

Republican **SINN FÉIN** Poblachtach

# SAOL NUA

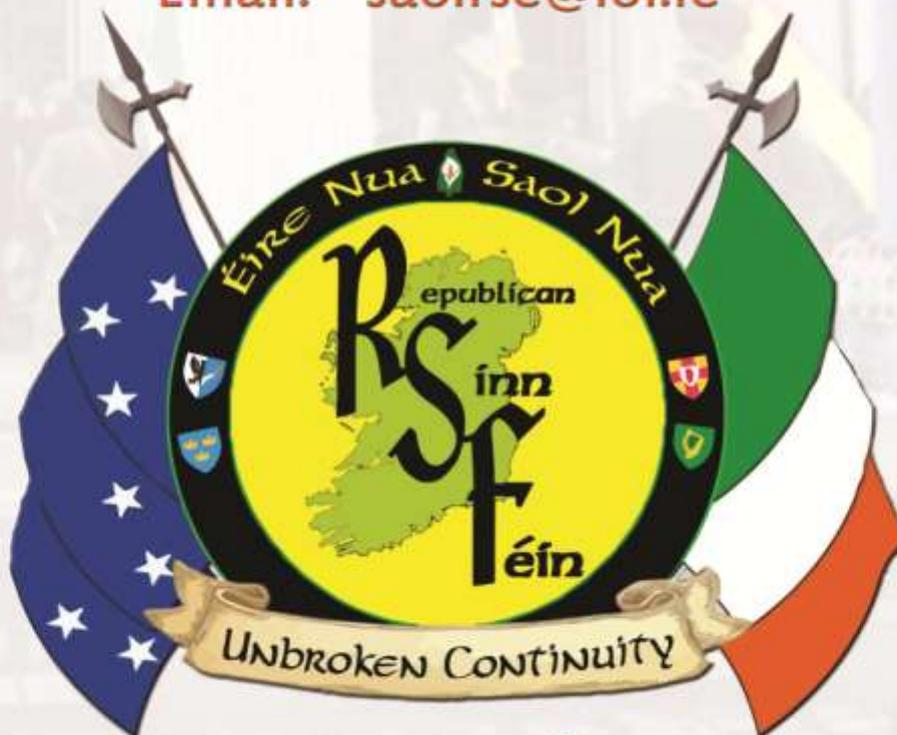
## A NEW WAY OF LIFE



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# Saol Nua – A New Way of Life

## **The Real Alternative**

### *A New Vision of Ireland*

Éire Nua — A New Democracy is the title of the SINN FÉIN Poblachtach Programme for a New Federal Ireland which would provide for four Provincial Parliaments and the maximum measure of local participatory democracy.

This structure would replace the two states created in Ireland in 1922 as part of the English ‘settlement of the Irish problem’. Éire Nua would ensure that every citizen of Ireland could participate in a new and genuine democracy.

New structures in a free Ireland would not of themselves bring about a just social and economic order, but they would make it possible to introduce progressive policies which would lead to the social, cultural and economic emancipation of all the Irish people.

Any realistic assessment of the results of partition government in Ireland will show that the arrangement has been a failure. The failure of the Six-County state is perhaps more obvious and certainly more widely acknowledged. The 26-County state has also been a failure, insofar as it has manifestly failed to provide a living, in decent comfort, for all its citizens.

The system of colonial capitalism, which decimated the Irish population under the Act of Union of 1800, still operates in Ireland. For nine decades of the twentieth century, one out of every two persons born in Ireland was forced to emigrate. Those who remained experienced unemployment rates of up to 20% in the 26 Counties and 15% in the Six Counties at various times.

Even during the period of the Celtic Tiger, one in every four households and one in every five people in the 26 Counties were living in poverty. These figures are from Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) data and are based on the ESRI 50% poverty line. This poverty line, which is used in many European studies, is a line which is half average income, adjusted for family size and composition. On this basis, the ESRI figures show a substantial increase in poverty between 1987 and 2000.

The gap between rich and poor continues to widen and the social consequences of this alienation and degradation are tangible and widespread.

The United Nations Human Development Report, launched in Dublin in July 2003, contains some shocking statistics for the 26 Counties:

**9.3% of those born today are not expected to survive the age of 60;**  
**22.6% of adults lack functional literary skills;**  
**12.3% live below the poverty line, as defined by the UN.**

This means that the 26 County State is second only to the United States as being the most unequal society in what is known as the Developed World, that is second worst out of 17 countries. The 'United Kingdom', which includes the Six Counties, is ranked fifteenth. Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands have the lowest levels of poverty.

Membership of the EU since 1973 has served to accelerate the forces of transnational capitalism which leave Ireland in such a debilitated condition. The new closer political union envisaged for the EU will result in the Irish people having even less control of their own affairs and we shall be treated as a mere 'region' by the economic planners who serve the interests of big business and the transnational companies.

The substantial increase in employment opportunities which came with the Celtic Tiger was brought about by the arrival of EU structural funds and the

encouragement of foreign, mainly US, capital investment by reducing tax on corporate profits. A lot of the new employment is in low-paid service jobs. A significant price has been and will be paid for this strategy. Irish sea fisheries have already been decimated by the fleets of other EU states and tens of thousands of farmers have been driven off the land. Indigenous industry has been neglected. Housing accommodation is outrageously expensive. The tax base has been narrowed in such a way that our spending on social Protection Expenditure has become the lowest in the EU. This expenditure includes spending on health care, unemployment, disability, old age, family/children and initiatives to deal with social exclusion.

The advent of the Euro currency has deprived us of one of the pillars of national sovereignty, a national currency and the right to set our own interest and exchange rates. All of these developments place us in a precarious position whenever the foreign capitalists begin to pull out and locate elsewhere in the world wherever they can find cheaper labour.

All of this free movement of capital has produced a real danger that the Irish banking system will fall completely into foreign ownership. The collapse of the Soviet system in eastern Europe does not at all signal the triumph of capitalism or market economies. Both systems have been centralising, impersonal, unecological and unethical. They have been disabling for millions of people, by making them dependent and they have been destructive of the earth and its resources. The high-consumption, high-pollution lifestyles of the rich countries are based on the exploitation of the poorer nations and are now also hopelessly unsustainable.

Free-rein transnational capitalism is a denial of true democracy, is outside of any democratic control, is predatory and dehumanising, and has not served the interests of the majority of people. The pursuit of endless economic 'growth', ever more centralised and undemocratic, as within the EU, must be replaced by a completely new decentralised and humane system.

Sinn Féin Poblachtach sees conventional economies as an unsustainable discipline which must be subordinated to social, environmental, ethical and spiritual values.

## **Decentralised and humane system**

We need a new system of economies which would put human beings and human development before the interests of finance and maximisation of profits. Major changes are now needed in order to promote the true long-term interests of people and social justice. We need to create a new vision of the Ireland we want, lay our plans accordingly and give our people a sense of direction and purpose.

It is apposite to recall here the prophetic words of the Irish patriot, James Connolly: “If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle unless you set about the organisation of the Socialist Republic your efforts would be in vain.

*“England would still rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and individualist institutions she has planted in this country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs.*

*“England would still rule you to your ruin, even while your lips offered hypocritical homage at the shrine of that Freedom whose cause you had betrayed.”*

James Connolly and Patrick Pearse died but the system they sought to change continues in existence to this very day. This system has forced 2,000,000 Irish people to emigrate since 1916.

Here in this document Sinn Féin Poblachtach seeks to outline the principal elements of its Social and Economic Programme. We are of a firm belief that a continuation of the present system, whether on the basis of the partition arrangement or in some form of united Ireland, within or without the EU, cannot bring about the human, social and economic development which would promote freedom, equality, justice and the happiness of each community and each individual person in it.

Centuries of colonialism and decades of high emigration and unemployment have produced a psychology of defeatism in Ireland. To accept these problems as inevitable is to lower our standards of national achievement. The politicians who advocate closer integration into the EU see this body as a mere mechanism of escape from their own ineptitude and failures.

Something new, based on a set of human values and on policies designed to promote these values, is needed. These values and policies are outlined below, and indicate the road to a new society in Ireland – Saol Nua.

## **ORIGIN OF SAOL NUA**

The November 1991 Ard-Fheis of SINN FÉIN Poblachtach instructed the incoming Ard-Chomhairle to develop a new Social and Economic Programme for the organization.

The Ard-Chomhairle, at meetings in early 1992 drafted Saol Nua and in July sent it to all Cumainn.

The November, 1992 Ard-Fheis adopted the Programme with some amendments.

Saol Nua – a new way of life, represents a vision of Ireland based on Republican, Socialist, Self-reliance and Ecological principles. The basic values are the foundation on which Saol Nua is built.

At the request of the 2002 Ard-Fheis, the Programme was updated in 2003.

## **NA BUN-LUACHANNA**

*The basic values of a New Society in Ireland*

### **Power to the people**

A concern for people, their welfare, well-being and happiness and a desire to cherish all the children of the nation equally. Every person is entitled to have his or her inherent human dignity respected and every citizen should be able to enjoy freedom from poverty or insecurity and to have access to a fair and adequate share of the nation's wealth. All citizens should be equal before the law and all have the duty and the right to contribute by work to their own welfare and the welfare of society.

We guarantee equality to all citizens regardless of race, colour, religion, ethnic or national origins, sexual orientation or gender.

A sense of the importance of pluralism in Ireland, and respect for the different traditions within the nation and a guarantee of freedom of expression, religion and philosophical opinion. We are committed to complete separation of church and state.

A recognition that human dignity requires the promotion of self-reliance in individuals, families and communities, on the basis of social justice. This involves reducing the extent to which so many people have been made dependent on the state, employers or financial operators.

A belief in a social and economic system which would develop the capability of people to take greater control of their lives. People have a right to shape the decisions which affect them. Both economics and technology should not be regarded as value-free, but should serve people by enabling them to become more productive and lead more satisfying and fulfilling lives. Over-emphasis on material 'needs' or wants has led to many social problems, greed and corruption.

A conviction that a fuller participatory democracy should replace the inadequate and abused system of representative democracy. This democracy would include economic democracy. Local worker/producer-owned cooperatives and community enterprises would be encouraged and developed. Local economic autonomy and self-sufficiency would be promoted and people would be encouraged to organise themselves and run their own affairs without recourse to the big cities or politicians.

A desire to see the nation organised as a community of communities, with Liberty, Equality and Justice for all citizens, and an approach to economic life and thought which would include qualitative values and ethical choice.

An understanding that most of the earth's resources are finite and that they must be used in a manner which is non-wasteful and sustainable. This means that waste and pollution are to be avoided and the environment protected and that resources should be available to all, including future generations.

A belief in the value of cultural and national identity and the need to conserve, promote and develop the Irish language as the distinctive central core of that Irish identity. This will change the present cultural dependency on England and the United States.

A realisation of the need for a comprehensive system of education for all children and continuing education for adults. The quality of people's lives depends greatly on their education, which, for the young should be child-centred and for adults should be community-centred, with an appropriate balance between academic and technical education, and a commitment at all times to equity for women within the education system.

A firm conviction of the necessity of national sovereignty and of the right to strive to achieve and uphold this sovereignty. Democracy can best function in a meaningful way at local and national levels. Within the national community there is sufficient solidarity, mutual identification and mutuality

of interest among people to induce minorities to agree freely to majority rule. Thus there is a shared citizenship, allegiance to a common government and a willingness to finance that government's tax and income transfer system. The solidarities which exist within nations do not exist between them. Multinational federations are unstable, artificial and repressive entities. Such federations like the USSR and Yugoslavia have come apart in recent times and many nation-states have come into existence. It behoves all Democrats and Socialists to work to defend the nation-states from transnational capital.

The Republican and Democratic aims and principles of the 1916 Proclamation and of the First Dáil Éireann, 1919 inspire and guide us in our efforts to bring a lasting peace with justice to all the Irish people.

A sense that we all have a common identity as human beings, as members of the great family of peoples. We wish to play our role in this wider world community as internationalists, on the basis of equality and respect for the rights of others. In particular, we would wish to eliminate the kinds of international trade and international debt that impoverish the peoples of the Third World. We advocate neutrality in respect to military alliances and power blocs and we feel a sense of solidarity with all peoples who are struggling for freedom and justice.

Truth, honesty, and justice should be the hallmarks of all our endeavours.

## **LONG-TERM POLICY**

*People come first*

*The welfare and well-being of all, meeting the real needs of human nature . . . not merely satisfying the wants created by the consumer society.*

It is a fundamental conviction of Sinn Féin Poblachtach that people come first, that all Social and Economic policy should serve the interests of people. We know that in Ireland today vast fortunes are made and enjoyed by a small, select class of people, mainly from the ranks of politicians, (with their numerous expenses, pensions, etc), financiers, business people, property developers and media gurus. This 'state class' is part of an international set which directs, operates or facilitates capital, both Irish and transnational. Their interests prevail over those of the ordinary people.

Meanwhile, family farms are being eliminated and the rural economy is collapsing. There is a lot of real poverty, inadequate health and education services and increasing unemployment as foreign capitalists pull out of Ireland. This in turn produces grave social problems and personal misery for thousands of individuals and families. Emigration, the safety-valve which let politicians off the hook for generations, could well return.

To work is a natural thing for people. Every person is entitled to an opportunity to use his or her talent in meaningful, satisfying and productive work. A lot of lip-service is paid to the importance of our human resources. But quick-fix solutions, based on a sell-out of national sovereignty, natural resources and national identity is a poor substitute for developing our own resources according to the needs of our own people.

It is surely not beyond the ingenuity of people to organise society in a way which provides for the welfare and well-being of all. Provision of work opportunities should be a primary objective of any radical programme, and radical steps are necessary. One fundamental of such a programme is that

there should be a discernible shift of emphasis. We need to develop a lifestyle which puts material things in their proper place, which is secondary, not primary. Such a lifestyle would give first place to the real needs of human nature and would be compatible with the living nature around us and with the finite resources of the earth.

The 'haves' may well be a greater problem than the 'have nots', because in the lifestyle of the acquisitive consumer society they move from one material 'fix' to the next, the second automobile, the second holiday, the yacht, the villa in Spain, etc. Meanwhile, those who have nothing to sell but their labour are in the weakest position of all, marginalised to the fringes of society, with many of them condemned to long-term unemployment. The escalating crime rate is one of the inevitable social problems which result from this national scandal.

Those who operate this system have devised measures of economic success which are quantitative rather than qualitative. This explains how Ireland had for years economic "growth" and rising unemployment at the same time. It is refreshing to note that the UN Development Programme Report for 1990 concluded that 'the link between economic growth and human progress is not automatic.'

The economic growth of recent years has been based on production and consumption, the consumer society, and has been achieved at the expense of many positive values. In financial terms, it has enriched the elite and left the majority relatively worse off. Selfishness and individualism are replacing the old Irish traditions of neighbourliness and social responsibility.

In this regard, two quotations from commentators are significant:

*"Ours is a time of patented locks, burglar alarms, barbed-wire fences, neighbourhood watch and vigilantes." – Zygmunt Bauman in "Globalisation: The Human Consequences" (1998).*

*“A regime which provides human beings no deep reasons to care about one another cannot long preserve its legitimacy.” – Richard Sennett in “The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism: (1998).*

In ÉIRE NUA we commented that those who operate the partition system of government in Ireland are hardly likely to change it and that they have now become themselves part of the problem. We can now add that in the social and economic spheres those who pursue careers and survival in politics, finance, administration and business are prisoners of the power structure of today and are most unlikely to have the courage to face the reality that the system they operate is a failure.

Only Sinn Féin Poblachtach, which has consistently advocated a radical approach, and other citizens of independent minds are free to propose and promote an alternative.

Much of the criticism which we have levelled at the capitalist system applies to other countries also. But we in Ireland, because of our long experience of capitalist colonialism, have suffered in a particularly acute way. Further ‘fixes’ by way of giving more power to the EU technocrats will bring a change from dependency on London to dependency on Brussels and will not solve our problems. Indeed, it will accelerate the very forces which have brought us to the wretched condition in which we are today. A new radical approach is needed, based on a different set of values and criteria.

We are not unaware that there is grave disquiet in other countries also, both developed and developing, arising especially from the terrible waste of resources, pollution of the atmosphere, chemical farming and the dehumanising results of high technology. Many people are coming to realise that the survival of the human race and the planet itself is being put in jeopardy.

The Constitution of Sinn Féin Poblachtach declares that we seek to create a Federal Democratic Socialist Republic in Ireland. The democratic structures outlined in ÉIRE NUA would be supplemented by a social and economic system which would seek to make it possible for every citizen to own an economic unit of production. It is only in small, distinct and comprehensible groups that people can be themselves and achieve self-esteem, dignity and fulfillment. The Irish Comhar na gComharsan is an example of the kind of local or community development in which each worker owns a unit of production.

## **THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS**

*Each district, region and province as self-sufficient as possible*

SINN FÉIN Poblachtach considers that the following are essential elements of the Democratic Socialist system which we propose: The unresolved national question is a running sore which constitutes an obstacle to the achievement of peace with justice in Ireland. This issue must be confronted and resolved as a matter of urgency. See ÉIRE NUA — A New Democracy and Towards a Peaceful Ireland. Finance, Banking and all key industries must be brought under public, democratic or social control, and the scope and extent of local community banking, like the Credit Unions, should be extended, so as to serve the needs of local people. Social control of capital is essential, to ensure that capital serves people, rather than people being the slaves of capital; to achieve wider capital ownership; to promote balanced development and an equitable distribution of wealth. Money must be regarded, not as a commodity, but as an accounting system in which all participate.

The enormous politicians' debt, known as the 'national debt' was accumulated by the politicians to finance a succession of 'fixes' and keep the electorate on their side. Borrowing massive sums in order to live on an overdraft was an act of national treachery. Sinn Féin Poblachtach does not consider that the Irish people are morally accountable for repaying this debt. Serious consideration should be given to writing off this millstone around the necks of the Irish people. At the very least, a moratorium should be declared and the debt recycled. Ireland is a country which possesses many natural resources, land, fisheries, minerals, climate, etc. These must be developed in a sustainable, non-polluting manner. Economic development requires motivation, know-how, capital, outlets and markets.

There is a demand at home and markets abroad for natural food with taste. Ireland is ideally positioned to take advantage of this and a whole new agrarian reform, based on both private farms and cooperatives, particularly

organic farming, could be based on such a development with many new jobs being created in production, processing and distribution.

Since one of our basic values is to enable people to look after themselves, to be self-reliant, and communities to be as self-sufficient as possible, Sinn Féin Poblachtach would plan for considerable investment in intermediate technology, as being particularly suited to Ireland's needs. Modern high technology serves an efficient system of production and consumption, and in this system labour is just a factor of production. Furthermore, high technology is generally capital-intensive, energy-intensive, adding to urban congestion and pollution and maximising waste. It dehumanises work, creates dependency on a large scale and alienates people because it diminishes their power to influence their economic and social environment. Indeed, this technology seeks more and more to achieve production without people at all.

Many of the high-technology enterprises are multinational companies which are the modern equivalent of the absentee landlords, and the modern clearances are ordered from boardrooms in distant lands. The high-exporting multinational corporations which have located in Ireland are neo-colonial in nature. They have not integrated with the rest of the economy and send up to 80 per cent of their profits abroad.

Alternative structures and alternative technologies are needed which will enable people to control their own work, conserve resources and protect the environment. Such alternatives are generally small or medium in scale, decentralised, relatively cheap so as to be generally accessible and compatible with people's need for creativity. Their social benefits are considerable. Local small-scale enterprise will also provide more work than centralised automated industry.

We are not alone in advocating such a change in direction, as many thinkers, both in Europe and further afield are coming to the conclusion that

this is the essential step which is necessary to reverse rural decay and the breakdown of social life generally.

This is not a return to the last century or even to the 1930's, but a policy for a positive development of technology such as has already been achieved with success in other countries including communities in the US and Canada. The modern personal computer is an example of advanced, inexpensive equipment for small-scale productive work. Similar material is available for food growing and processing, textiles, and a wide range of maintenance work and in many other areas of work.

The industrial revolution took work out of the home workshop into the factory and town; intermediate and alternative technology can bring much of it back again, and give people back their dignity.

The economic and social development model we propose would make each district, region and province in Ireland as self-sufficient as possible. The countryside, towns and villages and the city communities would be revitalised and each area would have its own network of industries and services.

It will be necessary to design new measures of economic success, because the terms 'economic growth', 'GNP' and 'standard of living' are now inadequate as indicators of economic well-being. They ignore, for example, the contribution of voluntary workers, and of thousands of mothers and men and women who choose to work in the home, all of whom make a substantial contribution to the economy, through the informal domestic and local community sector. Some more valid indicator of human need, such as 'quality of life' is needed.

There should be an Incomes Policy which would guarantee all adult citizens a basic minimum income, to be paid to all, including the unemployed and men or women working in the home.

Taxes should be progressive and redistributive and should be levied on wealth, legacies, waste and pollution and should encourage the efficient use and fair distribution and conservation of scarce resources, especially energy. A tax on land, urban as well as rural, would encourage efficient land use; make it easier for more people to own some land; bring home ownership within the reach of more people; help to redistribute wealth; and would encourage the rapid development of urban waste sites.

In general, there should be a shift from taxing labour to taxing land and capital, and from taxing people for what they put into the economy by useful work to taxing what they take out of it by use of resources, especially scarce energy resources.

A comprehensive national health service will be provided for all citizens, with an increased emphasis on education for healthy lifestyles.

The present two-tier health service, with long waiting lists, is an affront to dignity and justice. An enabling and conserving economy will free people from a lot of social and environmental hazards and stresses, such as unemployment and pollution. We shall seek to eliminate poverty and injustice and ensure that all have adequate food, shelter, education and a healthy environment in which to work. We seek to provide unqualified access to a comprehensive system of family planning and childbirth facilities.

Childcare must be shared as an equal responsibility between both parents and as a responsibility of society as a whole. Parents, whether single or in partnership, should not be restricted in their choice of working, either in the home or outside, due to lack of childcare facilities. It shall be the responsibility of the state to provide full-time childcare centres and crèches.

Sinn Féin Poblachtach will institute an education system which will provide for the development of the whole person and all his/her faculties and abilities; will enable people to fulfil their needs for self-esteem and self-

fulfilment; and will develop their capacities to manage their own lives and contribute to the well-being of the community. We shall aim to improve the quality of both academic and technical education. the contribution of both women and men should be equally represented in the curriculum. We shall not allow church or any other single control of the education system.

The intellectual challenge which faces us after centuries of colonialism is enormous and the education system should help every citizen to develop a mature ability to perceive, to think, to analyse and to set about solving problems in an organised and disciplined way.

A programme to develop a sense of moral responsibility and promote social ethics will be included in the curriculum for all children.

A programme will also be included in the curriculum to promote equality between men and women, thus combatting sexism and stereotyping in children and adults. Continuing education will be made available for adults in all parts of the country.

A system of National Service or Community Service will be established as an extension of the education system. The purpose of this service will be to develop in all young people a sense of personal and social or community identity, and to enable them to become useful and responsible citizens.

The service will be of twelve months' duration and could be done in two or three modules. It will include work at local, provincial and national levels. It would consist of community service, of which many types would be available, or it could be a combination of two or three different elements. It will be obligatory for young adults to have completed their service by the age of 21.

In all instances the youth of Ireland would do useful work as a contribution to improving our society and would derive personal satisfaction and

development from it as part of their preparation for an independent and responsible adult life.

We shall establish equality of opportunity as between men and women, particularly by defining policies to give legal expression to women's rights and by changing inherited negative attitudes towards women. The values and assumptions which underpin the capitalist society are over-masculine, materialistic and aggressive. Women and their values have for too long been marginalised as part of a dependency culture. Our view of society is different.

Women and all they can contribute should be brought back into the mainstream of decision-making in society. Positive action will be needed to ensure equality for women in all spheres of Irish life, and society as a whole will benefit enormously from this.

A comprehensive network of public transport will be established in all parts of Ireland. The emphasis will be on access – to work, home, shops, schools, hospitals, rather than on an ever-increasing mobility. The network will seek to provide a reasonable frequency of comfortable transport for people on the basis of value for money and energy conservation.

As much freight as possible will be carried by rail. The encouragement of local self-sufficiency and the development of intermediate technology will reduce the transport element which increases the cost to the consumer of many goods.

We believe that no healthy society can disown the essence of its own identity. Sinn Féin Poblachtach will therefore plan for the development and reinvigoration of our distinctive Irish identity, particularly the Irish language, which is central to that identity. Leadership, good example, improved teaching methods and a full radio and television service in Irish are essential to achieve success and ensure that the language becomes once more the everyday language of the majority of the Irish people.

An independent foreign policy and a policy of neutrality as regards military blocs and alliances will be maintained. Just and fair trading relationships will be established with the EU and other countries world-wide, on a basis of mutual interests.

## **THE NATION IS A COMMUNITY OF COMMUNITIES**

Our vision of a new type of society in Ireland clearly differs from the whole thrust of EU policy which subjects us to the collective interests of the major West European power centres. Despite some recent successes by Green parties in various countries and some EU legislation on the environment, conventional transnational capitalism, more and more centralised, and consuming vast resources, constitutes the basis of the EU and its policies.

It is difficult to avoid the decision that ultimately, in order to develop Ireland in accordance with our Basic Values, it will be necessary to seek a new arrangement, apart from full membership, with the EU. Furthermore, we do not agree with the rigging of the conditions of trade against the developing countries, which is based on domination and creates dependency.

We consider that each generation of the human race, in its turn, is the custodian of the Earth. The human family has a duty to protect, conserve and nurture the earth and to live in a fashion which will provide for further generations. Sinn Féin Poblachtach will welcome any international initiative to construct a new, sustainable and caring world economy which would recognise the rights of all nations and peoples. We feel that Ireland, as a nation which has experienced colonialism within Europe could make a special contribution to this work.

Our democratic socialist viewpoint makes us call into question the role of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other global institutions. Seven rich, high-consumption, high-pollution countries, the USA, France, Britain, Italy, Japan, Germany, Canada and Russia, under the umbrella of G8, have far too much influence over world development and trade. The economics they practice condemn millions of people to poverty and even threaten the extinction of life on the planet. The word 'economics' comes from the Greek and originally meant 'managing the household'. It is time the household of all humankind was managed in an

equitable manner, based on democracy and sustainable, non-damaging development.

In the democratic society which we seek to establish the structures of both political and economic life will be of critical importance. The proposed political structures are outlined in ÉIRE NUA, and are based on the principle of subsidiarity. The nation is a community of communities and each local community will have its measure of autonomy and people will be informed and involved in decisions. This will bring out the commitment which is the prerequisite of progress.

We do not seek to abolish private property, but we do reiterate the declaration in the Democratic Programme of the first Dáil Éireann in 1919 that 'all right to private property must be subordinated to the public right and welfare'.

Conventional economics is based on materialistic values, centralisation and economies of scale, and ignores the social and environmental costs involved in both capitalist-style and soviet-style development. A quotation from one of the most influential economists of the twentieth century, Maynard Keynes, is revealing:

'For at least another hundred years we must pretend to ourselves and to everyone that fair is foul and foul is fair, for foul is useful and fair is not. Avarice and usury and precaution must be our gods for a little longer still. For only they can lead us out of the tunnel of economic necessity into daylight.'

Keynes was speaking during the depression of 1930, but his assertion that ethical considerations are a hindrance to economic growth can now be assessed sixty years later.

What society has now reached the daylight? More than half the world has too little, we know. But where are the rich societies who say they have

enough? Certainly not the G8. They still want more and try to brainwash the poorer countries into believing that they too can one day have the same lifestyle of 'avarice and usury'.

In achieving their dominance the G8 and others are stripping the world of its endowment of resources from fossil fuels to tropical forests, and through the multinational corporations have created dependency on a large scale.

Nominally independent former colonies throughout the world, some with great resources, contain within them millions of people who live in poverty, like those who inhabit the shanty towns of South America. This is because they, like us, have suffered capitalist colonialism. (We would have the same level of destitution were it not for our emigration). They are still being exploited economically by the colonial masters, though the neo-colonialism by economics is more subtle. The only way out of this is by a bold programme of new style economics such as we advocate for Ireland. We were ourselves colonised within Europe and are a mixture of First and Third World economies.

## **A REAL AND SANE ALTERNATIVE**

*Small enterprises, worker/producer-owned co-operatives and regional development*

### **A Self-Reliant Socialism**

Our view of economics is different and we have outlined the salient elements of it in this document. For us people come first and we would shift the emphasis from 'growth' to sufficiency, from dependence of people to self-reliance and self-expression. Organisations should exist for people, instead of people being for organisations.

Our society is fast becoming a two-class society. A minority of privileged people exists and they are not necessarily the idle rich. Many managers and professionals work exceedingly hard and often suffer from stress. Side by side with them there is a dependent majority of consumers, many poor and idle, but all lacking power, except where the Trade Unions lobby on their behalf.

Another eminent economist, J.K. Galbraith, referring to the United States of America spoke of 'private affluence and public squalor'. This exists in a country where six per cent of the population of the world consumes 40 per cent of global resources, and where poverty and crime still blight millions of lives. This is the model which we seek to replace with a saner and more humane one.

Greater democracy in economic affairs and personal fulfillment will be achieved through small enterprises, worker/producer-owned cooperatives and regional development. Many social benefits will flow from small-scale organisation. People will feel that they belong, they will behave more responsibly and will contribute their own personal initiative.

The mass of the people must be involved in this social, economic and national reconstruction, based on a different set of values. Already some large, more impersonal enterprises have discovered that where the

workforce is organised into small teams with which people can identify, the workers get much more satisfaction from and give more to their work. There is no reason why the local and regional authorities (ÉIRE NUA) cannot become agents of social and economic development throughout Ireland as well as the provincial and national parliaments.

Sinn Féin Poblachtach will ensure that the role of the multinational corporations is limited in Ireland; that the commanding heights of the economy are brought under democratic control; that indigenous industry is promoted; and that democratic legal structures are put in place to promote worker/producer-owned cooperatives. Such enterprises can be organised and made to flourish in agriculture, manufacturing, fishing, distribution, housing and banking.

There are enlightened and progressive forces at work in many other countries which are seeking to bring about this kind of transformation of society and we are not being unduly idealistic or isolationist in proposing such an approach.

Ultimately, we are all our brothers' and sisters' keepers. By promoting self-reliance and community effort we shall be promoting a life-style which will be more simple, but which will also be more satisfying and even sophisticated, with more emphasis on leisure and cultural interests.

Technologies like information processing will increase the human possibilities for development without in any way damaging the environment.

More and more commentators are coming to realise that protection of the environment not only goes hand in hand with economic performance but is also becoming the driving force for the development of new markets. Ireland is, for instance, in a unique position in Europe to take advantage of the market for the produce of organic farming. A whole series of industries could also be built around fishing and forestry.

## **A PROGRAMME OF IMMEDIATE ACTION**

SINN FÉIN Poblachtach is aware that it is a long way from achieving its objectives, yet it feels it has a duty to outline an alternative to the present failed patchwork system.

In order to organise the Irish people in a demand for a new deal Sinn Féin Poblachtach will involve itself forthwith in a programme of action at the very points where the existing system operates most severely to the detriment of the community.

### **These issues will include:**

- 1)** Opposing EU/EPU/EMU proposals which conflict with the interests of the Irish people.
- 2)** Organising against repression, extradition and restrictions on the broadcasting media, in both the 26 Counties and the Six Counties.
- 3)** Contesting 26-County local elections and elections to *Údarás na Gaeltachta*.
- 4)** Involving ourselves in local and community issues.
- 5)** Supporting local autonomy, including local financing.
- 6)** Encouraging and promoting cooperative enterprises.
- 7)** Working to protect the environment and encouraging the recycling of waste and opposing incineration.
- 8)** Informing the people, young people and the unemployed in particular, about our alternative to the existing system.
- 9)** Developing and promoting our monthly publication, SAOIRSE.
- 10)** Supporting consumer rights and exposing the politicians' system of clientelism.
- 11)** Campaigning against unfair banking practices and supporting involvement in local Credit Unions.
- 12)** Supporting the campaign to maintain and extend the television service in Irish.
- 13)** Supporting a housing campaign and working against evictions.
- 14)** Working for and among the unemployed and emigrants.

**15)** Involving ourselves in Trade Union activity in support of workers' rights and seeking to interest organised labour in our alternative programme.

**16)** Campaigning against speculation in land for housing and essential services. Supporting demands that the principle, that the price of building land be based on the price of agricultural land plus 25%, be adopted and implemented.

*“Economic development is something much wider and deeper than economics, let alone econometrics. Its roots lie outside the economic sphere, in education, organisation, discipline, and, beyond that, in political independence and a national consciousness of self-reliance. It cannot be ‘produced’ by skilful grafting operations carried out by foreign technicians or an indigenous elite that has lost contact with the ordinary people. It can succeed only if it is carried forward as a broad, popular ‘movement of reconstruction’ with primary emphasis on the full utilisation of the drive, enthusiasm, intelligence, and labour power of everyone. Success cannot be obtained by some form of magic produced by scientists, technicians, or economic planners. It can come only through a process of growth involving the education, organisation, and discipline of the whole population. Anything less than this must end in failure.’ ‘What is the meaning of democracy, freedom, human dignity, standard of living, self-reliance, fulfillment? Is it a matter of goods, or of people? Of course it is a matter of people. But people can be themselves only in small comprehensible groups. Therefore we must learn to think in terms of an articulated structure that can cope with a multiplicity of small-scale units. If economic thinking cannot grasp this it is useless. If it cannot get beyond its vast abstractions, the national income, the rate of growth, capital/output ratio, input/output analysis, labour mobility, capital accumulation; if it cannot get beyond all this and make contact with the human realities of poverty, frustration, alienation, despair, breakdown, crime, escapism, stress, congestion, ugliness, and spiritual death, then let us scrap economies and start afresh. Are there not indeed enough ‘signs of the times’ to indicate that a new start is needed?”*

**– EF Schumacher in *SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL***

*Dr EF Schumacher, economist and journalist was born in Germany, lived in many countries, studied in Oxford and taught in Columbia University, New York. He is well-known for his appraisal of western economic attitudes, clearly expressed in his best-selling book *Small is Beautiful*. This was first published in 1973 and has since been reprinted 31 times. He died in 1977.*

*Fritz Schumacher was greatly interested in the developing third world countries but declared that the developed countries also had major problems. He saw modern society as greedy, inefficient, inhumane and unecological, and he called for a complete reorientation of values.*

*He saw a looming crisis of oil shortages, environmental destruction, dehumanised organisation of life and work and growing unemployment, all resulting in alienation and massive social problems. He, more than any other person, launched the idea of an intermediate technology.*

*'Modern technology,' he said, 'has become increasingly violent. Violence is not just a matter of one person hitting another person over the head, it is employing violent means. We have this in agriculture, where we scatter around very violent chemicals, we call them pesticides, which means killer substances.'*

*He advocated the creation of life-styles and technologies on a human scale which are low-cost, sparing in their use of resources, non-violent towards nature, and, therefore, unsustainable.*

*There are Intermediate Technology groups and Schumacher Societies in many countries today, promoting this man's ideas. Their emphasis is in smaller working units, communal ownership and regional workplaces utilising local labour and resources. As the man himself said: 'We need economics as if people mattered.'*

## **From Éire Nua – A New Democracy: DRAFT CHARTER OF RIGHTS**

*We the people of Ireland are resolved to establish political sovereignty, to secure human justice and social progress in this island, to achieve a better life for all, and henceforth to live in peace with one another. And so we declare our adherence to the following principles:*

**Article 1.** *Every citizen is born free and equal and shares the same inherent human dignity. Everyone is entitled to the rights of citizenship without distinction as to race, sex, religion, philosophical conviction, language or political outlook.*

**Article 2.** *Every citizen has the right to life, liberty, and security of person. No-one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention.*

**Article 3.** *Every citizen has the right to freedom of conscience, to free choice and practice of religion, and to the free and open teaching of ethical and political beliefs. This includes the rights to freedom of assembly, the right to peaceable association, the right to petition, and the right to freedom of expression and communication.*

**Article 4.** *Every citizen has the right to participate in the government of the country, and to equal access to its public service.*

**Article 5.** *The basis of government is the will of the people. This is expressed in direct participatory democracy and free elections by secret ballot. The right of every citizen to follow his or her conscience, and to express his or her personal opinion, stands against any demographically contrived attempt at repression.*

**Article 6.** *Every citizen has the right to education according to personal ability, the right to work, and the right to a standard of living worthy of a free human being. This right extends to food, housing and medical care, and to security against unemployment, illness, and disability.*

**Article 7.** *Every citizen has the right to marry and found a family. Mothers, children, the aged and infirm deserve the nation's particular care and attention.*

**Article 8.** *Every citizen has the right to equal pay for equal work, and the right to join a trade union for the protection of workers' collective interests, and these rights must be acknowledged by all employers.*

**Article 9.** *In the exercise of their rights, citizens shall be subject only to such constraints as may be necessary to ensure recognition and respect for the rights of others and the welfare of the larger community.*