expression were regarded as unimportant because they could not be quantified.

The above ideas have been responsible for whole populations being brainwashed into accepting the present state of things as normal.

We would encourage small-scale industry with low capital investment; adapting technology to a more human scale; moving towards greater self-sufficiency with a greater use being made of local raw materials and renewable resources; encouraging skilled work requiring creativity and imagination; craft industries; self-employment; trade associations to carry out research and development for the self-employed and small businesses; worker cooperatives; maintenance, repair and recycling work including energy conservation; social and community work including work in the arts, sciences and voluntary associations.

We reject both the State and the market as the recipe for economic success. While we see a role for long-term economic planning we believe that economic decision-making should take place wherever possible at local community level and at worker level (in the context of worker-owned and worker-managed enterprises). Central decision-making in economic and other matters should take place only in cases where local decision-making is not practicable. While the market has a role to play, the profit-motive must be mitigated by environmental, social, ethical and aesthetic factors. This will develop best in the context of a 'third sector' of worker-cooperatives, aided by a developing ecological and cooperative consciousness.

At present workers have no say on such basic issues as: products; raising capital; investment; operation of plant and office. They are unable to remove bad management from office or to decide when an industry should close. We propose the empowerment of workers in such spheres as: raising capital; allocating profit; determining investments in plant and machinery; arranging job assignments, rotations and responsibilities; choosing type of produce, services, markets and prices; organising research and development; setting wages, salaries, and fringe benefits; hiring and training new workers; creating job security and layoff standards; setting work standards and work rates; establishing safety rules and standards; overseeing physical working conditions.

Industrial capitalism has failed in the equitable redistribution of wealth and work. Industrial socialism has failed to manage the complexities of a modern economy either in production or in distribution. Both have failed in the crucial area of environmental protection. Only a Green economy, characterised by grass-roots participation and stringent environmental controls, can provide a real alternative.

We favour the breaking-down of hierarchical, managerial structures wherever practicable in the workplace. We also favour the abolition of the extreme forms of division of labour which dehumanise the work-process: in particular the 'production-line' system. Workers should, as far as possible, have the chance to perform fulfilling work, in a humane and cooperative environment, with maximum personal input into the managerial, process, and producing socially and ecologically desirable goods.

Semi-state operating companies could be re-constituted as workers' co-ops. Most of the existing

semi-state companies could be broken up into smaller decentralised units. Large co-ops and all co-ops in a monopoly situation would have, at least, equal representation by the community.

Traditional companies could be transformed into co-ops by:—

(a) provisions for worker representation on boards of directors;

(b) legislation enabling workers to acquire a slice of the equity each year so that eventually they own the business;

(c) tax and credit arrangements favouring co-ops over traditional businesses.

Guaranteed basic income paid to each citizen would inhibit any tendency for co-ops to revert to a traditional capitalist structure because of financial pressure on members.

We reject the state socialist alternative to capitalism since it is undemocratic (a bureaucratic and technocratic elite inevitably develops); inefficient (as shown by shortages and low productivity); and ecologically undesirable (because the state controls the economy, environmental activism is seen as treasonable). It also helps to shore up industrial capitalism, since it is such an obviously unattractive alternative.

Work

We would define 'good work' as work which involves a stretching of human powers and development of human potential; freedom from coercion (economic and otherwise); a sense of the worth of the activity both to the worker her/himself and to society and the ecosystem as a whole; a high degree of individual and mutual involvement in decision-making.

What we need to aim for, therefore, is an organisation of work which will provide maximum human fulfillment while avoiding the pitfalls of both the capitalist and state socialist systems.

For a variety of social and technological reasons, full employment in the traditional sense is not possible. (See Gorz, *Paths to Paradise: On the Liberation from Work*.) Nor is it desirable, since 'employment' in the traditional sense is strictly limited in its capacity to give full opportunity for human development. Full employment for all adult human beings would be a social and ecological nightmare.

In fact the 'work ethic' in its present form is a fairly recent development, corresponding to the need of industrial capitalism for a docile and obedient workforce. We argue that the road to human liberation is to loosen the work/income connection through guaranteed basic income rather than through pie-in-the-sky proposals for full employment. The only truly civilised society is one freed from the necessity to engage in forced labour. (In fact, the decline of the industrial work ethic and its structures could well lead to an increase in truly satisfying human work — the reasons for this will become clear as we go on).

The production of goods is the result not only of human labour but of resources including the sun which

belong to no-one. It is also the result of machines deriving from technological development, a part of our common human culture. What we urgently need are mechanisms to distribute the resources produced fairly to everyone, in non-bureaucratic ways which respect the right of human labour to a fair reward at the same time. The capitalist method of wealth-distribution — based on growth economics and the trickle-down theory — is inadequate and ecologically harmful. The state socialist method is unwieldy and also ecologically harmful. The social democratic or welfare state system combines — as in Ireland — the insecurity of capitalism with the bureaucracy of socialism without the benefits of either.

One half of a Green work platform, therefore, involves means to distribute wealth which would provide a basis on which people could have (a) a considerable portion of free time and (b) the means to use it for self-development in terms of physical, aesthetic and intellectual culture. Of course, guaranteed income would be only the basis of such development and would not of itself ensure it. The transformation from mass culture to a higher form of culture would be a long, difficult but essential process. We foresee the situation where education, for example, would become a lifetime process rather than being confined to the first couple of decades of a person's life.

When we propose opening a space for freedom and human self-development, we certainly do not look for an extension of 'leisure' in the sense in which it is known in industrial society. Rather, we seek the extension of free time as the basis — but only the basis — on which a truly creative and vibrant human culture might emerge.

The other half of a work platform involves a switch from capitalist and state control of industry to workers' cooperatives and self-organised activity in the 'productive' sphere, or 'ownwork' in James Robertson's terminology (see *Future Work*). Robertson believes that the normal pattern of working life in the future will not be modelled on the typical pattern of (masculine) full-time employment in industrialised societies, but on a flexible mixture of part-time employment, family work at home, and voluntary work mixed in perhaps with spells of full-time employment. This pattern is one that has been typical of women's working lives in recent decades. It is clear that if we are to look to a society characterised by increased leisure/ownwork rather than by the traditional pattern of full-time employment, radical social, political and economic changes will be necessary.

The emphasis in a Green society would move towards small family businesses, individual enterprises, communal business, workers' cooperatives. We favour reduced working-hours, work-sharing and a reduction in working time; a transformation of the values attached to production and consumption; worker democracy and profit-sharing; ethical investment; alternative trading systems for both goods and services (e.g. LETS — Local Exchange Trading System — is a means whereby skills are exchanged by a large number of

people on a credit-debit basis); community banks and credit unions; tax reforms that would discriminate positively in favour of worker-owned and controlled enterprises rather than the reverse as at present; and voluntary social employment schemes. Emphasis should be given to programmes of urban and rural regeneration, as well as re-cycling, maintenance and repair firms. There is considerable scope for economic enterprise in the development of socially-useful products. Economic, social and political structures should be decentralised to the greatest extent practicable and characterised by maximum personal input and involvement.

Everybody should have access to the means of production where practicable — land, industrial space, educational skills, tools, finance etc. This would enable people to become much more self-sufficient than at present. We would encourage job-creation in the areas of alternative energy, protection of the environment, recycling, in the acceptable forms of new technology, in health, housing and transport. The desirability of the end product should always be borne in mind where job-creation is concerned.

Part-time work should be improved in status. This will not occur until part-time workers have the same legal protection as full-time workers, and until jobs are normally offered on a part-time basis. Jobs which offer a low degree of personal fulfillment should normally be done by more than one person. Because of the present tax structure which penalises labour anyway, persons willing to work shorter hours would not lose out financially to a great extent even in the short term. In the long term, guaranteed basic income would act as a wage-subsidy to cushion the effect of reduced working hours.

The development of small businesses is hampered by bureaucratic regulations and unfair taxation. Present VAT registration limits are so low that most one-person businesses would need to register, thus wasting time for both the trader and the State. In the short term we recommend that VAT registration limits be doubled and in the long term we believe that VAT itself should be reassessed as a method of taxation.

The bureaucratic and unfair forms of taxation — PAYE and PRSI — should be abolished in favour of more appropriate tax methods which do not discourage work.

Many people find they cannot apply for jobs because of arbitrary age restrictions. This is a particular problem for women who have spent years in the home rearing children and wish to return to work. Age restrictions have often been introduced because of pension scheme requirements. It is unacceptable that actuaries should dictate whether a person is employed or not. Pensions should be freely transferable on changing jobs. Current employment legislation should be amended to ban discrimination on grounds of sex, age, race, class, religion (or lack thereof).

It is unacceptable that work that is paid has much more status than voluntary work. Persons working on useless or even harmful occupations for pay receive

acceptance and praise in industrial society while the unemployed must seek special permission to work on a voluntary unpaid basis for charitable societies. This situation makes no sense whatever.

Trade unions perform a valuable service in protecting their members' rights. We believe that trade unions should place greater emphasis on profit-sharing, reduction in working hours, job-sharing. Trade unions should also give greater weight to environmental concerns. We are opposed to union practices which limit access to certain forms of employment. Work should be open to all those qualified and willing to perform it..

We would encourage trade unions to become involved in the organisation of production through helping to set up co-ops. This would take them out of the present adversarial situation to a positive involvement in productive organisation. We also — in the present situation — believe that trade unions should take action against persons earning the national average wage and over who take additional employment.

We are opposed to involuntary emigration but in favour of labour-mobility and freedom to establish residence in another country as a basic human right.

Banks, Finance and the National Debt

The financial realm is too important to be left to the control of private banks which by their nature are primarily motivated by profit. We would encourage the development of a state credit agency and of credit unions and community banks in preference to private banks.

There is a difference between the national and the international portion of the National Debt. The international debt was pushed on the debtor nations. It is a weapon of neo-colonialism which has had catastrophic social and ecological effects on the Third World: riots, social upheaval, starvation and ecological destruction. In the Oxfam report *For Richer for Poorer* John Clark points out that while the total of voluntary aid from all Western countries to the developing world in 1985 was \$2.8 billion, the flow of resources from the developing world to developed countries amounted to \$25 billion. In other words, for every dollar given by the West in charity, the West's financial institutions took out \$9.

Debt-creation is a form of economic imperialism wherein the Western financial institutions combine with a home-grown elite to maintain the system of economic domination.

In our own country, money which could be used to alleviate poverty, to enhance health care and education is being used to pay off the international banking system. We propose that the possibility of Ireland's participation in a debtors' cartel be explored, whereby the debt could be renegotiated or, in the last resort, repudiated.

With regard to the domestically-held portion of the debt, repudiating this would be problematic, though the rate paid on this could be reduced.

Alternative Taxation

The main problem is income tax. Anyone on PAYE is taxed efficiently and harshly. The — partially or completely — self-employed can be involved in the black economy to the extent that only part of their earnings get declared. Involvement in the 'black' economy is often not because people are dishonest — in many cases, either the earnings seem too small to be worth declaring or it seems just too complex to do so. Nevertheless, the self-employed contribute far less than their relative share in the economy would indicate.

Many people will be adopting the pattern of 'casual' self-employment over the next few years, forcing the authorities to choose between an unworkable system of tax-collection and increasingly draconian methods of enforcement which are unacceptable in a free society. As there is no obvious means of reforming the system to allow for this shift, income tax will therefore have to be abolished and other taxes put in its place. This should lead to a great decrease in bureaucracy and the tendency of the 'accountancy mentality' to permeate the whole of the society.

But there is a strong argument for abolishing income tax quite apart from the problems of collection since it discourages work-creation by making it prohibitively expensive to employ people, and encourages the waste of the earth's scarce resources by discouraging the use of labour-intensive recycling industries.

The cost of all items is made up of four components: labour, interest, rent and energy. In comparison with other taxes, a tax on land has several advantages: it is easy to establish who owns land and who, therefore, should pay the tax. It is also fairly easy to determine the value of a property at any time and, consequently, the rate of tax which should be paid.

The taxation of energy is the key to achieving a sustainable Green economy. Energy from fossil fuels has all the characteristics required for a successful tax: it is in such limited supply that we urgently want to lessen its consumption and also comes from a few suppliers, making collection easy.

Government income, therefore, should come mainly from two basic taxes — one on energy, one on land. Other taxes would also be needed, including taxes on drink, tobacco and road usage in order to regulate demand. We also suggest a tax on bank deposits and on advertising. Any corporation tax should discriminate positively in favour of worker co-ops.

We are living in a period in which energy is historically cheap but this cannot last. Just like hard drugs, this cheap energy has altered the metabolism of the world economic system and there will be extremely unpleasant withdrawal symptoms when the supply dries up. Almost all the technology we have developed over the past century has been based on the availability of cheap energy and, when that energy disappears, the technology is likely to be obsolete. The sensible course for any nation is therefore to try to wean itself off the drug now and establish a sustainable system not dependent on cheap fossil fuels. The way to do this is to tax fossil fuel energy so that its cost is equivalent to

that of energy from renewable resources. It would be a shock to the system to do this suddenly but if the target were set and achieved in stages over a 10-15 year period it would be possible.

How would the tax work? First, a calculation would be made of the cost of energy in an Ireland which was completely dependent on its own renewable sources for its supply. The difference between this figure and the current cost of fossil fuel would be taxed away by a levy on production or imports of coal, oil, gas and turf. But all imported goods have an energy content. It would therefore be necessary to work out how much fossil fuel went into their production (a relatively easy thing to do) and impose an import duty accordingly. Irish exporters would receive a rebate equal to the amount of import duty so that they could continue to trade abroad.

The immediate effect would be to encourage recycling of things with a high energy content. Another effect would be to encourage Irish producers to use low-energy methods of production and the technological advances they made in this direction would open up a new range of export possibilities. Water, tidal, wind, solar, geothermal and biomass power sources would all be developed and Ireland could establish a world lead. (Price rises could be counterbalanced by the removal of VAT, and would be offset by the removal of income tax and by the payment of guaranteed basic income).

Apart from energy tax the other major item in a Green taxation recipe is land tax. Land tax, apart from its economic benefits, would encourage people to leave the city for the country, since it would encourage the sale of under-utilised rural land. It would discourage property speculation in cities — people could not leave land derelict since they would have to pay tax at the full rental value of the land. Land tax would help to abolish the tax avoidance industry. It would also militate against tax evasion, since it would be very difficult to evade. In combination with energy and other taxes, it would free the ordinary citizen from the burden of tax returns etc., and thus help to increase personal freedom.

While land tax would facilitate the Green ideal of encouraging rural communities it would have to come into being in combination with a number of provisions, in order to minimise any tendency for productivity to override ecological considerations:—

- (a) There would be no tax on areas of particular ecological sensitivity. Zoning would protect e.g. wild-life areas.
- (b) The use of environmentally-damaging chemicals would be banned.
- (c) There would be a certain minimum area which would be tax-free or taxed at a reduced rate. In farming areas this could include personal dwelling space.
- (d) The over-use of machinery would be discouraged through the provision of energy tax already discussed.

Land tax, used together with energy and other taxes as a source of funding of guaranteed basic income, is a means of ensuring that everyone shares in the wealth of the land by virtue of citizenship.

Guaranteed Basic Income

The argument that the state could not afford to pay a basic income to everyone is false, since everyone receives a subsistence already — none (or at least few) are actually dying of starvation. The problem is that this subsistence is paid in the most illogical, counter-productive and socially undesirable way imaginable.

The social welfare system — which presupposed virtually full employment — is no longer appropriate. The unemployed are paid to do nothing, and penalised for working. They are expected to subsist on an amount that is actually below subsistence, but not allowed to top it up legally. This leads to evasion and dishonesty as well as subordination. The system is riddled with sexist assumptions, and hampers the trend to more flexible labour relations. It victimises the handicapped, and persons who wish to spend their time minding their children or improving their education. Because of the stigma, oppression, frustration and subordination involved in 'unemployment' the pressure for 'job-creation' often results in pressure for socially and ecologically undesirable forms of industrialisation to 'relieve unemployment'. The 'means testing' involved in the social welfare system enforces poverty for both unemployed and pensioners.

Simply improving the rates of social security payments leads to an 'envy factor' whereby those in employment resist radical redistribution. This makes it politically difficult or impossible.

The production system is using increasing amounts of capital per unit of output, a development which tends towards replacing workers by machinery, labour by capital. State stimulation of investment leads in fact to the destruction of jobs. Andre Gorz (*Paths to Paradise*) points out that according to research in West Germany, DM1,000 million invested in industrial plant would have brought about two million jobs from 1955-60. In the period 1970-75 the same sum would have *destroyed* 500,000 jobs. Societies everywhere are organising the reduction of socially necessary work time through automation, but in ways which hide its reality. Waged work can no longer remain the central activity in people's lives, and any politics which denies this is a fraud, Gorz argues. The basic aim of keeping full-time work as the norm is to keep the relations of domination based on the work ethic.

The introduction of guaranteed basic income (GBI) would benefit those at the lowest income levels, since it would provide them with a minimum income: there would be fewer badly paid, unpleasant jobs. The consequence of GBI could well be an improvement in working conditions/wages, or else it would force the mechanisation of unpleasant work (no bad thing if a person's needs are otherwise met). GBI would greatly improve the conditions of women by giving them increased economic security and freedom, as well as the choice whether to be child-minders or to work full-time or part-time (this is a choice it also affords men of course). It would involve a tendency towards equalisation between those in full-time employment on the one hand and those in part-time employment on the

other. GBI would encourage small undertakings, whether of an individual or a cooperative nature. The basic income would function as a wage subsidy.

By weakening the work/income connection, a high level of GBI would reduce the impetus to socially useless or environmentally harmful forms of employment: social or moral considerations could be taken more into account.

The case for nuclear and armaments industries as providers of 'jobs' would be seriously weakened since jobs would be less important.

GBI ends the ludicrous 'means testing' which enforces poverty for both unemployed and pensioners. It provides artists and other creative people with the subsistence necessary to create freely without economic or other pressures on their work. It increases personal freedom by getting the State off people's back and by giving people the choice whether to take up paid employment or be satisfied with a basic income. It simultaneously releases people from the compulsion to work while releasing those who wish to work from the prohibition from working. It is thus doubly emancipatory. It enlarges the realm of freedom for individuals, and thus opens a space wherein people can develop their creative, cultural, intellectual capacities. Any negative effects deriving from people leaving the labour force would be balanced by those joining it. Many involved already in necessary work, particularly of a more 'mental' level, are motivated by factors such as job-satisfaction and peer-approval. Fear of starvation is not a necessary or desirable basis for a healthy economic system.

EC/1992

The Irish economy is one of the most open economies in the world, a fact which is often treated by native commentators as a natural phenomenon instead of a humanly-created one.

If you are exporting or are exposed to competition from imports your prices have to be as keen as those of the lowest-cost producer anywhere in the world if you are to stay in business. Consequently, you have to adopt essentially the same technology because the cost of cleaning it up could make you uncompetitive unless they are forced to do so too. You cannot afford to pay wages any higher than theirs either, despite the fact that it costs more to live in a country which freezes each winter than it does to live in a tropical one. Nor can you pay more taxes, even though your country is one with a high social overhead and a tradition of caring for the sick and the old — instead you must cut those overheads, exactly as our government is doing now.

The free traders say quite openly that the only businesses which can be expected to survive in a country are those in which it has a comparative advantage: in other words, those in which it uses relatively less of the factors of production than its rivals. They go on to argue that if every country makes just those goods in which they have a comparative advantage and they are traded for goods from other



lands, everybody benefits because the minimum of resources will have been used to make everything the world consumes.

The main flaw in their case is that efficiency of resource use matters above all else. What is certain is that if Ireland continues to take the free trade road we will have some tourism, some forestry and some mariculture but very little manufacturing. This is hardly a basis for a balanced society. It is also a high-risk strategy.

The only way to restore our freedom to build a balanced, diverse economy is to abandon unfettered free trade. We will obviously continue to import and export because this gives us greater choice but our overseas trade must be kept within much stricter limits.

'1992' is being promoted with all the resources available to the establishment who have prospered at the expense of the bulk of the people of the country. They do not even try to answer the questions such as: has the EC helped business, employment, indebtedness since we joined? Precisely why will the freeing-up of national barriers to trade be beneficial to Irish industry? But given their control of wealth and the media they do not have to: the social consciousness is controlled through advertising and the common 'consensus' of the rich who stand to gain through the widening markets for the multi-nationals, with their creation of false and ecologically-damaging needs.

In fact, while not everything that has gone wrong with the Irish economy can be attributed to the EC, it would be hard to deny that economically-speaking it has had a largely negative effect and that '1992' will intensify the process. Given the high transport costs from Ireland to the European mainland, what logic would there be in locating an industry in Ireland rather than e.g. in Germany or Italy?

However, it would be wrong to deny that the EC has had positive effects as well, though mostly not of an economic nature. These can be summed up as the areas of environmental legislation, culture (at least potentially), and the freedom of movement and of residence which the EC has opened up for the citizens of its constituent countries. While there is a strong case for controlling trade in the interests of national economic health these controls should not extend to the free movement of peoples since this is an unacceptable limitation on human freedom and autonomy.

We therefore propose that Ireland should make every effort to resist the incursions on her economic and political autonomy which any deeper involvement in the EC would entail.

WOMEN & SOCIETY

Our society is dominated by the 'masculine' phenomena of technocracy, aggression, and sexist role-playing. Only in a society in which 'feminine' values are given their full role will it be possible for ecological values to exist. We condemn the subtle and overt forms — psychological, verbal, institutional and behavioural — which sexism takes and we call for the liberation of

both men and women from the fetters of patriarchal society. We call for adequate alternatives to be developed to medical and technocratic control of reproduction. We are particularly opposed to sexist advertising and the pornography industry. We believe that women should play an equal role with men at all levels of life and we oppose all forms of male oppression of women. The removal of this oppression and the conditioning of both men and women that maintains it is the key to the 'Greening' of society. This Section is being reviewed by the Women's Group.

Law

As a general principle we believe the function of laws to be to protect individuals, animals and the environment from harm. We are opposed to laws that unduly constrain the freedom and autonomy of adult citizens in their private lives. We believe that humane alternatives to the prison system should be fully explored and that the legal system needs to be made more equally accessible to all strata of society. We call for a repeal of Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act, 1976.

Health.

The individual's health is inextricably linked with the health of the community and of the nation. Current health care, with its emphasis on the treatment of disease, rather than prevention, is not cost effective. We advocate a health policy which encourages positive health approaches in both the individual and the economy. We advocate:

- Control of chemicalisation of food and precise labelling of all contents
- Institution of education programmes for alcohol/drug abuse in the school and workplace.
- Education of management, unions and work-force in factors relevant to occupational health.
- Selection of potential health professionals by a system which places due value on humanitarian and communicative qualities.
- Emphasis on the importance of nutrition and the harmful effects of environmental pollution, in the training of health professionals.
- Emphasis on personal responsibility for health and the development of alternative therapies.
- Creation of an awareness of the spiritual dimension of human existence, and fostering of all avenues leading to personal growth in the widest sense.
- Support by the community of pregnant women and parents of new-born babies and of a more natural approach to child birth.
- Arrangement of state and private insurance to provide cover for alternative health care systems.
- A ban on harmful advertising, in particular of alcohol and tobacco.

In the short-term, since much of our health care is centralised in large over-stretched hospitals, we advocate the following alternative to reverse the present trend.

The Health Service should be divided into three levels
LEVEL 1:(a) G.P. with Nurse Practitioners; (b)

Polyclinics with multi-disciplinary teams from every appropriate field e.g. midwives, chiropodists, counsellors and social workers. Education is a major concern here; and (c) Community Hospitals. These will take referrals from clinics for minor procedures e.g. glue ear and tonsillectomy.

The area of Community Care has suffered severe cuts. The nature of intervention is almost entirely crisis-orientated with little or no resources for any meaningful preventive work.

LEVEL 2: Provincial Hospitals. These will service referrals from Level 1 who require more expertise and higher technology e.g. total hip replacements and kidney dialysis.

LEVEL 3: High Tech Hospitals. These will work in ultra specialist areas e.g. kidney transplants.

Education

If young children learn how to learn, they will be able to take charge of their own education later on. They need adult time: the time of people willing to listen and talk with them. They need space to make their own choices and follow them up.

Ideally schools should be 'facilities' where children can make use of the skills of teachers and have access to learning technology, rather than the educational 'factories' which mirror the actual factories of the industrial system. We propose less time in school, more learning outside school.

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

We believe that children have a right to adequate and responsible sex education.

We believe that parents should be encouraged to play a greater role in the impartation of basic skills, including reading and writing, to children.

We believe that everyone should have full access to education at all levels and in every sphere — scientific, technological, and in the arts and humanities. In order for this to come about there will need to be a massive extension of educational facilities and ease of movement between work and education rather than the rigid structures that exist at present.

We are opposed to the over-emphasis on examinations in education. GBI would facilitate access by mature students to university, and would ease financial problems for all students (this basic subsistence could be 'topped up' by part-time or summer work). In the long term the rigid distinction between educational levels might be relaxed. We support the extension of education to the public at large through the use of the mass media and this is something that could be greatly extended at the expense of much media rubbish.

Culture

Just as the work in industrial society tends to be

alienated work (i.e. it involves frustration not fulfillment) so the leisure found in that society is alienated leisure. Mass culture put out through the mass media is geared towards entertainment rather than enlightenment. It tends towards banality, shallowness, standardisation and repetition, producing the expected rather than challenge and stimulation. It works at the same time as an escape from the workaday grind and as a means of reinforcing the values of consumerism.

Thus, when we propose opening a space for freedom and human self-development, we certainly do not look for an extension of 'leisure' in the sense in which it is known in industrial society. The values of a Green culture would be opposed to the values of mass culture. We are committed both to folk and to classical culture and look for a massive extension of these in a new society — at the expense of mass culture.

Language

Probably the major cultural disaster of Irish history has been the loss for the greater part of the population, of the Irish language. We believe that in an ecological society there would be an end to the forces that have prevented the repossession by the whole population of our rich and distinctive cultural heritage.

At the same time we recognise that the use of Irish, since it tends to foster the self-confidence, amicable co-operation and creativity of our people, will be in itself an important agent in effecting the ecological revolution we desire. For this reason, as well as out of a sense of justice and of responsible stewardship, we affirm the right of every person in Ireland to avail of facilities for learning the Irish language.

We believe that everyone wishing to live her/his life through the Irish language or to use it to any degree, should be enabled to do so, especially in the domains of public administration, broadcasting and education. We demand further that Irish-speaking communities should be protected from economic and linguistic obliteration and allowed to manage their own affairs politically.

In line with our policy of partnership with the Third World, knowledge of a neutral, easily-learned language would allow communication between different communities while avoiding the linguistic imperialism consequent on the use of a stronger language. For this reason, and because of the huge savings in costs of translation etc. in international organisations, we support the use of Esperanto as an easily-learned, ideologically neutral and cost-effective means of communication.

Discrimination

We oppose racism, sexism, ageism and sectarianism and in particular, discrimination against travellers. We demand respect for their lifestyle, language and culture and the provision of adequate halting facilities. Irish people cannot consistently condemn racism abroad while continuing to practice it against the travelling community at home.

Housing

It is natural for people to take the best care of things they regard as their own. For this reason we support home ownership, and we believe that it should be encouraged by the formation of building cooperatives and by the availability of low cost housing loans and of building land at agricultural prices. Because of exorbitant costs and rates of interest the present generation have much less chance of owning their own homes than their parents or grandparents had. This is a socially harmful situation that will have to be changed if we wish our people to have a real stake in the community.

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 is inherently against the interests of the community.

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

Planning restrictions should be revised to allow people to work from home, subject to neighbour approval. There is nothing intrinsically wrong about a suitable mix of shops, offices, light industry and houses, and such a situation 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 material should be promoted; and provision made wherever possible for the communal use of labour-saving devices.

Transport

We aim to reduce wasteful and unnecessary mobility, to promote the most ecological modes of transport and to revitalise the railways as an alternative to road construction.

Walking and cycling are the healthiest and most ecological of all transport modes and should be promoted if we are to remain a sane and civilised society. Walking must be encouraged by the creation of improved facilities in town and country, e.g. pedestrianised zones, traffic-free urban areas and the provision of stiles and rights of way across private farmland in rural areas. Cycling should be encouraged by the creation of permanent cycle-ways on all main roads, better parking facilities, removal of VAT from bicycles and spare parts, the building up of a strong native bicycle industry.

Public transport must be greatly improved. We urge:—

(1) that responsibility for local public transport services be transferred to local and municipal authorities;

(2) that the railways should be revitalised and expanded for the transportation of goods and passengers;

(3) that free public transport should be available to unemployed persons and their dependents.

In urban areas we propose that public transport should be given priority over private, that the DART service in Dublin be extended to other suburban areas, bus services be improved by the creation of permanent bus-lanes (in time these could be converted into tramways or electrified light railways) more local and circular routes and late night services be introduced. In rural areas we propose that bus services be expanded to provide regular connections between outlying country areas, villages and the larger towns.

Since road construction involves enormous capital investment, and since cars are energy-intensive, environmentally damaging and dangerous, we recommend that:—

(a) no further large-scale road projects be entered upon and that investment be scaled down to whatever is needed to maintain our present road system in reasonable repair;

(b) the use of vehicles with a long life be encouraged;

(c) present speed limits be rigidly enforced and steps be taken to gradually reduce these limits in the years ahead;

(d) car-sharing schemes be promoted and private cars be excluded from urban centres;

(e) most heavy freight be transferred from the roads to the revitalised railways;

(f) the size of lorries on public roads be drastically reduced;

(g) heavy and articulated trucks be compelled to pay the full costs of the damage they do to roads.

Finally, our rivers and canals are a wonderful resource which have been neglected for many years. The time is ripe for a serious investigation of the social and economic benefits to be derived from the use of these waterways for transportation as well as for leisure purposes.

POLITICS

Green politics works by consensus wherever possible—that is, we reject the competitive, 'either/or' workings of conventional politics and aim to achieve decisions based on broad agreement rather than the victory of one interest group over another. We also reject political careerism, clientelism, profiteering, personality-cults and the other elements that disgrace the Irish political scene. Greens will practice rotation in office wherever possible; consultation and participation at grass-roots level; and the rechanneling of excess income of candidates for ecological purposes.

In order to limit the influence of vested interests on political life, we believe that stringent laws are needed limiting the size and mandating the publication of donations to political parties.

Since we believe that the only real way to maintain positive religious and other values in society is through

non-interference in the religious sphere by the state, we support the principle of complete separation of church and state.

Decentralisation

As we see it, 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 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 so on, 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.

Animal Policy

We are opposed to the abuse of animals whether in the form of coursing, factory farming, vivisection, or in any other way. Animals are especially prone to exploitation. As they cannot defend themselves effectively, they are employed, against their will, to support our wasteful, unhealthy and increasingly hazardous way of life. The Green Party seeks to end all forms of animal abuse by our support for vegetarianism and alternatives to the drug system of medicine.

Foreign Affairs

The Green Party believes that Ireland's neutrality has been eroded over the years and now means little more than military neutrality. Politically Ireland has become increasingly tied to the western power block. Our involvement in foreign policy co-operation in the European Community, all of whose other members are in NATO, has severely damaged our official neutrality. Therefore we have lost much of our former good

standing in the Third World and have been unable to fulfill our potential role as a conciliator between the developed and the non-developed countries.

We propose that Ireland's foreign policy should be based on positive neutrality and constructive non-interference. Where interference is deemed necessary, as in the case of human rights abuses, this should be done only through the United Nations.

We are concerned about the exploitative nature of international trade particularly between developed and undeveloped regions. This has led to famine, environmental disasters and the huge debt crisis. We believe that trade should be conducted on a non-exploitative and ecological basis. It is important to this that the activities of multinational corporations be controlled and that the international arms trade be halted.

We oppose much of what is happening in the European Community and believe that future European co-operation should concentrate not on trade but on intercultural co-operation, international environmental problems and the monitoring of human rights. We are eager to see such co-operation embody all of Europe rather than just part of the West.

We condemn the repression of the Bahais of Iran, and support the rights of the Nicaraguan, Palestinian and Tibetan peoples to freedom from oppression. We oppose apartheid and all forms of racism.

In present circumstances we believe it is very difficult for Irish people charged with political offences to receive a fair trial in Britain. Consequently we are opposed to extradition from Ireland to Britain for persons charged with such offences.

Northern Ireland

The Northern Irish conflict arises out of the constitutional status of Northern Ireland, a status that receives no consent from a third of its population. It is a constitutional crisis and it therefore requires a constitutional adjustment for its resolution. Only when that region acquires a constitutional status which receives the consent of the overwhelming majority of its citizens will normal politics begin.

The Green Party totally rejects the idea of coercing northern unionists into a United Ireland. Likewise we totally reject the current coercing of northern nationalists into the United Kingdom. We advocate the establishment of a Constitutional Conference to bring about a democratic method of achieving a new Constitution for the region based on the principle of consensus and in particular we recommend the use of the preferendum—or multiple choice referendum—to this end.

We reject the use of force by all sides in this conflict. We further call for the withdrawal of the British Army from Northern Ireland and their replacement by a neutral international, and as much as possible non-military, peace-keeping presence.

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 necessary. 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 society.

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LEGAL DEPOSIT

16 JAN 1989

Published in July 1989
By The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas
Address: 5A, Upper Fownes Street,
Dublin 2.
Tel. (01) 771436.

Printed on original 100% recycled paper — produced without bleaching or de-inking

Title: Green Party Election Manifesto 1989

Organisation: Green Party

Date: 1989

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