

## Statement by Labour (February 1979)

**Caption:** In the run-up to the first direct elections to the European Parliament, due to be held in June 1979, the Irish Labour Party issues a statement in February 1979 outlining its vision of European integration and the role that Ireland might play in such a process.

**Source:** Community Report. February 1979, No 2; Vol. 2. Dublin: Irish Office of the European Communities.

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### Socialists

The direct elections to the European Parliament offer to the people of the member states of the Community their first opportunity to express democratically their views on its future development. The Labour Party welcomes this chance to place before the Irish electorate its policies and proposals on the major issues which arise in connection with that development. The direct elections, however, represent little more than the first step in the process of building a democratic Community whose first concern will be the welfare of all its citizens.

The Labour Party will contest these elections on the basis of its democratic socialist philosophy and policies which are directly relevant to Ireland's national problems and to the needs of the Community as a whole. The party's policies have been framed in the light of its critical appraisal of the Community's performance in recent years. The economic and social system has failed to overcome the challenge of mass unemployment and of regional imbalance. Social injustice is still widespread. The institutions of the Community have lost all dynamism and are seen to be inadequate to deal with the problems facing the people.

To the problems of unemployment and inequality must be added new issues. The Community must face up to the needs of the Third World, the scarcity of energy resources, the maldistribution of raw materials and the threat of pollution. There will have to be effective control of the multinationals with their undemocratic influence on growth and jobs. The Community must also have regard to the signs of social deprivation and alienation which reflect the failure of the system. Deep and lasting changes are necessary and it is for these that socialists are striving.

The Labour Party, with its sister parties in the Confederation of Socialist Parties of the European Community, has elaborated a range of policies to deal with these challenges. The Labour Party has adopted a detailed policy statement which covers all areas of political concern. The Confederation has made a clear statement of the common stance of its eleven member parties on the central questions facing the electors of the Nine. Both of these documents are based upon a socialist analysis of the situation and upon the belief that a planned approach to economic and social change can lead to the creation of a better and more humane society in Europe. They equally recognise the Community's responsibility in a world context.

The socialist approach stresses, above all, the right to work and the consequent necessity of a combination of economic, regional and structural policies geared to achieve full employment by the utilisation of all available resources, especially through the direct action of the state.

Agricultural policy is recognised as central. The CAP must go forward with the goals of a better balance between production and consumption; more stable prices; and enhanced farm incomes through greater productivity and better structural policies.

Social policies must be geared to tackle deprivation, to reduce and ultimately remove basic inequalities and to end discrimination. Human rights must be promoted and defended. Economic democracy including full worker participation is at the heart of all socialist policy.

The Community must be a positive force for peace through the responsible use of its great economic power. Its policies must ensure its independence, its commitment to justice, the rejection of imperialism and the strengthening of the process of world development. Ireland's neutrality will have to be guaranteed. The enlargement of the Community is welcomed.

The Labour Party will campaign on the basis of these progressive and relevant policies and as part of the Community-wide socialist movement. The policies which Labour Party members of the directly-elected European Parliament will pursue will reflect the real needs of this country within the Community since they will place particular stress on economic development, regional balance, jobs, human rights and social progress. Equally they will contribute to the overall forward movement of the Community as a more

democratic, more economically advanced and more socially just group of nations, fully conscious of its world responsibilities.

The direct elections will give Ireland democratic representation within the institutions of the Community. It is essential that this representation should be both effective and soundly based in terms of policy. Within the new European Parliament the Socialist Group will be the largest and most influential group. Much of the most important work of the European Parliament is done through the activity of the political groups and it is at this level that the most effective case can be made for legitimate Irish interests. The election of Labour Party members to the Socialist Group will ensure that Ireland's voice is heard where it really matters.

The Labour Party is confident that its policies will be seen by the electorate as realistic and idealistic. A vote for Labour in the direct elections will be a vote for strong representation in the strongest and most progressive group within the new democratic assembly.

*by Tony Brown, International Secretary*