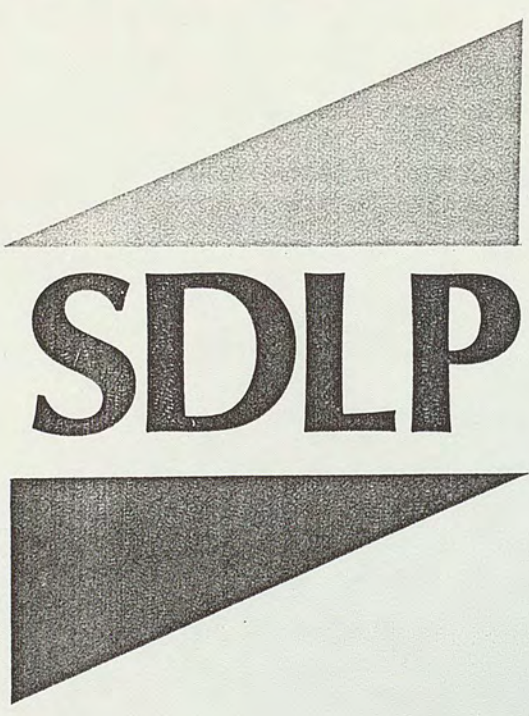




KEEP BUILDING



SDLP

MANIFESTO
Westminster Election

June 1987



KEEP BUILDING

"It is the function of a serious political party that genuinely seeks a solution to address itself to the heart of the matter however difficult that may be. That, the SDLP has done and is doing and our strategy offers a clear way forward for all who seek a peaceful political path."

So said the SDLP manifesto at the last Westminster election in June 1983. We then outlined that strategy published before the Assembly election in our October 1982 manifesto.

"We believe that a solution should be sought once again in its proper framework. It is abundantly clear that a purely internal solution to the problem of Northern Ireland is not possible. A solution must deal with the problem which is one of relationships not only within Northern Ireland, but within Ireland and between Ireland and Britain. The Anglo-Irish framework is therefore the proper framework for a solution. It is long past the time when the British government should allow its policies to be dictated by the intransigence of unionism."

The creation of the New Ireland Forum was promised in that same October manifesto and was described by us in the June 1983 campaign as "potentially the most significant political initiative since 1920" and forecast by the SDLP that its effect on British and international opinion would be such that the Northern Ireland problem would be at the centre of the stage of the next Westminster Parliament. That Parliament has just ended and the Anglo-Irish framework, the fruits of the Anglo-Irish Agreement one of the major events of that Parliament is now in place.

We refer to our previous manifestoes to underline the fact that the SDLP has been a serious committed political party which has stated both its objectives and its strategy openly and has worked steadily to deliver its electoral promises. We think that we can rightly draw attention to the fact that as a Party we do deliver and we do so steadily and openly. This election gives us an opportunity to build on those achievements. The SDLP approach - to keep building steadily - is in stark contrast to the negativism of those whose only word is 'no' and the nihilism of those whose only method is destruction. The Anglo-Irish framework promised by the SDLP is in place. It is a better decision making process than any that we have had since 1920. It is a step of major significance in the evolving relationships between Britain and Ireland. As we have said, it is but a framework, a necessary framework, within which to develop the healing process that will lead to final peace and stability.

We in the SDLP have spelt out the steps in that process. To do so again we must first complete the task of ensuring equality of treatment for all people in the North of Ireland. That will ensure the only solid basis for the next and major step in the healing process, the task of breaking down the barriers of prejudice and suspicion which are at the heart of the deep division in our society. The SDLP believes that the best way to do this would be for all sections of our community to share responsibility for the affairs of our society and through that common building to erode the old prejudices and distrust and to replace it with solid trust and mutual respect born of working together. Dialogue between representatives of different sections of the community in order to agree on institutions that will allow this whole community to work together is an essential next step and the SDLP remains ready after this election to enter into such dialogue.

As a Party we are also open to any other suggestions or methods that would break down the old divisions between Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter. The breaking down of those barriers, the results of the process of working together would itself transform relationships not only within the North of Ireland but within Ireland as a whole leading to a new Ireland which not only reflects our diversity as a people but would be built by the agreement of our different traditions and which would form the final basis for peace and stability and for a new relationship with Britain.

The path to the future that the SDLP spells out is clear. It is a peaceful and political path and a path on which there will be many setbacks and difficulties but we do not see any other road and our challenge to our opponents is to spell out their alternative. To succeed we require the maximum political strength, that can only be given by the electorate. A strong voice at Westminster is an essential element in pursuing that strategy. The SDLP believe that even with its small representation there to date it has clearly demonstrated the value of having voices there in stark contrast to the nonsensical contradiction of the politics of abstentionism.



This election gives the opportunity to allow the SDLP to take the strongest team to Westminster since 1920. We need that strong team in order to keep building towards our goals of peace and stability and to take the fullest possible advantages of the opportunities afforded by the Anglo-Irish Agreement. We are confident that our electorate see that need and will join on June 11th in giving us the maximum political strength to carry out the tasks that we have set out so clearly before them. We ask the electorate to join with us in the process of building a New North and a New Ireland.

REPRESENTATION

The SDLP's two MPs at Westminster, John Hume and Seamus Mallon, have continued throughout the Parliamentary term to represent their constituencies at Westminster. Of the 17 Westminster MPs only the SDLP can genuinely claim that they have made full use of Westminster. Both have given their constituencies full-time professional services. As a team at Westminster the SDLP has been successful in representing the interests of all the people of Northern Ireland on a wide range of social and economic issues who for one reason or another could not avail of their own MPs.

The SDLP is the only major political party seeking to actively represent people at Westminster. Abstentionism and boycott are the alternatives offered by our opponents, both loyalist and republican, but neither policy can offer anything positive to the people of Northern Ireland. Only active representation at and in Parliament can deliver, to the people of Northern Ireland.

ECONOMIC POLICY

In our desire to create equality and build peace we will continue to promote the need for central government to influence and direct economic activity to promote the well-being of all sections of our community. However we recognise that only consensus politics will create the atmosphere and institutions that enable new economic policies and initiatives to develop. The peace and stability which can ultimately result from the Anglo-Irish Agreement will be effective in the promotion of a new international image of Northern Ireland with a resulting effect on the opportunities of economic growth the SDLP is committed to the further development of cross border co-operation in economic matters. Both sections of our community will benefit from a joint programme of economic development.

The SDLP views with concern that the planned total public expenditure for Northern Ireland over the next three years shows no increase in real resources being made available in this region to reduce social ills and alleviate unemployment.

We argue that without any increase in the level of public service spending that services will deteriorate and concur with the view that the reason for sluggish growth in the economy in recent years has been the restrictions which the present government has placed in the rate of growth of the public expenditure.

The SDLP renews its demands for the promotion of new job opportunities by the completion of much needed social programmes in hospital building, education, housing, training provisions, leisure facilities and so on.

■ See SDLP document "SDLP and the Northern Ireland Economy".

We welcome the reversal of the government development agencies' policy in grant-aiding "traded services".* The neglect of this important area in the last decade by the development agencies has had a serious adverse effect on employment prospects. As a result this region has suffered dramatically from the failure to promote this section of our economy. Our education system is ideally suited to producing the staffing for many of the "traded services." The SDLP have in the past and will continue, in the future to press for greater government assistance to this sector of the economy in particular the development of a special tax status to encourage its growth.

We renew our faith in the potential for job creation and community improvement through Co-operatives. Early in the last parliament we pressed for the establishment of a Co-operative Development Agency. Such an agency is now operating and is proving its value. We are concerned that the level of government funding must be increased if the agency is to get on with the task that members of the community are identifying for and with it. Our policy document — The Case for Workers' Co-operatives outlines further our commitments in this regard. Co-operation between the development agencies, North and South, particularly in the international sector in promoting Ireland, as a base for industry must lead to more job creation in both parts of Ireland.



The SDLP is concerned at the low level of employees in Northern Ireland who are receiving training. This will have a long term adverse effect in the opportunities for industrial rejuvenation. Moreover we view with deep concern the planned expenditure allocated to the above training and employment programmes for 1986/87. While expenditure will increase marginally in cash terms, it will be more than offset by inflation and the increase in administrative costs.

The SDLP stress that optimum locations of industry within Northern Ireland cannot be provided by the free market apparatus. New inward investment must be treated in the area of greatest need. A positive programme from the government is required in this regard. In the construction industry there is a serious decline, due in the main to cuts in capital expenditure programmes. Several new capital projects must be adopted to reverse this decline.

We reject the Tories' low pay strategy. The economic history of this low pay and high unemployment region exposes the fallacy of the government's case. The Chancellor's proposals towards further pay reductions in areas of high unemployment could only damage this area. Poverty must not be promoted as the answer to unemployment. It is imperative that we have a statutory minimum wage.

* Insurance, banking, shipping service, arts, music, industry, etc.

FAIR EMPLOYMENT

The SDLP will continue to work on every front to achieve the goal of fair employment throughout the North.

Our Charter for equal and just employment opportunities is the most far reaching set of principles publicised on guiding fair employment practices. However we are not content to simply promote such outline principles on their own because in themselves they cannot solve the problem. Instead our charter is promoted in the context of a framework placing a statutory obligation to fair employment on employers. We propose an enlarged, better resourced and more powerful Fair Employment Agency to police employment practices. Sanctions including fines and withdrawal of government contracts would be imposed on employers failing in their obligations to implement fair employment practices.

We recognise that the achievement of such fair employment practices by themselves will not address the problems of high unemployment in many areas of the North. Those unemployment levels owe much to the old unionist policy of denying investment to those areas. Therefore securing investment and in influx of jobs in those areas is crucial to reversing the effects of discrimination.

Securing such investment is not easy given the image which potential investors have of Northern Ireland and the attractive inducements offered elsewhere. We are concerned that any effort which has the affect of leading potential investors to believe that they will have political problems if they come to Northern Ireland can only frustrate the creation of much needed new jobs.

We ask our friends abroad to use their influence to encourage investors to come to areas of high unemployment in Northern Ireland. This is part of our affirmative action approach aimed at reversing our unemployment levels and the unacceptable imbalances within those unemployment levels.

We are not content simply to rely on inward investment. At local, regional, parliamentary and European level we will continue to seek public expenditure initiatives which will yield employment opportunities. We have had some success in mitigating some of monetarism's excesses in employment terms. Our support for and sponsorship of local employment initiatives including co-operatives will continue. No other Party has a record to match ours in terms of active and fruitful work in relation to employment. Our last economic political document outlined our proposals for an economic and social programme with job creation as its primary aim.

We have identified problems in relation to training provision which we believe militate against the ideal of equality of opportunity. Those issues involving the location of training facilities and the pattern of course distribution are being pursued through all channels of influence and representation at present.

In our representations on matters of education policy we continue to identify factors which involve questions on equality of opportunity. These range from the demand for a Further Education College in West Belfast to our concerns on the effect that the introduction of student loans and higher education cuts would have.



We will continue to press the government on the issue of decentralisation. High unemployment areas outside Belfast have little share in public service employment. We have won a commitment from government for a full review of the location of all government offices. The SDLP wants to be in a position to secure the optimum advantage for high unemployment areas out of this review. Such decentralisation is an important element in addressing current imbalances and will be a test of the government's commitment.

It was the SDLP who placed the whole issue of fair employment on the agenda of the Anglo-Irish Conference. We submitted a far-reaching blueprint to both governments. The British government response included a consultative document indicating their plans for new and stronger legislation.

We have responded to the document addressing issues which it overlooked or misrepresented and proposing much tougher sanctions to securing fair employment practices. The Irish government is actively pursuing the matter through the inter-governmental conference. We are determined to ensure that important issues and devices which we have identified are properly accommodated in forthcoming legislation.

This approach addresses all dimensions of our discrimination/unemployment problem. We cannot have fair employment if we do not have adequate employment. The scale of the challenge is not underestimated by the SDLP.

We know how pervasive discrimination is in our economy. We recognise the immense damage done by the campaign of violence which economic experts told the New Ireland Forum cost 39,000 jobs in the seventies and mainly in Catholic areas. We see that those difficulties have been confounded further by monetarist policies which have used unemployment as an instrument of economic policy. We are under no illusions therefore that just stating aims and principles is sufficient. Given the scale of that task it would be easy for us to hide behind general demands with little regard to their implementation, or to focus only on particular aspects of the problem. However to do so would not be to confront the problem in all reality and would offer no real prospects to the unemployed.

We recognise that there are valid security concerns which might obtain in a particular employment situation. But we are deeply concerned about the use of security certificates under section 42 of the Fair Employment Act. We believe that the use of security certificates raises many concerns given that people against whom a certificate has been issued are not told of any reason and given no chance to clear their name.

Similarly with employees of contractors getting work from the Property Services Agency. Refusal of security clearance has meant loss of status, income or jobs to workers with no reason or redress or redress being offered. We pursued both subjects in the past parliament and will continue to do so.

AGRICULTURE

The agricultural sector of the economy is in a state of crisis. Surpluses in almost all of the major commodities have led to a massive pressure for "reform" of the Common Agricultural Policy. For the Tory government in Britain, and for some other European governments, "reform" of the CAP means squeezing the farmer in order to reduce production. That approach is unacceptable to the SDLP. In the last two years of appalling weather, farm incomes have decreased alarmingly, and many small farmers in Northern Ireland face disaster.

The SDLP will work for an alternative approach to reform of the CAP. It is unacceptable that surpluses exist in the dairy sector, in beef, and in many other commodities, at a time when vast numbers of people in Ireland and the rest of Europe cannot afford to buy the quantity and the quality of food which they need. We must work towards a new system which guarantees farmers a fair return for their work, either by means of variable premiums, headage payments or income support payments, while at the same time allowing the growing abundance of food to be reflected in lower prices in the market place. Lower prices, leading to increased consumption of food by those who desperately need it, will do more to reduce the so-called "food mountains" than free food schemes or quotas.

At the same time more positive encouragement needs to be given to farmers, particularly in the hill areas, to diversify into the non-food sector. A positive policy to encourage afforestation is only one example. The EEC has an £11b sterling deficit in timber and timber products. Many of our hill farmers could diversify into forestry if the government were to introduce a scheme similar to those in operation in Scandinavian countries. Under such a scheme a farmer would receive an annual income based on a percentage of the estimated value of the timber crop when mature.



The SDLP will work for full restoration of the 65,000 tonnes of extra dairy quota granted to Northern Ireland in 1984, and which was filched by the British government. We will also work for restitution of the estimated 66,000 tonnes of dairy quota lost to Northern Ireland because of the British government's illegal creation of a regional reserve in Northern Ireland, rather than allowing us access to one overall reserve.

The crisis in the beef sector illustrate the need for greater harmonisation of the Common Agricultural Policy between North and South. The SDLP will work to create a situation where northern farmers are entitled to the same benefits on the CAP as their counterparts in the Republic. We will shortly present detailed proposals for the achievement of parity between North and South within the Common Agriculture Policy.

Finally, the SDLP will work for an imaginative and generous response from the British government and the European Commission to the Maher Report on John Hume's proposal for an Integrated Rural Development programme for the North.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

FUNDING

The financial stringencies imposed on the Health and Social Services have served to deprive of care those who depend on them and to demoralise those who work to provide the services.

Even according to the government's own funding guidelines — the PARR formula — most of the Boards here have been consistently underfunded over the past number of years. We will continue to press for that missing funding to be given to those boards. More importantly we have been pressing for a complete review of the PARR formula which takes no account of patterns of social and economic deprivation which create particular health and social needs. The government have recently indicated to us that they will undertake a review. We are determined to ensure that the outcome of such a review will be an improved funding arrangement.

STRATEGIC PLANS

The five year strategic plans for Health and Social Services pose several major issues, all of which were addressed by the SDLP in our responses to those plans.

PRIVATISATION

All privatisation proposals in the plans are strongly opposed by the SDLP. We want to see efficiency in Health and Social Services but we define it primarily in terms of care rather than cash. Privatisation of areas of health and social service provision mean job losses, worse working conditions and a lower quality of service.

VOLUNTEERS

We are concerned about the emphasis given to "volunteer" involvement in health and social services. This is a departure from the principle of a professional service and could lead to an abuse of the voluntary ideal. Many activities complementary to current social service provision have been identified and undertaken by the voluntary sector. This work has not received the government financial support due to it. We want to press for proper funding for such voluntary work. While opposing moves to impose duties of the official services on the voluntary sector.

COMMUNITY CARE

The ideal of care in the community as opposed to institutionalization has long been promoted by the Party. The government's "community care" policy aired in the strategic plans ignores the vital issue of providing a proper framework of care in the community. Without such provision and adequate funding the policy amounts simply to dumping people out of institutions and into situations where they will have serious difficulty coping. The SDLP is determined to ensure that people are not rejected and neglected in this way and that families are not left desperately trying to provide a level of support which is beyond them.



HOSPITAL CLOSURES

The so called rationalisation of hospital services is essentially a policy of rolling centralisation. We recognise the value of specialisation on a regional basis of particular aspects of medical care. We also recognise the value of local hospital provision easily accessible to the community. The threat posed to hospitals in rural areas and small towns in particular has been fully resisted by the SDLP in the local areas concerned and at Westminster with some success. The doubts over the future of provision in the Mater and RVH sites must be laid to rest.

RENAL SERVICES

SDLP representation successfully led to the government review of dialysis provision here. We will continue to press for prompt implementation of the government's decision and for adequate continued funding.

BREAST AND CERVICAL CANCER

The SDLP campaigned in the last Parliament to have comprehensive screening services for breast and cervical cancer with computerised call and recall services. We welcome the government's commitment in relation to both screening needs and acknowledge progress which has already been made towards the government's recently professed aim of comprehensive provision.

NURSES

The low pay crisis facing many nurses is an affront to their professional vocation and to the principles of a proper health service. As well as pressing for improvements in nurses' pay arrangements we will seek guarantees that all future pay awards will be fully funded by government instead of boards having to partly fund these awards through cutting expenditure elsewhere.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Important social services are often targetted for cuts because of their lower visibility. We are determined to ensure that the social services budget is adequate to provide proper home-help facilities. Telephone contact for those in special need and social work support. It is only through effective social service provision that we can hope to address problems of child abuse and the special needs of many families and individuals.

SOCIAL SECURITY

RETURN TO POOR LAW

We were the only Party from the North in the last Parliament to oppose at every stage the new Social Security Act. In meetings with the London Social Security minister as well as the Northern Ireland minister we argued the particular needs of people here against the changes. We did manage some slight concessions and believe that with more representational weight we might have won more.

As the changes gradually come into affect our Social Security system is being debased. Both claimants and a hard-pressed staff will be degraded in the new poor law scenario. There is still time to bring influence to bear on some aspects of forthcoming changes and we will make every effort towards mitigation of the proposed deprivation which we can. We are fully conscious that much of social security provision is now essentially a matter for the minister who will not be bound by law in the manner of regulations to date. While such discretion is dangerous and a removal of legal rights, we believe that in our circumstances it gives us room to press for changes in social security administration here. The London minister has confirmed to us that it is possible for Northern Ireland to have differences in provision from Britain. We will therefore continue to press for new measures and modifications to take account of the special social security needs of Northern Ireland.

FUEL POVERTY

We will be tabling comprehensive proposals for addressing fuel poverty in all its dimensions. Action in this area is a priority, given that fuel poverty kills. An aggressive approach on the subject is all the more necessary in light of the Social Security Act's elimination of most acknowledgements of the problem and the mean restrictions in special payments during exceptionally severe weather. We are glad to be able to point to the SDLP's success earlier this year in forcing the government to actually give payments to those in fuel debt rather than simply deducting them from previous arrears.



BENEFITS FOR THE TERMINALLY ILL

We will work for the introduction of a special benefit to help the terminally ill to cope with the special costs which they might face. This would reduce some of the fund-raising burden on hospices and remove any worries about costs or charity from those who might wish to avail of the very valuable support offered by the Hospice movement.

BENEFITS FOR THE DISABLED - REVIEW

This will deal with those benefits for the disabled not covered by the Social Security Act. We will put forward proposals for improvements in provision of Mobility Allowance and Attendance Allowance. Moves to restrict benefits to those on Invalidity Benefit, or Severe Disablement Allowance will be opposed.

HOUSING

In this "Year of the Homeless" the SDLP welcomes the promise of legislation to provide for homeless persons.* The creation of a statutory obligation is a proper step, but must be accompanied by the provision of resources to allow the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to cope adequately with the problem of homelessness in Northern Ireland. We believe there is an ever increasing one. The Party is firmly opposed to the concept of "intentional homelessness" being made a provision of any such legislation. This would have the effect of providing an "out" for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and could be abused. Included in any such legislation must be an independent grievance procedure to allow swift and free legal redress to anyone, who has been improperly treated.

We will press the government to give adequate resources to this problem which cannot be solved solely by an allocation of responsibility. The present problem and its growing incidence are proof that the government's intentions of making no new resources available are misguided. New build targets in housing must be brought into reality and relate properly to need. The SDLP will work for an improved budgetary framework for NIHE. We seek a more efficient and orderly refurbishment programme on existing stock. Again we renew our call for a complete overhaul of the repairs policy.

We are glad of the achievement finally won through the Anglo Irish process of a decision to demolish Divis and Rossville. The replacement of these blocks by socially and environmentally compatible housing is a top priority. In planning such matters the needs of tenants must be taken fully into account. We are anxious that other "human filing cabinets" with their multiplicity of problems should also be targeted for demolition.

The levels of rural housing unfitness particularly in the western regions demand a special programme of action. We have already put forward proposals for such a programme which could be run as part of the Integrated Rural Development Programme which we are seeking.

* See SDLP policy document on the "Homeless".

JUSTICE

The SDLP has held the consistent view that flaws in the administration of justice in Northern Ireland are a major contributing factor to the alienation of large sections of the community from the institutions of the state. We believe it is essential that immediate changes should be made which would improve the quality of justice in this part of Ireland. Both the British and Irish governments are committed in Article 8 of the Agreement to seeking measures which would give substantial expression to the aims of improving public confidence in the administration of justice.

We reiterate our commitment that pending the introduction of a full return to jury trial we would urge changes in relation to the existing Diplock Courts. These would provide important necessary safeguards for accused persons and would mitigate against the unsatisfactory situation, where one man is asked to be the sole arbiter of fact and law.

We also believe that a greater number of lesser offences should be descheduled and tried by juries, not judges sitting alone. While we welcome the changes in the Emergency Provision Act relating to bail, powers of arrest and other matters, we will still oppose the continued existence and use of all such emergency legislation in Northern Ireland.



The SDLP is opposed to the increasing assault by the government on the right to compensation in civil matters in Northern Ireland. In particular we are opposed to the abolition of juries in High Court civil cases as proposed by the Thatcher government. We see the maintenance of juries as an important safeguard of civil law in Northern Ireland. We are also opposed to changes in the Criminal Injuries legislation, which would effectively restrict the level of claims for compensation especially for "nervous shock" victims.

EDUCATION

AN END TO SELECTION

Our recent policy document on Education "A Time for Change" again made clear our opposition to the "11+" and our commitment to a non-selective system of secondary education. We believe that non-selective secondary schools should be organised on a neighbourhood basis and would educate pupils until 16. When they would transfer to post-16 colleges offering A levels and a range of vocational courses.

We stress our opposition to the government's proposals for the transfer procedure. By transferring the number of fee paying places and sponsoring much higher fees in grammar schools the government will compound the injustice of selection by allowing special transfer facilities to the better-off. The government cannot with consistency sponsor such fee-paying facilities, while at the same time pretending that the selection procedure, which fee paying is buying its way around, is educationally sound.

Having long proposed common examinations at 16 in the context of a non-selective secondary system we welcome the GCSE. We are however concerned at the inadequacy of resources and preparation given to its introduction. Post 16 examinations should relate in content and mode to the common examination at 16.

MENTALLY HANDICAPPED - END THE STIGMA

We point out our success in the last parliament on pressing for the transfer of responsibility for the education of the mentally handicapped from the Health Authorities to the education authorities. From its earliest days the SDLP opposed the stigma of "ineducable" which the old position imposed. We are anxious that the rights of staff be fully protected and will try to ensure proper funding for this sector of education.

FURTHER EDUCATION

We believe that the work and potential of Further Education colleges and their students are undervalued at present. This is reflected in the budgetary pressures on these colleges with poor facilities, overcrowding and course losses.

Students in particular are badly treated. Further Education students have no mandatory grants, only some receive discretionary awards of low sums and only those deemed to be studying less than 21 hours a week may receive Supplementary Benefit leaving most without any financial support. We propose that Further Education students should be guaranteed an allowance at least equal to those paid for YTP with special grants for any special course costs. We believe that more people could avail of Further Education including some who for financial reasons opt for YTP. We will continue to seek the establishment of a College of Further Education in West Belfast.

HIGHER EDUCATION

We are committed to the development of a forward going higher-education sector in Northern Ireland. We are concerned that attempts to restrict courses and student numbers will restrict opportunities for our young people. Such attempts also ignore the potential for co-operation with the South where the demand for university places far outstrip current supply.

Once again we state our commitment to an adequate grant for students not subject to a parental means test. The run-down of the grants system has imposed heavy burdens on many students and must be reversed. Proposals for replacing grants with a loans system of any type will continue to be fully opposed by the SDLP.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS

SDLP proposes the establishment of an Irish Cultural Institution to support and encourage Irish Cultural activities. This Institute would incorporate a training institute for Irish teachers and establishing close links with the Arts Council as proposed in our Irish Language document. Details of this proposal are available in our policy document.



ENVIRONMENT

In this European Year of the Environment the SDLP is conscious of the popular concern of the danger to our environment by industrial pollution, and in particular to the nuclear energy industry.

Our total opposition to the Sellafield plant and its discharge of nuclear waste into the Irish Sea, with the consequent effects on the sea and the Irish coasts, is not a matter of current political fashion, but, as the public record shows, predates the Chernobyl disaster and is and has been seriously promoted by the Party. The Party will continue to do so and reiterate its call for the closure of Sellafield and an immediate end to the dumping of nuclear waste in the Irish Sea.

We will support all other effective anti-pollution measures. In particular we will continue to oppose any attempts by the British government to delay the European target date for the elimination of leaded petrol. We will seek environmentally sensitive policies in agriculture and in energy. We are concerned for the future development of Lough Neagh, one of our most valuable natural resources and will seek ways and means to safeguard it.

INTERNATIONALIST APPROACH

We renew our commitment as an internationalist Party. One of our objectives in working for an Ireland at peace with itself is to allow this country to play the special role in international affairs which its size and history would allow. Such an Ireland, free from military attachments, should work against the politics of global threat and promote new global power relationships against the colonialism, exploitation and underdevelopment which mark the current world order.

Consistent with these themes we will press for improved development aid by the UK government. We will oppose all policies of "tied" aid and a dependent aid which propagate underdevelopment. We will seek fairer trade arrangements with third world countries. The SDLP opposed the arrogant and selfish approach by Britain to the last Lome Convention and we are now even more concerned to see some of the losses to the third world countries at that time redressed.

At every opportunity we will promote the call for a New International Economic Order based on more equal power relationships and informed by just trading practices as the only basis for a fair world free from the outrage of underdevelopment, world poverty and hunger.

We reiterate our call for full and comprehensive sanctions against South Africa in solidarity with the efforts of freedom-loving people in that region.

We again reiterate our opposition to the interference by the Superpowers in some of their neighbouring states. While recognising the progressive changes undertaken by the new Soviet regime, we cannot ignore the nature of the Soviet presence in other states or the serious human rights violations in the Soviet Union itself. We deplore the US administration's continuing intervention in the affairs of the peoples of Central America, not least their sponsorship of a terrorist organisation in Nicaragua whose political wing have only a minority of popular support in their opposition to the fairly elected socialist government.

Our opposition to force or the threat of it as a political instrument in Ireland, is paralleled by our opposition to nuclear armaments. We will promote in every way we can, the cause of disarmament and support all moves to reduce, or renounce nuclear arsenals.

Our long standing commitment to the ongoing development of the European community has not diminished. We wish to see more direct democratic accountability of the EC's institutions. We recognise the practical need for effective European structures to tackle problems whose nature is much wider than any possible national remedy. In proposals for reform of the EC our particular concern is to ensure greater emphasis on regional needs aiming at equalisation of living standards in all corners of Europe and opposing the "Rich Man's Club" tendency of governments such as that in Britain. Work in Westminster complements our efforts in the European Parliament in these regards.

We reaffirm our commitment as a member party of the Socialist International and of the Confederation of European Socialist Parties.

The SDLP will continue to play a full role in the European Parliament's Socialist Group and the Confederation. We will seek to strengthen and expand our European and international political links. It is important that our political activity be not confined to these shores.