

A Restless Society

Developing a Sense of Community

**Young Fine Gael's Policy for progressive
political development in Ireland**

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Developing a Sense of Community

Preface

The following document is not a manifesto-type programme for government or a list of promises. Rather, it is designed to tackle what has always been Fine Gael's greatest handicap – namely the Party's lack of unifying political philosophy or sense of direction. In this respect, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael are **not** alike; Fianna Fáil has come to embody everything that is rigidly traditional in Irish society, and therefore it has a clearly defined philosophy. If Fine Gael is to become a Party capable of continuously winning power, it must become more than an "anti-party", united by nothing other than it's opposition to Fianna Fáil. The only future of Fine Gael is as a Party which offers a radical alternative to the conservatism of Fianna Fáil. If we are to do this, then we must have a sense of direction which is clearly defined, and which integrates the whole range of issues facing the country into one coherent analysis.

For that reason, although the document is sub-divided under various policy headings, each is linked to the others by a number of major themes, particularly:

1. A society which has become affluent, but not significantly more *democratic*, will gradually disintegrate.
2. Social institutions which we are used to regarding as static and absolute, such as the Family and Property, must be approached in a more flexible and realistic way.
3. There are economic reasons, apart from reasons of social responsibility, why governments must continuously battle against inequality.
4. The traditional framework of nation-states, each going it's own way, is no longer capable of handling the problems and dangers facing the world.

The one specific proposal (as opposed to outlining a general approach) in this document is the idea of a national minimum income, payable to all citizens whether working or not. It has been left as the single major specific proposal in the document because it is particularly relevant to the unemployment crisis, and we wish to give it particular emphasis.

This document is to be seen as a frame work document, to provide a general background to the more specific motions passed by Young Fine Gael National Conference or to more detailed policy documents in individual policy areas.

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I

Introduction

Parties with no basic convictions will never have the courage to lead

1.

It is universally recognised that Ireland today is in a state of deep crisis. For example:

- (i) unemployment has grown to monstrous proportions, and continues to rise;
- (ii) the finances of the State continue to be precarious, even if the slide has been halted;
- (iii) social problems such as drug abuse, marital breakdown, and soaring crime rates threaten to tear society apart;
- (iv) violence in Northern Ireland constantly threatens to erupt on a scale comparable to the Lebanon, with incalculable consequences for the whole Island.

2.

What is not always so readily recognised is that at the heart of this crisis is a malaise in our political system. Irish politicians are peculiarly unwilling to address themselves to basic questions as to how society works, or what role the Government should play. The superficial nature of so much of our politics has a number of consequences:

- (i) because parties do not differ on fundamental approach, they are reduced to making irresponsible promises in order to win votes;
- (ii) when parties win power, their thoughts turn to how they are going to win the following election rather than to what they are going to achieve in government;
- (iii) basic problems are allowed to fester and grow, as politicians can only be persuaded to act when they reach crisis proportions – by then it is usually too late;
- (iv) because governments lack the courage which only conviction can provide, they are unable to withstand the pressures of powerful interest groups;
- (v) paralysis of the political system not only makes it impossible to get to grips with problems, but also undermines people's confidence;
- (vi) Ireland, though having problems peculiar to itself, is not the only country to face immensely difficult circumstances. The 20th century has been and will continue to be a period of unrivalled change globally. Old approaches to new problems have not and will not prove sufficient.

3.

While the above observations do not hold true for all of our leaders all of the time, they are an accurate general assessment of the Irish political system in its present condition. It is for this reason that we in Young Fine Gael have decided to do what we can to fill the vacuum. In the following document we outline a basic analysis of society and approach to government; the views expressed are not ideological dogma, but a set of attitudes and approaches which we continue to advocate until such time as we learn of more helpful ones.

II

A Sense of Community

Economies are based on societies —

not the other way round:

1.

Our view of humanity is inspired by Christian beliefs — although it is of course a view which can readily be shared by non-Christians. In particular we believe that we all share a moral responsibility for the well-being of our fellow human beings.

2.

Today's conventional approach to government is founded on the principle that at the base of every society is an economy. We reject this and contend:

- (i) that this approach is a dehumanising, mechanistic one which is essentially wrong;
- (ii) that long before financial or commercial institutions existed in human history, there were social and political institutions;
- (iii) that while governments must maintain the financial health of their countries, there would be little point in them doing this if the methods they were to use drove the population to civil war;
- (iv) that on the other hand, if a solid sense of community, trust of the country's leaders, and a willingness to sacrifice have been built up, then there will be no obstacle to bringing the financial situation under control;
- (v) That economies are based on societies, and that the cohesion and creativity of a society depend on it's people's faith in each other.

3.

If a society suffers from low morale and a weak sense of community,

then its ability to create wealth is fundamentally impaired, through problems such as:

- (i) the desperate sense of insecurity which causes workers to cling to obsolete, loss-making jobs and inefficient practices, or causes farmers to cling to uneconomically small plots of land;
- (ii) profiteering through devoting funds to speculation rather than to more productive uses;
- (iii) a lack of pride in one's work;
- (iv) mistrust between employers and employees;
- (v) tax evasion and social welfare abuse;
- (vi) vulnerability to forces which prey on low morale and cripple people's ability to control their own lives, such as drug abuse or alcoholism;
- (vii) and the growth of crime which invariably accompanies the above.

4.

We therefore totally reject the notion that governments are to be judged mainly on the rise and fall of GNP. We regard it as a basic function of governments to promote a national sense of community, and believe that wealth creation should be seen as just one means to that end.

III

The Nation

We are a Nation because we believe we are:

1.

Our State is founded on the concept of Nationhood – this means that doubts or falsehoods about the concept of nationality will threaten the State's cohesion or poison it. We emphatically reject:

- (i) the kind of Nationalism which elevates itself to the status of a religion;
- (ii) the idea that a nation is a set of people with unique characteristics which set them apart;
- (iii) the idea, which follows from the above, that some people are more truly members of a nation because they conform more completely to the characteristics of that nation;
- (iv) the further idea that a small group, or indeed, one individual, can embody the characteristics and attitudes of a nation in such pure form as to embody "the spirit of the Nation" (it is

through such logic that Nationalism can be twisted into Facism);

- (v) the idea that nationality is inherent in any piece of territory;
- (vi) the idea that any religious denomination has priority in deciding the social and moral ethos of the Nation.

2.

We believe that a nation is founded on its own sense of community. Factors such as language, geography, history, or culture, can all help to promote such a sense of community – but ultimately a nation's existence rests on the beliefs of its own people. We therefore believe:

- (i) that true patriotism is loyalty to real people and a willingness to work for the common good, rather than a devotion to myths and abstractions;
- (ii) that we should, within reason, be proud of the traditions and achievements of our nation;
- (iii) that we should, however, regard our history and our culture, not as objects for vainglory or retrospection, but rather as stimuli for a constantly dynamic society;
- (iv) that we must, therefore, develop a deeper and more progressive idiom for our Gaelic heritage, if it is to survive;
- (v) that there is no theoretical limit to the human sense of community, and therefore the ideal of European, or even of World unity, must be strongly supported;
- (vi) that special care must be taken not to make religious or cultural minorities feel excluded from the national sense of community;
- (vii) that there should be a formal and unambiguous separation of Church and State written into the Irish Constitution.

IV

Northern Ireland

No society can function without basic consensus:

1.

One of the greatest single tragedies afflicting our country today is the Northern Ireland conflict. We identify the following as the main causes of the situation:

- (i) the co-existence of conflicting national loyalties in the same area;

- (ii) the racist concept of nationalism which both sides have inherited from the last century;
- (iii) the idea, held both North and South, that majorities have the right to impose their will on minorities, even when no basic consensus exists;
- (iv) the siege mentality, and consequent sectarian intransigence, of both North and South;
- (v) the oppression of the minority in Northern Ireland for over half century;
- (vi) the indifference and indecisiveness of British Governments, and their insensitivity to the plight of those who have been on the receiving end of injustice;
- (vii) the hypocritical neglect and narrow-mindedness of Southern politicians;
- (viii) the belief, held by too many on all sides, that problems can only be solved by imposing one's will on someone else, even when this involves murder.

2.

We believe that the most desirable resolution of the conflict would be a United Ireland. We believe:

- (i) that there should be no unification unless it is on the basis of consensus, and that Articles 2 and 3 should be amended accordingly;
- (ii) that the British Government should make it clear that it will not indefinitely accept responsibility for governing Northern Ireland unless basic consensus is achieved – which recognises the existence of two national identities;
- (iii) that a united Ireland is not inevitable, and, although in our view the best option, is not necessarily the only one;
- (iv) that Southern Governments should be concerned about the welfare of the Nationalist minority for as long as that minority maintains the same National identity as the rest of us;
- (v) that the immediate goal of Government policy towards Northern Ireland must be the reduction of tension and improvement of North/South relations.

3.

We utterly reject both the use of violence to achieve political aims by any group, and we also reject both the aims and methods of the Provisional I.R.A. and all other paramilitary organisations. We also reject the claim of these paramilitaries who purport to speak on behalf of the Irish people:

- (i) we reject their methods, because they use violence in order to impose their rule on people who have not given their consent to be ruled;

- (ii) we reject their aims, because they seek an imposed solution;
- (iii) in their cult of violence, their extreme nationalism, and their pseudo-socialism, Sinn Fein are comparable to the Nazi Party before they gained power;
- (iv) as long as Sinn Fein and the I.R.S.P. refuse to acknowledge the democratic process, and reserve the right to overthrow the State by force (whether they are currently pursuing this objective is a secondary consideration), they have no inherent right to take part in such a process when it suits them;
- (v) we propose the introduction of an Incitement to Hatred Act, whereby all extremists making inflammatory statements in public would be subject to a large fine.

V

A Restless Society

People will be alienated from a society which makes them insignificant:

1.

Because of a failure to appreciate that human nature is essentially dynamic and creative, a number of mistaken beliefs are common in politics, such as:

- (i) that the basic job of government is to provide people with "a decent standard of living";
- (ii) that people should be satisfied with their lot;
- (iii) that the growth of pressure groups is unhealthy;
- (iv) that unless people are threatened with starvation they will prefer to do nothing;
- (v) that what is good enough for one generation should be good enough for the next.

2.

We believe that man is creative, and therefore:

- (i) that all of us feel the need to exercise some influence over the world we live in;
- (ii) that in a society constantly threatened with destitution most people's energies are absorbed in the struggle to survive, but that once people became secure they will not remain content with mere security;
- (iii) that people generally want to make their mark on society, and if they cannot do it constructively they will be destructive;
- (iv) that, unless we appreciate this, we will never be able to

understand more modern phenomena such as youth cults, the demands of pressure groups, or vandalism.

3.

As society becomes more affluent, it either becomes more thoroughly democratic or it will disintegrate. The traditional approach of "Do what you are told and we will provide" will no longer work.

VI

The Family

1.

The primary foundation of society's sense of community is the Family:

- (i) the family is characterised by a stronger mutual sense of responsibility than is normal in other institutions in our society;
- (ii) there is a sufficiently developed degree of trust in most families to facilitate co-operation and mutual service which are not governed by purely commercial considerations;
- (iii) the familial bond is the strongest bond of trust in human history.

2.

However, we must recognise that the position of the family in society has been diminishing over the centuries:

- (i) in earlier times all institutions, even governments, were based on families;
- (ii) as society has become more developed and integrated, there has been a growth of social, political and economic institutions not based on the family, which have effectively reduced the family's role;
- (iii) if this had not happened there could have been no progress towards freedom and equality;
- (iv) in developed societies the extended family has now all but disappeared as an important institution;
- (v) the weakening of the family is therefore due to deeper reasons than a change in attitudes to sexual mores.

3.

Given the above points, we believe:

- (i) that the success of the family unit is dependent on a proper proportion of tolerance, affection, and consideration from each of the individuals involved;
- (ii) that the deficiency of any of these qualities is the most common cause for marital breakdown;

- (iii) that it is better for all and sundry to terminate a moribund relationship, and start afresh, rather than to remain enchained by law; **Add** ①
- (iv) that, therefore, legal divorce should be available as a civil right on the basis that it would alleviate hardship for many individuals, while not undermining society to any significant extent;
- (v) that the idea that one parent has more responsibility for child-rearing or income earning than the other, should be rejected;
- (vi) that the status of illegitimacy is a cruel and absolutely pointless weapon which offers no protection for the family, while stigmatising many people for life, and should therefore be immediately abolished;
- (vii) that the State should not interfere in sexual relationships between mature adults, except where basic personal rights are violated.

②

VII

Democracy

Democracy is not just about giving consumers a choice of political brands, it is about encouraging people to take an interest in their society:

1.

Democracy is not just a system, it is an ideal to be cultivated as widely as possible:

- (i) democracy helps to encourage people to take a greater interest in the problems and issues facing the group they belong to;
- (ii) democracy can enhance people's sense of collective responsibility, though it also depends on a certain sense of responsibility in order to work in the first place;
- (iii) the open election of national parliaments is an elementary degree of democracy only – just as it is the role of governments to promote economic growth, it is also their role to promote the extension of democracy throughout all levels of society;
- (iv) there is always a limit to how far democracy can be carried in a given group at a given time, depending on the attitudes and abilities of the people in it;

- (v) the decision to extend democracy will always involve a risk, because conditions are never perfect, we must be prepared to take such risks.

2.

In order for democracy to function properly, the following conditions are necessary (and it is the duty of governments to promote them):

- (i) a sense of loyalty to the common good;
- (ii) basic standards of honesty in public representatives;
- (iii) a general awareness of the issues involved in the decisions that have to be made and a degree of responsibility for their actions;
- (iv) an awareness that no human being may ever lay claim to infallibility, or seek to impose his/her moral code on the rest of society.

3.

In a political system, the main instruments of democracy are the political parties:

- (i) if regular change on an adequate scale is to be possible, it must be the role of political parties not only to fight elections, but to propagate ideas;
- (ii) democracy functions through dialogue, with leaders taking initiatives, and subsequently reacting to the general response; therefore the parties must be prepared to take major initiatives, and to break new ground;
- (iii) it is not the function of a political party to see itself as a miniature replica of the Nation;
- (iv) parties must present an identifiable contrast in their beliefs as to the future direction of the country – otherwise it is irrelevant to most people who is in power, and support for the democratic system is undermined;
- (v) the internal running of political parties must be democratic, in both structure and spirit;
- (vi) the financing of political parties must be scrupulously honest and fully open to public scrutiny, and the sources of large donations to party coffers (over, say, £5000), should be fully disclosed, so as to prevent undue influence on party policy.

4.

If a Parliament shows itself incapable of handling the Nation's affairs in a serious and responsible manner, then the entire democratic process becomes undermined, and extremist or self-interest groups may gain advantage. We therefore believe:

- (i) that a full and radical reform of the Oireachtas, as currently constituted, is necessary as a matter of urgency;

- (ii) that this should include a reform of the electoral system, which would orientate politicians and voters alike, towards policies and issues, and divert emphasis from 'parish pump-style' politics;
- (iii) that the introduction of a d'Hondt ('list')-type system, and/or single seat constituency P.R., would be the best way to bring about such change;
- (iv) that the number of T.D.s and Senators in the Oireachtas should be significantly reduced, and the duration of sessions in both houses greatly increased;
- (v) that politicians should be constrained by certain economic guidelines, as honesty and commonsense dictate, in handling the Nation's finances;
- (vi) that politicians should inspire good example by moderation and candour in their private financial affairs and life-styles;
- (vii) that no elected politician should simultaneously occupy two or more salaried posts, be it membership of the European Parliament, of Local Councils, of Health Boards, or, indeed, membership of any profession other than that to which he/she was elected;
- (viii) that the franchise and democratic base of the Seanad should be extended to include Trade Unions, community groups, etc.

5.

We recognise the right of any Church or denomination to speak on matters affecting both the moral and physical welfare of its members. We believe it vitally important, however, because of their unique position in society, that every attempt should be made by them to ensure that their positions on various issues do not take on specific political content.

We believe it perfectly legitimate and consistent for an individual to follow a certain code of morality in their private lives while at the same time accepting that it should not be enforced upon others through statutory legislation or otherwise.

VIII

Local Government

Giving power to Local Government fosters community involvement:

1.

A properly functioning system of local Government is essential:

- (i) to counter-balance the deadening effects of creeping

centralisation (moving government departments out of Dublin does not achieve this);

- (ii) to make our public institutions more responsive to people;
- (iii) to extend the scope of democracy through society;
- (iv) to foster a sense of local identity and build a greater sense of local community.

2.

The local government system in Ireland is little more than a facade of local democracy, due to:

- (i) the negligible powers allocated to elected councillors in relation to non-elected officials;
- (ii) the amateur status of local councillors, which makes it difficult for them to get to grips with their job;
- (iii) the practice of rotating the Chair of local councils, which effectively prevents any real leadership emerging from them;
- (iv) the tight grip maintained by central government over local funding;
- (v) the apathy of the public towards local government on account of its obvious impotence;
- (vi) the consequent cynicism and frustration of local councillors, which tempts some to indulge in sharp practice;
- (vii) the failure to plan effectively or to rationalise local services.

3.

We believe that local government must be given a greater role, and therefore we want to see:

- (i) greater control by local councils over fund-raising for their own needs;
- (ii) the appointment of full-time representatives to a higher tier of regional councils, if and only if the transfer of effective power from central Government to it can so justify these appointments;
- (iii) county and city managers who are accountable to their own councils rather than central government;
- (iv) a monitoring and liaison role for local councils over government departments operating in their own areas;
- (v) local councils to be made the principal instrument of regional policy, through a transfer of resources to councils in the less wealthy areas of the country;
- (vi) a population limit of 100,000 for each local council area;
- (vii) the boundaries of local councils in urban areas more realistically conforming to the reality of existing population concentrations, instead of outdated county boundaries.

IX

Property

1.

The basic purpose of a property system is to provide the security necessary for a stable and productive society:

- (i) at any time, and in any society, there will be large numbers of people who are actively trying to increase their wealth;
- (ii) one's own wealth can be increased either by taking it from other people or by helping to create new wealth – it is the role of the State to maximise the latter and minimise the former;
- (iii) in unstable conditions it is quicker and less risky to increase one's wealth by taking it from others than by creating new wealth, therefore instability tends to promote crime and speculation rather than production;
- (iv) in order to avoid anarchy there must be a basic predictability in the way wealth is held or transferred – hence the need for some form of property system.

2.

Over the centuries the growth in confidence, and the development of a more integrated society, have been accompanied by a growing degree of flexibility in the property system:

- (i) more developed financial systems have been able to extend credit over vast distances and over long periods of time;
- (ii) insurance systems have been developed, which effectively pool resources to help those who encounter misfortune, and which help to encourage confidence;
- (iii) the State mainly through taxation, has taken on greater responsibility for promoting people's welfare;
- (iv) the effect of the above developments is to make the link between the property base of society and actual transactions which take place, more and more indirect;
- (v) this trend promotes a more integrated and productive society, but in order to be successful, there must be an accompanying growth in general confidence between people;
- (vi) if this trend developed far enough, it is at least theoretically possible that we could ideally reach a stage where the property system became irrelevant, because people would have developed sufficient confidence in each other to do without it;
- (vii) it is in society's interests to advance in this direction.

3.

If the property system is blurred in this way without the necessary growth in confidence, the effect is to actually undermine confidence in the more flexible forms of property, such as money;

- (i) when people lose confidence in the more transferrable types of property, among the effects will be inflation, speculation, and a loss of investment, trade, and employment;
- (ii) when this happens, it may be necessary to restore confidence through measures such as tightening credit and cutting back on government borrowing;
- (iii) such measures should be seen as a temporary move to steady the economy only, and once confidence has been restored the development towards greater integration must be resumed;
- (iv) the hardening of the property base effectively exacerbates the underlying inequalities in the distribution of wealth, so great sensitivity to the plight of the least well-off must be particularly shown while this adjustment is being made.

X

Education

Today's society needs an education system which motivates people to develop and exploit their creativity and innovative nature:

1.

Our education system plays a vital role in developing a country's sense of community:

- (i) an education system must develop the individual's personality, and make him/her capable of thinking rationally;
- (ii) the education system should seek to make people aware of, and respond to, the issues and problems currently facing their society, whether political, social or economic;
- (iii) the education system should seek to equip people with greater skills of communication, and a greater appreciation of human behaviour, thus enabling people to relate more effectively with each other;
- (iv) the more developed a society becomes, the more skills and understanding people will need if they are to be able to fend for themselves – the education system must seek to ensure that no one is left without those skills or understanding;

- (v) the education system should not play a divisive role through systematically segregating young people according to sex, denomination, social class or physical disability.

2.

Education is important for its economic effects as well as its social effects:

- (i) as important as a training in any specialised skill is an ability to think and understand, because such an ability enables one to pick up new knowledge and skills more quickly – for this reason we would support any curricular review designed at enhancing abstract and divergent thought in so-called ‘academic’ education;
- (ii) education must train people to do more than obey orders – people must also learn how to do things for themselves and to use initiative;
- (iii) only by learning to share responsibility for group activities do people learn the dynamics involved in running other groups, such as businesses.

3.

The basic role of education, therefore is not only to make people aware of their past and present, or to train them how to think, but also how to organise themselves to set realistic goals and to achieve them. This means developing a greater emphasis on, among other things:

- (i) extra-curricular activities, which students have at least some responsibility for organising themselves;
- (ii) project work, as opposed to more repetitive and soul-destroying types of exercises, which are so predominant;
- (iii) role-playing exercises and games in conjunction with actual “work experience” projects;
- (iv) a voice for students in some of the decision-making in their school or college.

XI

The Market

1.

The Market System is superior as a basic economic system to a command economy because:

- (i) it works more efficiently, being sensitive to constant shifts in supply and demand;

- (ii) being less bureaucratic, the market allows for more spontaneous creativity;
- (iii) a market economy can make people less dependent on authority.

2.

However, left to itself the market system has a number of defects, which it is the State's job to correct:

- (i) investment and talent tend to be attracted to the richest markets, and people with more money are at an advantage in accumulating further wealth;
- (ii) the result of this is that wealth is inexorably drained from poorer regions and social classes, threatening whole areas of society and the economy with collapse;
- (iii) some essential services, or new areas of potential wealth creation, require too great or long-term an investment for private entrepreneurs to be willing or able to undertake;
- (iv) a laissez-faire economy may work well when there is growth, but when problems appear, the lack of discipline in the market can too easily allow panic to unnecessarily cause a collapse;
- (v) when large businesses are so successful that they gain an effective monopoly over whole segments of the economy, most of the advantage of the market system are negated, because the element of competition has been removed;
- (vi) when private individuals or organisations are allowed to accumulate wealth on a scale which rivals sovereign states, they form a concentration of private power which causes instability and which threatens democracy.

3.

The economic role of the State will therefore include the following functions:

- (i) systematically organising a continuous transfer of resources to less well-off regions and sections of society;
- (ii) ensuring that essential services, such as communications, health, transport, education, and housing, are universally available at an acceptable standard;
- (iii) taking the initiative in wealth creation where private enterprise has left a gap and protecting the consumer from fraudulent trade and professional malpractice;
- (iv) regulating the market so as to prevent manipulation, and to intervene when a crisis of confidence threatens;
- (v) taking control over or regulating areas of the economy controlled by monopolies, and endeavouring to prevent the emergence of such monopolies where possible.

4.

We believe that local community ventures, co-operatives, and small businesses must be strongly supported for the following reasons:

- (i) they foster the local sense of community
- (ii) they create a spirit of mutual responsibility, possible only in a small group working together, which boosts moral and efficiency;
- (iii) they give an impetus to local creativity and self-reliance rather than cultivating dependence on centralised planning;
- (iv) the ideas of collective worker ownership, shareholding, and profitsharing are attractive extensions of democracy into the workplace, which make for good labour relations.

5.

Therefore the emphasis of industrial policy should:

- (i) be shifted from attracting large foreign multi-nationals to backing properly researched, small indigenous enterprises;
- (ii) favour worker involvement in decision-making and management.

6.

In order for this to happen, however, it is vital to put special effort into research and marketing, so as to identify, develop, and exploit new markets.

⑦ Add ⑦.

XII

Unemployment

1.

The greatest emergency facing us today is the unemployment crisis. Among its underlying causes are:

- (i) a world economy which has been unstable and prone to recession over the past fifteen years, and continues to be so;
- (ii) a growth in automation in manufacturing and clerical work which is eliminating jobs - this problem can be reduced if the greater profits made in manufacturing are harnessed to create more jobs in services;
- (iii) our almost total dependence for industry on foreign trans-nationals leaves us badly placed to harness their profits, unless we can retain a greater share of profits in this country

to replace the reduction in their income tax and P.R.S.I. contributions;

- (iv) an education system which has produced a largely unadaptable and passive working population, lacking in organisational and leadership skills

2.

Additions
Our difficulties are compounded by bottlenecks in the labour market which for example prevent unemployed people from starting work - however sporadic or low paid - without losing their welfare entitlements:

- (i) we propose that the present systems of tax allowances, unemployment benefits, and old age pensions be replaced by a uniform minimum national income, payable to every adult citizen whether working or not;
- (ii) such a revised system would be far simpler to administer, and would remove the humiliation of the dole queue;
- (iii) with such a system, unemployed people can take on low-paid or occasional work without having to lose their initial income;
- (iv) the payment of a basic minimum income would help to give breathing space to those starting off a new business or trade, which usually needs time before it makes an adequate profit;
- (v) many people may be encouraged to retire earlier or to work shorter hours, which would help to alleviate the present crisis;
- (vi) pay-related benefit would be treated separately, possibly on a self-financing basis as an insurance system;
- (vii) in the case of married couples, each would receive their income separately.

3.

Much has been said by those in politics about creating jobs for people; little has been said about the large numbers who will continue to be left without employment, or how their lot is to be made more acceptable:

- (i) the two evils resulting from unemployment—lack of income and lack of participation in society—will in many cases have to be tackled separately;
- (ii) we will have to dispense with the idea that work is not real work unless it is directly paid for, and that income is not deserved unless it is earned directly from work;
- (iii) if the scheme of a national minimum income is introduced (provided it is adequate), the main problem left to be tackled is to get people constructively involved in society;
- (iv) this makes it of the utmost importance to provide voluntary

and community groups with as much aid and encouragement (advice and training being perhaps even more important than finance) as possible;

- (v) the strengthening of democracy at local level is also of crucial importance in helping to get unemployed people with leadership ability involved constructively in local problems.

4.

'If the nature of work is properly appreciated and applied, it will stand in the same relation to the higher faculties as food is to the physical body. It nourishes and enlivens the higher man and urges him to produce the best he is capable of. It directs his free will along the proper course and disciplines the animal in him into progressive channels. It furnishes an excellent background for man to display his scale of values and develop his personality'

J.C. Kumarappa (Indian Economist)

This quotation eloquently emphasises the importance of employment to the human being. Government policies should have the objective of involving all individuals in the economic and social development of our society.

Considering our demographic structure which results in excess supply of labour, we strongly support the creation of a third sector which would lie outside the public and private sectors. This sector would provide socially useful employment; individuals would be employed within communities in the areas of sports, arts and entertainment, cultural development, health and welfare, advice centres, creches, pre-schools, community projects, etc. Remuneration would comprise of the minimum income and community contribution.

XIII

Inequality

1.

The widespread poverty in Ireland has always constituted the greatest waste of our resources:

- (i) whereas destitution is an absolute condition, poverty is a state relative to one's own society – people who lack the resources to be considered "respectable" and to participate in the mainstream of society are living in poverty;
- (ii) a lack of resources on the part of poverty-stricken people is more often than not compounded by a sense of helplessness and apathy:

- (iii) the elimination of poverty therefore requires both an adequate income for all citizens, and the development of self-confidence by those who lack it.

2.

We must recognise that the biggest single obstacle to building a sense of community is a deep and wide class division, which is perpetuated by many social structures and traditional attitudes. It is the duty of governments to seek to overcome this division:

- (i) the education system is perhaps the most important channel through which class divisions are perpetuated; to combat this, government subsidies to schools, direct or indirect, should be inversely proportionate to the amount of private aid available to them;
- (ii) the legal system is largely inaccessible to those without high income (except when they are arrested) – to combat this there must be an adequate system of free legal aid;
- (iii) many of the least well-off people can neither afford their own houses nor obtain local authority housing, yet the State offers no support for those in the private rented sector;
- (iv) many professions and trades are structured in such a way as to restrict access to those with low incomes or no contacts; no trade or profession should be left with control over entry to it in the hands of a private monopoly;
- (v) the quality of primary and secondary education should be sufficient to give everyone with ability a real choice of whether or not to attend 3rd level colleges, access to 3rd level education should never depend on income.

3.

To reduce the class divisions in society, it must be ensured not only that everyone is guaranteed a reasonable income and access to essential services, but also that power and influence are more widely diffused through society:

- (i) a national minimum income would more effectively combat poverty than the present profusion of ill-coordinated schemes, which leave many people out and even inordinately benefit some others;
- (ii) it is not enough to ensure that everyone has an income; some people will need sustained and personal attention in order to help build their own sense of dignity and to learn how to organise themselves;
- (iii) in areas which are too poor to pay for essential services, such as transport or education to be maintained at an acceptable standard, subsidies must be made available – preferably locally – to achieve this; it is not necessary for these services to be always organised directly by the State;

XIV

Crime

- (iv) in organising a transfer of resources to the less well-off, we believe that a system of direct grants to individuals is the most efficient mechanism, sectoral or regional grants less so (though still often necessary), and price subsidies are the least satisfactory;
- (v) the integration of society must also be developed through the extension of democracy at local level and in the work place.

1.

The current rise in crime is symptomatic of the breakdown of social cohesion and the weak sense of community in Ireland today:

- (i) the traditional ideas on which Irish society had been built, and which have animated our politics, have failed to adapt to modern conditions and fail to win the allegiance of an increasing number of people;
- (ii) the growth of our towns and cities has been chaotic, and has resulted in the proliferation of anonymous, under-served residential areas which are ideal for crime;
- (iii) the greater affluence of the last couple of decades has not for the most part been accompanied by the development of a more democratic society which would harness people's energies more constructively;
- (iv) the catastrophic rise in unemployment has made its own contribution to the rise in crime.

2.

The ability of a police force to combat crime depends mainly on the degree to which it commands public confidence:

- (i) the severity of sentences imposed on criminals is less relevant in deterring crime than the perceived likelihood of being caught in the first place;
- (ii) the key to increasing crime detection is the development of closer relations between gardaí and the public;
- (iii) extra care must be taken to deal firmly with any abuses by individual gardaí should they occur, so that public confidence in the integrity of the gardaí is maintained at a maximum;
- (iv) the risk of crimes being committed must be reduced as far as possible – but not at the price of increasing the risk of innocent people being wrongly convicted.

9

3.

The quality of the judiciary must be improved through stricter qualification requirements, and greater specialisation of particular judges in particular areas.

4.

The purpose of prison should not be primarily one of retribution but to assert the importance of the law: the prison regime should be (which it manifestly is not) designed to encourage as many prisoners as possible to re-integrate into society.

XV

Industrial Relations

1.

It is no longer generally feasible for employers to direct their employees in a dictatorial manner, constantly relying on the threat of immediate dismissal and destitution:

- (i) we believe that it is natural for people to want to work, given acceptable conditions:
- (ii) the continuation of a teacher-pupil type of relationship in the workplace tends to produce a rebellious and irresponsible attitude on the part of employees:
- (iii) our management approach tends to be pre-occupied with structures and systems and to neglect the development of human skills and motivation, such as through promoting belief in the service which a business is providing to society and development of a sense of mutual responsibility:
- (iv) work performance can be encouraged as much through recognition (particularly for those already highly paid) as through the incentive of higher pay;
- (v) the Government should take all possible steps to eliminate discrimination in employment against any section of society, whether on the basis of sex, religion or social background.

2.

The constant battle between management and unions for re-distribution of profits could be more constructively focussed on an effort to re-distribute decision-making power:

- (i) Trade Unions should abandon a confrontational and defensive approach to industrial relations where possible, and seek instead to win an expanding place for themselves in the structures of management, and as social partners in a creative role.

- (ii) if employers resist giving increased responsibilities to employee representatives, they have only themselves to blame if their employees behave irresponsibly;
- (iii) conflict between management and unions can be creative or destructive; if it is handled responsibly by both sides, mutual respect and understanding can develop as a result, which facilitates the growth of industrial democracy;
- (iv) the law should play a more active role in regulating industrial relations, and in promoting the development of industrial democracy on an orderly basis;
- (v) it is equally important both to protect employees against arbitrary dismissal and to ensure that it is nonetheless possible to dismiss incompetent employees after due process.

XVI

Natural Resources

The Government has a right and a duty to ensure that our natural resources are harnessed to the maximum benefit of society.

1.

The greatest single area of wealth creation from natural resources lies in agriculture. The chief goals of Government policy in improving our agriculture must be:

- (i) the development of a comprehensive medium-term plan for agriculture;
- (ii) to increase the level of education and training available to farmers;
- (iii) adequate provision of resources to advisory services in both funding and manpower.

2.

Creation of wealth from our natural resources, including forestry, fisheries, and land, may not always be spontaneously undertaken by private enterprise, so the Government must play a guiding role in such ways as:

- (i) investing in areas which yield a return only after a long period;
- (ii) establishing incentives to encourage planting of deciduous trees in addition to those in operation for commercial coniferous plantings;

- (iii) ensuring that the possibilities of creating wealth from downstream industries are exploited to the full;
- (iv) controlling the exploitation of natural resources which are in danger of being exhausted prematurely.

3.

Ownership of the country's natural resources ultimately belongs to the community, and therefore the Government has a right and a duty to ensure that these resources are harnessed to the benefit of society, in such ways as:

- (i) ensuring that oil, gas or minerals are exploited for the maximum benefit to the National economy. We believe that this can be best attained by a policy of extraction and a use of the revenues which will lessen the possibility of uncontrolled disruption of the social and economic order. This is not a plea for the status quo. Change may be both necessary and desirable but should be carried out in a controlled fashion;
- (ii) curbing land speculation.

4.

Our Environmental heritage, whether geographical, archaeological, historical or natural, must be given the full protection of law (ultimately overseen by a central co-ordinating body) by:

- (i) legislation outlawing pollution of our land, sea, lakes, rivers, and air, being promulgated, with appropriate and severe penalties as deterrents;
- (ii) introduction of a comprehensive set of minimum standards, recognised by International agencies, to guarantee quality of air and water;
- (iii) passing legislation giving full protection to all our field monuments, submerged archaeological sites, and rationalising the treasure trove laws; Add
- (iv) investment in sign-posting of, and pamphlets on, archaeological sites open to the public (as is done with State forests and National Parks);
- (v) enforcement of existing wildlife legislation by more adequate funding of and recruitment to, the wildlife ranger service and the establishment of a network of nature reserves representative of the natural heritage.

1.

Since the early Seventies the world economy has been in a shaky condition, due mainly to the weakening or collapse of some of the main pillars on which international confidence has rested since the War:

- (i) the cheap and secure energy supply on which Europe in particular depended has become radically more expensive and precarious;
- (ii) an orderly system of international exchange rates has given way to a sharply fluctuating exchange regime which increases uncertainty in international trade;
- (iii) the United States in particular has been reducing its contribution to international institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank;
- (iv) the uncertainties of world trade have been aggravated by a trend towards protectionism;
- (v) the societies of the more developed countries have been too rigid to be able to adjust smoothly to the obsolescence of traditional industries, often maintaining them as a heavy burden on their economies.

2.

Some of the major problems of the world economy are due to the rapid growth of capital held by private corporations and individuals in comparison to that held by governments:

- (i) trans-national corporations are now the prime movers of the world economy, and the advantage they hold due to their economy of scale and concentration of high technology guarantees their continued dominance;
- (ii) however, the shallowness of their roots in the societies where they operate, and the consequent ease with which they can shift location, increases the unpredictability and volatility of economic conditions;
- (iii) most of the world's international trade now consists of internal transactions of trans-national corporations (e.g. Ford of Britain selling spare parts to Ford of Germany); the prices governing this trade are not sensitive to the laws of supply and demand, as they can be artificially set by the headquarters of these companies;
- (iv) the increase in wealth held in private hands has made speculation in currency and commodity markets far more difficult to control;
- (v) the so-called Euro-currency market (offshore financial

transactions uncontrolled by government regulation) has expanded out of all proportion, making the whole world financial system acutely vulnerable to any major collapse of confidence.

3.

Perhaps the greatest reason of all for economic instability is the precarious condition of nearly all Third World economies:

- (i) compared to the structural transfer of resources to poorer areas and people within developed countries, the international transfer of resources is negligible;
- (ii) the result of this is a continuing drain of wealth from the great majority of less developed countries;
- (iii) most Third World countries depend heavily on the export of one or two commodities, and are vulnerable to damage caused by price fluctuations;
- (iv) inflation in countries at the core of the world economy tends to transfer at a higher rate to countries on the periphery.
- (v) Third World countries have had to sink deeper and deeper into debt in order to stay afloat;
- (vi) perhaps the greatest current threat to the world economy is a default on foreign debts by a major Third World country;
- (vii) tackling the crisis will require major and continuous transfers of resources from wealthy to poorer areas.

4.

The economic crisis is fundamentally due to the weakness and division of political structures in a world in which the global economy is increasingly interdependent, and in which economic forces, both financial and industrial, transcend national boundaries. Political structures must be strong enough to provide stability and regulation to the workings of the market; when they fail to do this adequately the result is instability and lack of confidence.

XVIII

The Threat of War

1.

The current Superpower conflict is essentially a continuation of the hostility and suspicion that have always dominated relations between the USSR and the Western Powers since 1917:

- (i) it is in the nature of every power bloc to seek to extend its influence at every possible opportunity;

- (ii) the ideological dimension to the Soviet-Western confrontation, while important, tends to be overstressed;
- (iii) the conflict between the Superpowers is not merely one which revolves around a military threat, but is a power struggle taking place all over the globe on diplomatic, economic and ideological levels – Ireland is not neutral on the last three;
- (iv) in combating Soviet influence in the Third World, the West is disadvantaged by its identification with Apartheid and with past and present economic exploitation, by its support for tyrannical regimes against popular resistance, and by the continuing injustice suffered by various groups,

2.

The comfortable idea that the mutual threat of nuclear destruction will indefinitely stave off war is becoming increasingly untenable:

- (i) each Superpower is actively pursuing the possibility of destroying each other's nuclear arsenal in a single strike, thus removing the certainty of deterrence;
- (ii) the United States in particular, has been exploring the idea of 'flexible response', that is the possibility of fighting a war, even involving nuclear weapons, which is less than total;
- (iii) the arms race cannot be tackled completely in isolation from the overall relationship between the Powers;
- (iv) the West has tended to see Detente as meaning freezing the present power position and calling off the rivalry, whereas the Soviets see Detente as meaning simply that the ongoing struggle stops short of full-scale war;
- (v) it is inherently impossible to stop power blocs from vying with each other for greater influence, but it is possible to agree rules and procedures in order to regulate and contain the conflict;
- (vi) the arms race is now escalating into outer space and urgently needs to be controlled;
- (vii) the threat of war is heightened by the economic crisis, while defence spending drains resources from the world economy.

3.

The basic goal which all states must aim for is the elimination of war as a feature of international relations:

- (i) this can be achieved in the immediate future through unilateral disarmament;
- (ii) history has witnessed a change in the climate of international opinion which has made naked colonialism largely both unacceptable and unprofitable – the fact that Powers extend their influence through more indirect means is undeniable, but nonetheless a step in the right direction;

- (iii) it is therefore both practicable and urgent to work for a similar rejection of the use of military force in the pursuit of greater influence;
- (iv) to achieve this, there must be a further development of popular solidarity, so that the military deterrent can eventually be replaced as a means of defence by the deterrent of an unbreakable campaign of civil resistance:
- (v) systematic research and training in the art of organising civil resistance should take up a growing share of national defence budget;
- (vi) we do not believe that Ireland should join NATO.
- (vii) that Irish Governments actively oppose the installation of bases or equipment with a nuclear potential, in Northern Ireland.

XVIV

Europe

1.

The countries of the European Community are suffering from increasingly serious economic disadvantages because of our divisions:

- (i) despite the E.M.S., the currency fluctuations between the member states continue to be a handicap to trade and investment;
- (ii) each country now represents too small a market to provide the level of competition needed to keep European business abreast of developments in the United States and Japan;
- (iii) each country is now too small to be capable of stimulating economic growth in isolation, without the effects of extra investment being dissipated on imports;
- (iv) each member-state is incapable in isolation of achieving the same economies of scale in high technology research and development as can be achieved in the United States or Japan;
- (v) the protectionist measures adopted by each of the member-states are a heavy burden on trade;
- (vi) it is impossible for the member-states in isolation to negotiate from a position of strength with trans-national corporations or to regulate international financial markets.

2.

Although the European Community shares a common interest

with the United States in containing the influence of the Soviet Union, our interests and attitudes diverge in many ways:

- (i) Europe depends on imports from the Third World for raw materials far more than the United States;
- (ii) for historical reasons, Europeans have a greater awareness of the reality of the Third World than Americans;
- (iii) European Powers have a long historical experience of dealing with other Powers on an equal basis, whereas the United States has only the experience of either isolation or dominance;
- (iv) Europeans tend to see the Superpower conflict as a power struggle, whereas both Americans and Soviets are too apt to cast themselves in the role of crusaders;
- (v) if a 'limited war' were to be attempted, Europe is likely to be the battlefield.

3.

For both political and economic reasons, therefore, it is imperative that Europe pull itself out of its present crisis and act as a coherent body on the world stage, which will require:

- (i) a transfer of greater power from the Council of Ministers to the Commission and Parliament, so as to end the present endemic paralysis of decision making;
- (ii) a co-ordinated economic strategy for growth;
- (iii) a European currency, backed by a reserve fund;
- (iv) an incomparable stronger regional policy;
- (v) a common approach to dealing with trans-national corporations;
- (vi) a common foreign policy; **ADD**
- (vii) a common environmental policy;
- (viii) pooling of resources for technological research and development.

4.

We wholeheartedly embrace the idea of a European political union and fully endorse the draft treaty approved by the European Parliament.

XX

Global Policy

Introduction

The international policy of Young Fine Gael is based upon the positive use of Ireland's world position to promote the peaceful

co-existence of nations, the reconciliation of peoples, and the extension of basic, fundamental human rights throughout the world. We see Ireland's position as being that of an ex-colonial nation, militarily non-aligned, but politically committed to the principles of democracy, justice and individual as well as collective human rights.

The afore-mentioned principles should guide the international policy of Young Fine Gael and also the foreign policy of our country.

Development

We are committed to the extension of the principles of a just society to the international arena. As an ex-colony we know only too well the deprivations which colonial masters in yesteryears, and neo-colonial masters today, caused, and still cause, in the developing world. Ireland is singularly well-placed to take the initiative and provide an example in this regard. Therefore, Young Fine Gael will, on all possible occasions, press for and support:

- (i) the rapid expansion of Ireland's official development assistance to meet the United Nations target of 7% of G.N.P. (presently at just .23%);
- (ii) the establishment of an effective national development education programme for schools to raise awareness of the real issues of underdevelopment;
- (iii) the expansion of European Community support for Developing countries, particularly in the Lome treaties, and oppose protectionist measures against the goods of Developing countries;
- (iv) the establishment of a New International Economic Order, along the lines of the Brandt Report, and urge the Government to take the initiative in the international arena to promote a realistic transfer of resources from the Developed to the Developing World;
- (v) safeguards to prevent Development Assistance being abused by regimes which deny or interfere with basic, fundamental human rights;
- (vi) safeguards to prevent the imposition of the culturally determined values of the Developed World upon the Developing World;
- (vii) the prioritisation of long-term rural and agricultural development.

Peace

We view the relations between the Superpowers with extreme concern. Two nations, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., have the capability of destroying life as we know it on this planet. While we

do not see the political systems of the two Powers equally, we do believe that they have co-equal responsibility for the threat to humanity which their stocks of illegal chemical, biological and nuclear weapons pose. As its contribution to the process of peace, Young Fine Gael will advocate the following policies:

- (i) opposition to the extension of war capabilities into space;
- (ii) encouragement for all disarmament initiatives, and push for greater Irish participation in such initiatives at the United Nations;
- (iii) oppose any moves in the European Community towards militarisation, and strive for military disarmament throughout the Continent of Europe;
- (iv) establishment of an effective system of civil resistance as an integral part of our defence capabilities;
- (v) to oppose all Superpower interference and exploitation of the political strife within or between Third World countries.

Participation

We see myriad examples of injustice in the world which prevent the rightful participation of peoples in their societies. Repression, torture and political terrorism represent insidious attacks upon everything we, as democrats, represent. In all such cases our voices must be raised, both nationally and internationally, in solidarity with peoples terrorised by their Governments or armed minorities. On such issues young Fine Gael will have the following policy;

- (i) to raise such issues both within the organisation and nationally;
- (ii) to lobby the Minister for Foreign Affairs to take a strong stand on such issues and to use his/her position on a European and international level to recognise the problem and press for a solution;
- (iii) to raise such issues at all international fora in which Young Fine Gael participates;
- (iv) to take concrete actions at national level including boycotts, demonstrations and informational events.

Conclusion

Any statement of principles will be attacked by the cynic as being so many useless platitudes. We affirm, however, that as an organisation of Irish youth we have a right and a duty to put forward positive policies of hope. Any honourable venture begins with the ideas of individuals, and through perserverance will end in success.