



SPEECH BY  
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*M.P., M.E.P.*

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S.D.L.P. PARTY LEADER

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- TO -

**21st**  
**21st ANNUAL CONFERENCE**



WE are gathered together today for our Annual Conference. It is our twenty-first, a time for reflection and a time to harness our energies and ideas for the future. As I have said in the introduction to our Conference booklet, when one thinks of the year in which this party was founded, no party anywhere in Europe could have had a more difficult birth. When one casts one's mind back over those twenty-one years, neither could any party have had a more difficult childhood nor indeed a more difficult youth. As we face adulthood however, we do so with the wisdom born of deep experience, a wisdom born of dealing with the fundamental of politics and democracy, a wisdom that has given us the greatest possible respect for politics and democracy because we have seen the alternative in all its ugliness and destructiveness at close hand. In recent times and indeed in recent weeks the ugliness and destructiveness has reached a new low, its perpetrators seeming to learn nothing from their experience, nor from the dreadful suffering imposed on innocent victims and their families. It all seems to reinforce our conviction, a conviction of which it is our public duty to convince all sections of our people, that the political process is the only peace process.

In a deeply divided society that process will always be a difficult process but the lessons born of bitter experience are very clear and they apply not just to ourselves but to divided societies everywhere. Where difference exists in society, deep difference, difference of identity, the answer is not confrontation of difference. The answer is not to pretend that difference does not exist or that those who differ have no rights. The answer is not violence. The answer is not war. The answer is respect for difference and accommodation of difference. Society is richer for diversity. If our experience were to be summed up in a number of sentences, they would be sentences that we have often repeated over our twenty-one years but must keep repeating. The essence of unity is the acceptance of diversity. That is a fundamental truth about every society in the world. Humanity transcends difference. Humanity transcends nationality. We are human beings before we are anything else and the most fundamental human right is the right to life.

The place where we meet, Enniskillen, symbolises in a very deep way what I am saying. One of the worst examples of the refusal to respect difference took place in this town. People met to respect their dead, an act, an occasion, which is respected throughout the world and throughout history. They were bombed and innocent people died. But Enniskillen symbolises also this weekend the hope that we are offering because it reminds us of the origins of our problems. Derry, Aughrim, Enniskillen and the Boyne were all European battles, the participants from many European countries. Those same European countries are an example to us today of what I have been talking about – the essence of unity is the acceptance of diversity – and therein lies many lessons for us particularly because of our renewed association with them. I will return in detail to that later.

We also meet at a very historic moment in the history of our country and in the history of Europe as we move towards 1992 and indeed in a few weeks time to the historic summit at Maastricht. The unity of Europe and the development of its institutions and powers via the Single Market is the single most powerful development affecting this country for centuries – its internal relationships, its relationship with Britain in particular and its relationships with the rest of Europe. When we think of the intense emotion and debate that went into the events of the 1920s and the tragedies that followed, influencing attitudes on this island ever since, when we think of the emotionalism and intensity and debate released in some sections of our community by the Anglo-Irish Agreement, I am amazed at just how little real public discussion there has been in this society and in this country on the implications of the Single Market and the move towards European political union. Again the SDLP has been the only political party in the North of Ireland promoting awareness, understanding and debate on the major and fundamental implications for all our people of the Single Market. We are the only party to produce major publications on the subject for the man and woman in the street. We have held major conferences for special interest groups and published the proceedings of those conference to further public awareness and public debate. We held conferences on the implications for business and employment of 1992; on rural development and alternative land use for small farmers; on lesser spoken languages and cultures; on the environment and the need to adjust economic policies and legal provision; on the effect on the customs industry and jobs of the removal of borders; on employment rights and opportunities for women and for those with disabilities; on Interreg, the new policy for dealing with the problems of border regions and the opportunities that it presents to our border counties, the areas of highest unemployment in the EC.

In addition we have used our elected position in the European Parliament, with the powerful support of the Socialist Group, of which we are members, to promote the interests of all our people. Socialist Group resolutions in the European Parliament, in my name as the SDLP MEP for Northern Ireland have led to the Arfe Report on lesser used languages and cultures and the need to

preserve and develop them, in keeping with our policy of respect for diversity and to the establishment of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages with its Headquarters in Dublin and to the creation of a budget line in Europe to promote and develop those languages, spoken by over 30 million people. It is gradually increasing that budget line every year it has now reached 2.5 million ECUS. Our resolution on the regional problems of Northern Ireland led to the Martin Report which directly created £63 million for the special housing problems of Belfast, the results of which are now experienced by so many new housed families in Belfast. Our resolution on rural development led to the Mahon Report, a model for rural development anywhere in the deprived regions of Europe. These have been described by the European Commissioner as pathfinding documents which have had an impact on Community policy making and so we see rural development being now made a central feature of Agricultural Policy not just in the North of Ireland but across the European Community. On our political problems our resolution led to the Haagerud Report recommending that for a change there should be a joint British/Irish Government approach to the political problems of Northern Ireland, modelled on the European approach and on the acceptance of diversity and the respect for difference. Some people might have noticed that the Anglo-Irish Agreement set up institutions directly modelled on those of the EC. The Anglo-Irish Conference is a Council of Ministers. The permanent Anglo-Irish secretariat is modelled on the permanent EC secretariat called a Commission. And there is an Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier similar to the European Parliament. All of these three institutions, by the way, were recommended in Appendix C of the SDLP discussion paper on Anglo-Irish relations published by us in April 1981. We are a party which believes in the art of politics which in practice is the art of persuasion, which takes patient, steady work in Belfast, in Dublin, in London and in Brussels.

As we approach the Maastricht Summit our voice will be heard as well. In advance of that Summit there will be a two day meeting in Brussels of the leaders of all the Social Democratic, Labour and Socialist parties in Europe to discuss our attitude to the agenda of the Summit and to make a major declaration on our position on the challenges posed by Economic and Monetary Union and Political Union to all of the people of the EC including ourselves. As leader of the SDLP I will be present at that meeting which will be attended by the Socialist Prime Ministers who will sit at Maastricht thereby assuring that we will play our part in shaping the agreements that emerge from Maastricht.

The conference at Maastricht is devoted to updating the EC treaties in Political Union and on Economic and Monetary Union, in short to intensify the process of European Unity begun as far back as 1956 when the first six member states came together. It seems to me that some of those voices raised against the evolution of political and economic union particularly in the British Conservative Party want to ignore reality and to forget what European Union is all about. Do they ever think of what sort of Europe the EC have replaced? Have

they ever cast their minds back to the history of Europe in this century alone. Have they forgotten the slaughter of millions of people that the Europe of the past represents – two world wars in this century alone with all their devastation, allied to the conflicts of every generation in previous centuries? If all of the people in that horrific past had been offered a European Union would they not have been prepared to pay a price for it? As I have said often, if someone had stood up 50 years ago today when the Second World War and slaughter was at its height and said that in 50 years time instead of slaughter and destruction the representatives of those warring countries would be around the table finalising the major steps to European Unity – a unity in which the French are still French and the Germans still German, a unity whose essence is the respect for European diversity, would anyone have believed that person? How could anyone, even in the name of little England, seek to place obstacles in the way of such a process, or complain of having to pay a price for it?

But a price doesn't even have to be paid. Economic necessity underlines and underpins the idealistic reality of a United Europe. The facts are, and some people refuse to face them, that the nation state has outlived its usefulness and its day has come and gone. No nation state can live apart in today's world politically, economically or environmentally. The world is a smaller place. We are interdependent. Could any one of the 12 member states live apart from the rest with economic and political barriers separating them? Could they survive economically? Has Chernobyl taught them nothing?

None of this rules out the fact that the Maastricht Summit faces major challenges both political and economic. Everyone accepts the concept of a Single Market. It is possible to have a genuine single market without a single currency? The creation of a single currency will of itself substantially reduce costs in inter-community trade. Everyone accepts that the Single Market will substantially increase economic growth. Paper work and delays at borders alone at the moment costs an extra £7 billion per year. The removal of borders will reduce that cost, reduce prices to the consumer by around 6% and create an estimated 5 million new jobs. The real challenge is to ensure that these jobs are not centralised in the richer regions of Europe but are shared also with the poorer regions. Hence economic and social cohesion is a major issue at Maastricht. Already the Community has agreed to a new approach to regional policy and a doubling of the structural funds to underpin that policy. Priority regions, the poorer regions, of which we are one have already been identified as the major recipients of that new funding up till 1994 but that funding must be increased and extended beyond that date. The Confederation of European Socialist parties through its representatives at Maastricht will be committed to that development. We are also committed to a Social Charter to provide equality of treatment and basic social rights for workers right across the new Europe. Our proposed Social Charter demands that these rights must include:

Fair wages and hours of work;  
The right to work and to paid holidays, sick pay and redundancy pay;  
The right to information, consultation and participation for company workers,  
particularly in multinational firms;  
The highest standards of health and safety protection;  
Full childcare provision, maternity and paternity leave;  
Vocational training for young people and retraining for older workers;  
Equal treatment and equal opportunities for women and men;  
The right of elderly people, people with disabilities and unemployed people to a guaranteed minimum income to protect them against poverty.

**W**E also face a major technological challenge in today's world in order to keep abreast of current formidable developments in science and technology and to develop common policies across Europe in research, industry and the environment. There is not much point in proudly proclaiming our independent state nationhood if our next door neighbour can build a Chernobyl or a Sellafield without consulting us. The last industrial revolution which in terms of historical and economic development fuelled the nation states has now run its race. It led of necessity to centralisation, to depopulation of outlying regions and rural areas and to the creation of capital cities and the intensification of urbanisation with all its consequent problems.

The technological revolution which we are now going through can reverse all of that. It is no longer necessary to depopulate regions or rural areas. The new technology will intensify the process of decentralisation. This will provide a major opportunity for Ireland, North and South, if we are prepared for it. Northern Ireland was the first region of the UK to be included in the STA programme from Brussels thus opening the door for us to seize these new opportunities. This will become even more important when, following the Channel Tunnel, Ireland North and South becomes the offshore island of Europe with no land links to the rest of Europe. In pursuit of this approach we have already been looking ahead. A few weeks ago with the assistance of our good friend Ed Markie in the American Congress I addressed 40 Presidents of the largest companies in Wall Street, the financial centre of the Western World, to demonstrate to them that we could much more efficiently and at much less cost provide the workers here to carry out their back office work. I would like to pay tribute to the outstanding presentation and case made on that occasion by Mr Frank Hewitt of the IDB.

We also face a major challenge to our largest industry, Agriculture. Rural policy today in this new technological world is no longer just about Agriculture produce. It is about rural development as well. We have been arguing that for some considerable period of time and we are glad that it is now reaching the ears of those in power. We have been considerably assisted in having our case heard by the support of the Socialist Group in Europe and our identification with many of the poorer regions of Europe.



Apart from the period of the power-sharing executive the SDLP has been excluded from the exercise of executive governmental functions. Despite this it has been highly successful in the formulation of policy and in turning policy into effective action with the assistance of our friends in Europe.

Look at Rural Development - the ensuring of the life and prosperity of communities in rural areas. In 1984 the SDLP submitted a resolution which was adopted by the European Parliament calling on the Commission to promote Rural Development in Northern Ireland. The resolution played an important role in the development of thinking within the European Commission. In 1989 the Commission committed itself for the first time to a comprehensive policy on Rural Development. In 1989 the reformed Structural Funds identified Rural Development as a major objective of expenditure and this year rural Development has been recognised as a major objective of the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. We now see, a reflection of this European-wide movement in new policies within Northern Ireland, a Rural Development Commission has been established, and specific responsibility for Rural Development has been vested in Mr. Hanley. We welcome these significant steps, and we must prepare our local communities to take full advantage of this new approach and halt the decline of our rural communities.

The SDLP will continue to be in the forefront of the efforts to promote Rural Development. We seek not just to preserve local traditions and cultures but to build them into aspirations which reflect the way life is now; we seek to make living and working in rural areas viable and attractive to a wide range of activities and individuals in a modern competitive society, based on high technologies, rapid communications and an increasingly shared information and culture.

We know what is needed, the reform of agriculture; the creation of small and medium sized businesses; the promotion of rural tourism; the strengthening of education and training provision; improvements in roads, telecommunications and in the standards of rural housing; we know how to do it by harnessing the initiative and the support of a great number of organisations, public authorities and individuals, concentrating above all on supporting local people who want to do something for themselves, targetting the efforts of local and regional authorities, businesses and universities and finally by taking advantage of the example being given by Europe and the support offered through the European Structural Funds.

The SDLP together with all its partners in the Socialist Group of the European Parliament understands the necessity to reform the Common Agricultural Policy; how can we take issue with a reform which tackles the fundamental problems of European agriculture - overproduction and its impact on third world farming, environmental damage and flight from the land? How can we take issue with a reform which for the first time is aimed at ensuring that

the agricultural budget is an instrument for real financial solidarity in favour of those in greatest need? The reform will protect smaller producers through full compensation for price cuts and through exemption from quota cuts. Until now the Common Agricultural Policy, by linking support to quantities produced, has enabled some - those who have contributed most to surpluses - to benefit disproportionately. These farmers, the very large ones with over 125 acres of cereals, more than 750 ewes, more than 90 beef animals, or more than 40 milk cows will bear the burden of adjustment. The amount of disinformation and of alarm that this tiny group of privileged farmers (about 3% of the total) has been able to mobilise and their effrontery in claiming to speak on behalf of all the farmers of Europe tells us a lot about the challenges facing a party like ours which is committed to a fairer and more equal society, and which seeks to protect the weak not the strong.

The reform of the CAP proposed by Mr. McSharry is designed to protect the rural community and the small farmers in particular. The farmers with less than 125 acres of cereals, less than 750 ewes, less than 90 beef animals, less than 40 milk cows will not be damaged by these reforms. Those are the small farmers, the large majority of farmers on this island North and South.

As we draw close to Maastricht the SDLP is ranged alongside those who see in a closer European Union the best way to guarantee peace, democracy, basic human rights and economic welfare on our continent. We want to see a strengthening of the triangle formed by the Community, its Member States and its regions. Look at the scale and speed of what is happening. By 1993 borders will cease to have economic significance. By 1996 a common currency will begin to be introduced. Look at the power and influence already being exercised by the European Commission whether it be GATT negotiations or in relation to the economic and democratic rehabilitation of East Europe and of Russia. We want to see a strengthening of the powers of the European Parliament.

Most of all our concern will be to use the European Community for the good of the people we speak for, and that means all of the people of Northern Ireland. The European Community also recognises the economic reality which is that our situation and needs are similar to those of the South of Ireland and should be addressed in the same context, we already have a number of similar regimes in agriculture; we have common objective no. 1 status for structural fund expenditure and a special cross-border fund; last month a new programme of loans and grants, funded by the E.F.T.A. countries identifies Ireland, North and South, as a single region. Preparation is underway for a new generation of structure funds actions to run from 1994-97. The Northern Ireland authorities must ensure that this time they emulate the success of Dublin in maximising the support received; what we call for now is a joint approach and application based on a comprehensive economic plan covering the whole island. Proposals are also being debated to give special additional help through a new 'Convergence Fund' to the less prosperous member states of Spain, Ireland, Greece and

Portugal, aimed at facilitating Economic and Monetary Union and at funding environmental protection and the improvement of transport infrastructure. Will Northern Ireland find itself excluded from the benefits of this Convergence Fund because of our divisive political heritage or will its political representations show the practical maturity to recognise that environmental problems know no borders and that better transport links are needed both between North and South, and between both and the outside world particularly when the Channel Tunnel makes us the offshore island.

I will be seeking to co-operate with my Unionist colleagues in the European parliament to implement the strategy which we will need to follow over the next 12 months in response to those opportunities.

Those who are on the one hand argue against an over centralised Europe and on the other against Federalism do not seem to see the contradiction in their view. The essence of European unity is based on the acceptance of diversity and the evolution towards Federalism and a Europe of the regions is the way to ensure the protection of that diversity. A Europe of the nation states will never do that.

All of this of course has implications for our own serious political problems here in Northern Ireland. Our problems in Ireland are not unique in European or World history. Many countries have backgrounds of historical national conflict, tension with neighbouring states and internal differences of language, religion or national identity. The lesson learned by those countries was that difference itself need not be a problem. The issue for those seeking stability and harmony in those countries was not the elimination of diversity but its accommodation. They learned that there was no peace, no stability, no security in seeking to have political arrangements which reflected and respected only one tradition and its values. Rather stability and the best protection for any tradition lay in creating political consensus with structures that neither privileged nor prejudiced the position of any tradition.

The challenge to unionists and nationalists in Ireland is to pick up that message. The evolution of European unity has already made the facing of that challenge easier for all of us because it has fundamentally changed the whole historical basis of the Irish problem, the basis of British Irish relationships and the quarrel about sovereignty. I have already and often argued that the Irish problem was totally European in its origins. Everyone knows that Derry, Aughrim, Enniskillen and the Boyne was about a major European quarrel and it reinforced the basis of the Irish quarrel which has remained with us ever since, at such an enormous cost. The Irish have for centuries had links with Europe. We have always been a wandering people. From the early days of the monks in the 6th Century, the Irish colleges scattered across the European continent, the 17th Century links with Spain which led to the Plantation of Ulster, the Wild Geese in the armies of Europe, the links of the United Irishmen to revolutionary France

which led to the Act of Union. It was those links with Europe that go to the heart of the historic Irish British quarrel and are its fundamental roots. Britain's defined selfish interest in a presence in Ireland was clearly related to regarding Ireland as the back door for her European enemies during centuries of European competition, conflict and war. Historically the Irish republican movement justified its use of force by asserting that Britain was in Ireland defending her own interests by force. Indeed that is the specific reason given today by the provisional IRA for its use of what it calls armed struggle to achieve its political objectives. But in today's new Europe all that has changed, and even in their own terms the IRA have no longer any reason for the use of arms or bombs.

The word sovereignty at the heart of the quarrel has no longer its traditional meaning. Britain and Ireland are now sharing sovereignty because of economic and political necessity not only with each other but with ten other European countries most of whom had the historic links with Ireland that Britain feared. That shared sovereignty deals with major matters fundamental to the lives of all our people and will be intensified post Maastricht as we move to a federal Europe. The Irish have now renewed their links with Europe and can and will intensify those links as we build friendship and alliance with the many European regions with similar problems and as we become part of the European majority and increase our real influence in order to face up to the major challenges facing all our people.

THERE does remain a serious legacy. The nature of our problem has changed but it is a bitter legacy of that past. We are a deeply divided people. What is abundantly clear to anyone is that violence and force not only have no contribution to make to that problem, they intensify the problems and the fears, the prejudices and the bitternesses that are at its heart. Does anyone think that Serbs and Croats will preserve their identities or settle their differences by war or physical force? Does anyone think that Greeks and Turks in Cyprus can settle their difference by force. Does anyone in the world outside of the paramilitary organisations think that we can. Are there any people in these organisations who are thinking at all?

This situation obviously presents a serious challenge to both governments. The British Government has already declared that it has no selfish interest in a presence in Ireland. It should continue to say so but it should also in conjunction with the Irish Government and indeed with any assistance from the rest of Europe declare that it is its firm intention to commit all its available resources to tackling that legacy, to healing that division by agreement. Both governments should base their approach on the methods that have been so successful in transforming the peoples of Europe from permanent conflict and slaughter to a beacon of light and hope for divided people everywhere. Difference should be respected and institutions should be created North and South which clearly



pects our diversity and our difference but which also allow us to work the substantial common ground between all of us and through that process of working together, as happened in Europe, to break down the barriers of prejudice and distrust over a few generations and evolve into a genuine new Ireland whose unity, similar to Europe's is based on diversity and born of agreement and mutual respect. That is the only true peace process and it is one that threatens no one. It would be a new Ireland in a new Europe, one which would have its agreed links with Britain and with the rest of Europe. Given that both parts of Ireland have already agreed on that process of working the common ground with all the peoples of the European Community, all of us preserving our differences, can we do not likewise on this small offshore island.

This approach presents a major challenge to everyone in Northern Ireland, Unionist and Nationalist. It presents a particular challenge to the Provisional IRA. Do they accept that the basic reasons that they give for their methods no longer exist. The answer that they keep giving is that our approach, because we insist on agreement, gives a veto to the Unionists. Could they tell us how a group of people could unite about anything without agreement. Could they tell us how Serbs and Croats or Greek and Turkish Cypriots could unite without agreement? The truth is of course that the Provisional IRA are not talking about unity; they are talking about assimilation. They conveniently ignore the fact that the people of Ireland were divided long before partition. Wolfe Tone wanted to unite Catholic Protestant and Dissenter two hundred years ago. They must have been divided. And is it not common sense that the peace process of ending division is better achieved if we get the British Government committed to it together with the Irish Government and our European partners. Put more directly and more bluntly, have they the moral courage to take the historic step of laying down their arms and joining the rest of us in the challenging process of finally breaking down the barriers between the people of Ireland.

The other and more pressing reasons for them to change their methods have been repeated often. Now International human rights organisations are focussing on the major onslaught on human rights that the paramilitary organisations represent. Helsinki Watch has just delivered a major condemnation, and Amnesty International, already described by leaders of the Provisional Sinn Féin as a world wide respected human rights organisation, are bound to do the same. Will they listen, or will they adopt an alternative to their armed struggle before that report emerges?

The facts as we all know and as the last few terrible weeks have underlined yet again, are horrifying. The real victims of the paramilitary organisations are the ordinary people of Northern Ireland. Of the 2,936 lives lost up till last week-end 2,501 were residents of Northern Ireland. 435 were British army. 479 were RUC and UDR, all Northern Ireland people. 85 were loyalist paramilitaries, 296 were nationalist paramilitaries of which 239 were provisional IRA and 144 of them were killed by themselves in "regrettable mistakes" or executions. 1,645 were

innocent civilians. I told them on 1st January 1990 that the pattern of paramilitarism was such that if it continued more than half of their victims would be innocent civilians. The pattern has continued with great grief and sadness to so many decent fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, brothers and sisters. Are there any grounds whatsoever that can justify methods which produce such results - results which in the end only intensify the real problem which we face, the division of our people.

I could go on. I won't. Let me again quote to all paramilitaries the words of a man who is a model in any struggle for justice, for harmony and for the realisation that justice can never be achieved by anyone who uses means that are themselves more unjust - Martin Luther King:

"Violence as a way of achieving justice is both impractical and immoral. It is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding; it seeks to annihilate rather than to convert. Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends by defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers".

I appeal to all paramilitaries to heed these words of deep wisdom. I appeal to them to lay down their arms and by doing so save the lives of human beings.

THE current situation also presents a major challenge to all political parties in Northern Ireland. It presents a particular challenge to the Unionist parties and their people. Speaking to the Northern Ireland Convention as far back as 1976 I referred to the challenge that existed then. I repeated it to our Party Conference in 1987. I repeat it again:

"The Loyalist tradition in Ireland has always rightly sought - I emphasise rightly - to protect its basic traditions and rights and we would support them in upholding those traditions and rights. Sadly, we believe that in protecting them they have taken a course which has been wrong. Throughout Irish history, your tradition has lived under many constitutions in this island, but it has always had one thing in common, that you sought to protect yourselves by retaining all power and protecting ascendancy.

"Today you can do likewise. You can retain power. You can wrap your flag around you. You can beat your drum. But one thing we know and all know if we have any integrity and intelligence is that you will fail.

It has failed before and it will fail again because it seeks to exclude other traditions and in the end will only lead to the grave, to death, destruction and conflict. It may satisfy the bugle in your blood. It may satisfy the atavism that is in everyone of us. You may feel proud and patriotic because it appeals to the

fundamental emotions that exist here. But it will not succeed. There is no point in seeking security in that approach. The real security your tradition has rests in your own strength and numbers and in nothing else.

It does not rest in Acts of a British Parliament. The history of the Anglo-Irish relations is littered with Acts of the British parliament giving promises to the Irish Protestant population, every one of which has been broken. In 1793 the Act of Renunciation promised that Grattan's Protestant Parliament would last forever. "Forever" lasted seven years till 1800. Establishment of the Church of Ireland in 1800 was to last forever. "Forever" this time was a little longer - it was 67 years. You had 1920. You had 1949. These were Acts of Parliament promising security to the people of Northern Ireland, to your tradition. Did they provide that security? They did not. Even in debating the 1973 Act, in the first debate in the old and now defunct Assembly I said that the Constitution Act did not provide a basis for security for the people of Northern Ireland. It only provided a framework, an opportunity.

"In the end, the real protection the majority tradition in this part of Ireland has, rests in its own numbers, not in defensiveness or siege mentality but in positively coming out, working in co-operation and partnership with the other tradition and building an entirely new society".

John Hewitt, the distinguished northern poet summed up very well the anxiety of the entire Unionist tradition when he said:-

"This is our country also, nowhere else;  
and we shall not be outcast on the world".  
We agree.

There is no surer way of removing that anxiety and of protecting the identity of your own people than by standing on your own feet and by addressing the relationships which go to the heart of our problem. The failure to resolve these relationships to your own satisfaction as well as everyone else's goes to the heart of the fears and the insecurity that your people feel. We are inviting you to join us in a genuine and lasting peace process. In addressing the relationship that goes to the heart of your most oft expressed concerns, the relationship with the rest of this island we underline that what we are asking you to do is to follow the European model. Let us agree institutional North and South which not only respect our differences and our diversity but allow us to carry out the increasingly necessary task of working our considerable common ground together. We also ask you in the full knowledge that agreement on such relationships will be in the context of agreed relationships with Great Britain and the rest of the European Community. And we restate, to underline our commitment to agreement, that it should be endorsed in a joint referendum North and South on the one day, requiring an affirmation from each. I believe that such an agreement would be the beginning of a real process that would allow all our relationships to evolve in the future in the way that has happened in

Europe and that in a few generations there would emerge a genuine New Ireland in a new Europe built by agreement and respect for diversity.

In approaching such talks I would ask your tradition to rekindle and regenerate the spirit of your forefathers who, driven from this land by religious intolerance and social and economic need shaped the Constitution of the United States of America. By the time of the American revolution almost two thirds of the three million population were Calvinists, Scots, Irish, Presbyterians were to the fore in the struggle that would establish a new nation which would never again lapse into exclusion of its own citizens from meaningful participation in their own government, from meaningful self-determination. The underlying principle in the Constitution born of their experience was the acceptance of diversity and difference. Europe has learned that lesson two hundred painful years later. Could we learn it again in Ireland?

**A**S we have said before such an Agreement would transcend in importance any previous agreement ever made because it would for the first time give all sections of our people the security that they want and allow them to work together and to ultimately break down our outdated barriers.

Our approach to the Brooke talks was based, as everyone knows on that overall strategy, a strategy that at the end of the day is designed to involve the settlement of all relationships. Because such an agreement, emerging from such talks, would be aimed at giving security to all. It would remove the objections to such talks that are based on the existence of other agreements whether of 1920 or 1985. That is why we have called, and call on Mr. Brooke again to convene such talks without delay. I would hope that the Unionist Leaders would respond in the same spirit. I believe that all of our people and indeed people everywhere would applaud.

In all of this we should recognise that the wider world in which we all live is a smaller world today because of the major advances in technology and communications. As we move to build a new order in our own land and participate in the building of a new order in Europe we should not forget as Social Democrats that it only can have real meaning for us as part of a new World order.

Let there be no doubt that there is deep concern and fear in the developing countries that our preoccupations with the Single Market and with Eastern Europe will yet again put their problems on the back burner. Let us reassure them. If we accept as we do that one of the travesties of the arms race and cold war was that it maintains such dreadful injustice and misery, then we must make a new global co-operation and meaningful North/South dialogue one of the prizes to be won from the changing East/West relationship. We seek a new European order, yes, but within a new world order.



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We, as Social Democrats, already face other more direct challenges. Just as in the 1980's new trends in economics were used by our critics to deny the public sector practically any valid role in society, so too now they are using the collapse of the regimes in the East to predict the death of Social Democracy. We must be quick to defend our proud record in the creation of truly democratic and humane societies in Europe. We must assert that while we always were concerned about the creation of wealth, the focus of our agenda was ever on how best to use that wealth. That is a question which today more than ever demands the most urgent moral and intellectual consideration. We hear much in these days of free markets, of the free flow of capital, of the free movement of goods and services, but we must insist – and remind our critics – that these are useful only to the extent that they serve a more important freedom, that is the freedom of the individual and the freedom that is afforded all our citizens and not just a privileged few, to exploit the potential of the human condition. That is our agenda; it calls for no apology; it is one of which we can be proud.

We are the heirs to two thousand years of history and today we stand on the threshold of a new millennium. At the end of the century which has seen such unprecedented horror and witnessed such unparalleled pain, we are called to heal the divisions of the past and to build an Ireland that is whole in a Europe that is whole in a world that is whole.

Let us not fail. Let us try to usher in a new and kinder era in the affairs of our country, of our continent and our world, and let us hope that our children and our children's children will be able to say of our generation in time to come, "Truly, they were people of vision: truly, they were people of peace".

We Shall Overcome.