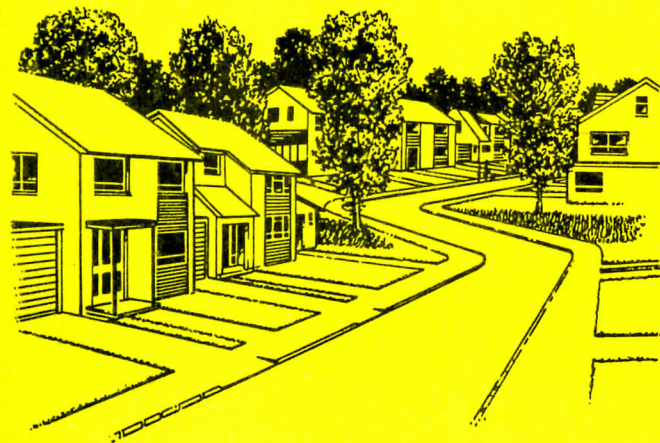


THE ENVIRONMENT



A POSITION PAPER PRESENTED BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE
COUNCIL TO THE 1978 ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE
LABOUR PARTY.

THE ENVIRONMENT

A POSITION PAPER

This position paper is submitted by the Administrative Council to the 1978 Annual Conference of the Labour Party to initiate discussion in this policy area. It does not represent party policy at this time.

INTRODUCTION:

The environment is important. It is a primary resource for tourism, for agriculture and for some industries. It is the base of our rural and urban settlements. The environment, and what happens within it, affects every one of us, both collectively and as individuals. The environment, under our present social system is neither owned or controlled by us. Instead individuals, be they land owners or single private industries, have exploited the environment for their gain, at our expense.

The use of the environment for industrial and communal purposes can determine the way in which we physically live our lives. The use, or abuse which is made of our environment by either individuals or organisations can and does determine the quality of our homes, our jobs and our community facilities. Control of the environment is too important to be left outside the control of the community.

We have learnt that the environment is highly complex and inter-dependent. The flow of heavy traffic along a road, the noise of new machinery in a plant, the building of dwellings in certain areas and the loading of water and drainage systems all directly and immediately effect our environment.

An unjust society produces an unjust environment. The exploitation and distortion of the environment for private gain has come from a society which enshrines private gain above community need. To change the way in which society relates to the environment it is essential to change society. Minor reforms may provide partial improvements in the level of air pollution or the traffic systems within our settlements. But they can do only that and no more.

A socialist society can and will create a socially just environment. Such an environment would be based upon the principles of democratic socialism, involving communal ownership, public participation, equal mobility, freedom, and the positive encouragement for the personal development of every individual. The socialist perspective of the environment extends from the nature of land ownership to the fostering and development of our culture and the arts within society.

Labour fully recognises the comprehensive and interdependent nature of the environment. Accordingly, Labour proposes to co-ordinate with the Department of the Environment, responsibility for Transportation, Tourism and the Arts in addition to the current range of activities and responsibilities.

A socially just environment is the physical framework which provides

for personal freedom and development with public participation and community control. Labour knows that is only a socialist approach which can construct that framework.

SECTION 1 — LAND.

1.1 Labour believes that land which is used for social purposes should be subject to community control. The present free market system of buying and selling land for building purposes leads to exorbitant prices and speculation. The value of land is determined by the demands placed upon it by the expansion of the population of the community and the consequent need for housing and related facilities. Labour believes that this community created value should not be captured by land dealers in the form of high land prices and retained for their private benefit.

Our society, which is expanding rapidly, is constantly in need of new land for building purposes on the edge of our existing settlements. In addition land which is within built up areas is frequently required to change its use and to provide for new buildings. Land is a fixed resource and new land, used for building purposes, has to be taken out from agricultural or related use.

In the past and at present the community need for land was exploited by individual owners for their private gain. It is the community which has had to pay for this exploitation, by way of higher mortgages on privately purchased houses, or higher compensation in charges to Local Authorities for compulsorily acquired land. This private exploitation of a fixed resource has inevitably made impossible the provision, for all our people, of housing and related facilities like schools and community buildings. In such a system, it is the poor and the weak who suffer. It is they who remain unhoused and badly educated.

Objective.

1.2 Labour proposes to bring all land required for social purposes under community control. This includes land within built up areas and agricultural land on the edge of urban settlements. This land should be vested in the local authority on behalf of the community. This objective requires an amendment to the Constitution.

Proposals:

1.3 As an interim measure, Labour will:

- (i) Require Local Authorities to designate all new building land required for periods of ten years.
- (ii) The Local Authorities will be the statutory body to purchase all such land.
- (iii) The price of new building land will be fixed and based upon its existing use value.
- (iv) The Local Authorities will be empowered to sell off land so purchased to co-operatives, housing building companies and other organisations in accordance with the development objectives for the area.
- (v) Land within built up areas, including inner city areas, will be available to the Local Authorities at prices based upon existing use value.

The implementation of this interim land policy will require legislation based upon the Kenny Report and substantial amendments to the law relating to compulsory purchase and arbitration. In addition, a financial programme based upon the annual land requirements of each Local Authority will be integrated into a National Economic and Social Plan.

SECTION TWO

PLANNING

2.1 A socially just environment cannot be achieved without planning. The present system of planning in our society was established to minimise the private abuse and exploitation of the physical environment. As such it cannot, by its very nature and form of establishment, positively ensure that the physical resources of the environment are managed and developed for the benefit of the community.

2.2 The absence of socialist planning in our society has resulted in massive suburban sprawl around our major towns and cities with a consequent decline and running down of the inner city areas. This suburban sprawl is frequently ugly, badly serviced with community facilities, unevenly developed and totally without an efficient system of public transport. Dublin, Cork and Limerick have been especially badly affected by this form of planning.

- 2.3 The Local Authorities at present only have the power, through their Development Plans, to determine where development should not take place. They have no power to ensure that development occurs in certain areas in an orderly fashion. At the same time, they are statutorily obliged to provide a range of services within their functional area. This results in the Local Authorities, acting on behalf of the community, being forced to respond to un-coordinated and often contradictory proposals from private developers.
- 2.4 The result is an uneven and unbalanced development of our environment. In addition, the scarce capital investment funds of the developer are frequently wasted through delays and duplication. Much of the development capital for urban expansion comes directly from the State, or from the pension funds of many employees. In addition, the State and semi-State sector of the economy is the largest consumer of the new office accommodation which is built within our society.
- 2.5 In short, although the community provides the bulk of the capital used for urban development, either directly through the State or through building societies and pension funds, it has only a passive or a negative role in physical planning. This is not a healthy situation. It benefits the quick profit speculator at the expense of the community at large and frequently also at the expense of the development company or the house builder.
- 2.6 Our population is currently growing faster than any other in Western Europe. In addition we are rapidly urbanising. Given this continuous pressure of growth, the environment is now at extreme risk from potentially damaging development. In addition, because of our social system and inadequate planning machinery, our community is at full risk from unscrupulous developers, concerned only with exploiting community need for their private gain.
- 2.7 Socialist planning will develop the full potential of our environment in a responsible way, by responding democratically and rationally to the needs of our society, both at national level and at community level.
- 2.8 Democratic socialist planning must begin with the community and provide for a framework within which community needs and aspirations can be made known. This will provide the base upon which all subsequent planning must rest. The Development Plan of each local Authority must begin as the expression, through local action and voluntary input, of community needs.

- 2.9 The planners, in conjunction with local public representatives, will then begin to co-ordinate the various inputs and eliminate duplication and waste. Local planning will fit into the context of regional planning and national planning.
- 2.10 In order to achieve the objective of a socially just environment, Labour recognises that the structures of our planning system must be changed. In addition, the community must be equipped with new methods and, when necessary, new institutions to implement its plans.

2.1 Regional Planning

- 2.1.1 Labour recognises that there has never been a regional plan for the State. The sum total of the various county Development Plans are often contradictory and bear no relation to existing social or economic programmes. There has been a total neglect of regional planning in the past and this has created a vacuum within which it has been impossible for many Local Authorities to produce serious or relevant development plans. The EEC's regional policy, upon which so many pro EEC hopes rested in the 1972 referendum, has not been effective. The absence of any national regional plan has, however, obscured the extent to the EEC failure. Ireland's population is expected to grow from 2,900,000 in 1971 to 3,200,000 in 1981 and to reach 3,500,000 by the year 1991. In addition the urban areas of Ireland, where the pressure for physical growth will be greatest, will also increase their numbers.
- 2.1.2 In order to respond to this anticipated growth and the subsequent need for new facilities and services, Labour proposes to undertake the following measures:
- (i) Labour will produce a white paper on population and growth, which will survey and analyse the present situation and provide a common basis for collective action within the State.
 - (ii) Labour will, on the basis of this white paper, produce a population policy, containing the growth rate for the country at large and for the different regions.
 - (iii) Labour will produce a Regional Plan as an integral part of a National Economic and Social Plan which will match the provision of resources with the projected change of population within the countries different regions.

- (iv) Labour will rationalise the present anomalies between the different regional boundaries for different State and semi State functions and produce, in consultation with the various agencies, an agreed regional division of the country.
- (v) Labour will work to ensure, by extensive action within the EEC Council of Ministers and the EEC Assembly, that the EEC Regional Policy provides substantial financial aid for major infrastructural services as outlined in the above mentioned Regional Plan.
- (iv) Labour will ensure that the Regional Plan as proposed will create the necessary framework to enable Local Authorities to evolve their own Development Plans.

2.2 Local Development Plans:

- 2.2.1 The original 1963 Planning Act and its successor the 1976 Planning Act, place responsibility on Local Authorities, as the Local Planning Authority, to produce Development Plans. Labour recognises the advances that have been made with these measures, but regard the present position as being totally inadequate to respond to the real pressures of growth and change. The gap between aspirations and action within the Local Authority makes it powerless to achieve its own planning objectives.
- 2.2.2 Because of the existing control and ownership of development land, as indicated earlier, the Local Authority plan is at best a passive document preventing certain development, but essentially powerless to execute a basis development programme. To this difficulty is added the real problem of the revision of Development Plans and the meaningful participation of the public, together with the local public representatives.
- 2.2.3 Labour proposes that present planning legislation be amended and Local Authorities be required to produce a two level Development Plan. The primary level will have a ten year framework and will be set within the context of the National Regional Plan mentioned above. It will be concerned essentially with population growth, employment, social requirements and the network of major infrastructural services. The secondary level will have between a two and four year framework and will be of a small scale. A number of plans will be produced at this level for the different areas within each Planning Authority. It will be concerned more directly with the physical built environment and will serve as the basis for

normal development control. Both planning levels will contain a major element of public participation. Adequate resources will be made available to ensure a full understanding of the alternative planning strategies by the public.

- 2.2.4 For both levels of planning, public participation and community input will be positively fostered by the provision of planning participation finance to local groups and by the publication of alternatives by the Planning Authority.

2.3 Implementation:

- 2.3.1 Labour recognises that a major weakness of planning is the inability of the Local Authorities to have their plan implemented. The adoption of Labour's policy on land will strengthen considerably the effective powers of the Local Authority. In addition, the development section of Local Authorities will be reorganised within the context of a complete Local Government reorganisation. This will enable Local Authorities to be in a position to positively programme the implementation of their development plans.
- 2.3.2 Implementation in the Dublin region poses special problems because of the size of the region, the existence of five Local Authorities directly concerned and the rapid scale of urban growth within the region.
- 2.3.3 Labour will establish an Urban Development Corporation for the Dublin region. This new body will be similar to the structure of a semi-State organisation and will have the task of implementing the combined planning objectives of the Local Authority within the region. Its relationship to the Local Authority will be similar to that of a semi-State body to Central Government. It will have the power to purchase land, co-ordinate other State and semi-State organisations within its area, commission various works, enter into joint ventures with other organisations, for example development companies and builders and to sub-contract various building projects within the context of the Development Plan.
- 2.3.4 Positive physical planning to create a socially just environment does not happen. It must be made to happen.

SECTION THREE.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT.

- 3.1 The natural environment is a basic resource held in trust by this generation on behalf of the nation. The environment extends from our coastal zone overland to include deposits of natural resources as well as the air which we breathe. We have learnt in the past decade that the environment can be easily damaged and its ecological balance disturbed with a consequent threat to life and to work. To date our knowledge of how our environment fully functions is limited. We have developed systems of meteorology, under public control, but our knowledge of the seabed is limited and privately controlled by multinational exploration companies.
- 3.2 In order to manage our environment sensibly and responsibly on behalf of the community, it is essential that we expand considerably our knowledge and monitoring systems of the environment.
- 3.3 The rapid growth of urban and rural settlements, the increase of industrialisation and the application of industrial methods to agriculture, combine to threaten the existing balance of our environment. This basic natural resource is essential, non-renewable. Once destroyed, it is virtually impossible to reconstruct. The real value of that resource, to ourselves and to the rest of the world, is increasing rapidly each year. In particular, the value of the sparsely populated natural environment of Ireland, in contrast to most of the EEC, is a resource of rapidly appreciating value.
- 3.4 To date, we have allowed our Local Authorities and private organisations to prepare plans and submit proposals without having a complete understanding of the potential environmental impact which they would have. This can no longer continue.
- 3.5 *Labour will ensure that the following measures will be implemented, as a start, in order to create a socialist framework for the full management of the environment.*
- 3.6 A complete reorganisation of the existing environmental research and information agencies will be carried out with the objective of providing detailed and accurate environment information. All exploration companies will be required to provide this new

Environmental Agency with the details of its environmental information derived from exploration within our jurisdiction.

- 3.7 All Planning Authorities will be required to include in planning proposals assessment of the potential environmental impact of the strategies which are put forward. This assessment will contain basic data on air, water and sound pollution as well as a comprehensive local physical and social impact assessment.
- 3.8 Local Planning Authorities will require applications of a certain scale to be subject to a detailed environmental impact statement. This statement will be provided by An Foras Forbatha and the Institute of Industrial Research and Standards on behalf of the Local Authority.
- 3.9 Local Authorities themselves will be required to prepare an environmental programme aimed at ensuring that all their own water sewerage and refuse disposal systems are brought up to an acceptable level of environmental management.

3.1 Services.

- 3.1.1 The provision of essential services, such as water, sanitation and communications, is a major part of any environmental programme. The quality of that provision, or its absence can threaten the basic resources themselves. Hence, a rapidly growing town with a crude sewerage system can endanger its own water supply as well as polluting the associated natural life and the natural amenities. Some services, such as telecommunications and postal deliveries, are critical to the quality of life within a settlement but outside the administrative responsibility of the Department of the Environment. Labour will ensure that these departmental services are properly co-ordinated within the Regional Plan. Labour will undertake the following measures regarding the provision of services:

3.2 WATER.

- 3.2.1 — A national Water Council, under the aegis of the Department of the Environment, will be established to:—
- 3.2.2 — Measure and protect our fresh water resources.
- 3.2.3 — Ensure, through the co-ordination and co-operation of each

Local Authority, that a supply of piped water is made available to every home.

- 3.2.4 — Ensure that An Foras Forbatha have sufficient resources to provide a comprehensive technical service to Local Authorities
- 3.2.5 — Our Fresh water supplies will be developed and protected by the building of new reservoirs and the constant monitoring of water standards.
- 3.2.6 — Legislation to protect our water supplies will be strengthened and penalties increased.

3.3 SANITATION

- 3.3.1 The provision of a modern sanitation system, with high levels of environmental quality and amenity protection is essential. The potential of recycling waste product, to produce either biological fertilisers from raw sewerage or heat from the incineration of refuse cannot be overlooked. The constraints upon our environment, and increasing energy costs within our society demand the full utilisation of all our resources.
- 3.3.2 — Labour will ensure that a programme is developed by each Local Authority to provide modern standards of sanitation to every home within its area.
- 3.3.3 — Labour will provide grants to Local Authorities to Modernise their existing sewerage plants in order to bring them up to an acceptable environmental standard.

SECTION FOUR

4. TRANSPORTATION.

- 4.1 Freedom of access and equal mobility are essential to the creation of a socially just environment. Without these basic freedoms, the environment cannot belong to everyone. The ability to travel to work, spend time at home, or enjoy the open air of the natural environment depend dramatically on what form of transport is used. In turn, the use by many people of private transport in certain areas and at certain times can and does reduce other peoples mobility and pollutes the atmosphere with exhaust fumes.

- 4.2 Our society, because of the dominance by private capital, has allowed the needs of private transport to over-ride the needs of the rest of the community. The commitment to urban motorway construction is an example of this, as it concentrates massive public resources into a road system which can only directly benefit the private car user. Because of our population structure, up to 40% of our population are legally too young to drive. In addition, many more are either too old, disabled, or simply too poor.

- 4.3 The Socialist framework for transportation within the environment must concentrate on providing for equal access to mobility for all our community. Within this framework, the private car has a definite and positive place. No other form of transport enables so much freedom and mobility as the car but we cannot allow the exercise of that freedom to reduce the mobility of others by congestion and traffic jams or damage the environment through air and noise pollution.

- 4.4 Labour believes that transportation is an integral part of the environment policy. At present, Government responsibility for transport is split between two Departments. Labour will move transport to the Department of the Environment. The country has suffered badly in the past because of the absence of a national transport policy. The development of the road system took place in isolation from overall transport needs, settlement growth or energy conservation. There have been great disparities in the access to transportation and consequent mobility among the public. This has usually resulted in the lower income groups having far less mobility. In addition to this inequality, certain areas have been environmentally overloaded by traffic volumes.

- 4.5 The energy crisis has added a dramatic element to our uncoordinated and socially unjust transportation system. The growth of urban settlements to date and their transportation needs have resulted in isolation for some areas and an unevenly loaded road system.

- 4.6 Labour believes that a radical transportation policy is required in order to obtain the following social and economic objectives:
 - (i) Equal mobility for all citizens.
 - (ii) Efficient and energy conserving systems.
 - (iii) Economic and efficient movement of freight.
 - (iv) Protection of the environment from noise and air pollution.

4.7 *In order to achieve these objectives Labour will take the following measures:—*

- (i) A national transport policy will be established as an integral part of the Regional Policy.
- (ii) A National Transport Council, incorporating the various transportation interests, will be established to advise the Minister on matters relating to transport generally. Particular effort will be made to co-ordinate and harmonise the operations of the State owned transport companies, Aer Lingus, Coras Iompair Eireann, B & I and Irish Shipping.
- (iii) A National Ports Policy will be part of the overall transport policy referred to above. Among other things, the existing legislation will be amended and the various Harbour Acts amended to bring the activities of Port Authorities within the scrutiny and control of Local Authorities.

4.1 Pedestrians.

- 4.1.1 Pedestrians will be fully recognised as an important component of our transportation policy. Pedestrian rights, including the provision of priority in certain areas, will be encouraged.
- 4.1.2 Labour will request Local Authorities to provide for pedestrian shopping areas within our towns and cities so that entire pedestrian networks are established within our urban areas.

4.1.3 Cyclists

Cycling has been an important part of our society. Where possible, Labour will provide for the provision of cycle lanes and routes, particularly in new urban areas.

4.2 Roads

Labour will take the following action:

- 4.2.1 A National Road Authority will be established under the direction of the Department. This body will be responsible for implementing the National Primary Road Scheme. Priority will be given within

the context of the Regional Plan to bring the primary road system up to modern standards. Labour recognises that progress has been made in this area in the last decade but much work remains to be done.

- 4.2.2 Labour will give maximum priority to the construction of major by-passes in order to reduce the time distance between destinations and to restore the local environment quality of many provincial towns which are on the national routes.
- 4.2.3 Labour is opposed to the construction of urban motorways through existing urban environments as has been proposed for the Dublin region because of their environmental and social impact, as well as because of the real doubts to their suggested efficiency.
- 4.2.4 Labour recognises that road space is scarce in some urban areas and a policy of road pricing designed to promote the free flow of commercial and public transport traffic will be evolved in consultation with the Local Authorities concerned.

4.2.5 Car Parking facilities:

Labour will ensure that an integrated system of car park spaces, road pricing and pedestrian networks is established within our urban areas.

- 4.2.6 Labour will increase the campaign to improve road safety standards and will make the wearing of car safety belts for all drivers and front seat passengers compulsory.

4.3 Public Transport.

- 4.3 Labour is determined to improve and extend the public transport system within built up and new urban areas, but equally within our rural areas which have seen the decline of an effective public transport system. Labour is particularly committed to the idea of public transport as an essential social service because it:
- (i) Provides equal access and mobility.
 - (ii) It is used by those sections of our population who because of age, health or income are prevented from driving a private car.
 - (iii) It creates less environmental pollution and damage.
 - (iv) It is a much more economical system of transport in terms of energy consumption per person carried.

4.3.2 CIE is the state owned public transport organisation and operates both a road and rail system throughout the country. Labour regards the provision of a public transport system as an essential social service. Because of its history and the financial constraints placed upon the Company by conservative fiscal thinking, CIE has had many difficulties. Many of these problems have now been resolved and in recent years CIE has achieved improvements in both productivity and efficiency. Labour believes that a positive transportation policy can secure further improvements within CIE.

4.3.3 Labour will require all development plans produced by Local Authorities to be based upon the provision of a public transport system.

4.4 Dublin

4.4.1 Labour recognises that the Dublin region, because of its size and recent growth, has a particularly acute transportation problem: *Labour proposes to implement the following measures:*

- (i) Labour will establish an Urban Transportation Authority for the Dublin region.
- (ii) Labour will ensure that adequate resources are made available to this new Authority.
- (iii) Labour will build the Dublin Rapid Rail System, including the proposed subway, in order to improve public transport, reduce congestion in the city centre, and promote a better local environment and efficiency in energy consumption.
- (iv) Labour will prevent urban motorways from being constructed in the city areas because of their disastrous effects. Instead, public transport will be vigorously promoted within the city area.
- (v) Labour will promote the construction of a major road network around the Dublin city area, to promote regional development.

4.5 Ports.

4.5.1 Labour recognises that a National Ports policy is an essential part of any transport policy and is also critical to regional policy needs. Labour will co-ordinate the activities of the various port authorities and produce a national port policy based upon:

- (i) National Development requirements.
- (ii) Existing local port facilities and activities.
- (iii) Regional needs of each port area.
- (iv) The development potential of the port.

The existing Harbour Authority legislation will be revised in order to modernise the various authorities, extend their terms of reference and introduce industrial democracy at policy making level.

4.6 Conclusion.

Transportation is a critical component of the environment. It is only by means of a socialist framework that a comprehensive and integrated policy can be established and implemented. Such a policy depends upon the support and co-operation of the community at large and the transport industry. Labour, through its policy of industrial democracy, will create the positive climate within the industry between unions, management and the consumer which is essential if the country is to obtain the transport system it needs.

SECTION FIVE

5. HOUSING

5.1 Labour believes that the right to basic shelter is a fundamental human right. Accordingly, access to adequate housing will be assured on the basis of a person's housing need and not on their ability to pay for such housing. The provision of suitable accommodation for everyone within the community is regarded as central to the welfare of society.

5.2 The successive failure of conservative Governments to make adequate capital available has resulted in a continued shortage of housing generally and an acute shortage of Local Authority dwellings. On the basis of existing population figures, the demand for housing amounts to 372,000 dwellings up to the year 1986.

5.3 Labour recognises that the most important part of meeting housing demand is to ensure that the total housing stock of 850,000 dwel-

lings is well maintained and brought up to modern standards. This involves the provision of adequate finance to provide for internal bathrooms and toilets as well as an internal supply of hot and cold water. In the past the concentration on the supply of new dwellings has allowed too high a number of old dwellings to become obsolescent and to cease to be part of the housing stock.

- 5.4 The supply of new dwellings, either within the existing urban areas or in new suburbs, must be seen in the context of building new communities or expanding existing communities. The provision of large housing estates without the simultaneous construction of essential neighbourhood facilities such as primary schools, second level schools, play groups, playing fields and community centres, has caused great social hardship. Labour will, by means of effective planning and specific housing legislation, ensure that this does not happen in the future and will act to provide these facilities where they do not at present exist.
- 5.5 The provision of capital for loans and grants had been ineffective. It has, with the recent £1,000 grant, simply inflated the cost of new housing or ensured that some people because of their low incomes could not afford to house themselves. Housing finance support should be aimed directly to the individual, and not to the builder. Emphasis must be given to first time house purchasers.
- 5.6 The demand for privately rented dwellings, either flats or houses, continues to rise. This sector of the housing market receives no subsidy with the exception of people living in rent-controlled dwellings. Existing rent-control legislation has been detrimental to the housing stock in general and has not been equitable in its application. Many houses have fallen into disrepair because of this legislation, and some tenants have not paid their fair share of housing costs. The entire rented sector of housing must be reviewed in order to protect new tenants and ensure the proper maintenance of the housing stock.
- 5.7 Standards of housing construction and layout are low and the resultant product adds to the community's problem. Energy insulation standards are too low generally, and speculatively built private housing is frequently below the existing minimum standards of construction and energy insulation.
- 5.8 Local Authority housing administration has not been satisfactory. The levels of maintenance have been poor and badly managed,

causing great distress, particularly to elderly tenants. The tenants organisation, NATO, has received uneven recognition and treatment from different Local Authorities throughout the country and it has not been properly involved in the management of Local Authority housing. The allocation system in the larger housing authorities is still very unsatisfactory and needs to be revised and made much more efficient.

- 5.9 The special housing needs of two groups of people still require attention. Enough effort has not been made by all Local Authorities in the housing of the travelling people. Special action must be taken to provide permanent homes for those travelling people who wish to settle.
- 5.10 Disabled people form an enormous section of our community. Recent studies estimate that one in five members of our society can expect to be disabled at some stage in their lives. This can arise from old age, accident or illness and will require substantial modification of the homes to provide proper accommodation. Attention must be paid to these factors in the design of new homes and capital provided for the modification of existing stock where necessary.
- 5.11 The provision of new housing forms the largest part of the construction industry. As such it is an important part of our domestic economy, requiring a lot of capital and producing a lot of employment both directly on site and in associated areas such as in the provision of building materials and building services. Housing policy must have regard to the construction industry and those related areas. In the past the industry because of its size has been used as an economic regulator with disastrous effects. There is a need to stabilise the industry. In addition, there is a need to establish a State Construction Organisation to ensure that the national housing programme, particularly the Local Authority sector, is efficiently and economically implemented.
- 5.12 *To meet the housing needs of our community and remove the many problems identified with housing at present Labour proposes the following housing policy measures:*

5.1 Finance.

- 5.1.1 Labour will ensure that sufficient capital is made available to meet housing need. Effective social control of the major

financial institutions will enable the Government to ensure that savings are encouraged within the community and directed to areas which require investment, including the provision of capital for housing construction.

- 5.1.2 Labour will actively encourage the first time buyer of whether old or new, by introducing a low rise mortgage subsidy for housing loans, in addition to the present level of tax relief.
- 5.1.3 Labour will provide an additional group subsidy to housing co-operative applicants where the group is not less than ten applicants.
- 5.1.4 Labour will extend the present low rise mortgage scheme operated by the Local Authorities by offering it to applicants on a Local Authority transfer or allocation list on repayment terms, which would be based upon the Differential Rent Scheme.
- 5.1.5 Labour will place a special emphasis on the restoration and renovation of sub-standard housing. A scheme of grants and loans will be introduced to enable householders, including tenants of private, rent-controlled dwellings, to bring their dwelling up to modern standards by providing an internal bathroom, toilet and modern kitchen facilities. Local Authorities will be entitled to receive special housing improvement grants to assist this policy objective.
- 5.1.6 The present differential rent scheme, as negotiated with NATO will be retained. NATO will remain as the officially recognised negotiation body regarding any changes
- 5.1.7 Tenants paying rent to private landlords will be able to obtain a rent subsidy by way of income tax allowance. This subsidy will, in principle, be equivalent to that received by Local Authority tenants or the average mortgage holder and would be related to their income.

5.2 CONSTRUCTION

- 5.2.1 A national housing plan, forming a part of the National Economic and Social Plan, will be established with housing construction targets established for each Local Authority area.

- 5.2.2 A State Construction Company will be encouraged to help Local Authorities meet housing targets. Direct Labour construction units will be established in those Local Authorities which require them
- 5.2.3 Housing grants and loans will be paid only to those dwellings which have been built and completed to specified standards of construction and insulation.
- 5.2.4 The 1966 and 1969 Housing Acts will be revised by the implementing of a new Housing Act, which will have the objectives of:
- (i) Protecting the existing housing stock
 - (ii) Requiring each Housing Authority to prepare a housing plan for its area, including proposals for rehabilitation and modernisation.
 - (iii) Increasing substantially housing energy insulation standards.
 - (iv) Improving the design and standard of construction of housing units.
 - (v) Ensuring the simultaneous provision of community facilities by requiring that new housing schemes above a certain number include as an integral part of the scheme a range of basic community facilities and open spaces.
 - (iv) A National Housing Construction Industry Council, representative of the various elements of the building industry including manufacturers, contractors, suppliers, trade unions, loan institutions, architects and the consumer, will be established to advise the Minister of the Environment.
- 5.2.5 The design of housing will be improved by providing for more detailed research into housing. An Foras Forbatha and the HEA will be encouraged by means of additional funds to provide for additional housing research.
- 5.2.6 Legislation will be introduced to provide for the registration of architects.
- 5.2.7 A new system of costing housing will be established which will take into account the absence or presence, adjacent to the dwelling being costed, of essential neighbourhood facilities mentioned above and adequate provision of transport and related services.

5.3 Flats and Private Rents.

5.3.1 The provision of private rented accommodation has not been properly managed in the past. Labour will undertake the following measures:

5.3.2 — A full analysis and study of the needs of this sector of housing will be undertaken as a priority.

5.3.3 — The present landlord and tenant legislation governing controlled rents in privately owned housing will be replaced with new legislation which will:—

- (i) Establish a rents tribunal.
- (ii) Establish and protect the rights of tenants.
- (iii) Provide a direct rent subsidy, where needed, to tenants in private rented accommodation.
- (iv) Encourage the creation of midterm leases of up to ten and twenty years for flats and so enable tenants to purchase leases, giving them security of tenure and a stake in their home.
- (v) Provide for an income tax allowance for flat dwellers against the cost of their rent.
- (vi) Revise the system of registration of all flats, bedsitters and dwellings available for rent.
- (vii) Establish the rights of both tenant and the landlord.

5.3.4 Labour will ensure that an adequate supply of short term and mid term rentable accommodation is made available at an equitable cost to the tenant with proper conditions of tenure.

5.4.1 Local Authority Housing.

5.4.1 Labour will review the role of Local Authorities with regard to housing in order to radically reduce the large housing lists in many areas.

5.4.2 Local Authority housing Programmes will be required from each Authority, with the objective of ensuring that an adequate supply of housing is provided in these areas in which people wish to live.

5.4.3 NATO and recognised local residents associations will be invited to make submissions to the formulation of such housing programmes.

5.4.4 Labour recognises that the need for housing is greatest among Local Authority tenants and potential tenants because of their lower incomes and it will ensure that capital funds are made available to meet the housing programme of each Local Authority.

5.4.5 The management and maintenance of existing Local Authority housing will be radically improved:

- (i) Tenants will be enabled to become actively involved in the management of their housing areas.
- (ii) A special purchase scheme will be introduced for Local Authority tenants of flats to enable them to purchase on a co-operative basis, their block of flats.

5.4.6 The system of allocation for Local Authority dwellings will be revised and, in the case of large Local Authorities, special provision will be made to computerise the system in order to improve its efficiency.

5.5 Housing Co-operatives.

5.5.1 Labour recognises the great potential that Co-operatives have for providing satisfactory housing, increasing user participation at the design stage and assisting in community development. The important work of the National Association of Building Co-operatives over the years is recognised and its capacity to develop, given the necessary resources, is fully understood.

5.5.2 To assist the work of the Co-operatives, Labour would aim that, over a four year period, Co-operative housing would amount to at least 10% of the annual housing output.

5.5.3 Labour will provide direct assistance to co-operative housing ventures in the following ways:

- (i) Financial and technical assistance, by way of a grant-in-aid and experienced personnel to a National Housing Co-operative Association.
- (ii) Special housing loan subsidies, as indicated above, to groups of at least ten applicants, in addition to the proposed subsidy and tax allowances available generally.
- (iii) Housing sites provided by Local Authorities will be provided to recognised local Co-operatives at a subsidised cost.

5.5.4 The primary objective in helping Co-operatives will be to enable these individuals to cross the housing cost threshold, which in the past prevented them from attempting to purchase a home of their own, even though they were normally capable of meeting the monthly costs of housing.

5.6 SPECIAL HOUSING REQUIREMENTS:

5.6.1 Labour recognises the plight of the travelling people and the desire of the majority of them to become a part of the settled community. Labour believes that a special effort must be made to house the travelling people.

5.6.2 Every Local Authority will be required to provide for the travelling people by:

- (a) Providing a special housing plan to accommodate those members of the travelling people within their area who wish to be rehoused within that area.
- (b) Providing halfway settlement camps for travelling people in locations adjacent to urban services and acceptable to the local community.
- (c) Providing each year a number of permanent homes for travelling people.
- (d) Providing, in conjunction with the Regional Health Boards, a comprehensive social counselling service to help the travelling people to settle down with the settled community.

5.6.3 Senior Citizens.

- (a) Old people form a special component of housing need within our society. This has been recognised in the past but it is clear that in some areas, the provision of housing for senior citizens has not been successful.
- (b) Old people should be encouraged to retain as much autonomy and independence within their housing as possible.
- (c) Local Authorities will be encouraged to prepare a special housing programme for senior citizens within their functional areas.

5.6.4 Disabled people.

The combination of improvements in health care, and the desire of many people to remain living at home, when in the past they would have been hospitalised, has increased the number of disabled people in our society living at home. In addition, accidents and disabilities related to motherhood and old age also lead to disabilities, for a time, among people living at home.

Labour recognises that these factors of disablement are a real hardship to many people who find that their homes are an impediment to a normal life.

Labour will ensure that the following measures are adopted and implemented:

- (i) A comprehensive survey of the disabled and their housing will be undertaken by the Department of the Environment and the Regional Health Boards.
- (ii) Housing design standards will be modified to ensure that all newly constructed housing can easily respond to the physical needs of the disabled with the minimum of modification.
- (iii) Housing estates and neighbourhood design standards will be modified to provide for care of the disabled and access, particularly for wheelchairs.
- (iv) All public buildings, particularly essential service buildings will be required, over a specified time period, to make provision for wheelchair access by disabled persons.
- (v) An enlarged programme of technical advice and financial aids will be provided to implement this programme.

SECTION SIX

6.0 CULTURE AND RECREATION.

- 6.1 Our society alienates many working people from themselves and from their surroundings. Educational resources are limited, and confined largely to those with wealth. The reality of an inadequate educational base for many people in the past confined them to unskilled or semi-skilled employment.
- 6.2 Our economic system determined largely by considerations of private gain with minimum public expenditure particularly at local level, resulted in very few resources becoming available for cultural and recreational development at local level.
- 6.3 The inequality within our education system has resulted in an artificial distance being established between ordinary people and the arts. In addition, it has weakened the natural self-confidence

of many people in their own spontaneous expression in relation to the arts and recreation.

6.4 Labour is committed to providing a socialist framework within each local community by specific development and encouragement for the forms of cultural and recreational activity listed below.

6.5 A socially just environment must have, as an integral part, a positive framework which fosters and develops culture and recreation within local communities.

6.1 The Arts.

Each Local Authority will be encouraged to develop an Arts/Cultural programme for its area aimed at helping individuals, groups and organisations to develop their own skills in the area of Art and Cultural matters.

6.1.2 Each Local Authority will be encouraged to develop an Arts Plan for its community. This plan will aim at increasing activity within the arts generally and at raising the standard of performance and achievement.

6.1.3 Each Local Authority will be encouraged to appoint an Arts Officer whose task will be to co-ordinate and promote activity in the arts within its area.

6.1.4 The Arts Officer will have direct liaison with the Arts Council and will be in contact with other Arts Officers from adjacent Local Authorities.

6.2 Library Service.

6.2.1 The Library service is an essential part of a socially just environment. Its provision throughout the country is uneven. The library service, in conjunction with existing educational facilities, provides a unique opportunity to provide for second chance education within our society.

6.2.2 Labour will ensure that the library service is modernised and extended to meet existing demand. In addition, the range and scope of the library service will be dramatically extended, in conjunction with the perceived needs of the local communities.

6.3 Local Museums and Galleries.

6.3.1 Every community must, in a developed environment have an understanding and knowledge of its own history and local culture. There is a critical need to provide for local museums and galleries within our communities in order to facilitate this need. Some towns in Ireland do have excellent museums but sadly many others have none at all.

6.3.2 Labour will make provision to enable Local Authorities to provide for such facilities within their areas. These centres will become local arts centres, incorporating:

- Museum
- Art and sculpture gallery
- Local library
- Art workshops
- Drama centres

In many urban areas there are old industrial buildings within the centre of the town which could be utilised for this purpose. In addition, the renovating of such buildings and their renewal would act to conserve the towns.

6.3.3 Urban conservation and preservation is an integral part of any local arts/cultural programme. Labour will encourage Local Authorities to develop an awareness and self confidence in their building heritage and to make provision, within their local development plans, to ensure its conservation.

6.4 Amenities.

6.4.1 The development of amenities within our local communities, particularly the built-up urban areas, is essential if our people are to enjoy their leisure within a socially just environment.

6.4.2 There is a great need to encourage Local Authorities to develop local amenities adjacent to residential areas and to urban centres. Parks, play-grounds, nature trails and small animal sanctuaries all have a positive place within our environment. They are not luxuries, but essentials of life, if we are to enable ordinary people to develop and grow within our urban environment.

6.4.3 Labour will encourage Local Authorities to make provision to

provide for such amenities. In addition, the housing policy proposals include amenity provision requirements.

6.4.4 Labour will aim at ensuring that rapid urban expansion is orderly and balanced and that provision for amenities within urban areas proceeds along with the rest of the development.

6.5 Sport and Recreation:

6.5.1 The achievement of our full human potential within a socially just environment also requires facilities for our physical development. Sport and recreation form an essential part of this objective. To-date, the existing sport facilities have been provided largely by voluntary sports organisations in conjunction with the Local Authorities. Labour recognises the great work done in this area by such organisations in the past. However, the rate of urban and population growth and the cost of facilities now makes that task especially difficult.

6.5.2 There is a need now to fully co-ordinate the various activities and organisations within the sports world. Labour will propose that each Local Authority prepare:

- (i) A sport and recreation development plan in conjunction with the various local sports organisations within its area.
- (ii) Provide facilities for the enjoyment of sport and recreation.
- (iii) Appoint a Sports and Recreation officer to co-ordinate the activities of the various organisations within the area with the work of the Local Authority.

6.6 Forest Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, National Parks and Heritage Towns.

6.6.1 At national level, there is a need to consolidate the work done to date in the Forest Parks and to develop the range, scope and number of such parks. In addition there is a need to provide for some form of public transport, at weekends and holiday times, to these areas to ensure that everyone within our community has access to them.

6.6.2 Labour recognises the unique value of some of our towns and proposes to designate, with the co-operation of the Local Authorities, a number of these towns as Heritage Towns. These will have special grants and other assistance to conserve and develop their unique social and architectural heritage.

6.6.3 Wild Life Sanctuaries in a rapidly urbanising Europe are an increasing necessity in a socially just environment. Labour will prepare a detailed programme for such sanctuaries.

SECTION SEVEN.

TOURISM

7.1 The recognition of the importance of tourism as a major industry follows naturally from the previous section. The environment of Ireland, our countryside, the scenery, our culture and our customs and ourselves as people form the primary resource upon which our tourist industry depends.

7.2 The creation of a socially just environment, within a socialist framework, will not only directly benefit our society but it will also consolidate and extend the potential of our tourist industry.

7.3 Labour recognises that tourism in some countries has eroded both the culture and self respect of many of the people as well as placing an enormous physical strain upon parts of the physical environment.

7.4 Labour will oppose any development within tourism which could be seen to undermine the culture and self respect of the people or to place inordinate strain upon certain areas of the environment.

7.5 Labour recognises, in agreement with Bord Failte, that the environment is the most fundamental resource of the tourism industry. Labour will, accordingly, transfer responsibility for tourism to the Department of the Environment. The new Regional Authorities, as proposed in the reform of Local Government, will be harmonised with the existing tourist regions.

7.6 Local Authorities will be encouraged to play a more direct role in Tourism. Each Development Plan will be required to have a section on tourism within it. The Environment Management Unit of each Local Authority will have close liaison with the Regional Tourist Organisation.

The tourism content of such programmes as the Local Arts and Recreational Programme and the National Heritage Programme is recognised.

SECTION EIGHT

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- 8.1 Labour believes that a democratic system of local government is essential to the health of the country and to the development of the nation. The present system is now totally out of date. The original model, established in 1898, has been considerably modified and made less democratic. In addition, the substantial internal migration within the State has seriously distorted the ratio of representation to population across the country. In short, we have an inadequate system of local administration, tightly controlled by Central Government, with elected members performing largely as consultative councils.
- 8.2 In the larger Local Authority areas, the managerial system is totally inadequate, as well as being undemocratic. Labour believes that a radical re-structuring and re-organisation of the present local government system is required.
- 8.3 Labour will introduce a new level of administration at Regional level, to administer the new regional division of the country mentioned earlier.
- 8.4 It is proposed that a new tier in the Local Government structure should be created which will group members of County Councils for the administration of those central government services which can best be administered on a regional basis. Social services, such as health and education, economic activities such as tourism, industrial development and agriculture, and services, such as planning water and roads, would be the responsibility of regional councils of County Councils.
- 8.5 The proposed new bodies would, in so far as is practicable, be composed of similar land areas, population and economic wealth. The geography of the country suggests certain natural groupings, such as the South West or the South East, while social groupings suggest that Dublin City and County should be one unit.
- 8.6 These new councils would, in fact, be development corporations with their main responsibility to devise and administer plans for regions larger than the county areas. They would not usurp the

role of the County Councils which would continue to represent an invaluable bulwark in the workings of true local democracy.

- 8.7 Membership of the Regional Councils could be chosen by direct vote at Local Elections, with each county entitled proportionately to a number of seats. Alternatively, membership of these councils could be chosen by elected members of County Councils. These choices will be made after consideration of this position paper. The new Councils would have their own staffs and headquarters and would co-ordinate the activities of the County Councils in the fields mentioned above. Members of County Councils and of the Local Councils would, of course, be eligible for membership of the Regional Councils and could sit on them simultaneously.
- 8.8 Whatever co-ordination now exists is haphazard and depends on the initiative of the already overworked local councillors and officials. Roads, water and other services need to be developed on a broader basis with co-operation and co-ordination. The economic infrastructure necessary for sound development plans needs far broader bases than many of the existing county areas. For these reasons it is anticipated that Regional Councils will be an invaluable and exciting new departure in Local Government.

8.1 Representation.

- 8.1.2 Labour will equalise the ratio of representation to population throughout the country. This will result in a more equal quality of local representation throughout. Labour will recognise the substantial growth of urban Ireland by the creation of a number of new Urban District Councils and local boroughs, to provide local councils for new areas.
- 8.1.3 The autonomy of local authorities has been further undermined by the abolition of domestic rates. Labour has always argued that rates were a bad form of taxation. Labour will abolish the rating system entirely and establish a new form of financing for Local Authorities. This will consist of a statutory per-capita grant each year, plus a block development grant.

8.2 Administration.

- 8.2.1 The achievement of a socially just environment will require a total transformation of the structure and form of administration of our

Local Government system. Labour recognises that this is both a complex and specialist task requiring consultation and co-operation with Local Authorities, local communities and the personnel currently employed in Local Government.

8.2.2 Labour proposes to enter into detailed discussions with these groups to obtain a full picture of their perceived needs and requirements. In addition, the Labour councillors throughout the country form an unique source of information and wisdom which will be drawn upon in order to finalise the details of our Local Government reform proposals.

8.2.3 The "Ultra Vires" principle which completely confines Local Authorities at present and hampers local initiative and diversity will be abolished by Labour.

8.2.4 Labour will establish a full and detailed position on Local Government reform having regard to the following objectives:

- (i) Local democracy
- (ii) Public Participation
- (iii) Administrative and Organisational efficiency
- (iv) Industrial democracy

CONCLUSIONS

The environment is a vast and complex area which effects every aspect of our lives. It can oppress or liberate our potential for human development. In transferring responsibility for tourism and transportation to the Department of the Environment, Labour will make logical and comprehensive sense of our socialist approach.

This document is a draft document. Its function and purpose is to stimulate debate among party members. There are areas which need revision and development. This can only come from informed and committed dialogue from all party members.

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The Labour Party
16 Gardiner Place,
Dublin 1.

February, 1978

ENVIRONMENT

The Council wishes to make the following recommendations for inclusion in the Party's policy document on the Department of the Environment.

- (1) The principle of decentralisation is an important one. Local authorities should have a wide range of powers in the Economic, Planning and Social fields. An extension of this decentralisation process would involve the statutory recognition of properly elected community councils, by the relevant local authorities. It is fundamental to our development as a nation to give people an effective voice in their own destiny.
- (2) Decentralisation of power in the local authorities can only be effective if the authority has an adequate budget, with absolute discretion (subject only to proper audit) as to how the money in the budget should be spent. A statutory mechanism would be necessary to guarantee the budget to the authority. One suggestion is to link the amount of the budget to the population of the authority area. The figure, thus arrived at, would be the minimum amount which must be allocated. The legislation should allow the authority to make a case to the Department of the Environment for further sums to cater for large scale projects.
In addition the council submits the following recommendations on individual areas:
 - (3) A national housing emergency should be declared.
 - (4) There should be a subsidy for oil and electricity in houses without fireplaces.
 - (5) Urban building land should be brought under the control of the local authority.
 - (6) Some remedy should be found (perhaps by way of an ex-gratia grant) for the tenants of low cost housing built by the last Fianna Fail administration.
 - (7) Legislation requiring the owners of blocks of flats to register with the relevant local authority should be introduced.
 - (8) The range of reserved powers exercised by the county managers should be examined.

ENVIRONMENT

THE ITINERANT PROBLEM

This problem is nowhere near solution. Alcoholism, wife beating, vandalism and petty crime are increasing among the travelling people.

The enthusiasm of a few years ago is being eroded.

The number being housed is fewer.

The numbers of people on the road is increasing.

Little efforts are being made to educate the young itinerants.

A national scheme of settlement is urged and a DATE should be fixed for a Final Solution to the problem — even if we must employ methods used in the Netherlands by the last Dutch Socialist Government.

Social workers, preferably male, are needed. We say male because great firmness is required to make the males give adequate amounts of the Social Welfare benefits to the mothers and children.

SUBMISSION FROM DUBLIN SOUTH COUNTY

CONSTITUENCY COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT

(1) Re-Organisation of Local Government.

The Act of 1898 which set up the system of Local Government as we know it in Ireland should be scrapped and a new act embracing the various amendments where suitable be enacted. It is felt that such an act should take cognisance of the fact that some counties due to their size are not able to bear the burden of a separate County Council and where this occurs we suggest that two such counties could be joined or part of a larger county joined to a small one. This it is felt could lead to a more economical method.

The Dublin area is considered by us to be in quite a different position, and it is felt that the three bodies which cater for the Greater Dublin area are not an ideal situation in view of the huge population that now inhabits the area. The suggestion of a Greater Dublin Council was rejected and instead we suggest the division of the City and County into six areas with six full councils as follows: (1) Dun Laoghaire Borough, (2) Borough Councils for (a) Tallaght and (b) Lucan and Blanchardstown (these two areas will each shortly have a population the size of Cork). (3) South County Council based largely on the constituency but taking in some areas from Tallaght, Dublin City and Dun Laoghaire. North County Dublin based largely on the constituency but taking in some areas from the city. We further suggest that the new Local Government Act provide for the payment of all Council and Borough Chairmen with allowance for expenses and entertainment. We also feel that all councillors should get travelling and out of pocket expenses. It is noted that the County Management system was first introduced into Cork City in 1929 and extended to the whole country under the County Management Act of 1942. The South County Dublin Constituency Council feels that on the whole the system has worked fairly well but the Act should be amended to give the elected members more power and better control over the various officials.

HOUSING

We recommend that a new Department should be set up by the Government for the control of housing. This department to have

complete control of all housing, local authority and private. Such a department could be administered by one of the new Ministers of State. This would lead to greater control of private speculators and ensure that all new houses would be up to standard.

PLANNING

We recommend that local councils should be given greater powers in the field of planning and development and penalties for breach of planning permissions should be increased to such an extent as really hurt.

POLLUTION CONTROL

We suggest that the control of pollution should come under the control of the proposed Department of Housing and that an act should be adopted for the control of pollution and providing for heavy fines for industrial pollution.

We also suggest that every effort should be taken for the protection of wild life, many species of which are now in danger of extinction.

LOCAL AMENITIES

We feel that one of the causes for the wave of teenage violence now affecting the country at the present time is due in a large extent to the lack of local amenities and it is felt that the central government should place far greater funds at the disposal of the local authorities for the provision of such amenities. Mountain regions such as the Wicklow, Kerry and Donegal mountains could quite easily be made into national parks. This could be done quite easily and would prove a great boon to City and Urban folk.

CONTROL OF BUILDING LAND

Local authorities should have power to take into communal control all land zoned, then as building land. This would lead to control of prices of such land and help to reduce the price of houses.

CONSTITUENCY COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT

AT PRESENT

- (1) Private builders build sub-standard houses and inflate the price of development by excess profit-taking.
- (2) Speculators escalate the price of land needed for building.
- (3) Builders and property developers severely neglect amenities which should be provided in conjunction with house building.
- (4) Building societies and other finance organisations are forcing people to invest money in order to obtain loans which have to be repaid at exorbitant rates of interest.
- (5) Building workers do not enjoy the same level of employment or the same conditions of employment as other industrial workers.

THE FUTURE

Labour believes that housing is a social problem that can only be provided in the long-term through Socialist policies and complete control by the state of all building resources and finance and the Labour Party will work constantly towards that objective.

INITIALLY

- (1) All local authorities shall be funded from the Exchequer to allow planned housing development be undertaken within their boundaries. Banks and other financial institutions shall also be compelled to grant interest-free loans to a central fund controlled by the Government.
- (2) All house-building shall be supervised by a Government Planning Department and the houses shall be leased at a rent commensurate with the means of the family.

- (3) Houses shall not be sold privately, but only through the local authority concerned. In the event of such sales, recognition shall be given for rent paid and improvements made.
- (4) All house-building by local authorities shall be by direct labour with guaranteed employment, guaranteed pension, etc.
- (5) Housing Co-ops will be actively encouraged.
- (6) Private building shall be discouraged and a special premium per unit will be paid into a central fund for use by the local authorities.
- (7) Land for building shall be sold to a central agency at a price comparable to the value of the land in its previous use.
- (8) Ground rents shall be abolished without compensation.
- (9) Building materials shall be purchased by a central agency and distributed to the local authorities and co-ops.
- (10) CIE as the state transport body shall be involved from the outset in any housing development.
- (11) Rents of all privately owned property (i.e., flats or offices) shall be determined by a central authority.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM AND RE-ORGANISATION

Why need for reform?

The present system of local government is basically the same system instituted by the British in 1898. Our main concern is that a system designed for 1898 has remained largely unchanged despite the huge demographic shift over the last 80 years. We feel that the Labour Party's response to the 1972 Green Paper on Local Government Reform was largely a negative one. The Party's main emphasis was in defending Urban District Councils earmarked for abolition. The wider issues on the need to restructure local government totally came in for, at least, inadequate consideration. Mr Tully, as Minister, showed little interest in re-organisation.

For us the proposal to scrap the existing Dublin Corporation and County

Council and to form a Greater Dublin Council should be enforced. The divide between city and county now is totally artificial. You have the ridiculous situation in housing whereby the Corporation is buying land in the "County" and is building "Corporation" houses on it.

Local Government has little meaning where the units are in excess of 500,000 people. Hence we suggest the creation of Local Government units of 100,000 in the Greater Dublin area. There would be a division of functions between the Greater Dublin Council and the 100,000 units. This two tier system would improve efficiency and the quality of services and would on the other hand provide a framework for more local democracy.

The 100,000 units could be delegated such functions as Environment control, parks, maintenance, refuse collection, community facilities (including youth education), education and community care services.

Interim Measures:

In the absence of major re-organisation we suggest the following changes:

- (a) Planning— A Greater Dublin Planning Authority with representatives from the County Council, Corporation and Dun Laoghaire Borough Council should be set up.
- (b) Housing— To avoid corruption local government representatives should only have the power to advise and not approve housing allocations. The Manager should sanction approvals on the basis of the points scheme.
- (c) Health— We feel that the Health Boards are currently being dominated by the doctors. Decision-making on these boards should be in the hands of elected representatives.
- (d) Land Acquisition— There is an urgent need for legislation on the German model to speed up the process of Compulsory Purchase.

Observations on Local Government Representatives.

- (1) They should be paid.
- (2) They should have secretarial facilities and free postage. For instance there is the injustice that a representative who is a TD enjoys free postage.
- (3) TDs should be ineligible to become local government representatives. TDs should be legislators and their time should be devoted to issues of national and not local interest.
- (4) Expenses— We feel there is abuse here. Representatives should only be granted expenses for attending for the entire meeting.

SUBMISSION FROM DUBLIN ARTANE CONSTITUENCY COUNCIL

ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The Artane Constituency Council of the Labour Party in considering its views on Environment firstly came to the conclusion that at the basis of any sound environmental policy must be the control of land for development purposes. The high cost of land affects the programme of housing and the availability of open spaces for amenity purposes.

Speculation in land, as well as increasing the actual cost of housing, will also contribute to a cut-back in the actual size of houses.

The National Economic and Social Council in its report in 1965 recommended that land for development purposes should be brought into public ownership. A similar proposal was made in the Kenny report. This fundamental problem has not as yet been tackled by any government, and we believe that this inequity of land to which value is added by community needs, should be so increased in value that it is difficult to develop a proper strategy for housing and amenity development.

The Artane Constituency Council, therefore, believes that the Labour Party should adopt a policy for the enactment of an amendment to the Constitution to enable the enactment of legislation to bring into public ownership land for development purposes.

The priority areas in the environment which the Artane Constituency Council would like to see adopted by the Party for immediate implementation on the Labour Party achieving power are as follows:

- (i) Public ownership of land for development purposes.
- (ii) State accommodation to be provided for married couples without children, or with insufficient points to acquire accommodation under the present system.
- (iii) Local authority flats for single persons. The rent for these flats should be at an economic rent, and such rent would be acceptable to young persons who are now unscrupulously exploited by private landlords.
- (iv) Development of parks and open space facilities for housing estates.
- (v) The provision by local authorities of amenity buildings for recreation, cultural and educational purposes.
- (vi) To bring into public ownership buildings and sites of historical value.
- (vii) An increase in the provision of grants for an easing of restrictions for the improvement of existing housing stock.

ENVIRONMENT

Urban Planning.

- (1) The Greater Dublin Region encompasses Dublin city and county and the adjoining parts of counties Wicklow, Kildare and Meath. This area contains one-third of the population of the state and it is projected that by the end of the century the population of Greater Dublin will exceed that of Northern Ireland.
- (2) There has been a total absence of overall planning in the major developments in recent decades. What planning decisions were made were instituted as a reaction to events. It has been largely a question of keeping people quiet when particular issues arise. This has been seen as the typical private enterprise approach, where profit determines what planning decisions are ultimately made. It has been described by an environmentalist as building social injustice into bricks and mortar.
- (3) The provision of high rise housing development was designed primarily as low cost housing with the minimum of land use. The policy has been completely unsuccessful from a social point of view. This type of housing development is an unsuitable environment for young children and it has been established that it is also a major cause of stress to families. It has been housing policy to allocate a flat to a family as an intermediate step towards the provision of a house. This has hindered community development as people who felt they were transient did not feel part of the community.
- (4) The provision of additional land space for recreational and sporting facilities, green spaces, sites for schools has not been adequate in new urban developments. There has been a tendency by developers to provide only the minimum green space and very often this space is made up of small sections separated through an estate rendering it of little practical use to the community.
- (5) The social problem of vandalism has arisen mainly as a result of the abysmal failure by planners to give proper attention to environmental considerations. It is now a major and serious problem in our cities and the resources required to contain this problem are increasing without any significant result. The problem of inner city violence

has been caused by the neglect of living communities and the so-called "boom" in office block development. The stage has been reached where it has become unsafe to visit the city centre after 11.00 p.m.

- (6) The following policy steps are therefore clearly indicated:
- (7) The creation of new towns not exceeding 30,000 in population density with the necessary infrastructure and services. This policy would reverse the tendency for the city to sprawl westward without apparent coherent planning.
- (8) The updating of the laws relating to physical planning. Many of the laws relating to sewage, roads, etc., are clearly archaic.
- (9) The determining of planning priorities housing, industrial and educational and the zoning of areas for recreational and sporting facilities.
- (10) The preservation and restoration of buildings of cultural, historical and architectural significance.
- (11) The preservation of city centre communities with their particular identities through special grants and support.
- (12) The termination of the policy of building high rise flats.
- (13) The question of land control is central to urban planning and development. The price of development land must be related to its previous use and not the speculative market price which is ultimately passed on to the community in house prices and the cost of local authority services. In this regard the Kenny Report of 1972 must be implemented as a matter of priority.
- (14) That proper democratic consultation procedures be set up to enable the community to participate in planning decisions.
- (15) That special priority be given to the siting and planning of industrial development in the Dublin Region. In recent years the Dublin Region has been deprived of the extra industrial development essential to combat the rising unemployment in the city. The environmental aspect of this development has not been sufficiently investigated, and the misconceptions created have mitigated against employment growth in the region. In this connection a special study

is necessary to determine the appropriate balance between environmental and industrial considerations.

URBAN TRANSPORTATION.

- (1) Every road user and commuter is conscious of the escalating traffic congestion in our cities. The real cost to the economic and commercial life of the city has not been quantified, but it is an increasing factor in distribution and transport costs. The increasing traffic delays constitute a growing waste of valuable energy resources and contributes to the national fuel imports bill with an adverse affect on the balance of payments.
- (2) Surveys have shown that approximately 30% of commuters use public transport. In other European cities the reverse is the case. This trend is especially evident in the use of public bus transport by the community. Bus journeys at peak time are subject to delays owing to traffic conditions and consequently this leads to the reduction in passengers and to the increase in fares.
- (3) The Dublin surban railway on the other hand has an increasing passenger utilisation. Unless this service is modernised and expanded it will be unable to cope with the rising demand. The suburban rolling stock, locomotives and signalling equipment will be obsolete by 1979. Despite its defects the suburban railway is the fastest mode of transport in the city and is used to a much greater extent by the travelling public where the service is available.
- (4) It is becoming necessary for urban society to re-think its attitude to the motor car and its use. Unless major resources are made available for a policy of massive road development which is not advocated, some limitations will have to be placed on the use of the private motor car. For a majority of the community who work in factories, offices or shops a motor car would not be an essential as a means of commuting to and from work, but would be needed for leisure, week-end and holiday activities.
- (5) Besides CIE other public bodies such as local authorities and the Gardai have a function in transport operations. There is a lack of overall co-ordination in providing the necessary facilities for a smoother traffic flow.

(6) The following policy steps are therefore clearly indicated:

- (1) There is a clear need for a policy for creating a public awareness of the need to conserve energy and a proper recognition of the advantages of public transport in relation to energy conservation and the preservation of a healthy environment.
- (2) The setting up of a Dublin Transport Planning Committee with representatives of local authorities, CIE, private transport interests and the Gardai to co-ordinate improved methods to overcome traffic congestion. Representatives of Transport User groups should be represented on this committee.
- (3) The provision of a Rapid Rail Transit system by the modernisation and electrification of the existing suburban rail system. The advantages of electrification over diesel traction are reduction in noise levels and the elimination of the pollution caused by engine fuel. With electrification the speed and frequency of services could be greatly increased.
- (4) The extension of suburban rail services on the existing rail line from Heuston Station to Kildare with a link-up with the city centre using the loop line to Connolly Station and from Connolly Station to Liffey Junction on the Dublin to Mullingar line.
- (5) The introduction of special lanes and traffic light priorities on main city roads for bus vehicles, taxis and emergency services during peak traffic hours.
- (6) The provision of car parking facilities on the perimeter of the city centre to ease congestion and the provision of cheap fare bus services from these car parks to the city centre.
- (7) The introduction of limited, pedestrian only, zones in the city centre shopping areas with exceptions for delivery vehicles.
- (8) The development of an Underground Transit system serving areas of the city not already accessible to rail services and linking up with rail termini. An underground line from Dublin Airport to the city centre would be necessary.
- (9) Special consideration to be given to elderly and disabled persons in the design of public transport vehicles.
- (10) That the cost of a modernised city public transport system be borne on a socially equitable basis as between fares and the necessary state subvention to offset any deficit.

ENVIRONMENT

Organisation of Local Government.

The criticism of the local government administrative base made in the Labour Party Outline Policy (1969) still stands.

Recommendations

A two-tier local government structure should be created. Regional councils should be set up based on natural geographical units where possible. Some of the present health boards provide reasonable examples of the area which regional councils should cover.

Local community councils should also be established to cater for the immediate size of Finglas, whereas in a rural setting it might include an area the size of South Leinster.

The aim should be to devolve as much power to the people as possible.

Powers

Regional councils should be empowered to deal with areas such as housing, health, the provision of educational facilities, tourism, etc., with the proviso that the basic standards laid down by central government in education, etc., be adhered to. Power should be vested with the elected representative rather than the manager.

Community councils should have control over local amenities such as provision of leisure facilities, local planning, collecting of refuse, etc. As with the regional councils these councils should be democratically elected.

Pollution

Strong anti-pollution measures should be passed relating to national water (internal, the air and land). Where pollution is coming from natural sources (e.g. sewage, pig slurry) provision should be made for the recycling of that material.

Roads

The policy laid down in the 1969 document should be reiterated.

Urban Planning.

In order to prevent lobb-sided and anti-social development of urban areas strict legislation should be passed. This should provide for keeping inner cities alive, an even spread of prosperity, proper planning of new urban areas, etc.

KILDARE CONSTITUENCY COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT

Housing in Rural Areas.

Increase the size of our present villages to a population of say 500 to 1,000 inhabitants by extra groups of houses. Provide Schools and Sports Grounds and of course a small hall should be provided within the school complex for use by the school pupils and for adult functions when not in use by the school.

If necessary, build new villages approximately three to four miles from good sized towns. This will allow for development of farm dwellings which already adjoin our roads and will leave more land for farm use.

Housing in Urban Areas.

Maisonettes should be provided with each scheme of local authority houses for occupation by newly weds and old people and single people who cannot acquire alternative economic accommodation. Greater emphasis on local authorities to build further houses and prevent speculative building by private builders.

Tenants or vested owners of local authority houses should not be allowed grants to build a further house and still maintain use of original one.

If the owner of a local authority house vacates it the Council should be empowered to take it over for letting to people on the waiting list.

Advocate longer term loans thereby reducing the weekly repayments and interest rate on such loans to be at a nominal rate.

By-passes for heavy traffic: Car parking to be allowed in well defined parks inside our towns.

Complexes to be provided for overnight parking of lorries or caravans with specific charges per night or per hour.

Roads and Highways.

Plantations of dwarf trees and shrubs should be planted on all newly repaired roadsides and corners.

Proper landscaping of all new dwellings along our roads and highways to blend with existing rustic appearance.

Cut away corners on roadways should not be left as an encouragement for illegal dumping and parking for dealers or overnight campers.

Strict control over refuse dumping on roadsides.

Amenities

Local authorities should provide necessary halls for entertainment purposes. These halls to be rented to local community groups, drama clubs, sports clubs, etc.

Some of our large midland estates to be taken over and developed as national parks and opened to the public on weekends and bank holidays.

Most of our forests and plantations should also be opened to the public on weekends and during school holiday periods.

It should be possible to collect enough revenue on entrance charges to employ the necessary personnel to keep our parks and plantations open at these times.

Schools should be allowed free access for pupils under guidance of their teacher for the purpose of increasing their general knowledge of biology and plant life in general.

A central area should be developed for the education and correction of young offenders on the lines of "Boystown" of American fame.

SUBMISSION FROM LOUTH CONSTITUENCY COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT

- (1) We demand a State Construction Company for schools, hospitals and housing schemes.
- (2) We demand that all local authority sewage be treated and funds made available to do so.
- (3) We demand a State Building Society and as an interim that building society agencies be removed from auctioneers and insurance brokers.

SUBMISSION FROM ROSCOMMON-LEITRIM

CONSTITUENCY COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT

- (1) Steps to be taken now to preserve our environment and as this is a very general term we suggest (a) indiscriminate dumping of rubbish be immediately investigated - it is taking on the proportions of a national disgrace. (b) Pollution of air be monitored urgently in Dublin, less urgently countrywide; (c) pollution of water be monitored - rivers, sea-shore, lakes, etc. Much can be done in this area like insisting that premises connect to sewers; insisting on planning permission for silo pits, etc. (d) Preservation of scenic areas.

We suggest that much of this is already on paper but nothing is seen to be done - except in the case of the Grand Canal and even here much good work in being undone by dumping on its banks.

- (2) HOUSES

We suggest a very long term house-building programme be drawn up and council flats be built for lower paid single workers and newly marrieds - or existing flats (unsuitable for families) be converted to this purpose, and families be gradually moved to houses.

Old peoples houses should be built in the same area as other houses. Our people concerned with local government should pool their ideas and try and iron out the problems which beset the housing of our people.

- (3) ROADS

Anyone will admit our roads are not suitable for increasing traffic and heavy articulated trucks. Something will have to be done about the unnecessary carnage on our roads - something more than education and armbands. These remedies are not enough. We suggest more pedestrian crossings, compulsory wearing of certain type of "night coat" for pedestrians walking on roads at night and strictly forbidding dark clothing at night with the suggested "night coat." Arm bands are just *not* sufficient - they are only somewhat helpful, and this is not good enough where lives are at risk.

ON ENVIRONMENT

- (1) The power of local authorities is being whittled away, e.g. in Health, Roads, Planning, Housing and most recently by the cut-back in rates.
- (2) There is a need for vastly improved network of local transport, apart from the main arteries. This should be a function of CIE.
- (3) Too many members of local authorities and ancillary bodies are mere cannon-fodder for the officials. The Labour Party should give a lead in insisting on people of a higher calibre for all such posts.
- (4) Party members on all local bodies should give a lead in care for the environment, especially on planning bodies of any kind.

ENVIRONMENT

- (1) Under this heading we feel provision should be made to ensure that all local authorities use a voucher system for free fuel for the elderly. This system is presently operated by some authorities and would appear to be much more satisfactory.
- (2) Building land should be taken out of the market place and should not be subject to the whims of the speculator. Local Authorities should not have to compete with speculators to acquire land for housing. It will take political will to confront this problem and the Labour Party should be to the forefront in this.
- (3) When balancing the environment with job creation it is important that short sighted policies are not adopted. While it is our duty to further the work potential of our people the scales should always be balanced in favour of the environment. While progressing to an industrial and efficient society it is essential that an imbalance is not created in nature.

Threats to the environment can be identified as follows:

- (1) Pollution of atmosphere caused by transport and industrial fumes, chemical sprays, aerosols, etc.
- (2) Pollution of rivers and lakes, indiscriminate discharging of untreated industrial wastes, dyes, etc., inadequate sewerage treatment in towns and cities, improper siting of dumps near streams and rivers, etc. Siting of factories with no thought given to location and existing ecology. Mining, especially open cast, should be required to re-instate the sites and replant where necessary.
- (4) It is necessary for local authorities to ensure that areas of land in its natural state should remain untouched near built up areas.
- (5) NOTE

There was a very long discussion on the question of nuclear energy, and the siting of nuclear power stations and the disposal of nuclear waste. A lot of delegates expressed concern at this type of development but it was felt that we were not sufficiently well informed on the subject to include it in the form of a proposal.

We would, therefore, be grateful if the policy document on the environment would give adequate coverage to this important question and that full information be provided without employing too much technical jargon so that the rank and file of the party can form opinions.

LABOUR WOMEN'S NATIONAL COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT

We recommend that Regional Consultative Boards, representative of home users and flat dwellers be established to advise on housing and local development with regard to—

- (1) The Planning and design of the home.
- (2) The quality of the immediate environment.
- (3) The provision of adequate facilities.
- (4) Basic standards in relation to the above.

NOTE

We envisage a proportionate involvement of women and men on the Regional Boards on the basis of their experience of coping with the home environment.

Title: The Environment

Organisation: Labour

Date: 1978

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