

21st Century Commission

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Introduction by the Commission Chairman

This Commission was established by the Party Conference in November 2007. It was given a broad mandate: to examine and report on all aspects of the Party's organisation, campaigning and political activity; to make recommendations on the role which Labour should undertake in the modern Ireland; and to report to the NEC so that conclusions might be reached at the next Party Conference.

After I was asked to serve as chairman and the other membership was agreed, the Commission held its first meeting on the 29th March 2008. We have been hard at work since then.

In recognition perhaps of the urgency of the task facing us, the time-scale set by the Party Conference was a demanding one. In the event, our work was not finished by November of last year, although we took the opportunity to brief delegates at the Special Party Conference on our work to date.

We gave final approval to this report on the 10th January 2009.

The membership of the Commission was representative of the different elements of the Party including the Parliamentary Party, the constituency organisations, Labour councillors, our staff and the Party Sections.

As the Party Leader pointed out to us at our first meeting, our task was nothing less than to develop a blueprint for a 21st Century Labour Party. A party that is relevant to, and successful in, contemporary Ireland. Successful in motivating people to join us, successful in winning elections, and successful in improving Ireland.

From the start, we were determined that this would be a participative exercise, engaging all Party members in debate. To that end, we held meetings of Party members throughout the country, sent out a detailed questionnaire and set up a dedicated website.

We were all of us struck by the thirst for debate among the membership on these issues and by the willingness to engage, coherently and constructively. Whatever else happens to this Report, it seems to us vital that the Party organisation must maintain ongoing engagement with its members and make full use of this relatively untapped resource.

I in turn was struck by the constructive approach brought to the Commission and its work by all its members. There was full debate and detailed argument but there was no rancour or divisiveness. None of our members, including myself, achieved all we would have wanted but all of us see a great deal in our Report that, if implemented conscientiously over the coming months and years, will radically improve our Party and its standing.

I want to thank all the Commission members for their hard work and their contribution: Michael O'Reilly, Aidan O'Sullivan, Bernard Cantillon, Cairin De Buis, Mary Freehill, Michael O'Brien, Derek Nolan, Dermot O'Gara, Enda Duffy, Irene Shelley, Joanna Tuffy, Lorraine Mulligan, Paddy

Murray, Roisin Shortall, Sean Mc Carthy, Alan Kelly, Alex White, Siobhan Mc Laughlin and Sudhansh Verma; as well as Dermot Lacey, who acted as Commission Secretary.

I want to thank the Party Leader and Deputy Leader for their wholehearted support for our work. Sincere thanks are also due to the Party staff at Head Office and in Leinster House for so much logistical support and other assistance.

My personal thanks go to my own support team, Dermot Ryan, Mark Garrett, Pat Carroll and John Fanning, who assisted me in analysing the issues and composing draft proposals for the Commission to consider.

I am grateful to Catherine Byrne, who brought her professional expertise to the task of creating the members' questionnaire and who conducted face-to-face interviews on our behalf

Finally, I want to thank Finbarr O'Malley, who helped me in editing all this material into the final product you see before you and in preparing the necessary changes to be made to the draft Party Constitution.

This Commission was established by the Party Conference. Throughout its work, we have been conscious that we were engaging in a process owned by, and accountable to, the Party membership. Now, its Report goes back to the body that created it, the Party Conference, for debate and, I hope adoption.



Greg Sparks

Chairman, Commission for a 21st Century Labour

THE REPUBLIC GUARANTEES RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL LIBERTY,
EQUAL RIGHTS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES TO ALL ITS CITIZENS,
AND DECLARES ITS RESOLVE TO PURSUE THE HAPPINESS AND PROSPERITY OF THE
WHOLE NATION AND OF ALL ITS PARTS,
CHERISHING ALL THE CHILDREN OF THE NATION EQUALLY ...”

Proclamation of Independence, Easter 1916

1: Why a Labour Party

The task facing the Labour Party today is an acute one. On the one hand, when *Commission 21* started its work, the economic indicators were ominous and, by the time we finished, it had become clear that Ireland had entered a recession – perhaps the most severe reversal of our economic fortunes in the history of the State. The basic infrastructure of a modern western economy – governments central banks, financial regulators and the banking system itself – had failed not just in Ireland but throughout the developed world.

On the other hand, both our Party and our country are entering a period of significant anniversaries. This January is the 90th anniversary of the Democratic Programme of the First Dáil, a Labour Party initiative. In three years time, Labour will celebrate 100 hundred years since its foundation. And, just four years later, we will commemorate the 1916 Proclamation of Independence signed by James Connolly, one of our Party’s founders; the Easter Rising, in which he fought; and his execution.

We in Labour need to reflect on our origins and purpose. Our object must be not simply to commemorate the past but to explore the present in order to map out the future – a future for our country with Labour at its heart.

In our almost one century of existence, Labour has fought many battles which have changed Ireland for the better. It was Labour who gave women the right to equal pay for equal work, Labour which brought in the laws which protect our rights at work, Labour which introduced the legislation on equality, on standards in public life and freedom of information, Labour that freed separated people from the dogmas of the past and allowed them remarry, Labour that made it legal to buy a packet of condoms, Labour that abolished third level fees – and it was Labour that brought in the first current Budget surplus in a generation.

But political parties are not historical societies: they exist to shape the future. To do that, we in Labour must have a party that is, first of all, proud of its identity, relevance and message. Secondly, and as importantly, our Party must be “fit for purpose”, fit to engage and succeed in modern progressive politics.

Each generation must face new challenges and must measure itself by its capacity to tackle them. For today's Labour Party, faced with the worst economic recession in the State's history, we believe success will be measured by how well, in the few short years between now and 2016, we have reacted to and overcome our worsening economic position while at the same time holding true to the task unfinished since our formation – to create a prosperous and sustainable society in Ireland, one that cherishes all its children equally.

What makes Labour Different.

The Labour Party was born at a meeting of the Irish Trade Union Congress in Clonmel in 1912, with James Connolly proposing the motion to establish the Party and James Larkin speaking immediately after, in support.

For Larkin and Connolly, republicanism and socialism were completely complementary and the Irish socialist was in reality the true Irish patriot. In 1900, in a pamphlet called *The Coming Generation*, Connolly wrote the much quoted passage –

“Ireland without her people is nothing to me, and the man who is bubbling over with love and enthusiasm for ‘Ireland’, and can yet pass unmoved through our streets and witness all the wrong and the suffering, the shame and the degradation wrought upon the people of Ireland, aye, wrought by Irishmen upon Irishmen and women, without burning to end it, is, in my opinion, a fraud and a liar in his heart, no matter how he loves that combination of chemical elements which he is pleased to call ‘Ireland’”.

In 1916 James Connolly put his name to the Easter Proclamation –

- declaring the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies,
- guaranteeing religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and
- declaring its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally.

Labour Party ideals first impacted on the policy of the new State 90 years ago in the Democratic Programme of the First Dáil of January 1919, jointly drafted by Tom Johnson of Labour and Sean T O’Kelly of Sinn Féin. That Programme –

- reaffirmed that all rights to private property must be subordinated to the public right and welfare,
- insisted that the first duty of Government was to make provision for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of children, to secure that no child should suffer hunger or cold from lack of food, clothing or shelter, and that all children must be provided with the means and facilities requisite for their proper education and training, and

- demanded “a sympathetic native scheme for the care of the Nation’s aged and infirm, who shall not be regarded as a burden, but rather entitled to the Nation’s gratitude and consideration”.

The Democratic Programme was a Labour Party initiative. It wouldn’t have been written at all, and certainly not in that language, without Labour’s insistence and input. As a compass for government, it is as relevant today as it was 90 years ago. With no such compass, the present Government seems paralysed, with no strategy, no answers and no vision for the future. Our people cannot be expected to make sacrifices today if they are promised nothing but more of the same tomorrow.

All political movements proclaim their interest in the common good. All parties say they support a prosperous economy, thriving industries, sound education, accessible health services, and so on. Other parties, however, still insist on the jaded and discredited slogan that “a rising tide will lift all boats”. Labour rejects that flawed, simplistic and inadequate analysis. We believe in a prosperous economy but we do not accept that, left to its own devices, a prosperous economy will create a just society that looks after the aged, cherishes its children or guarantees equal opportunity for all.

Indeed, as recent events have proven, an economy left to its own devices may not prosper at all: it is just as likely to collapse, with sudden and disastrous consequences.

Economies are amoral; it is for the society in which an economy operates to decide, through real political debate, what kind of community we want to live in, to decide what kind of community the economy must serve.

Labour rejects the view that politics is now all to be played out in a game of marketing, in a bland ideology-free middle ground. If Labour in Ireland and likeminded parties elsewhere communicate a belief in barely distinguishable differences between themselves and the right, or confine themselves to arguments as to who would make the better manager, then they themselves are major contributors to the lack of real debate on society’s future and the general public disengagement from politics.

For every party politician and every party member, the central question is: What is Government for? For us, the answer is that Government is, or should be, about change and social progress. Government should be the instrument through which our society is changed and renewed. Through which disadvantage and injustice are corrected. Through which prosperity is protected, not just for the few but for the benefit of the community, and through which society ensures that there is opportunity for all.

If Labour had to define ourselves purely by what we are opposed to, it would be the infamous declaration of Margaret Thatcher that: “There is no such thing as society”. But we should never define ourselves solely by what we are opposed to. That limits us to the pre-determined agenda set by others. Instead, we must create our own perspective and promote our own agenda.

Labour’s core purpose is to reform Irish society. Now more than ever, we need to:

- build a strong and sustainable base for future economic growth and a future shared prosperity,
- provide support for the most important job there is – caring for our families,
- help every child to live to their full potential, and
- ensure for the senior citizens of this country the services that they have earned.

We regard a thriving economy as a means towards an end: a thriving economy serving a society that thrives; a society bonded by principles of solidarity and social justice; a society where no class or individual is burdened by disadvantages inherited from another generation; a society where each individual is free to attain his or her maximum potential and to contribute that potential for the betterment of others.

We in the Labour Party believe that developing a thriving society is the business of politics and politicians – not a by-product of laissez-faire economics. Politics never could and never will be able to rely on market forces alone to deliver on our vision of a prosperous and sustainable future.

We also believe that a sustained and successful effort to reduce inequality and to assist those falling behind is not at all incompatible with a sustained and successful commitment to meeting the challenges of the market economy. The socialised market economy is more likely to be more successful in the long run.

And the long run is what's critical for the betterment of our children. Politics means nothing if it does not mean that the world we bequeath to our children is a better place than the one we ourselves inherited.

Other political parties place their faith in a market-driven individualism. Our founding principles, on the other hand, derive from our understanding of human dignity, the common good and human rights. They derive from the proposition that inequality within our community raises basic ethical questions, about social justice, and that society as whole has a duty to every person in serious need. We belong to a tradition that promotes social inclusion and solidarity between all members of the community as fundamental values.

We therefore see equality of opportunity in terms of the rights of our citizens: the right to a fair opportunity to achieve your own potential, without being handicapped by the weight of disadvantages that burdened your parents and their parents before them.

For Labour, it is unacceptable that, even after a decade of Celtic Tiger growth, we still remain a society with marked inequalities, more pronounced than in most developed European states. These marked differences in income are also accompanied by marked differences in educational attainment, health and mortality rates. And it will not be acceptable to Labour if the current recession is presented as an excuse for further delay in areas, such as early education, where urgent action is needed.

It is unacceptable that 17% of households live in fuel poverty – unable to heat their homes to an adequate temperature due to low household income and low energy efficiency.

It is unacceptable that up to 5,400 premature deaths in our country could be avoided each year if we took a more robust approach to tackling social deprivation and health inequality.

And it is unacceptable that there are upwards of 80,000 children in this country living in consistent poverty. Or that a child of parents who did not complete their secondary education is 23 times more likely to live in poverty than a child of parents with third level qualifications.

As we approach the centenaries of our Party and our State, two stark realities endure. First, Ireland has less equality of opportunity than other European countries – and this has changed very little despite the recent huge expansion in education and economic growth. And, second, disadvantage in Ireland is inherited. Many of today’s poor are the children of yesterday’s poor and their children are the most likely candidates to be tomorrow’s poor. This was the reality in 1916; this is still the reality today; our monument to James Connolly and those others who signed and died for the 1916 Proclamation must be that, with Labour in Government and Labour policies in action, it will not be so in 2016.

Labour and the Republic.

For the Irish left, republicanism is not about opposing British monarchs or about territorial claims. Republicanism is of course very much about the traditional values of liberty, equality and fraternity. But these values can be achieved and given an every-day concrete reality only by reference to the origin and meaning of the word “republic”: the property of the people. The civic republican tradition insists that government is a public matter, that it belongs to and must include and involve the people. We insist that government is public property and that it cannot be subjugated to any private or sectoral interest.

At the heart of civic republican values are interdependence, public participation, civic pride, the common good and a commitment to public as opposed to private interests.

The liberal agenda spear-headed by Labour in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s was essentially about trying to carve out an appropriate private realm for individuals, within which people were free to live their lives without state interference. The battles to provide for divorce, to decriminalise homosexual acts and to provide for access to contraception can all be seen in that light.

However, having fought so long to carve out a private space in our lives, protected from an interfering state, our country seems to have forgotten the importance of a healthy and properly functioning public realm. It is a precious inheritance and one that each generation has to carefully protect and develop.

We must, as a community, accept that there are some things in life which can only be delivered when we work together. Not everything can be bought in a neatly packaged box as a purely private transaction.

For some time now, the public realm has been under pressure. This country has neglected the space in our lives where we meet each other as equal citizens, come together to provide certain things in common and engage with each other in the governing of our community. That public space has suffered from both concerted assault and deliberate neglect. Too much public territory has been ceded to private ownership, based on an ideological argument that the market will deliver better results, but with no clear benefit for the citizen. And in too many cases golden circles have determined the distribution of society's wealth, where the rights of citizens and the needs of the public should have held sway. At the same time, the quality of public debate has declined and confidence in public institutions, both in their probity and in their efficiency, has been eroded.

It is time to redress that balance. A new generation of parents, are deeply unhappy with what Ireland has to offer to their children. They are unapologetic about demanding the best for their children – the best healthcare, the best schools, the best childcare and, yes, the best playgrounds. They know that these things are publicly provided in other countries and they wonder why they cannot be provided here. We cannot deliver those things for our children unless we renew our civic republican commitment.

It is Labour's duty, as part of that process of renewal, to demonstrate that taxpayers' money can be used efficiently and effectively to provide high quality services to all, not just to those who can afford to buy them privately. Otherwise, we will not persuade people to invest in them financially or politically, or indeed to work in them. We have to demonstrate that the public service can sustain the highest international standards, adapting to changing times and to the evolving needs of the people they serve.

If we want better public services – and Labour does – there are three issues that must be tackled: mindset, management and money. So far as mindset is concerned, we in Labour believe in quality public services. There is a whole range of things in our lives that we do better when we do them collectively. High quality public services are a hallmark of a humane and civilised society. What we have had instead is a barely concealed contempt for the public sector and a lauding of all things private.

The second issue is management. Yes, there is waste in the public service. If we believe in quality public services, then it is imperative for us to demand the best possible return on our investment. Unless we convince people that the public sector can deliver high quality services in an efficient and cost effective manner, we will not persuade them to invest – nor should they. Everyone must embrace the need for change in the way that services are delivered. The public service needs to move away from an excessive focus on a 'command and control' model of service provision, where accountability is focused on financial inputs, to a more flexible ideal, which devolves autonomy to more local level, encourages innovation and risk-taking among public sector managers and defines accountability to a greater degree in terms of what is achieved. This means substantial changes in

how we manage the public sector in future. We must make these changes as part and parcel of our response to the present crisis in our economy.

The third element is money. One of the biggest wasted opportunities of the Celtic Tiger years was the failure to channel our new wealth in an effective and committed way into high quality public services. But, when we call for greater investment in public services, we don't mean an uncontrolled and uncontrollable opening of the purse strings. Instead, we mean addressing areas where specific investment can deliver strong returns. We mean putting in places services, such as pre-school education, which simply don't exist at present. And we mean combining investment with structural reform. Our aim must be to deliver a more effective and consumer-focused public service.

Labour and the Economy.

The present inequalities in Irish society, despite our Celtic Tiger decade, present Labour with a challenge. The economy, its health and its future are central to any serious-minded political attempt to create a fairer society. We cannot and do not turn our back on policies of economic growth and national prosperity. Labour must be central to that debate.

In fact, through Ruairi Quinn's tenure as Minister of Finance, we can claim much credit for the transformation of the economic and social landscape of our country.

Recent Exchequer returns have shown the error of over-reliance on tax incentives for speculation in property. For sustainable economic prosperity, Ireland will need to invest in infrastructure and in the new business start-ups that will create jobs in the decades to come.

Labour is instead committed to a thriving business sector, rather than to a purely passive, property investment sector, and to maintaining Ireland's position as a country that attracts and maintains investment. We want to encourage, support and develop indigenous business and successful native entrepreneurs. We reject an ideology that insists that economic prosperity is in some way dependent on labour market inequalities. We believe instead that our future economic prosperity relies on equality of opportunity for our entrepreneurs to realise their vision: the vision of a central role for science and technology in a knowledge based economy: an economy that can find new cures for old diseases and new energy sources to safeguard a threatened environment.

Our purpose is to build the new economy, to be a voice for enterprise, business and aspiration and to make Ireland a leader in that new economy. That future lies in Irish firms being able to develop ideas, commercialise them and turn them into world leading products.

Ambitious for the Future.

At our Party's foundation in the early years of the last century, the mindset of the country believed that poverty, disadvantage, poor health and inadequate housing were part of what we are. It was a mindset that was prepared to tolerate glaring, persistent and institutionalised inequality because we were taught to believe there was no alternative.

The idea that we could mount a comprehensive assault on disadvantage was a utopian ambition, which had no place in the daily reality of Irish public life. The best the poor, the marginalised or

people with disabilities could hope for was good will, good works and the voluntary dedication of a few.

Those old days have gone. Since 1945 social democratic ideas about welfare, secularism, tolerance and pluralism have become deeply rooted in European and Irish society, in public policy and in the law. We cannot allow the recession be used as an excuse to turn back the clock. On the contrary, we believe it will be impossible to deal with our present economic problems without a vision and an ambition as to where we want to take Ireland and its people. The only policies that should be abandoned are those that allowed the Celtic Tiger to come and go, leaving a small cohort of a well-off class but not enriching our community in general.

What was remarkable about the Celtic Tiger era was that, although we became a relatively rich country and a confident people, as a community we lacked ambition. We allowed ourselves drift into the belief that the private sector had all the answers and the public realm represented nothing but waste. There was in particular a deep lack of ambition in the pursuit of equality of opportunity for all. During the Celtic Tiger decade, we did not consider or address the central issues of inequality and disadvantage in any comprehensive way.

Labour has never been short of convictions. But we have at times lacked the courage of our convictions. Now is not the time to question or abandon them. What we – all of us, the Party, the country and its people – need is a sense of ambition. We need the courage to tackle the ideology that the private sector is always right, that we must accept the diktats of the market place. We must reject the old way of doing things, the traditional acceptance of second-best. Now more than ever, we need an ambition to drive us to build a better, fairer, more successful society.

- The Labour Party stands for a dynamic, positive role for the State working through responsive and accountable public institutions at local, national, and international levels. We insist that, in expressing the democratically determined public good, the State can be an enabling, civilising and bonding force. The State is central to the creation and distribution of wealth through the investment, development and management of the country's assets and resources. It is also responsible for the provision of effective, high quality and accountable public services, regulation of markets for the public good and a fair taxation system.
- The Labour Party believes that community solidarity, a common sense of belonging and a willingness to work for the common good in the local and the wider community, is essential to creating a good quality of life for all. The environment is central to a true sense of community, locally and globally. Without clean water, air and safe food there is no life. All human interaction with the environment must be sustainable, so that we can meet the needs of today without compromising the rights of future generations.
- We support an efficient and competitive public sector, operating in an open, mixed economy, responsive to consumer needs, generating and maintaining quality employment and a sustainable environment.

- Our Party is a member of the Party of European Socialists and we share with our sister parties a common political and economic theory of social organisation, advocating the conscious direction of social life and requiring limitations on the private ownership, control and abuse of our businesses and industries. A socialist, as opposed to a conservative, dynamic is obsessed with the conviction that there must be a better way, that there is a reason for getting involved in the business of government in the first place and that, when the business is completed, changes will have been made and made for the better. We believe that the function of government is to improve the situation.

We belong to the most creative, vibrant and resilient movement in Western European political philosophy and we are the authentic Irish voice of that tradition.

Together with our sister parties, we strive for the achievement of equality, social and economic justice, community solidarity and freedom. We seek to have these values reflected in the laws and institutions of Ireland, in the European Union and in our relationships with the wider world.

Labour's vision is of an Ireland contributing to the sustainable development of the earth, to solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, to the eradication of poverty and the protection of children's rights, the strict observance of internationally accepted legal commitments, a genuine and participative multilateral approach to international relations and peace between states. Labour supports the development of a democratic and social European Union through which our vision both for Ireland and for the wider world can be achieved.

But, while we believe these values and ambitions are shared innately and instinctively by the majority of Irish people, the challenge for us is to make Labour a beacon for those hundreds of thousands of potential voters and supporters.

- The Irish people have a real and working concept of a society defined by the pursuit for its members of equality of opportunity and a reasonable measure of equality of outcomes.
- They are opposed to a politics that accommodates connections and influence, golden circles and the inside track with, if necessary, a little corruption on the side to grease things on their way.
- They believe in politically and legally enshrining equal pay, the minimum wage, the right to join a union, to negotiate collectively, to decent and affordable childcare and to a civilised work-life balance for individuals and their families, however defined.
- They recognise the strong argument for predominant public provision in respect of health care and education – all in all, the civilised welfare state.
- The Irish people also recognise the need for a strong commitment to the public realm – libraries, public parks, museums, cultural and arts centres – and to civil society, the things that shape our national identity.

- And they cry out for competence in government and public administration.

So, Labour must provide the Irish people, its potential supporters and voters, with “something to steer by”. That “something” must be a clear reference point for the real divisions between, on the one hand, the strange mix of market liberalism and corporatism that currently predominates in Ireland and, on the other, an agenda that is egalitarian and committed to a welfare state and the provision of quality public services, as well as respecting community and voluntary effort towards the strengthening of civil society.

The purpose of such a reference point is to contest and achieve political power – to govern, in order to implement our programme.

Reshaping Society and Reforming the Labour Party

The policies of the last decade have created new problems, new inequalities and new injustices. It is our task to face them, to tackle them head on.

We live in a country of great potential. Labour would make different choices. Our objective is to build a society based on the principles of socialised democracy, the social market economy, a fair and equitable tax system, efficient and quality public services. A society where every citizen will have, to the extent of his or her ability, an equal right and entitlement to participate in the social, economic and cultural life of the nation, where everyone has an opportunity to develop their personal and social selves in conditions of freedom, solidarity, justice and equality.

Yes, we live in a globalised world and a globalised economy. Yes, our vision of social inclusion requires levels of prosperity that can only be produced by a dynamic, efficient Irish economy, able to compete against the best in the world. And so, yes, we are committed to an environment that creates and sustains a genuine entrepreneurial spirit, creating profit for the Irish economy and Irish society.

But our core principle that drives us forward remains the same as drove Connolly in 1916 and that inspired Tom Johnson in 1919: that no-one gets left behind, that our society and our capacity for progress is diminished, not sustained, by inequality – that we are all in this together.

Every generation has the opportunity to reshape society for themselves and their children. At the start of the 21st Century the Labour Party has an opportunity to provide new vision, new purpose and new leadership for this country and to shape our place in a newly expanded Europe and an increasingly globalised world.

Over the last 10 years, we have become a country on auto pilot, with no clear idea as to where we are going. We need to get a sense of national direction and aspiration. A common cause, to inspire the allegiance and the imagination of the New Ireland. The future has endless possibilities.

- Imagine an Ireland, twenty years from now, with a million more people on an island where sectarian conflict is a distant memory from history.
- Imagine a country, in which communities are integrated, with people from many different nationalities and traditions.

- Imagine an Ireland that leads the new world economy, still attracting the best companies in the world but also having strong indigenous companies investing abroad.
- Can we see China, not as a threat to our jobs at home, but as our biggest export market for food and agricultural products and specialist services?
- Think of Ireland no longer depending on oil but leading the world with alternative energy harnessed from the wind and the waves, in that nine-tenths of our territory which is the sea around us.
- Imagine visiting delegations coming here to see the best hospitals in the world and to examine the most modern schools.
- Imagine an Ireland that has a place in a school for every child and no room for poverty.
- An Ireland of living cities that work and move and a thriving rural economy, providing a decent living for farming families.

This party, that has led so much change in Ireland, must now have the courage to change itself. At every level of our organization, we need to do better. As a political party Labour has to reflect the change we want to see in society. It's simply not possible to fight the political campaigns of the 21st Century with a 20th Century organisational structure.

The role of *Commission 21* is to create a Labour Party with a single purpose. Developing relevant and far-reaching policies, winning votes and winning elections: this is the only way the Labour Party will have the opportunity to enter government with the ambition of reshaping Irish society. To achieve that purpose we need to reform ourselves. Our ambition for the Labour Party must match our ambition for the country.

Labour is a future-looking Party: that's why we're involved in politics – because we want to shape the future.

It has been the job of *Commission 21* to help create a “fit for purpose” organisation to take on these challenges. In doing so, we have shone a light on all aspects of the Party's organisation and structure. Throughout our work there has been clear evidence that our members recognise the challenge and are more than willing to take it on. Acceptance of this Report and its recommendations will be another step towards achieving our goals.

*"COMRADES, WE ARE LIVING IN MOMENTOUS TIMES.
WE ARE NOW ON THE THRESHOLD OF A NEWER MOVEMENT,
WITH A NEWER HOPE AND A NEW INSPIRATION."*

James Larkin, addressing the Irish Trade Union Congress, 1914

2: The Party Structure – National

A common theme throughout all the individual interviews, group sessions and submissions is that the Party has limited resources but does not appear to be able to get the best from the resources it has. A contributory factor to this position, in our opinion, is the present structure by which the Party organises itself.

In addition, account does not appear to have been taken in the current structures that the election of the Party Leader and Deputy Leader through each member's vote has changed the dynamic within the Party. We have a leadership that is accountable to the full membership for its stewardship. If we are to hold the Leader and Deputy Leader accountable, through elections by the full membership, then we must also give them the mandate and resources to implement their vision for the Party.

It is these issues that *Commission 21* addresses itself in this chapter.

The General Secretary

At present the General Secretary is appointed by the NEC. Two difficulties arise through this process. First, any body with 32 members would find it difficult to exercise effective day-to-day control over, and secure accountability from, an executive officer. Second, neither is the General Secretary accountable to the elected Party Leader. These weaknesses have separated the resources of Head Office from the strategy being pursued by the Party leadership. At present in excess of €2.6m per annum is spent by Head Office. Our proposals are designed to lead to direct accountability for the general thrust of expenditure to the Leader's office.

These proposals are not a criticism of the present or former general secretaries or of the staff in Head Office. We recognise that in the last decade there has been a significant increase in the resources made available to all political parties but the Party's constitutional structures, under which these resources have been managed, have not been adapted by the Party Conference to take account of this growth. Accordingly, we recommend that –

The General Secretary should be appointed through an open competitive process conducted under the authority of the Party Leader, with the appointment made by the new Executive Board, for no longer than the tenure of the Party Leader's term (including any term for which a Leader may be re-elected).

The General Secretary should no longer be classed as the chief executive of the Party but as its Chief Operating Officer. The role and responsibility of the General Secretary will continue to be the management and control of Head Office, but under the direction of the Party Leader, in order to recognise and give effect to the Leader's direct mandate from the membership.

However, the General Secretary should retain specific responsibility under the Party Constitution, independent of the Party Leader and reporting to the Executive Board (and the Parliamentary Party, as appropriate):

- (a) *for the integrity of the records taken and maintained of meetings of the Parliamentary Party, the Executive Board and the new Central Council,*
- (b) *for ensuring that the register of members and branches is maintained, specifying their paid-up status, and*
- (c) *for the organisation of the Party's Annual Conference.*

The General Secretary will be a non-voting member of the Executive Board.

He or she will be responsible for the performance of Head Office, based on specific objectives and outcomes, and will be asked to introduce a career structure for the staff within Head Office, as well as a performance-based management system.

Head Office Staff

It is not the intention of *Commission 21* to analyse or comment on the roles or responsibilities of the present or proposed staff of Head Office; nor is it our intention to be prescriptive as to the appointment of different personnel. However, there are a number of appointments we would recommend to be considered, as follows.

We recommend the assignment of a senior member of staff as a national organiser, who would work with the Organisation Sub-Committee and have responsibility for implementing on the ground plans for the development and expansion of the Party at branch and constituency level, membership recruitment, candidate selection and electoral strategy generally.

The national organiser, in addition to the other roles and responsibilities he or she is given, will also be charged with the development of a team of local and regional organisers for specific targeted constituencies. While it did not escape our attention that the innovation involved in the appointment of regional organisers was viewed positively throughout the party, we believe focus will have to be given to better defining their role and accountability.

It also became clear during our consultations that the body of local government representatives was not being adequately serviced. With the abolition of the dual mandate, it is in our opinion important that specific personnel and resources (including assistance with printing, media relations and research), under the direction of the national organiser, should be devoted to supporting these important public representatives, not only in their present role but also as future members of the Parliamentary Party and indeed potential future Party Leaders.

Party Leader and Deputy Leader

At present the Party Leader and Deputy Leader are elected for a term of six years. We cannot understand the rationale for this term of office. Nor was it defended or justified by any grouping within the Party during our consultations. The natural life cycle of parliamentary politics is the lifetime of a Dáil. Accordingly we recommend that –

- *Elections to the offices of Party Leader and Deputy Leader should be held within six months of any general election following which the Party does not enter into Government.*
- *Elections should in any event be held after the Party Leader has served a term of 10 years in office.*
- *The Party Constitution should enable a candidate to contest both offices, with provision that a candidate defeated in the election for Party Leader remains in the contest for Deputy Leader.*

National Executive Committee

The National Executive Committee (NEC) is central to the Party's organisation. It is responsible for overseeing, directing and co-ordinating the Party's affairs, subject to the ultimate control exercised by the Party Conference. The make-up of the NEC is up to 30 voting members, with an additional 5 non-voting members.

There were a number of submissions to *Commission 21* asking for additional representation on the NEC. In our opinion, these submissions highlight confusion between two potential roles for the NEC: that of an executive committee and that of a broader, representative forum. We believe the Party needs both. But both sets of functions cannot be performed by one and the same body. At the present, the NEC attempts to perform both roles and it does not fully succeed in either. In other words, the NEC is neither a proper executive body nor a truly representative one.

In the opinion of *Commission 21* the present size of the NEC undermines its ability to function in an executive capacity.

However, it is also our opinion that a forum is needed to represent the broad Party membership and its Sections. It is imperative that the Parliamentary Party and the Party leadership stay directly in touch with the views of the Party membership and that certain core decisions are vested in a body with a representative mandate. Accordingly, we recommend –

The Labour Party should have two bodies at national level: a Central Council (CC) and an Executive Board (EB). The appropriate functions of the current NEC should be assigned between the two bodies to ensure that both the representative and executive roles within the Party can be fully exercised.

The membership of the Central Council should consist of –

- a) *one representative elected by each Constituency Council,*
- b) *one representative elected by the Party staff, including staff members directly employed by members of the PLP,*

- c) *one delegate from each existing and newly-formed Party Section including Labour Youth, Labour Women, Labour Trade Unionists and Labour Equality, and*
- d) *the members of the Executive Board.*

The Central Council should have power to appoint up to three additional members from sections of the Party organisation that it believes are under-represented on the Council.

Due to the broader and more representative nature of the Central Council, a number of roles and responsibilities of the current NEC should be entrusted to it, including the approval of the Party manifesto and the removal of the Party Leader. (A full list of the proposed functions of the Central Council and the Executive Board is set out in Appendix 3.)

The Central Council should meet at least once quarterly, other than the quarter in which an Annual Conference is held, unless the EB decides that an extra meeting is required. The Party Leader should be required to submit to each meeting a report on the current political situation, dealing with any major developments. He or she should also outline progress on strategy for the development of the Party.

The Executive Board (EB) should have 13 voting members. The EB would perform the managerial functions of the Party. This would include ratifying candidates, oversight of the Party's finances and the approval of standing orders. A full list of the proposed functions of the Executive Board is set out in Appendix 3.

The voting membership of the EB would consist of 6 ordinary members elected at annual conference, the Party Leader and Deputy Leader, along with the Chairperson and National Treasurer of the Party (who will both continue to be elected by Conference, thus ensuring that a majority, eight out of 13 members of the EB, are directly elected by the Party Conference). In addition there should be two representatives of the Parliamentary Labour Party and one representative of the Association of Labour Councillors. The General Secretary should be a non-voting member of the EB.

The election of the six members at Annual Conference should be a contest through a panel system, to ensure that three members are men and three members are women.

Neither members of the PLP nor Party staff or employees of individual members of the PLP should be eligible to contest elections to the EB at the Party Conference.

Regarding the five present standing sub-committees (the Management Sub-Committee, the Finance Sub-Committee, the Organisation Sub-Committee, the International Affairs Sub-Committee and the Policy Committee), we recommend as follows.

- a) *The Management Sub-Committee does not require constitutional status and should be deleted from the Constitution. The EB should instead have a general power to appoint such a committee, or one or more ad hoc committees, on the nomination of the Party Leader, to assist and advise on general or specific management issues as the occasion requires. Any such committee would be answerable to the EB on the performance of its functions.*

- b) *The Finance Sub-Committee should remain a sub-committee of the EB, chaired by the Party Treasurer. The constitutional provisions relating to the functions, powers and duties of the Party Treasurer should be clarified and strengthened.*
- c) *The International Affairs Sub-Committee and the Policy Committee should be committees of, and report to, the CC. The chair should be appointed by the CC on the nomination of the Party Leader and the committee should have three members each from the CC and the Parliamentary Party.*
- d) *The Organisation Sub-Committee should continue to be a committee of, and report to, the EB. The chair should be appointed by the EB on the nomination of the Party Leader and the sub-committee should have three members each from the EB and the CC.*

Any rule or practice that prevents public representatives from serving as members of the Organisation Sub-Committee should be abolished, since we believe it curtails the provision of relevant and valuable expertise. However, the Chair should not be a member of the PLP.

Parliamentary Party

The PLP (which includes the Party's public representatives in the Dáil, the Seanad and the European Parliament) plays a pivotal role in defining the image of the Party. It is the public face of the Party and the successes and failures of its members are those of the Party as a whole. And it is through the PLP that we can shape the development of public policy, whether or not we are in Government.

The election of a TD depends on a number of different elements including the hard work, reputation and public profile of the candidate, the constituency being contested and the image of the Party at the time of the election. Elsewhere we discuss the selection process for candidates. Here we make recommendations that will contribute to the Party's image and the effectiveness of the PLP as a whole on a national basis.

It is without question that members of the PLP can influence public opinion and the standing of the Party through the projection of their contributions to public debate. It is for this reason that *Commission 21* calls for greater support for, and co-ordination between, PLP members as the Party's principal policy spokespersons. The following recommendations are made.

We write elsewhere on the role a revitalised regional structure in providing a forum for genuine policy debate within the Party. Clearly, the active participation of the PLP is central to the success of that recommendation.

In addition, we strongly recommend a greater and more structured use of IT technology as a means to expand the input of those interested in contributing to the development of public policy, through establishing forums that members may contribute to, in direct dialogue with the spokesperson. Specifically we recommend that each front bench spokesperson should host a live web debate at least once (preferably twice) annually through which members may ask questions directly of the spokesperson on the issues of the day and the development of policy.

At present TDs have available two members of staff, a secretarial assistant and a parliamentary assistant (PA). At present, certain of the PAs work with the policy director in co-ordinating parliamentary responses to issues of the day and help in developing strategies and policies.

We recommend that this, at present informal, arrangement is not just continued but formalised and strengthened. We recommend the formal establishment of a new Parliamentary Support Unit based in Leinster House. The Parliamentary Support Unit would coordinate the services already provided to the PLP, as well as design and develop additional services as determined by the PLP. The Parliamentary Support Unit would:

- (a) provide and coordinate research and advice on political, legislative and campaign matters in order to provide maximum support to the PLP*
- (b) provide and coordinate training and support for the PAs, Secretarial and constituency support staff who work with Oireachtas members*
- (c) provide advice and support to the PLP on staff matters such as recruitment, development and other HR issues*
- (d) coordinate information sharing on issues such as campaign techniques, policy development, media relations, constituency organisation*
- (e) coordinate the design and print services within the Houses of the Oireachtas as well as commission appropriate print material and on-line services from external contractors.*

Commission 21 is conscious that the TDs rely on their PAs to help in their re-election. Having considered fully the deployment of the limited resources available to the Party and the unique contribution that the TDs could make towards improving this image, it is believed by Commission 21 that this greater co-operation and co-ordination will help in improving the Party's standing in the polls. It will also help, in our opinion, the existing TDs to be re-elected, along with new Labour TDs.

3: The Party Structure – Local

The members are the lifeblood of the Labour Party. It is their vision and personal political commitment that inform the Party and help develop its policies and the message it presents to the wider community from which we seek support. It is also the members who canvass, leaflet, fundraise and carry out other activities focussed on gaining seats in Dáil and local elections, with a view to fulfilling the party's policies and objectives.

There are currently almost 7,000 members of the Labour Party. Most members are automatically assigned to a branch within a constituency. There is also a little used provision in the Party Constitution for persons to join as individual Party members.

There are almost 350 branches of the party throughout the country. The activities of branches differ from constituency to constituency, and whether they are urban or rural, but, in accordance with the Party's Constitution, every branch:

- must have at least ten members in an urban area, five in a rural area.
- must hold an AGM and elect branch officers.
- must hold a minimum of three meeting per year.

Branches are affiliated to the local Constituency Council, of which there is one per Dáil constituency. Each Constituency Council must hold no less than four meetings per year and membership is automatic to all members of the affiliated branches.

Other Party units include those which are locally based, such as Divisional Councils and Regional Councils, and the Party Sections having a national membership, such as *Labour Youth*, *Labour Women*, *Labour Trade Unionists* and *Labour Equality*.

The Party Constitution enables but does not require Divisional Councils (which sub-divide a constituency, such as one covering two counties) and Regional Councils (which unite two or more neighbouring constituencies).

Generally speaking, the consultations of *Commission 21* found that the effectiveness of the structures of the Party vary greatly. However, due to the changes in our society, fewer and fewer people have time to attend traditional branch and constituency meetings. In some, but not all constituencies, branches are meeting their requirement to meet at least three times a year. But many branches rarely discuss policy issues, either of local or national importance. In many constituencies the Constituency Council is the only real and effective operating unit of the Party but, again, discussion of Party policy is not a principal feature on every Constituency Council agenda.

It also appears to *Commission 21* that the functions of Regional and Divisional Councils are obscure. This has resulted in them either not operating at all or not operating on an effective basis. We recognise, however, there are exceptions to this generalisation. For example, in some Dublin constituencies, divided by City and County boundaries, Divisional Councils have performed and should continue to perform a useful function.

In our discussions with Party members throughout the country, they were convinced that the Party has the right mix of policies to tackle the problems so visible in our economy and our community. They genuinely believed that Labour should be in Government, should be confident in our policies and should be selling them to electorate. We discovered a real and unsatisfied thirst among the membership for genuine engagement in the process of political debate and policy formation. They fully understood also, however, that they had to be fully up to the undoubtedly equally important task of “selling” the Party message at election time.

Many members have a keen interest in the development of party policy, as well as campaigning for the implementation of that policy. Despite this, there are very poor structures in place for members to interface with our front bench spokesperson, to comment upon or input into policy formation.

Commission 21 is satisfied that our membership is a large and under-used resource. Our Party is the poorer for not making as effective a use of it as possible. We need to develop structures suitable to modern living that challenge and engage our membership, on an ongoing basis.

Individual Members and Supporters

As we pointed out earlier, the Party Constitution allows for supporters to become individual Party members, where the members either are not assigned to any branch or do not wish to become a branch member. That seems to us to be a potentially significant but under-utilised resource. The reality is that in a modern society a political party will attract many potential supporters due its stance on specific issues or, as already indicated, their support for a particular candidate. Not all will want to join branches. Some members might submit drafts for policy proposals, due to their expertise in that area, while others might have significant local knowledge and expertise. Some may be active only in one of the Party Sections but not at local level.

The Party and its structures must be flexible enough to accommodate all members who are willing to contribute and to make best use of their contributions.

We recommend three classes of membership: national, constituency and branch membership. The option of national, or individual, Party membership should be promoted to a far greater extent than it is at present and should be supported by allowing individual members to participate to the fullest extent possible in Party activities, supported by the information network we propose elsewhere and by dedicated resources to keep all members fully up to date with the Party and its activities. As at present, individual members would be entitled to vote in Leadership elections but not at selection conventions and could not attend Conference as delegates.

The new status of constituency member would not be a branch member but would be entitled to speak and vote at Constituency Council level. A constituency member would have no vote at local selection conventions but would be entitled to vote at Dáil selection conventions. Constituency members would send delegates to the Party Conference based on the same member to delegate ratio (5:1) as branches do.

Branch membership should, however, continue to be promoted as the preferred membership option and branch members should continue, as at present, to retain the full range of existing rights.

We further recommend the formal establishment of a Labour Supporters Network, which would allow individuals who are not Party members to support the Party in various ways, including receiving communications, attending meetings and conferences as observers and participating in policy formation. Those who sign up for this option would receive communications, be invited to events and meetings and be encouraged to donate, to attend social functions, and so on.

Branches

Traditionally it would appear that many branches existed to ensure selection as a candidate but, with the advent of “one member, one vote”, this is no longer necessary or directly relevant. Now, it is perhaps more due to the fact that it is the number of members per branch that decide the number of delegates that can vote at Annual Conference.

Paradoxically, it can be argued that the present Party Constitution actually encourages the creation of branches, as they are the method by which constituencies can influence votes at Conference, including election to the NEC. Other problems identified during consultations included the following.

- Members are sometimes arranged into branches only to ensure the selection of candidates and votes for the NEC.
- Some candidates will have attracted a following that is not interested in attending branch meetings but do help in canvassing and working for the individual candidate. The present structures do not facilitate such supporters.
- There should always be a healthy tension between the constituency organisation and the public representatives. It is important that as far as possible, the local organisation does not become or be seen as a fiefdom of a TD or local representative, rather than promoting the Party.
- Members, particularly in rural constituencies, do not always feel valued or supported by the party nationally. They can feel isolated, particularly if they do not have a TD or Senator.
- There is a view that the activities of branches are not always relevant to the local community. It is important that members feel welcomed to a branch (there were a number of cases specifically raised where new members did not feel they were welcome) and that each member should be entitled to raise issues that they see as relevant to their local organisation.

The phrase ‘One size does not fit all’ came up repeatedly during *Commission 21* consultations. We believe the focus of membership in the future should not be to do with structure or number of meetings and so on, but should rather focus on energising the base of the political party. Among the proposals we recommend are the following.

Constituencies should be encouraged to rationalise the number of affiliated branches. The number of delegates for Annual Conference should be allocated on the basis of constituency membership numbers, so as to discourage unnecessary multiplication of branches. Unless there is a good reason for a different basis – and this must be viewed sensitively in rural constituencies – the starting point should be that each branch encompasses a single local electoral area.

Targets should be drawn up for each constituency, in consultation with the national organiser. These targets would include number of activities such as recruitment, community activism, leaflet dropping, social events, fundraising and so on.

We recommend an awards scheme, to be presented at Annual Conference, to recognise the outstanding contribution of members and constituencies in various activities such as recruitment, fund-raising and local community initiatives.

We also recommend that there be a Conference showcase, including featuring of membership activities in national newsletters.

Regional Councils and Party Sections

At its consultative meetings throughout the country, the Commission was struck by the number of members who welcomed what they saw as a rare opportunity to discuss in a serious and focussed way the present situation of the Party and the options for its future. Many members insisted that this process must continue.

Commission 21 is convinced that such a process of ongoing engagement with and between the Party membership is vital to our future health and well-being. A central concern of the Commission has therefore been to enhance the role of members in debating and formulating Party policy and co-ordinated responses to local issues.

We are satisfied that the branch and Constituency Council structure is not adequate to meet what is at present an unmet need. A broader structure is required.

We recommend that the National Organiser should have responsibility for the resuscitation and revitalisation of the Regional Council structure, as an appropriate regional forum for policy debate by the membership. Not only will this facilitate discussions but it should also help the organisation to develop – as in a case where neighbouring constituencies may help each other, particularly, if one constituency has a TD. If this proposal is to fully work, however, Commission 21 believes there are two additional requirements:

- (a) the Party Leader must seek a commitment by the PLP, its spokespersons and their PAs to commit themselves to a regular series of regional meetings throughout the State, and the Party Sections should be organised on the same regional basis, which should further facilitate organisational growth;*
- (b) the Party Sections should form –*

- *policy units at national level, as support to the Dáil spokespersons relevant to their own principal concerns, and*
- *regional units affiliated to the Party's Regional Councils, to feed into the debate taking place at regional level.*

Of course there will be logistical problems. For example, every region might want at the same time to debate health – a prospect that would place unreasonable demands on the health spokesperson, or whoever the member of the PLP might be. However, if the process is properly planned in advance, then these Regional Council meetings should become a regular part of the Party calendar, rather than being seen as extraordinary events. It will also be important that the meetings are planned properly, with media coverage for the spokesperson and the local public representatives. This task should be given to the regional organisers, along with the local organisation.

We emphasise that this proposal is in addition to our recommendations in the chapter on IT, which outline further proposals to enhance communication within the Party including, in particular, the ability to contribute to policy development.

4: Candidate Selection

Labour has a huge problem in retaining seats when sitting TDs retire or die. For example, in 2007 we had three retirements and we lost two seats, Carlow-Kilkenny and Dublin North. We also failed to win back Dublin North Central and Kerry North, seats lost in 2002. It has happened at so many elections that it could easily become a self-fulfilling prophecy unless we are prepared to address the problem. Without supportive action from the local organisation, along with help from the Party leadership, a first time Labour candidate could go into an election with his or her chances of succeeding severely reduced. That cannot be allowed to happen.

The interviews and surveys conducted by the Commission indicate a strong desire to tackle the situation. A commonly held view was that the present selection procedure does not encourage the growth of new talent and can in certain circumstances act as a barrier to many who would like to be considered for nomination either in a general or a local election. There is also widespread support for the general principle of “one member, one vote” at selection conferences. This system is better than voting through branches. However, there were a number of reports of abuse in membership registration which has caused some disquiet.

“We need to be very clinical in our candidate selection. We need to be very clinical in where we put our candidates and how we select our candidates. We don’t have time for molly coddling, we don’t have time to be embracing the fact that people contributed to the Party for years and they deserve this, that and the other. The reality is that we are all part of the bigger picture and it has to be for the better of the Party and someone has to make those decisions.” (quote from a Commission interview)

On the other hand, there is healthy scepticism at any suggestion to give wide powers on the choice of candidates to Head Office. Previous experience of imposed candidates has not been all that impressive either. It is generally accepted however, that no one has a monopoly of wisdom or local knowledge in this delicate area. Party members jealously protect their privilege of choosing the Leader and Deputy Leader. They rightly are no less protective of their influence on the choice of local and Dáil candidates.

“It is a very, very difficult circle to square. To select the right candidate but not to disenfranchise the local organisation, that is the challenge. An imposed candidate, as we have discovered – and I can give you chapter and verse from my time – just doesn’t work, so we can’t do that. At the end of the day, we are an outfit of volunteers and, secondly, we can’t preach democracy and not practice it. It is a very great challenge but it is one that we have to do by persuasion and that is engaging with the organisation on the ground in a debate in advance of a selection convention.” (quote from a Commission interview)

It should be noted at the outset that the current Party Constitution stipulates in Article 13.2 that the procedure for selecting Party candidates shall be prescribed by the NEC. In other words, there is no procedure set out in the Constitution itself dealing with this issue. *Commission 21* makes no recommendation for change to that constitutional provision. Our recommendations in this chapter are therefore directed to the Party Conference, for its approval for adoption by the proposed Executive Board, but do not involve any proposed amendment to the Party Constitution.

Our recommendations fall under two headings, number of candidates and selection of candidates, and apply to both Dáil and local elections.

Number of candidates

The decision on candidate numbers in a constituency or local electoral area (LEA) is always a vexed one and can only be made by a thorough examination of the local circumstances. On the one hand, today's additional candidates will be tomorrow's public representatives. On the other hand, no-one would argue for additional candidates if that damages the prospect of holding on to a seat. The rate of transfer between Labour candidates is traditionally quite poor and that is increasingly becoming the situation for both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. Both of those parties now tend to nominate fewer candidates, so as to limit transfer losses.

Research demonstrates that a Dáil candidate needs to get at least 50% of the quota on the first count in order to be seriously in the running for a seat. (Above 65% of a quota offers a high probability of election; from 50% to 65% of a quota means about an even chance of election; less than 50% of a quota means there is very little chance of election.)

It is also clear from research and analysis that the quality of the candidate is increasingly important. The selected candidate must be in a position to attract in excess of 50% of a quota; otherwise the chances of success are minimal.

Candidate selection

There are always three different, sometimes conflicting, interest groups at play in a candidate selection process in any political party: the candidates, the party leadership and the local selectors.

Current practices can be damaging to the Party's national interests. Our full potential cannot be realised if candidates are chosen as much for their capacity to control a selection conference as their capacity to win the actual election.

It has been pointed out to the Commission that both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are moving towards a system that removes the local organisation from the selection of candidates and gives that power exclusively to the national organisation. Having taken into account the views of all the submissions, *Commission 21* rejects the view that candidate selection should be decided on at national level. We are satisfied, however, that a short list procedure has merit because it ensures that those seeking nomination as candidates meet basic criteria as to their suitability and electability.

We accordingly propose a hybrid system, one grounded on recognition of the primacy of the local membership as candidate selectors.

The selection of a candidate should be regarded as the culmination of a process in which both the local party and the national organisation are involved.

In constituencies with sitting TDs or councillors, the National Organiser should seek an early indication from each public representative of his or her intention to stand again or to retire. That should, if possible, be done at least two years before the likely date of the next election.

The Organisation Sub-Committee should be authorised to establish a 3 person Candidate Selection Board to oversee the selection process for a constituency or LEA. The National Organiser should have the right of attendance.

The Commission recommends a case by case consultation between the Board, the National Organiser and local Party officers on what is appropriate in each constituency and LEA. That consultation needs to be informed by research and analysis and it needs to be rigorous and timely, based on an appreciation by all parties to the process that such consultation is not just desirable but necessary in order to contribute to the success of the Party locally and nationally.

In view of the increasing importance of geographical spread in ensuring candidate success, the Board should have power to consider, in consultation with local members, the number and distribution of candidates, with a view to making recommendations.

The Board would draw up a list of interested members to be considered for nomination. The Board would have the right, of its own initiative, to add names of anyone it considers to be a suitable candidate.

The Board would conduct interviews with potential applicants and arrange for local opinion research to be carried out to assist its considerations of the merits of a candidate. The Board would also carry out confidential soundings among the local membership.

The Board would then draw up a short list, for approval by the Organisation Sub-Committee, of nominees to be submitted to a Selection Conference. Incumbent TDs and local Senators would be placed as of right on the list for Dáil elections; serving councillors would be placed as of right on the list for local elections.

The procedure outlined above should also be followed to fill casual vacancies in Party seats on local authorities.

Existing rules about the post-Selection Convention ratification of candidates and addition of candidates should be retained.

Rules and Standing Orders for a Selection Conference, as pointed out earlier, will be at the discretion of the proposed Executive Board which can, from time to time, revise these to take account of changing situations, both local and national. The Party Constitution should be amended to enable a procedure so that, where it is decided that a geographic spread between candidates is needed, two or more selection conventions could be held, each involving only the members from the relevant area.

Candidate selection for Seanad and Úduras na Gaeltachta elections should be a joint function of the proposed Central Council and the Parliamentary Party (which would, following a general election, consist of members of the incoming Dáil and the outgoing Seanad). Members of either body seeking a Seanad nomination should not be entitled to vote.

Decisions relating to a Presidential election should be a joint function of the proposed Executive Board and the Parliamentary Party.

Candidates Panel

Separately, the Commission endorses the proposal that the Party should develop a panel of possible and likely future candidates for local and general elections. It would be important that persons on the panel should be given no guarantees that they may be selected in the future. However, by and large candidates should be chosen from those who have committed themselves to working through the panel system.

Candidates on the panel should be required to participate in obligatory training dealing with such basic skills as fundraising, canvassing and internet communication and that also incorporates mock radio, TV and newspaper interviews, including video replays that encourage honest assessment of both weaknesses and strengths.

These training sessions will help both the candidate and the Party to identify the disciplines and skills required to conduct a modern election campaign.

The training programme could also involve the candidates contributing to the Party's development through helping with research, policy development or contributing their skills in other areas.

The training obligation can be a useful mechanism to encourage a potential nominee to demonstrate that he or she has both the will to win and a number of specifically personal traits that he or she 'brings to the table'. As already indicated recent research points to the 'added value' which voters seek from the candidate as an individual over and beyond what is offered by the Party brand. One of the reasons the larger parties are increasingly relying on research for candidate selection is because of the importance attached by the electorate to the individual candidate.

Finally, during the their interviews with the Commission every successful Labour TD has the same message to a new candidate. The hallmark of success for Labour Party people is hard work on the ground and, in most elections, that is the vital ingredient of winning. Training sessions with sitting TDs can help a candidate learn how to cope with that particular side of a TD's work, while still preserving both the ambition and the capacity to contribute to national politics.

5: Market Research

During the course of our work it very clear to us that, first, both of the larger parties are increasingly reliant on market research not only in defining their message but also in their candidate selection. Second, however, there is a healthy scepticism and even fear on the part of our Party membership about having a market research led Party.

We have a choice: to investigate how research tools can be used to our advantage without allowing these tools to dictate against the direction that members wish to pursue or, alternatively, to turn our backs against their use. It is the Commission's view that we need to embrace and expand our use of market research.

In doing this we need to fully understand what we mean by market research and the advantages and dangers associated with its use. Market research is a branch of the social sciences that measures behaviour and the reasons for that behaviour among a given population, by conducting social surveys among representative samples of the population. It was originally developed as a technique for calculating the market share of manufactured goods in the US in the 1930s. But it was quickly adopted by the media for estimating voting intentions before elections and by political parties to determine the level of support and the composition of that support, typically analysed by age, sex, region and social class, and the reasons for that support. President Roosevelt was an early convert to the new science.

A wide range of techniques have been developed by market researchers in the intervening years but the most important distinction to bear in mind is that between quantitative and qualitative methods of research;

Quantitative: surveys of a given population where the sample size is sufficiently large and representative of the population to ensure statistically valid results. Opinion polls carried out by the media are a typical example. They are carried out within published and acknowledged margins of error and would usually involve samples of between 1,000 and 1,200 respondents. Generally speaking, the published results are statistically valid between a margin of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Qualitative: in-depth questioning of small samples, either individually or in groups of six to eight people. Interviewing is carried out by specialists, typically psychologists or sociologists, who probe respondents to assess their reasons for arriving at particular opinions or attitudes or for behaving in a particular way.

Unlike quantitative research, the results of qualitative research have no statistical validity. They may provide insights as a result of the reaction of specific individuals to specific ideas. But extrapolation of those individual insights to the broader population must be treated with caution.

Commission 21 believes that political parties operating on a professional basis need to employ both market research techniques on a continuous basis.

However, we need to stress that the objective of carrying out regular surveys for the Labour Party is not to assess the mood of the people in order to adjust our policies accordingly; it is to assess the mood of the people, so as to determine the most effective way to communicate our policies. We can therefore define market research from a Labour Party perspective as finding out what people are thinking, so that we can talk to them in a way that makes it more likely that they will listen, connect and agree with what we propose.

Due to the importance that the Commission attaches to the use of research, we set out a specific programme for 2009-2012. This recommendation assumes that the next general election will most likely take place in 2012 and that our recommendation forms part of the Party's long-term electoral strategy. In the event of an election being brought forward, the programme we recommend should be adjusted to take account of a new date.

Our recommendation for a market research programme falls into two parts: a national market research programme and a constituency market research programme. It is important that, if we undertake this recommendation, it is to be done annually so as to track changes during the period under research.

The national market research programme would encompass –

- 1) *Annual “state of the nation” qualitative research, involving 12 group discussions, recruited to be nationally representative in terms of age, region, socio-economic class and sex. This project will be designed to allow respondents to define the issues that affect them and to assess their attitude to these issues. It will also examine detailed attitudes to the political parties and in particular to the Labour Party and their likelihood of voting Labour. A key objective of the initial qualitative project will be to suggest a classification of the population into the likelihood of voting Labour, from ‘entrenched loyalists’ to ‘completely unavailables’, through varying degrees of ambivalence.*
- 2) *Annual “state of the nation” quantitative research – a nationally representative sample of all adults, designed to quantify attitudes to the political parties and to the issues identified at the qualitative stage and in particular to quantify the “propensity to vote Labour” segments of the population that were identified earlier.*

Once the nature and composition of the ‘propensity to vote Labour’ segments of the population have been identified, it may be necessary to conduct separate qualitative and quantitative research among them so that they can be defined in as much detail as possible.

In addition to our recommended national market research programme, there is an argument for a constituency market research programme. The old maxim “all politics are local” has always been assumed to have particular relevance to Irish politics, so there is a strong case for replicating the national market research programme in all constituencies.

However, this would be prohibitively expensive because the laws of statistics dictate that, although sample sizes for individual constituencies don't have to be the same as for national surveys, they do have to be at least half the size and therefore it would not be possible to survey each constituency.

There is, however, a separate reason for carrying out constituency surveys; in addition to examining the relative importance of a range of local issues, awareness levels of existing and potential candidates can be measured alongside likelihood of voting for them.

Therefore, we recommend that a proportion of the Party's total market research budget should be allocated to constituency surveys. The selection of constituencies should be based on the likelihood of Labour seat gains.

Given the importance of accurate constituency information on local issues and the impossibility of carrying out detailed market research surveys in every area, we propose setting up a training programme for a team of key supporters, though they would not be allowed to work within their own constituency, to enable them to carry out informal surveys as professionally as possible. It would be vitally important that confidentiality within the Party be maintained throughout.

This team would be organised to carry out surveys within specific constituencies in consultation with the local organisation on the issues that need to be addressed.

6: Developing the Relationship with the Trade Unions

The established links between the Labour Party and the trade unions in Ireland are historical, organisational, financial and personal, as well as emotional. As we approach the centenary of the foundation of the Labour Party at the Irish Trade Union Congress in 1912, we have an appropriate opportunity to reflect on how that relationship should evolve and endure throughout the 21st Century.

The challenge for both Labour and the unions is to develop a relationship which acknowledges our common history, deepens our ability to further our shared objectives and also benefits the Party's goal of maximising support at elections and implementing its distinctive policies in government.

These issues were raised and discussed at every one of the meetings we held and in every one of our interviews. Clearly, this is something that animates Party members.

Throughout *Commission 21's* consultation process and discussions with party members, there was almost unanimous agreement that maintaining the *status quo* was not an option for the current relationship between the Labour Party and the trade unions. Plainly, the current arrangements do not work well and do not benefit either side. Common themes repeated at every stage in the Commission's consultation process on this topic included the following.

- There was a strong belief that the current relationship is not working effectively for either the Party or the trade unions.
- Many labour and social democratic parties across the globe have used their links to trade unions in a more productive manner than we have here in Ireland.
- The Irish social partnership model, which has been in place for more than 20 years, ensures that the unions have a direct route to national policy making through government. The unions are therefore less dependent on their political links with the Labour Party.
- The support provided by the trade unions goes beyond the affiliation fees paid to the Labour Party. This includes the use of office space, articles in union newspapers, as well as the endorsement of Labour candidates to union members at election time.
- There was concern about the public perception of undue influence exercised by the trade unions over the Party and its policies, through their block representation at the Party Conference. The argument was also made that the unions gain more from their links with the Party than any benefit accruing to the Party.
- The Labour Party and the trade unions share many common objectives including the delivery of quality public services and the enhancement of employment rights. It is in the pursuit of those shared objectives that a more productive working relationship should be explored.

- As a national political party, it is not in Labour's interest to be closely associated with any interest group. The roles of the Labour Party and the trade unions are different. Trade unions by their very nature must have different objectives to those of a political party. On many occasions these will overlap with the objectives of the Labour Party but there are occasions when they will be at variance.

At an organisational level there was a very low level of awareness of the existence of the formal trade union group within the Party. It was also a surprise to many that members of non-affiliated trade unions could be members of the *Labour Trade Unionists* group within the Party.

Formal links with the unions

It became obvious during the consultation process that there is a lack of clarity, as much within as outside the Labour Party, about the exact nature of the relationship between the trade unions and the Party. In order to provide that clarity, the details of the relationship are provided below.

- There is no longer any formal relationship between the Party and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the successor to ITUC – the body that established Labour in 1912. Instead, our relationship is with those individual unions that choose to join the Party as group members.
- At the end of 2007, there were six trade unions, or union sections, affiliated to the Labour Party. They were UNITE, AMICUS, IMPACT (Municipal Employees), TSSA, UCATT and SIPTU.
- The formal relationship with individual trade unions is based on the group membership provisions in the Labour Party Constitution (Article 3). Group membership is also open to other bodies; however, only trade unions have used this form of membership (By way of contrast, the co-operative movement is affiliated to the UK Labour Party but there is no equivalent affiliated body within our structure).
- In 2007 the affiliation fees from the trade unions was €60,107, which was approximately 2.5% of the total income for the Labour Party in that year.
- The formal benefits of membership for affiliated trade unions are confined to being represented at the Party Conference by delegates (linked to the number of union members) and being allowed to submit motions for deliberation at the Conference. At the last conference in November 2007, 11.44% of delegates represented the affiliated unions.
- In addition, *Labour Trade Unionists* elect one representative to the NEC. However, that Party Section is open to members of the Party who are members of any trade union, irrespective of whether that union is affiliated to the Party or not.

International comparisons

Many submissions to *Commission 21* and individual comments made during our interview process drew upon international comparisons, to assess the extent and quality of the relationship between the Labour Party and the trade unions. Many of the details of these comparisons are included in an appendix to the report.

Unsurprisingly, the UK provided the most common example used. This is a useful illustration of trade union involvement in the decision-making structure and funding of our neighbouring Labour Party. The table below tries to provide as detailed a comparison as possible.

Level of participation	Ireland	UK (affiliated bodies)
Votes in leadership elections	0%	33%
Liaison Committee	Informal	High level with direct and formal access to Prime Minister
Affiliation at local level	Not allowed	Encouraged
Role in selection of candidates	None	Where there is local affiliation
Resources of liaison committee	Low	Several full time staff and resources
Union officers at Constituency Level	None	Encouraged
Resources to recruit union members to Labour	Informal	Formal structure and resources in place
Resources to help union members get active in campaigns to elect Labour	Informal	Formal structure and resources in place
Union reps on NEC	1 (out of 30)	12 (out of 33)
Union delegates to conference	11.44%	Slightly less than 50%
Funding	€60,107 per annum from unions in affiliation fees. In addition use of premises and donations at election time are also given to the party by unions	£3.00 (€3.80) for each member of an affiliated union. In 2005 trade union affiliation fees and donations amounted to £42,187,613 representing 64% of the total donation income of the Party

Recommendations:

The focus of many modern reforms within the Labour Party have been towards empowering individual members to make the most important decision within the Party, including selecting candidates as well as electing the Leader and Deputy Leader. In this context it is clear that the concept of group membership has become less relevant within a modern political party.

At the same time there is a significant enthusiasm within the Labour Party to strengthen our organisation and support among working people generally and Trade Union members specifically. In order to do so, strategic planning and appropriate resources must be applied to the project.

In order to develop, redefine and revitalise the relationship between the Labour Party and the trade unions, as well as reflect their complementary but independent objectives, *Commission 21* makes the following recommendations.

There should be equal status provided to Labour Party members who belong to affiliated and non-affiliated unions; this means that membership of Labour Trade Unionists must both be open, and be seen to be open, to all Party members who are trade union members. The objective of a stronger Labour Trade Unionists Section should be to increase Party membership and support among working people generally and trade union members specifically. Labour Trade Unionists, in common with the other Party Sections, should organise on a regional basis and, as we recommend elsewhere, should feed into the policy consultative process we recommend should be undertaken by the Party's Regional Councils. Labour Trade Unionists should also, in common with other Party Sections, be represented on the new Party Central Council.

It is in our view incompatible with the objectives of a modern progressive political party that votes are cast at a Party Conference based not on the number of Party members a delegate represents but on the number of members of that delegate's own organisation – when the bulk of those affiliated members are not Party members, Party supporters or even Party voters.

We accordingly propose that Article 8, section (3) (b) of the Party Constitution be amended so as to introduce a new system of trade union representation at Party Conferences, based on the number of members of each union who are themselves branch members of the Party, as follows:

- *where not more than 50 members of the union are branch members of the Party: 1 delegate for every 5; plus*
- *for additional Party branch members above 50 but less than 500: 1 delegate for every 10; plus*
- *for additional Party branch members above 500 but less than 1,000: 1 delegate for every 15; plus*
- *for additional Party branch members above 1,000: 1 delegate for every 20.*

There exist strong historical and cultural ties between the Party and the trade union movement, with common goals and objectives on a lot of the issues facing Ireland. The Party should examine with ICTU and individual unions the means to strengthen and promote membership of Labour Trade Unionists not only with the currently affiliated unions but with supporters within non-affiliated unions as well. Both the Labour Party and the unions should make greater and sustained efforts to strengthen and promote Labour Trade Unionists, to reflect the strong historical and cultural ties that exist between the Party and the trade union movement.

A greater commitment must be made to develop a joint campaign platform with individual trade unions, or where appropriate a group of unions, where there are specific common objectives.

The Party, in collaboration with supporters within the unions, should organise a regular information and recruitment campaign at trade union conferences in order to increase support for the Labour Party among active trade union members.

In recognition of the special and historical ties between the Labour Party and the Trade Union movement, Commission 21 recommends the establishment of a formal Labour-Trade Union Centre to undertake and commission research and promote debate on our common agenda of social, economic and workplace reform. This Centre would be jointly funded and managed by the Labour Party and the Trade Unions, sections of Unions, or members of Unions who choose to affiliate to it. The Labour-Trade Union Centre would provide a new platform on which to develop and strengthen the relationship between the Party and the Trade Union movement. The Labour-Trade Union Centre would agree an agenda on which to campaign, would promote trade union objectives among the country's workforce as well as encourage membership and support of the Labour Party. The Centre would also engage with similar international bodies.

7: Building a Diverse, Just and Inclusive Society

Integration is the outcome that most Irish people desire from the exceptional wave of immigration that Ireland has experienced in the past decade, especially the period from the accession of 12 new states to the European Union.

Integration is not readily defined, however. We can comfortably set out what we don't want. We can hardly ask new arrivals to abandon their identities, any more than Irish people in the USA were asked to abandon theirs. On the other hand, we don't want a society dotted with particular ghettos or closed enclaves that do not contribute to or participate in the wider community.

Integration policy centres on how to manage the diversity that immigrants bring. On the one hand, there is the question of human rights, the protection against discrimination and economic exploitation and the establishment of fair procedures for citizenship applications for those who want to stay here for the longer term.

On the other hand, there is the question of respect for cultural distinctiveness.

So we have to balance two separate rights: the right to be treated the same despite one's cultural and ethnic differences and the right to be treated differently because of them. There is the proper demand for equality and alongside it there is an equally compelling case to respect a diversity of identities.

Integration can take many forms. At one extreme is total assimilation. At the other there are separate ghettos that exist within society but with only a tenuous connection to that wider society. In between, there are many shades of integration. The UK Crick Report *The New and the Old* offers this working definition: "integration means not simply mutual respect and tolerance between different groups but continual interaction, engagement and civic participation". It is to this model that we should aspire in our policy discussions.

It is not entirely a new issue for Ireland. After all, the southern unionist tradition did not fit easily into the homogeneously defined Gaelic, Catholic and Nationalist newly-formed Irish State. As part of the peace process, we have finally given belated recognition to a variety of traditions within the general idea of Irishness, just as devolution in the UK has incorporated Scottishness and Welshness into the more general idea of Britishness. In the USA the notion of being Irish-American is well established and carries a potent political clout that cannot be ignored. So, double identities are quite common and need not be a source of conflict.

Some issues need to be stated without doubt. We stand for fundamental human rights that relate to individuals, not to groups. Some people advocate 'multiculturalism' as a claim to group rights detached from and superior to personal human rights. That can lead to the oppression of some within the group and the loss of their individual rights. Women in particular would suffer the loss of many of the gains won in recent decades were that to become embedded in Irish policy.

There is sometimes confusion between the diversity of peoples and the diversity of values. A diversity of peoples should not rule out the possibility of common values that unite us all. We do not need to be a wholly homogenous society for such values to be shared by all, new as well as old.

Labour is a pluralist party. We all have different identities and we respect each. Our commitment is to a common set of values, universal human rights and democratic government, and a common set of institutions, the rule of law and parliamentary and local government.

However, in the survey of Party members commissioned for the report, dealt with in detail in Appendix 2, respondents were asked to rate the record of the Labour Party in regard to its efforts to attract, amongst others, immigrants to the Party.

The overall tone of the results is negative and probably reflects a consistent theme of the survey as a whole: frustration at the lack of a concerted recruitment drive within the Party. Only 22% of respondents felt the Party's record in recruiting immigrants was either 'good' or 'very good', while 37% believed it to be 'poor' or 'very poor'. Clearly, Labour is not in a position to preach to Irish society from any position of superiority.

Both the Party and society in general need to acknowledge, accommodate and celebrate the fact that we have a rich variety of social and cultural heritages on this island. We need to work harder to establish a framework that embraces the diverse origins and traditions, ethnic, historical, political and spiritual, of all our people.

We support integration as the preferred model for public policy decisions. Integration is a two-way process. The new must understand and respect the old but the older communities must also try to understand the new sympathetically.

Many ad hoc decisions made in recent years can and do militate against integration, notably some responses to the problems within schools created by the arrival of new communities. Strategic planning is needed to ensure proper structures are established and bedded down.

Trade Unions have made valuable efforts to service the new communities and to hinder the 'race to the bottom' pressure that has been evident in employment practices of recent times. We should examine what the unions have done and work with the union sections who serve these groups of workers.

Labour, as well as other representative bodies, must redouble our efforts to secure a broad-based and participative membership from the new communities. The main focus has to be in local areas where there has been a significant settlement of immigrants. Labour TDs and Councillors who represent these areas need to discuss among themselves what measures they should take to represent these groups. We suggest a code of good practice be prepared for public representatives. Branches and constituencies have to make a special effort to welcome any prospective members and to keep fully abreast of issues that arise such as school places, language support, housing allocations and any intimidation directed against ethnic minorities.

8: Labour and the Island of Ireland

Historically, the Labour Party is an all island organisation. Labour was also organised in the north by stalwarts such as Paddy Devlin of the Northern Ireland Labour Party and Gerry Fitt of Republican Labour. Today we share the same philosophical views with the SDLP, our sister party in the Party of European Socialists.

Indeed one indication of how closely aligned are our aims and objectives is found in Mark Durkan's speech to our 2006 conference. Taking as his theme the 90th anniversary of the Proclamation of Independence, he reminded his audience that up to one child in three in this country – North and South – still live in poverty, many in extreme poverty. He asked: "Can all parties North and South not join a democratic covenant that by 2016 we will truly have fulfilled the 1916 Proclamation's commitment to treat all the children of the Nation equally?"

Such a covenant would entail:

- A community where no child is ever left behind because of disability, or left out because of colour
- A Nation where to be a child of Ireland does not have to mean a child of Irish parents
- A society where parents of an autistic child do not have to research, lobby and petition various service providers as though they are the first
- A culture where young women are safer on our streets and young men are safer on our roads
- An island where children and their families will be protected against persecution and prejudice as well as poverty
- An economy that invests in the skills and values the talents of all young people including those with learning disabilities
- A country whose services and systems, laws and budgets truly proclaim "Every Child is our Child".

This is of course very similar to the covenant we set out in Chapter 1 of this report. We should seek to work with our sister Party in Northern Ireland to achieve these aims across the island by 2016.

In marked contrast to many European democracies where issues of economics, social equality and class became of paramount importance, the politics of Ireland in general and Northern Ireland in particular after 1922 was dominated by the War of Independence and the subsequent partition of Ireland. In Northern Ireland this created, in effect, nationalist and unionist Labour Parties, deriving support from their respective communities but with little political strength. The unionist dominance in Stormont had, in any event, turned Northern Ireland into a virtual one party state. Under its

watch, and with the acquiescence of Westminster, sectarian discrimination against the nationalist minority in the workplace prevailed.

All of this, in time, became explosive. It eventually erupted in the 1960s with the civil rights movement, the Orange opposition, Stormont intransigence, the arrival of politically motivated violence and the imposition of direct rule from London.

The Social Democratic and Labour Party emerged from the civil rights movement with the help and support of the Irish Labour Party. Brendan Corish, then Labour Leader, encouraged old Northern Labour stalwarts like Paddy Devlin and Gerry Fitt to link up with the newly elected civil rights Stormont MPs John Hume, Paddy O’Hanlon and Ivan Cooper. The original constitution of the SDLP was modelled on that of the Irish Labour Party. In addition the Irish Labour Party, which still had a small political organisation north of the border, a remnant of its establishment in 1912, instructed all its members to join the new SDLP. Labour sponsored the SDLP for membership of the Socialist International and subsequently for what is now the Party of European Socialists.

More recently, after the Assembly elections in 2007, the DUP and Sinn Féin emerged as the dominant parties of the unionist and nationalist communities. This, together with an announcement by Fianna Fáil that it intended to organise in the North, exasperated anxieties within the SDLP as to its future role in Northern Ireland politics. It appeared that significant numbers within the party, particularly outside Belfast, would have seen such a move as a lifeline for their organisation.

The problem for the SDLP was that any move to link with Fianna Fail might have resulted in the party splitting between those who favour an all-island nationalist party, with a “catch all” appeal, and those whose preference is for a party with a strong commitment to the values we share in common with our sister parties in the PES and the Socialist International.

What should the Labour Party’s response be to events in Northern Ireland? Should the Irish Labour Party follow Fianna Fáil and consider organising in the North?

Our first response to these questions is that they are not at all as immediate as they were when *Commission 21* was established. The Fianna Fáil “threat” to the SDLP’s viability has been removed: it now appears that plans to organise in Northern Ireland are no longer a priority and have been postponed indefinitely.

In addition, the SDLP itself has rediscovered a strong voice and a message for its constituency. That voice and message were most recently heard in the speech given by Mark Durkan to the British Irish Association meeting in Oxford in September last year.

As politics develops in NI and the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement are bedded down, the old issues between unionists and nationalists will be replaced by the same sort of issues that confront government and public administration in any modern society. And hopefully the institutions of the Agreement will adapt accordingly. The SDLP Leader has argued that, at the time of the negotiation of the Good Friday Agreement, the system of designation of Assembly members as nationalist, unionist or other was “necessary because of what we were coming from but should not be necessary where we are going”. These measures had sectarian or sectional undertones and should be bio-degradable, dissolving in the future as the environment changed.

As we move towards a fully sealed and settled process we should be preparing to think about how and when to remove some of the ugly scaffolding needed during the construction of the new edifice ...

If we are serious about a truly shared future then we have to allow for truly shared politics where parties can – and have to – appeal across the traditional divides. The fault-line in our society will still be there but it should not determine the party political cleavage for future generations.

In the interim, however, the reality remains that Northern Ireland is not a fully normalised society. Under the Agreement, elections are contested between parties designated as either nationalist, unionist or other and they draw their support accordingly. Until some of this “ugly scaffolding” is removed – and that can be done only by those who agreed to erect it – we are not at all convinced that parties based in either Dublin or London have any real or significant contribution to make to Northern Ireland politics by organising there – and adopting one or other of those labels for the purpose.

Effectively, this would require Labour to opt for adherence to, and seek votes largely from, one of the two dominant traditions; would split the existing progressive vote; and would risk unsettling the present balance between the parties.

We are also far from convinced that there is sufficient demand at present within the North itself for a single, all-Ireland social democratic party, as opposed to the strengthening of links between the two existing parties. This is not to deny a continuing role for the Party and its members in working to develop and ultimately meet such a demand.

The Irish Labour Party’s approach is determined by two major considerations. The first the fact that both we and the SDLP are members of the PES and are sister parties in the European socialist tradition. There must, in our view and that of the PES, continue to be a vibrant local PES party in Northern Ireland, capable of maintaining a clear electoral presence and with the capacity to win seats at local, Stormont, Westminster and European level.

If the SDLP, in whole or in part, chooses at some future stage to merge or create formal links with Fianna Fáil, then it would automatically lose its membership of the PES. In all likelihood, in those circumstances a portion of SDLP members would decline to follow the party into such a merger or alliance. It would then be important that we, along with the British Labour Party, ensure that the social democratic and labour movement is adequately represented in Northern Ireland politics. Under the Statutes of the PES it would be possible for the new party to allow for dual membership for Northern Ireland members. Accordingly, an activist could be a member of the new party and the Irish or British Labour Party. Such a provision could accommodate the dual community identity (“British or Irish or both”) that remains at the heart of the Good Friday Agreement.

Our second major consideration derives from our own history and convictions. Labour is a party that is both Irish and republican and that aspires to a shared, 32 county future. However, we recognise the reality that, even with most guns silenced, for most of the time, Northern Ireland remains a bitterly divided society and in danger of becoming ever more so. There is more and more evidence of a hardening of separateness between both communities, of a society that is becoming more divided by tribal identifications. Parallel with efforts to maintain functioning political institutions, we need a real effort on all sides to tackle the sectarian divisions that have increased rather than diminished since Good Friday Agreement of 1998.

A devolved government and assembly may contribute to normalisation but, of themselves, they cannot provide a comprehensive solution. We all of us need to address rather than exacerbate the structural divisions within Northern Ireland. Where people live, for example, where they send their children to school. These are the immediate challenges we all face in resolving conflict, combating sectarianism and establishing reconciliation between all people in the North.

We are convinced, therefore, that every Irish nationalist who wants to unite this country must recognise as a task for themselves the need to address rather than exacerbate the structural divisions on the island and in particular within Northern Ireland. After all, if your vision of a republic cannot include – and instead insists on the defeat of – your political opponents, then it is not a true republic at all. At its most basic, a “republic” denotes public property which is owned in common by, and attracts the allegiance of, all citizens.

For that we need a new accommodation, a new framework and a new form of words, if we are to continue the unfinished project of nation-building.

Both Labour and the SDLP need to work together. We cannot accept as adequate a stasis with nothing better to hope for than separate provision, separate development and a parity of esteem that is exclusively grounded on a sectarian headcount. We need instead a framework that embraces the diverse origins and traditions, ethnic, historical, political and spiritual, of all our people. We need to acknowledge, accommodate and celebrate the fact that we have a rich variety of social and cultural heritages on this island and that neither glorious achievement nor suffering, trial and struggle are the particular preserve of any of our forebears or any of our histories.

That is the national struggle for 21st century Ireland.

The leaders of the Labour Party and the SDLP should, as a priority, work together to forge a common policy platform along similar lines to those being proposed against child poverty in the Republic. This common platform should be developed into a common commitment by both parties to be delivered by 2016.

Both parties should commit themselves to working together to develop and deliver the policies and others consistent with the goals and objectives that define our parties.

The Northern Ireland electorate must continue to have the opportunity to vote for a party affiliated to the Party of European Socialists such as the SDLP. We – and indeed our sister parties throughout Europe – are committed to ensuring that there will continue to be a member party from Northern Ireland within the PES.

The relationship between the Labour Party and the SDLP is grounded on a mutual acknowledgement of our different situations and a mutual respect for each other’s autonomy. But there are strong and enduring links between us, based on individual friendships, joint solidarity and a shared philosophy. We should work together to make those links more visible, to our members and to the island as a whole.

The present arrangements, whereby persons resident in Northern Ireland can join the Irish Labour Party and become members of the Northern Ireland Labour Forum, should be maintained and supported.

9: Fundraising

Political campaigning takes a lot of energy and commitment and must be underpinned by a healthy organisation. Indeed, many of the reforms recommended by *Commission 21* will need increased resources to fulfil. Therefore, the issue of fundraising is something which we must take on board.

Fundraising, by political parties, charities and sporting and other voluntary bodies, has undergone radical change in Ireland over the last number of years. It is an extremely professional business, and the non-profit sector invests significant resources in fundraising activities. Other political parties, in particular Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, have a number of dedicated staff responsible for fundraising. The Labour Party has no such personnel, although we have been very fortunate in the past with a number of people, in particular the current Treasurer who has undertaken significant fundraising to allow the Party to compete in terms of election expenditure.

The income of political parties in Ireland is very difficult to estimate. It is generally accepted that Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael raise significantly more funds than others. However, it would appear that the Standards in Public Office (SIPO) rules are quite easy to work around. Only contributions over €634.87 to individual Oireachtas members, and contributions over €5078.95 to political parties, have to be declared, making it very easy for people to contribute sums under that figure which need not be made public. For example, in 2006, total donations ranging from €11,000 to €87,000 were declared by the Labour Party, Sinn Féin, the Green Party and the Socialist Party. However, no declarations were declared by either Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael.

This is not to suggest that these parties did anything illegal but it shows that their fundraising activities target figures just under the threshold, therefore not requiring them to publish their donations.

Commission 21 is fully aware that the Labour Party supports open and accountable State financing of political activities.

This is motivated by the need to eliminate undue influence from public affairs through financial donations. We believe a coalition of political power and business interests can make for an unhealthy cocktail unless fully and transparently regulated. Political influence should not be a by-product of economic worth.

The Commission is also fully aware that the Party does not believe – and has never argued – that public funds must be the only source of income for political parties. The Party does not believe, for constitutional and other reasons, that there is anything wrong in principle in citizens contributing their time, talents and other resources to the political organisation of their choice.

But Labour does believe – and has consistently argued – that there must be real and effective limits to campaign finance from private sources and limits to campaign expenditure, at both general and local election level. We also believe these rules must be governed by principles of openness and transparency. The Party endorses the criticism made of the current rules by SIPO itself and is committed to the reform of those rules.

Labour will therefore continue to campaign for a reform of political funding, both for parties and in relation to the interest groups that spring up at election and referendum time. In the meantime, we must deal with the reality that we are being significantly outspent by others and we must take measures to ensure we can compete with regard to election expenditure.

During our consultations, the following potential areas for fundraising were identified.

Ongoing contributions from Party members

Efforts have already been made in this area, particularly by the Party Treasurer.

We recommend that the Treasurer be mandated to introduce a more professional approach including, if thought necessary, hiring specialist personnel.

Dedicated appeals to coincide with specific campaigns

Used effectively by other political organisations, targeted fundraising drives should be made when initiatives are launched.

For example, every member and supporter should receive a text and email immediately after the Leader's speech at conference, when they might be more open to making a contribution.

Grassroots online funding

Now a huge phenomenon in the United States, online grassroots funding has been used to great effect by the Barack Obama campaign. The average contribution to Barack Obama's campaign is under €100.

The Labour Party has been ahead of other parties in Ireland with regard to initiatives such as blogging and Flickr; we need to also be ahead of the curve in Ireland with regard to online fundraising.

High profile events

Events such as dinner dances and golf classics have been used to great effect for various non-profit organisations in Ireland. As well as raising money, it is an opportunity for supporters to network in an informal setting.

The Labour Party has not undertaken many of these events, and needs to explore the possibility of hosting them in the future, both regionally and nationally. Not only would such events raise funds but they would increase the social interface between members and supporters.

Local constituency fundraising

Of course a great deal of fundraising at a local level for constituencies and local public representatives is currently very successful. As well as traditional methods such as Race Nights and Table Quizzes, newer methods such as house parties and themed events have been used in more recent times.

Support from personnel in the form of information sharing and training needs to be provided so that models of best practice can be shared between constituencies. This could be run alongside the award scheme recommended for Annual Conference.

Corporate fundraising

The issue of corporate fundraising was raised repeatedly during the *Commission 21* consultations. Despite perceptions among some party members, it is currently Party policy to accept corporate donations. This is done both at national and at local level. After all, the advertisement in the Race Night programme from the local supermarket is a corporate donation. So also, in many cases, is the use of the upstairs room in the pub for branch and constituency meetings.

As formally approved by the NEC in October 2005 –

“The Labour Party, mindful of the challenges facing the Party, establishes that the Party will seek to raise funds to support its electoral activities.

“The Party will accept donations from individuals, corporations and organisations and will comply in full with all legislation in relation to donations for electoral purposes. The Party will also seek to maximise its fundraising capacities by expanding its range of fundraising initiatives and by actively seeking financial support from the general membership to support the General Election fund.”

However, the Party has not put effort into actively seeking such donations.

As stated earlier, very strict guidelines should oversee all our fundraising, ensuring that the Party lives up to the high standards expected of those in public life.

We recommend that guidelines, binding both Head Office and constituencies and candidates, should be drawn up for debate and approval by the Central Council.

10: Information Technology: Communicating the Message

Overview

The internet provides a unique organisational opportunity for the Labour Party. From the start, the Party's political and administrative leadership have adopted a very positive attitude towards the development of the party website. They have worked hard to keep the site up to date with advances in technology and, to a large extent, they have laid the benchmark for Irish political websites since 1997.

In the last year alone, there have been over 129,000 unique visitors to the website, who have viewed over 787,000 pages. There are 257 people registered to update different sections of the website and we have over 400 members participating in political debate on the official party discussion forum.

While this is all positive, however, we need to constantly review and update the content and technology that underpins the site or we could easily fall behind our political opponents.

With the correct investment in technology and people we should be able to –

- connect with, involve and mobilise our supporters,
- get our message out to the public, and
- target our limited resources more efficiently.

Mobilise our supporters

While investment in IT can help us to improve internal party organisation, the key benefit is that it provides a direct channel of communication with our supporter base. By carefully growing our email list, we can engage directly with supporters who cannot or will not join the Party or engage in traditional party activities. This in turn provides opportunities to revitalise our fundraising, encourages people to take part in online campaigning activities and eventually moves them from on-line to off-line action.

Get our message out

As a small party, we have always suffered from poor coverage by the traditional media. The internet allows us to present our message directly to the public without having to go through the filter of those media outlets. Figures show that technologies such as online video, blogs, and social networks are becoming increasingly important as sources of political information. By understanding how these technologies work, we can beat the larger parties in articulating and promoting our message and viewpoints.

Target our resources

Our resources are limited so it is extremely important that we target those resources correctly. To date we have depended too much on the activity and organisation of individuals or local constituency organisations. Head Office must provide a key supporting role to local constituencies and, while the situation has definitely improved, we can do much better. By learning from the successes and difficulties of sister parties in Great Britain and the United States, we should ultimately

aim to develop an integrated database comprised of the electoral register, our supporter list and our membership database. This project is no easy task but it is critical if we are to achieve the level of efficiency needed to win elections.

The General Secretary should appoint an individual within Head Office with specific responsibility for the implementation, in consultation with an IT contractor, of the recommendations below.

Growth of the members and supporters list

The growth of the members and supporters list is probably the single most important action to be undertaken. To achieve this we need to:

- a) review all party activities to ensure that we collect contact information (email, mobile number, etc) at every opportunity*
- b) develop an email campaign strategy to ensure that each one has achievable goals, a full life cycle (i.e. conclusion and follow-up) and is supported by traditional party activity (i.e. Dáil Questions, local offline campaigns)*
- c) set aside internal or external resources for the drafting of email campaigns.*

This will allow us to develop a social network on the Labour website that allows members/supporters to engage in online activity.

Network with others

We should work within the PES to develop an IT information exchange between member parties. We also need to develop bi-lateral arrangements with Labour in Britain, the Democrats and the AFL-CIO and to develop an intern exchange program with these organisations.

Integrated Database

The creation of an integrated database in the future would be a major project; we need to carefully investigate what options are available and the benefits that would accrue before we start to spend money. This would be a substantial piece of work which would include researching what databases are currently in use within local constituencies and among elected representatives and what data sources we have access to within Ireland and the condition and usage rights of that data.

The Website as a Tool for Policy Development

Over the years there has been much discussion about how ordinary members of the party are excluded from policy development. This situation can be easily rectified by allowing members to engage with Party spokespersons and committees over the internet. The Party discussion forum is already being used to present draft papers to members for discussion. We need to build on this and develop tools to allow members directly engage with Party spokespersons using video webcasts, online chat forums and other methods.

For this process to be successful however Party Spokespersons will need training and support on the use of these tools. Ordinary members will also need feedback on how their views and concerns are taken on board, so that they will have confidence in the process.

Search Engine Optimisation

Search engine optimisation is the process of analysing the code and content of a website to see if it is being listed highly in internet search engines such as Google. This process can be quite complex due the high number of variables involved. It is an extremely important process however as a large amount of the traffic to a website is determined by the search engine results page ranking.

11: Additional Recommendations

A new Party Constitution

Many of the recommendations made in this Report require amendment to the Party Constitution, while others can be implemented without constitutional change. *Commission 21* has given careful thought to the proposed set of constitutional amendments. We strongly recommend that they be made by way of adopting a new Party Constitution.

This is for a number of reasons. First, some recommendations, such as the establishment of the proposed Executive Board and Central Council, require a number of consequential amendments throughout the Constitution. Read by themselves these amendments make no particular sense. No one in this country needs reminding of the dangers implicit in presenting to an electorate a complex and largely unintelligible document to vote on, consisting only of amendments to another document, and which is by itself therefore readable only for its authors and other experts.

Second, we believe the present Constitution taken as a whole is not a particularly “user-friendly” document. It is drafted in a language that is at times overly technical and legalistic. We have taken this opportunity to commission a new text which we hope is shorter and written in plainer and more accessible language, without changing the essential meaning of the text.

Party Staff and Public Office

Due to the increasing demands on Party organisation, election candidates and public representatives it is the opinion of *Commission 21* that employment as a member of the Party staff is becoming progressively more incompatible with the demands of a personal election campaign or service as a public representative. We recommend that in the future a person who is a member of the Party staff and who is selected as a candidate for election to the Dáil, the Seanad or a local authority, or who is appointed to the Seanad or a local authority, should be required, within 6 weeks of having been so selected or appointed, either to resign or to accept secondment without pay from the Party staff. In the event of a successful election, the period of secondment would last until the person ceased to be a public representative or until the expiry of the term of his or her employment, whichever is the sooner.

The Party President

The position of Party President was created specifically for the merger between the Labour Party and Democratic Left. Our recommendations provide for the future abolition of the office. However, *Commission 21* is as conscious as every Party member of the extraordinary and distinguished service to progressive politics given, in Ireland and internationally, by our current President Michael D Higgins TD.

We accordingly recommend that Deputy Higgins should continue to hold the office and title of Party President for so long as he remains a Party member and should in that capacity be *ex officio* a member of the Executive Board and Central Council.

The Party and its Social Life

Many members have commented on the inadequate attention devoted by the Party organisation to social activities. We meet each other only at meetings or at campaign headquarters. New members in particular find this intimidating and off-putting.

It is difficult to be prescriptive about the solution: it is not a matter for rule-making or constitutional amendment. The Commission believes it is necessary to highlight the issue, however, and to propose that Head Office and the constituencies consult with each other, with a view to drawing up a regular programme of social occasions – outside the inevitable fund-raising circuit – which Party members and their friends would find attractive.

Implementation of our recommendations

Commission 21 is conscious that we have made a package of proposals that require implementation over a period of time. This means a sustained effort over a number of years.

If the Party Conference accepts this Report, then it is entitled to know that progress is being achieved on implementing its recommendations.

The Commission accordingly recommends that a high level group be set up by the Central Council, on the nomination of the Party Leader, consisting of senior Party staff and members of the Central Council, to oversee and report on the implementation of our recommendations. The Party Leader, other Party Officers and organs and the Party staff should co-operate with the high level group to enable timely and accurate reporting.

This group should report to each quarterly meeting of the Central Council and to each Party Conference over the three year period from the Report's adoption by the Party Conference.

Draft Motion for Party Conference.

Motion to Amend the Party Constitution

Conference,

Recalling the resolution passed by it in 2007, directing the NEC to establish a Commission on 21st Century Labour, having a representation, involvement and input from across the Party –

- to examine and report on all aspects of the Party's organisation campaigning and political activity and in particular to make recommendations on the role which Labour should undertake in the modern Ireland, and
 - to report to the NEC so that conclusions may be reached at the next Party Conference,
1. Hereby adopts, affirms and endorses the Report received from Commission 21 and its recommendations and instructs the Party Leader and the incoming Executive Board and Central Council –
 - a) to take all necessary steps to ensure its implementation,
 - b) to establish a high level group, as recommended in Chapter 11 of that Report, to oversee the process of implementation, and
 - c) to report to the next following Party Conference on the steps achieved for this purpose; and
 2. Resolves that the Party Constitution be amended by the insertion of the following Article as Article 17:

17. – (1) Subject to the subsequent provisions of this Article, on the conclusion of the Party Conference at which the motion to amend the Party Constitution by the insertion of this Article is passed, the draft Constitution of the Labour Party appended to the Report of the *Commission on 21st Century Labour* comes into operation, in substitution for this present Party Constitution. This present Constitution, apart from this Article, from the conclusion of that Conference, accordingly stands repealed.

(2) The branches, individual members, Constituency, Divisional and Regional Councils, Party Sections and group members that have standing in the Party under this present Constitution continue to have such standing within the Party on the date on which the draft Constitution comes into operation.

(3) For the period between the coming into operation of the draft Constitution and the conclusion of the Annual Conference next following its adoption, members elected or appointed to the NEC under the provisions of this present Constitution shall

constitute the membership of the Executive Board under the draft Constitution. The provisions of the draft Constitution (including provisions of the scheduled Standing Orders of the Annual Conference) that deal with the election of delegates to the Executive Board by Annual Conference shall apply to and govern arrangements for and the holding of the next following Annual Conference.

(4) For the purpose of appointing delegates to the four Annual Conferences following the adoption of the draft Constitution, group members are entitled to appoint delegates in accordance with either of the following scales, whichever is the greater:

- (a) the scale provided for under the new Article 9 (3) (b) or
- (b) the scale provided for under the old Article 8 (3) (b) but reduced, for the purposes of –
 - (i) the first such Conference (and any intervening Special Party Conference), by 20%,
 - (ii) the second such Conference (and any intervening Special Party Conference), by 40%,
 - (iii) the third such Conference (and any intervening Special Party Conference), by 60%, and
 - (iv) the fourth such Conference (and any intervening Special Party Conference), by 80%.

(5) Notwithstanding anything in the draft Constitution, so long as the current holder of the office of Party President, Michael D Higgins TD, remains a member of the Party, he retains the office of Party President and in that capacity is a member of the Executive Board and Central Council of the Party, without necessity for re-election to that office. On his ceasing to hold the office of Party President, that office stands abolished.

(6) At the conclusion of the fourth Annual Conference following the adoption of the draft Constitution, or on the Party President ceasing to hold that office, whichever is the later, this Article is spent and stands repealed. Until such time, notwithstanding anything in the draft Constitution, this Article remains in force and has effect in accordance with its terms.

(7) Until the time that this Article is spent and stands repealed, the Executive Board has power to interpret its terms and to make provision for any circumstances that are not envisaged by those terms.

National Executive Committee

Appendix 1: Summary of Recommendations

The Party Structure – National

The General Secretary

The General Secretary should be appointed through an open competitive process conducted under the authority of the Party Leader, with the appointment made by the new Executive Board, for no longer than the tenure of the Party Leader's term (including any term for which a Leader may be re-elected).

The General Secretary should no longer be classed as the chief executive of the Party but as its Chief Operating Officer. The role and responsibility of the General Secretary will continue to be the management and control of Head Office, but under the direction of the Party Leader, in order to recognise and give effect to the Leader's direct mandate from the membership.

However, the General Secretary should retain specific responsibility under the Party Constitution, independent of the Party Leader and reporting to the Executive Board (and the Parliamentary Party, as appropriate):

- (a) for the integrity of the records taken and maintained of meetings of the Parliamentary Party, the Executive Board and the new Central Council,
- (b) for ensuring that the register of members and branches is maintained, specifying their paid-up status, and
- (c) for the organisation of the Party's Annual Conference.

The General Secretary will be a non-voting member of the Executive Board.

He or she will be responsible for the performance of Head Office, based on specific objectives and outcomes, and will be asked to introduce a career structure for the staff within Head Office, as well as a performance-based management system.

Head Office Staff

We recommend the assignment of a senior member of staff as a national organiser, who would work with the Organisation Sub-Committee and have responsibility for implementing on the ground plans for the development and expansion of the Party at branch and constituency level, membership recruitment, candidate selection and electoral strategy generally.

The national organiser, in addition to the other roles and responsibilities he or she is given, will also be charged with the development of a team of local and regional organisers for specific targeted constituencies. While it did not escape our attention that the innovation involved in the appointment of regional organisers was viewed positively throughout the party, we believe focus will have to be given to better defining their role and accountability.

It also became clear during our consultations that the body of local government representatives was not being adequately serviced. With the abolition of the dual mandate, it is in our opinion important that specific personnel and resources (including assistance with printing, media relations and research), under the direction of the national organiser, should be devoted to supporting these important public representatives, not only in their present role but also as future members of the Parliamentary Party and indeed potential future Party Leaders.

Party Leader and Deputy Leader

- Elections to the offices of Party Leader and Deputy Leader should be held within six months of any general election following which the Party does not enter into Government.
- Elections should in any event be held after the Party Leader has served a term of 10 years in office.
- The Party Constitution should enable a candidate to contest both offices, with provision that a candidate defeated in the election for Party Leader remains in the contest for Deputy Leader.

National Executive Committee

The Labour Party should have two bodies at national level: a Central Council (CC) and an Executive Board (EB). The appropriate functions of the current NEC should be assigned between the two bodies to ensure that both the representative and executive roles within the Party can be fully exercised.

The membership of the Central Council should consist of –

- a) one representative elected by each Constituency Council,
- b) one representative elected by the Party staff, including staff members directly employed by members of the PLP,
- c) one delegate from each existing and newly-formed Party Section including Labour Youth, Labour Women, Labour Trade Unionists and Labour Equality, and
- d) the members of the Executive Board.

The Central Council should have power to co-opt up to three additional members from sections of the Party organisation that it believes are under-represented on the Council.

Due to the broader and more representative nature of the Central Council, a number of roles and responsibilities of the current NEC should be entrusted to it, including the approval of the Party manifesto and the removal of the Party Leader. (A full list of the proposed functions of the Central Council and the Executive Board is set out in Appendix 3.)

The Central Council should meet at least once quarterly, other than the quarter in which an Annual Conference is held, unless the EB decides that an extra meeting is required. The Party Leader should be required to submit to each meeting a report on the current political situation, dealing with any

major developments. He or she should also outline progress on strategy for the development of the Party.

The Executive Board (EB) should have 13 voting members. The EB would perform the managerial functions of the Party. This would include ratifying candidates, oversight of the Party's finances and the approval of standing orders. A full list of the proposed functions of the Executive Board is set out in Appendix 3.

The voting membership of the EB would consist of 6 ordinary members elected at annual conference, the Party Leader and Deputy Leader, along with the Chairperson and National Treasurer of the Party (who will both continue to be elected by Conference, thus ensuring that a majority, eight out of 13 members of the EB, are directly elected by the Party Conference). In addition there should be two representatives of the Parliamentary Labour Party and one representative of the Association of Labour Councillors. The General Secretary should be a non-voting member of the EB.

The election of the six members at Annual Conference should be a contest through a panel system, to ensure that three members are men and three members are women.

Neither members of the PLP nor Party staff or employees of individual members of the PLP should be eligible to contest elections to the EB at the Party Conference.

Regarding the five present standing sub-committees (the Management Sub-Committee, the Finance Sub-Committee, the Organisation Sub-Committee, the International Affairs Sub-Committee and the Policy Committee), we recommend as follows.

- a) The Management Sub-Committee does not require constitutional status and should be deleted from the Constitution. The EB should instead have a general power to appoint such a committee, or one or more ad hoc committees, on the nomination of the Party Leader, to assist and advise on general or specific management issues as the occasion requires. Any such committee would be answerable to the EB on the performance of its functions.
- b) The Finance Sub-Committee should remain a committee of the EB, chaired by the Party Treasurer. The constitutional provisions relating to the functions, powers and duties of the Party Treasurer should be clarified and strengthened.
- c) The International Affairs Sub-Committee and the Policy Committee should be committees of, and report to, the CC. The chair of the Policy Committee should be appointed by the CC on the nomination of the Party Leader and the committee should have three members each from the CC and the Parliamentary Party.
- d) The Organisation Sub-Committee should continue to be a committee of, and report to, the EB. The chair should be appointed by the EB on the nomination of the Party Leader and the committee should have three members each from the EB and the CC.

Any rule or practice that prevents public representatives from serving as members of the Organisation Committee should be abolished, since we believe it curtails the provision of relevant and valuable expertise. However, the Chair should not be a member of the PLP.

Parliamentary Party

We write elsewhere on the role a revitalised regional structure in providing a forum for genuine policy debate within the Party. Clearly, the active participation of the PLP is central to the success of that recommendation.

In addition, we strongly recommend a greater and more structured use of IT technology as a means to expand the input of those interested in contributing to the development of public policy, through establishing forums that members may contribute to, in direct dialogue with the spokesperson. Specifically we recommend that each front bench spokesperson should host a live web debate at least once (preferably twice) annually through which members may ask questions directly of the spokesperson on the issues of the day and the development of policy.

At present TDs have available two members of staff, a secretarial assistant and a parliamentary assistant (PA). At present, certain of the PAs work with the policy director in co-ordinating parliamentary responses to issues of the day and help in developing strategies and policies.

We recommend that this, at present informal, arrangement is not just continued but formalised and strengthened. We recommend the formal establishment of a new Parliamentary Support Unit based in Leinster House. The Parliamentary Support Unit would coordinate the services already provided to the PLP, as well as design and develop additional services as determined by the PLP. The Parliamentary Support Unit would:

- (a) provide and coordinate research and advice on political, legislative and campaign matters in order to provide maximum support to the PLP
- (b) provide and coordinate training and support for the PAs, Secretarial and constituency support staff who work with Oireachtas members
- (c) provide advice and support to the PLP on staff matters such as recruitment, development and other HR issues
- (d) coordinate information sharing on issues such as campaign techniques, policy development, media relations, constituency organisation
- (e) coordinate the design and print services within the Houses of the Oireachtas as well as commission appropriate print material and on-line services from external contractors.

Commission 21 is conscious that the TDs rely on their PAs to help in their re-election. Having considered fully the deployment of the limited resources available to the Party and the unique contribution that the TDs could make towards improving this image, it is believed by *Commission 21* that this greater co-operation and co-ordination will help in improving the Party's standing in the

polls. It will also help, in our opinion, the existing TDs to be re-elected, along with new Labour TDs.

The Party Structure – Local

Individual Members and Supporters

We recommend three classes of membership: national, constituency and branch membership. The option of national, or individual, Party membership should be promoted to a far greater extent than it is at present and should be supported by allowing individual members to participate to the fullest extent possible in Party activities, supported by the information network we propose elsewhere and by dedicated resources to keep all members fully up to date with the Party and its activities. As at present, individual members would be entitled to vote in Leadership elections but not at selection conventions and could not attend Conference as delegates.

The new status of constituency member would not be a branch member but would be entitled to speak and vote at Constituency Council level. A constituency member would have no vote at local selection conventions but would be entitled to vote at Dáil selection conventions. Constituency members would send delegates to the Party Conference based on the same member to delegate ratio (5:1) as branches do.

Branch membership should, however, continue to be promoted as the preferred membership option and branch members should continue, as at present, to retain the full range of existing rights.

We further recommend the formal establishment of a Labour Supporters Network, which would allow individuals who are not Party members to support the Party in various ways, including receiving communications, attending meetings and conferences as observers and participating in policy formation. Those who sign up for this option would receive communications, be invited to events and meetings and be encouraged to donate, to attend social functions, and so on.

Branches

Constituencies should be encouraged to rationalise the number of affiliated branches. The number of delegates for Annual Conference should be allocated on the basis of constituency membership numbers, so as to discourage unnecessary multiplication of branches. Unless there is a good reason for a different basis – and this must be viewed sensitivity in rural constituencies – the starting point should be that each branch encompasses a single local electoral area.

Targets should be drawn up for each constituency, in consultation with the national organiser. These targets would include number of activities such as recruitment, community activism, leaflet dropping, social events, fundraising and so on.

We recommend an awards scheme, to be presented at Annual Conference, to recognise the outstanding contribution of members and constituencies in various activities such as recruitment, fund-raising and local community initiatives.

We also recommend that there be a Conference showcase, including featuring of membership activities in national newsletters.

Regional Councils and Party Sections

We recommend that the National Organiser should have responsibility for the resuscitation and revitalisation of the Regional Council structure, as an appropriate regional forum for policy debate by the membership. Not only will this facilitate discussions but it should also help the organisation to develop – as in a case where neighbouring constituencies may help each other, particularly, if one constituency has a TD. If this proposal is to fully work, however, *Commission 21* believes there are two additional requirements:

- (a) the Party Leader must seek a commitment by the PLP, its spokespersons and their PAs to commit themselves to a regular series of regional meetings throughout the State, and the Party Sections should be organised on the same regional basis, which should further facilitate organisational growth;
- (b) the Party Sections should form –
 - policy units at national level, as support to the Dáil spokespersons relevant to their own principal concerns, and
 - regional units affiliated to the Party's Regional Councils, to feed into the policy debate taking place at regional level.

Of course there will be logistical problems. For example, every region might want at the same time to debate health – a prospect that would place unreasonable demands on the health spokesperson, or whoever the member of the PLP might be. However, if the process is properly planned in advance, then these Regional Council meetings should become a regular part of the Party calendar, rather than being seen as extraordinary events. It will also be important that the meetings are planned properly, with media coverage for the spokesperson and the local public representatives. This task should be given to the regional organisers, along with the local organisation.

We emphasise that this proposal is in addition to our recommendations in the chapter on IT, which outline further proposals to enhance communication within the Party including, in particular, the ability to contribute to policy development.

Candidate Selection

The selection of a candidate should be regarded as the culmination of a process in which both the local party and the national organisation are involved.

In constituencies with sitting TDs or councillors, the National Organiser should seek an early indication from each public representative of his or her intention to stand again or to retire. That should, if possible, be done at least two years before the likely date of the next election.

The Organisation Committee should be authorised to establish a 3 person Candidate Selection Board to oversee the selection process for a constituency or LEA. The National Organiser should have the right of attendance.

The Commission recommends a case by case consultation between the Board, the National Organiser and local Party officers on what is appropriate in each constituency and LEA. That consultation needs to be informed by research and analysis and it needs to be rigorous and timely, based on an appreciation by all parties to the process that such consultation is not just desirable but necessary in order to contribute to the success of the Party locally and nationally.

In view of the increasing importance of geographical spread in ensuring candidate success, the Board should have power to consider, in consultation with local members, the number and distribution of candidates, with a view to making recommendations.

The Board would draw up a list of interested members to be considered for nomination. The Board would have the right, of its own initiative, to add names of anyone it considers to be a suitable candidate.

The Board would conduct interviews with potential applicants and arrange for local opinion research to be carried out to assist its considerations of the merits of a candidate. The Board would also carry out confidential soundings among the local membership.

The Board would then draw up a short list, for approval by the Organisation Committee, of nominees to be submitted to a Selection Conference. Incumbent TDs and local Senators would be placed as of right on the list for Dáil elections; serving councillors would be placed as of right on the list for local elections.

The procedure outlined above should also be followed to fill casual vacancies in Party seats on local authorities.

Existing rules about the post-Selection Convention ratification of candidates and addition of candidates should be retained.

Rules and Standing Orders for a Selection Conference, as pointed out earlier, will be at the discretion of the proposed Executive Board which can, from time to time, revise these to take account of changing situations, both local and national. The Party Constitution should be amended to enable a procedure so that, where it is decided that a geographic spread between candidates is needed, two or more selection conventions could be held, each involving only the members from the relevant area.

Candidate selection for Seanad and Úduras na Gaeltachta elections should be a joint function of the proposed Central Council and the Parliamentary Party (which would, following a general election, consist of members of the incoming Dáil and the outgoing Seanad). Members of either body seeking a Seanad nomination should not be entitled to vote.

Decisions relating to a Presidential election should be a joint function of the proposed Executive Board and the Parliamentary Party.

Separately, the Commission endorses the proposal that the Party should develop a panel of possible and likely future candidates for local and general elections. It would be important that persons on the panel should be given no guarantees that they may be selected in the future. However, by and large candidates should be chosen from those who have committed themselves to working through the panel system.

Candidates on the panel should be required to participate in obligatory training dealing with such basic skills as fundraising, canvassing and internet communication and that also incorporates mock radio, TV and newspaper interviews, including video replays that encourage honest assessment of both weaknesses and strengths.

These training sessions will help both the candidate and the Party to identify the disciplines and skills required to conduct a modern election campaign.

The training programme could also involve the candidates contributing to the Party's development through helping with research, policy development or contributing their skills in other areas.

Market Research

A national market research programme should encompass –

- 1) Annual “state of the nation” qualitative research, involving 12 group discussions, recruited to be nationally representative in terms of age, region, socio-economic class and sex. This project will be designed to allow respondents to define the issues that affect them and to assess their attitude to these issues. It will also examine detailed attitudes to the political parties and in particular to the Labour Party and their likelihood of voting Labour. A key objective of the initial qualitative project will be to suggest a classification of the population into the likelihood of voting Labour, from ‘entrenched loyalists’ to ‘completely unavailables’, through varying degrees of ambivalence.
- 2) Annual “state of the nation” quantitative research – a nationally representative sample of all adults, designed to quantify attitudes to the political parties and to the issues identified at the qualitative stage and in particular to quantify the “propensity to vote Labour” segments of the population that were identified earlier.

Once the nature and composition of the ‘propensity to vote Labour’ segments of the population have been identified, it may be necessary to conduct separate qualitative and quantitative research among them so that they can be defined in as much detail as possible.

A proportion of the Party's total market research budget should be allocated to constituency surveys. The selection of constituencies should be based on the likelihood of Labour seat gains.

Given the importance of accurate constituency information on local issues and the impossibility of carrying out detailed market research surveys in every area, we propose setting up a training programme for a team of key supporters, though they would not be allowed to work within their

own constituency, to enable them to carry out informal surveys as professionally as possible. It would be vitally important that confidentiality within the Party be maintained throughout.

This team would be organised to carry out surveys within specific constituencies in consultation with the local organisation on the issues that need to be addressed.

Developing the Relationship with the Trade Unions

There should be equal status provided to Labour Party members who belong to affiliated and non-affiliated unions; this means that membership of *Labour Trade Unionists* must both be open, and be seen to be open, to all Party members who are trade union members. The objective of a stronger *Labour Trade Unionists* Section should be to increase Party membership and support among working people generally and trade union members specifically. *Labour Trade Unionists*, in common with the other Party Sections, should organise on a regional basis and, as we recommend elsewhere, should feed into the policy consultative process we recommend should be undertaken by the Party's Regional Councils. *Labour Trade Unionists* should also, in common with other Party Sections, be represented on the new Party Central Council.

It is in our view incompatible with the objectives of a modern progressive political party that votes are cast at a Party Conference based not on the number of Party members a delegate represents but on the number of members of that delegate's own organisation – when the bulk of those affiliated members are not Party members, Party supporters or even Party voters.

We accordingly propose that Article 8, section (3) (b) of the Party Constitution be amended so as to introduce a new system of trade union representation at Party Conferences, based on the number of members of each union who are themselves branch members of the Party, as follows:

- where not more than 50 members of the union are branch members of the Party: 1 delegate for every 5; plus
- for additional Party branch members above 50 but less than 500: 1 delegate for every 10; plus
- for additional Party branch members above 500 but less than 1,000: 1 delegate for every 15; plus
- for additional Party branch members above 1,000: 1 delegate for every 20.

There exist strong historical and cultural ties between the Party and the trade union movement, with common goals and objectives on a lot of the issues facing Ireland. The Party should examine with ICTU and individual unions the means to strengthen and promote membership of *Labour Trade Unionists* not only with the currently affiliated unions but with supporters within non-affiliated unions as well. Both the Labour Party and the unions should make greater and sustained efforts to strengthen and promote *Labour Trade Unionists*, to reflect the strong historical and cultural ties that exist between the Party and the trade union movement.

A greater commitment must be made to develop a joint campaign platform with individual trade unions, or where appropriate a group of unions, where there are specific common objectives.

The Party, in collaboration with supporters within the unions, should organise a regular information and recruitment campaign at trade union conferences in order to increase support for the Labour Party among active trade union members.

In recognition of the special and historical ties between the Labour Party and the Trade Union movement, *Commission 21* recommends the establishment of a formal Labour-Trade Union Centre to undertake and commission research and promote debate on our common agenda of social, economic and workplace reform. This Centre would be jointly funded and managed by the Labour Party and the Trade Unions, sections of Unions, or members of Unions who choose to affiliate to it. The Labour-Trade Union Centre would provide a new platform on which to develop and strengthen the relationship between the Party and the Trade Union movement. The Labour-Trade Union Centre would agree an agenda on which to campaign, would promote trade union objectives among the country's workforce as well as encourage membership and support of the Labour Party. The Centre would also engage with similar international bodies.

Building a Diverse, Just and Inclusive Society

Both the Party and society in general need to acknowledge, accommodate and celebrate the fact that we have a rich variety of social and cultural heritages on this island. We need to work harder to establish a framework that embraces the diverse origins and traditions, ethnic, historical, political and spiritual, of all our people.

We support integration as the preferred model for public policy decisions. Integration is a two-way process. The new must understand and respect the old but the older communities must also try to understand the new sympathetically.

Many ad hoc decisions made in recent years can and do militate against integration, notably some responses to the problems within schools created by the arrival of new communities. Strategic planning is needed to ensure proper structures are established and bedded down.

Trade Unions have made valuable efforts to service the new communities and to hinder the 'race to the bottom' pressure that has been evident in employment practices of recent times. We should examine what the unions have done and work with the union sections who serve these groups of workers.

Labour, as well as other representative bodies, must redouble our efforts to secure a broad-based and participative membership from the new communities. The main focus has to be in local areas where there has been a significant settlement of immigrants. Labour TDs and Councillors who represent these areas need to discuss among themselves what measures they should take to represent these groups. We suggest a code of good practice be prepared for public representatives. Branches and constituencies have to make a special effort to welcome any prospective members and to keep

fully abreast of issues that arise such as school places, language support, housing allocations and any intimidation directed against ethnic minorities.

Labour and the Island of Ireland

The leaders of the Labour Party and the SDLP should, as a priority, work together to forge a common policy platform along similar lines to those being proposed against child poverty in the Republic. This common platform should be developed into a common commitment by both parties to be delivered by 2016.

Both parties should commit themselves to working together to develop and deliver the policies and others consistent with the goals and objectives that define our parties.

The Northern Ireland electorate must continue to have the opportunity to vote for a party affiliated to the Party of European Socialists such as the SDLP. We – and indeed our sister parties throughout Europe – are committed to ensuring that there will continue to be a member party from Northern Ireland within the PES.

The relationship between the Labour Party and the SDLP is grounded on a mutual acknowledgement of our different situations and a mutual respect for each other's autonomy. But there are strong and enduring links between us, based on individual friendships, joint solidarity and a shared philosophy. We should work together to make those links more visible, to our members and to the island as a whole.

The present arrangements, whereby persons resident in Northern Ireland can join the Irish Labour Party and become members of the Northern Ireland Labour Forum, should be maintained and supported.

Fundraising

We recommend that the Party Treasurer be mandated to introduce a more professional approach including, if thought necessary, hiring specialist personnel.

Targeted fundraising drives should be made when major initiatives are launched. For example, every member and supporter should receive a text and email immediately after the Leader's speech at conference, when they might be more open to making a contribution.

The Labour Party has been ahead of other parties in Ireland with regard to initiatives such as blogging and Flickr; we need to also be ahead of the curve in Ireland with regard to online fundraising.

High profile events such as dinner dances and golf classics have been used to great effect for various non-profit organisations in Ireland. The Labour Party has not undertaken many of these events, and needs to explore the possibility of hosting them in the future, both regionally and nationally. Not only would such events raise funds but they would increase the social interface between members and supporters.

Support from personnel in the form of information sharing and training needs to be provided so that models of best practice can be shared between constituencies. This could be run alongside the award scheme recommended for Annual Conference.

As stated earlier, very strict guidelines should oversee all our fundraising, including funding from corporate donations, ensuring that the Party lives up to the high standards expected of those in public life.

We recommend that guidelines, binding both Head Office and constituencies and candidates, should be drawn up for debate and approval by the Central Council.

Information Technology: Communicating the Message

The General Secretary should appoint an individual within Head Office with specific responsibility for the implementation, in consultation with an IT contractor, of the recommendations below.

Growth of the members and supporters list

The growth of the members and supporters list is probably the single most important action to be undertaken. To achieve this we need to:

- a) review all party activities to ensure that we collect contact information (email, mobile number, etc) at every opportunity
- b) develop an email campaign strategy to ensure that each one has achievable goals, a full life cycle (i.e. conclusion and follow-up) and is supported by traditional party activity (i.e. Dáil Questions, local offline campaigns)
- c) set aside internal or external resources for the drafting of email campaigns.

This will allow us to develop a social network on the Labour website that allows members/supporters to engage in online activity.

Network with others

We should work within the PES to develop an IT information exchange between member parties. We also need to develop bi-lateral arrangements with Labour in Britain, the Democrats and the AFL-CIO and to develop an intern exchange program with these organisations.

Integrated Database

The creation of an integrated database in the future would be a major project; we need to carefully investigate what options are available and the benefits that would accrue before we start to spend money. This would be a substantial piece of work which would include researching what databases are currently in use within local constituencies and among elected representatives and what data sources we have access to within Ireland and the condition and usage rights of that data.

The Website as a Tool for Policy Development

Over the years there has been much discussion about how ordinary members of the party are excluded from policy development. This situation can be easily rectified by allowing members to engage with Party spokespersons and committees over the internet. The Party discussion forum is already being used to present draft papers to members for discussion. We need to build on this and develop tools to allow members directly engage with Party spokespersons using video webcasts, online chat forums and other methods.

For this process to be successful however Party Spokespersons will need training and support on the use of these tools. Ordinary members will also need feedback on how their views and concerns are taken on board, so that they will have confidence in the process.

Search Engine Optimisation

Search engine optimisation is the process of analysing the code and content of a website to see if it is being listed highly in internet search engines such as Google. This process can be quite complex due the high number of variables involved. It is an extremely important process however as a large amount of the traffic to a website is determined by the search engine results page ranking.

Appendix 2: The Trade Union Link

1: Party Constitution, Article 3: Group Membership

1. Trade unions, sections or divisions of unions that are not themselves group members, professional associations, co operative societies and other organisations which subscribe to the Party's Principles and Objects and accept this Constitution are eligible for group membership of the Party.
2. Applications for group membership shall be made to the NEC. Every applicant for group membership shall make, through a duly authorised officer, a declaration that the group subscribes to the Party's Principles and Objects and accepts this Constitution. 3. Group members shall pay an annual group membership fee. A group member which has not paid its annual group membership fee by the date in each year fixed for the purpose shall have no standing in the Party for the remainder of that year and may not be represented at any meeting to which it would otherwise be entitled to send delegates. A group member that is 2 years in arrears of payment shall be deemed to have resigned from the Party.

2: Affiliation Fees of Group Members, 2007

Membership not exceeding 500	€179
Membership exceeding 500 but not exceeding 1,000	€358
Membership exceeding 1,000 but not exceeding 1,500	€537
Membership exceeding 1,500 but not exceeding 2,000	€713
Membership exceeding 2,000 but not exceeding 2,500	€888
Membership exceeding 2,500 but not exceeding 3,000	€1,070
Membership exceeding 3,000 but not exceeding 3,500	€1,248
Membership exceeding 3,500 but not exceeding 4,000	€1,427
Membership exceeding 4,000 but not exceeding 5,000	€1,665
For each additional 1,000 members or part thereof	€268

3: Affiliated trade unions Ireland 2007

Union	Numbers Affiliated	Fees	Delegates
UNITE (ATGWU)	14,000	€4,077	11
AMICUS	21,000	€5,953	15
IMPACT (Municipal Employees)	2,500	€888	6
TSSA	1,365	€537	4
UCATT	4,000	€1,427	7
SIPTU	175,000	€47,225	92
Total	217,865	€60,107	135

4: International comparisons: political contributions from trade unions

Ireland: €60,107 per annum from unions in affiliation fees. In addition use of premises and additional donations at election time are also given to the Party by unions.

New Zealand: donations – not affiliation fees – from unions to the Labour Party amounted to at least \$180,000 (€89,531.97) in 2005.

Norway: in 2006 donations from unions were much lower than in 2005 which was an election year. Nonetheless the Norwegian Labour Party received NOK 5.4 million (€681,000).

Canada: affiliation fees to the New Democratic Party are at the rate of 20 cent per member a year. This is somewhat comparable to Ireland (roughly 28 cent per trade union member) and reflects the status of the NDP which is also a smaller third party with less influence than many of our sister parties.

United Kingdom: Labour Party receives £3.00 (€3.80) for each member of an affiliated union. From 2001 to 2005 trade union affiliation fees and donations amounted to £42,187,613, representing 64% of the total donation income of the party. (Of this sum, the great bulk was provided by way of affiliation fees.) In contrast, corporate donations for the same period amounted to £3,029,084, or 4.6% of the Party's donation income.

Australia: a large part of the Labor Party's income is derived from affiliation fees from unions. Some \$1.25 million is paid to the party annually as affiliation fees. In the 10 years leading up to 2004-05, unions donated \$49.68 million to the ALP national office and the party's state and territory branches. More was given by unions directly to local ALP campaigns.

Sweden: during the 2002 elections LO, the largest labour union in Sweden, contributed direct and indirect aid to the Social Democratic party that has been estimated to a value above 500 million Swedish kronor (approximately €54 million).

5: International comparisons: political affiliations of trade unions

Country	Trade union Organisation	Party links
France	French Democratic Confederation of Labour (CFDT):	Closely affiliated with the French Socialist Party
	General Confederation of Labour (CGT)	Closely affiliated with the French Communist Party
	General Confederation of Labour - Force Ouvrière	Does not have ties with any political party
Germany	German Federation of trade unions (DGB)	The DGB has no allegiance to political parties or religious denominations: "politically independent but not neutral."
Italy	Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL)	Communist and socialist aligned organisation

	Confederation of trade unions in Italy (CISL)	Traditionally aligned with the Roman Catholic church
	Italian Workers Union (UIL)	co-operates quite closely with the larger CGIL and CISL
Spain	Trade union Confederation of Workers' Commissions (CC OO)	Formerly associated with the Spanish Communist Party, but now a largely independent body
	General Workers' Confederation (UGT)	Traditionally linked to the PSOE political party
Sweden	Swedish Trade union Confederation (LO)	Closely aligned with the Swedish Social Democrats
UK	Trade Union Congress (TUC)	Close links with the Labour Party
Ireland	ICTU	No links with Labour
	Individual trade unions	Six out of 55 unions affiliated to ICTU are group members of the Party. Of these, SIPTU is by far the largest, representing more than one-third of all trade union members in the State.

Appendix 3: The Membership Survey

Profile of Members—who we are.

Thirty per cent of Party members have joined within the last five years; almost a third have been in the Party for over 20 years. Just over half of the respondents are trade unionists. Almost two-thirds come from constituencies with a Labour TD.

Men are more likely to have been in the Party a little longer than women; just under half of the men (49%) have been in the Party for 10 years or more, compared to 44% of women. Interestingly, the comparable figure for Trade Unionists was 54%.

Just over two-thirds of all respondents (67%), were from urban constituencies, just over half (52%) were members of Trade Unions and, although the proportion of men who belonged to a Union was a little higher (52%) than for women (47%), the difference wasn't all that great.

Almost two-thirds of respondents (64%) were from constituencies with a sitting Labour TD, 90% had a sitting Labour Councillor but just under a third (32%) were represented by a Labour Senator.

Respondents were active in a wide range of Party groups. Almost a third (32.7%) were constituency council officers but women were significantly less prominent in this area (21%). Almost a third of all respondents (30%) were members of the *Labour Trade Unionists*. Over two-thirds of the women respondents (70%) were members of *Labour Women*.

Labour Party members are active in their communities--almost one third of all members are also members of the GAA and over half are active in residents' associations. Twelve per cent are on parish councils and 10% are members of parent-teacher associations. They are also a rather dramatic lot – 10% are members of drama societies.

Membership of Other Organisations: Open-Ended Responses.

Over 350 respondents volunteered information on their membership of other organisations not included in the pre-coded question, demonstrating the wide range of charitable and political interests and commitments among Labour Party members: from Concern, Trócaire Oxfam and the Simon Community to the ICCL, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth. There were members of a variety of international political support groups; e.g. Palestine, Burma, Venezuela, and one member of the Norwich City F.C. who volunteered that he was a soul-mate of Delia Smith.

However the most revealing result from this analysis was the extraordinary level of Labour Party membership support for Amnesty International: 72 out of a total of 360, exactly 20%.

Policy Development.

Labour Party members are actively interested in policy development—almost one third are 'very interested' and another 29% are 'quite interested', with a further 25% who are 'moderately interested'—meaning that nine out of every 10 members want to contribute to policies. Men were

marginally more interested in policy development than women and those in the under-50's age group were marginally more interested than older members, but there were no really significant difference between sub-groups on this issue.

The main forum for policy development is at constituency level; two out of every five members have contributed to policy development at this level in the last two years. There was some difference between the sexes in this area with men being significantly more likely to contribute (42%) than women (34%). Approximately one in six respondents (17%) had contributed to policy development at Annual Conference, with only small difference between men (18%) and women (15%).

Interestingly, approximately one in five respondents (19%) had participated in policy development in areas outside the main Party outlets and this time women (22%) were more likely to have taken part than men (17.5%).

There is some indication that members would like a little more opportunity to engage in policy development but in general the vast majority of members are happy enough with the scope they have, with just over 30% of respondents declaring themselves 'very satisfied' or 'quite satisfied' compared with a little over 22% being 'very dissatisfied' or 'quite dissatisfied'. Of the remainder, 37% were 'moderately satisfied' and a further 11% were in the 'don't know' category. Men expressed slightly higher levels of dissatisfaction than women.

Party Organisation and Membership Participation.

Since the last general election in 2007, members have been very active, with an over 90% attendance at meetings, over half (56%) out canvassing and almost two out of every three members (63%) distributing leaflets. There has been a high level of fund-raising activity (54%) and over one third of all respondents (35%) have been a member of some local Party committee. There were no significant variations in participation between men and women or between different age groups.

Half of all respondents claimed to have attended three or more meetings within the last twelve months and less than a quarter (23%) didn't attend any meetings. Local and national issues were discussed at most of the meetings.

Respondents were also given a detailed opportunity to comment on how satisfied they are with the performance of Party management on a variety of administrative issues. The overall results show a reasonable level of satisfaction but there were significant critical minorities on all issues. The most critical issues were 'assisting in recruitment of members'; where over a third of respondents (36%) were 'not at all satisfied', and 'assisting in organisation at branch and constituency level', with just under a quarter (24.4%) 'not at all satisfied'. Over one in five respondents were also in this category for 'fund-raising assistance' (23%) and 'securing publicity on issues' (21%). There were no marked differences in the responses of the different sub-groups.

Respondents were much more satisfied with Party management performance in areas like 'supporting the local party at election times', 'promoting national campaigns' and 'communication between Head Office and local parties'.

Respondents would appear to be in regular communication with their local branch. Over 70% of respondents had received a formal communication from their branch within the past month and this includes almost one in five members (19%) who had received communication within the last week.

Regular communication from members' constituencies was only slightly less frequent with over two thirds of them (67%) receiving formal communication on a monthly basis and 15% in weekly contact.

Contact with Head Office was also surprisingly regular, although this could have been affected by the sending out of the questionnaire. Almost two-thirds of the respondents (65%) had received a formal communication from Head Office within the last month.

Respondents were also asked about communication from their local councillor or candidate councillor and again regular communication was the order of the day, with almost half (48%) being in communication within the last month, including 17.7% within the last week. Formal communication with the local Labour TD was only slightly less: 46% within the last month but, given that almost one in five respondents had no local TD, it means that for those who do almost two-thirds are in regular monthly contact.

There is also a high level of contact with the Leader: 44% within the last month and just over 87% within the last six months. Not surprisingly, members are satisfied with this level of communication with the Party Leader. A quarter of all respondents were 'very satisfied', a further 40% were 'satisfied' and another quarter were 'quite satisfied'. Respondents were also reasonably happy with the Party's use of information technology. Almost a quarter (24%) rated it 'very good', with a further 42% rating it as 'good'. Just over one in ten respondents thought it was 'poor' or 'very poor' and 18% thought it was 'in-between'.

Respondents were then asked about their preferred method of communication, with e-mail (54%) winning handsomely over letter (37%) text messaging and phone calls (9% each) and with newsletter (8%) and website (4%) being the least preferred options. However, the most interesting point about the responses to this question was the significant variation between the sexes, with women much more at ease with new technology. Half of the men choose e-mail as their preferred option but this compared with almost two-thirds (63%) of the women. The difference for text messages was even more marked being the preferred option of 17% of the women compared to only 6% of the men.

There was a reasonable level of traffic to the Labour Party website, with over a third of all respondents (35%) visiting the site on a monthly basis, but there was also a disappointing 35% who never visited the site at all. This time there was little difference between the sexes but younger respondents were significantly more likely to log on.

Membership Participation: Open-Ended Responses.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to comment on other forms of participation but the pre-coded questions seem to have more than adequately covered this area and, apart from some comments on participation in the recent Referendum campaign and the Thomas Johnston Summer School, there were very few contributions – apart from one respondent who somewhat wistfully declared: 'I do a lot for the Party'.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to add comments to the question about Party activity between elections and, although most respondents were satisfied with their responses to the pre-coded question, some did use this question to voice criticisms about the structure of branch meetings mainly on the grounds that they were boring, repetitive and dominated by older, long serving members. Slightly mixed signals were proposed as solutions:

'more policy discussions and less 'meetings culture' stuff'

'branch meetings should be more social because young people are put off by how boring they are'.

Candidate Selection.

Respondents were not happy with the present system of candidate selection, believing that it militates against the retention of a seat when a sitting elected member departs for whatever reason. Almost half of all respondents (46%) believe that the present system makes it more difficult to retain a seat compared to less than a quarter (24%) who disagree. A third of respondents expressed no opinion. There were no significant differences between the sub-groups.

There was an overwhelming majority in favour of using market research to assess the likely impact of potential candidates: just under two thirds in favour (65%) with less than a quarter (23%) against. Approximately one in eight respondents (12%) expressed no opinion.

There was also strong support for the involvement of the Party Leader and the organisation Sub-Committee in the selection of candidates. The most popular option, chosen by almost two in five respondents (39%), was as an advisory role to the constituency but almost one in five respondents (19%) opted for an equal role with the constituency. Two further options were supported by smaller numbers: 18% for a right to veto where procedures have been breached and 15% for a mediation role in the event of a dispute. Only 5.5% opted for no role at all.

Candidate Selection: Open-Ended Responses.

Almost 300 respondents made use of the open-ended question to add further thoughts on succession planning and candidate selection. The dominant theme was a plea for more professional procedures. These included more careful screening of candidates, more training given to selected candidates and, above all, more time allowed for the whole process. Ideally selection should take place two years before an election.

Other comments around the same theme were that all TDs should have a running mate – regardless of the possible risks – and that all TDs should have a recognised successor.

Many of the contributions on this subject were clear about the characteristics of an ideal candidate: not a blow in, well versed in Labour traditions, not selected on the basis of gender balance requirements, (some dissent here), should be high calibre, well known in the area and a hard worker. The only bias that should be considered would be towards younger candidates.

There was very strong opposition to 'paper' branches, and family fiefdoms.

There were divided views on Head Office involvement—some believe in it and that the Party Leader should have a role as done in other parties – but the majority was against. There were more in favour of market research than against and in favour of candidate training.

'It is vital that the Labour Party profile does not come second to that of the candidate.'

'Sitting members must refrain from keeping potential successors at arm's length.'

Trade Union Links.

In relation to this issue respondents were given three options: that the links should be maintained as is, that they be strengthened, or that they be changed. A significant majority (43%) opted to strengthen the links with little differences between the sub-groups on this issue. The remaining respondents were almost equally divided between those who wanted to maintain the status quo (23%) and those who wanted a change in the relationship (27%).

A second question on this issue asked respondents how happy they were with the *status quo* and here the responses were a little more divided. Once again a significant majority (47%) expressed themselves happy with the current situation but almost two out of every five respondents (39%) said that they were not happy, with almost 14% undecided.

There are some pointers to the level of ambiguity that exists on this issue in the contributions respondents made in response to the open-ended question.

Trade Union Links: Open-Ended Responses.

Over 300 respondents took the opportunity to comment directly on the Party's links with the Trade Unions and analysis of the responses show serious divisions between their attitudes to the relationship. Approximately half are in favour of either maintaining or strengthening the association, mainly on the grounds of tradition, continuity, commonality of interests and a shared political history. Opinions among this group were often expressed with a degree of vehemence: 'If anything is done to damage the link I'll leave the Party'. Responses from the other half were no less passionate but were divided between those who wanted to break the link completely and those who wanted the relationship to be reassessed and put on a different footing. Those who want the link broken give three main reasons: most trade unionists vote for Fianna Fáil; the association damages the party in a society where Trade Union membership is in decline and Unions are unpopular; and what they consider to be the different interests of the two sides. Those who want the relationship put onto a different footing argue for two main areas of negotiation: greater commitment from the Unions to urging their members to vote Labour and a more definitive acceptance that the interests of the two parties may not always coincide – and in particular that the Labour Party should be able to criticise aspects of Union behaviour when it see fit.

'It is a form of political madness for a political party on 12% to turn up its nose at half a million trade unionists'

'Trade Unions are important to some workers; however why a political party would want to be associated with cancelled flights, cancelled trains, cancelled hospital appointments and general inflexibility is a mystery to me'

'The unions are deeply unpopular with the public, give little money to the party and, in my 23 years in an affiliated union, I've never been asked to join or even vote Labour.'

'The relationship with the unions is vital for the future of the Party. If we break the link we represent no one and nothing.'

'I am personally proud of the link with the unions but I would recognise that it is perceived negatively.'

'The party should be 'owned' by the TU movement as the only way of ensuring it carries out the purpose for which it was set up-to serve – the interests of the workers.'

'If union members voted for the party, Labour would now be in power.'

'It's not working but it's potentially very important.'

'Destroy the perception that we are in their pockets, establish independent identities and build real and active partnership'

Diversity.

Respondents were asked to rate the record of the Labour Party in regard to their efforts to attract women, youth, immigrants and older people to the Party.

The overall tone of the results is negative and probably reflects a consistent theme of the survey as a whole: frustration at the lack of a concerted recruitment drive within the Party. Of the four categories only women were regarded as being taken seriously in terms of recruitment. Almost half the respondents (49%) felt the Party's record in recruiting women was either 'good' or 'very good'. This compares with a comparable result for immigrants of 22%, young people 28% and older people 24%. The highest negative ratings reflected another consistent theme echoed across a number of responses to different questions: the lack of attention to recruiting younger members. Over one third of respondents (37%) rated the Party's attempts to recruit young people as either 'poor' or 'very poor'.

Diversity: Open-Ended Responses.

Over 200 respondents availed of the opportunity to make additional comments under this heading. The majority of these comments were directed at the recruitment issue and revealed an underlying disquiet at the Party's failure to recruit, particularly among younger people. Some respondents reluctantly accepted that the Labour Party wasn't alone in this respect and that there appeared to be general lack of interest in politics among the younger generation.

However there were also strongly worded criticisms of the Party's failure to take the issue more seriously:

Judging by the lack of new members my constituency has a serious problem in the future'.

I think the whole matter of attracting new members will have to be revised and dramatically changed'.

Accepting the difficulty of appealing to young people, many respondents felt that both the image of the Party and the structure of meetings might have to change:

Involving young people in any political activity is difficult. We must project a more dynamic image'.

Young people care – they just don't know it. We must energise them'.

Being a member of the Labour Party should be hyped up as a cult'.

The image of Labour Youth is a problem. Too much focus on the politics of identity; not enough on social solidarity'.

All Ireland Structure.

There was a clear majority in favour of the Labour Party being involved in some form of all-Ireland organisation or structure. Two out of three respondents (66%) felt that it was 'very important' or 'important' for the Party to develop an all-Ireland structure. Of these, 66% chose the 'very important' option. Only 16% of respondents chose the 'unimportant' or 'not at all important' options.

All Ireland Structure: Open-Ended Responses.

Once again respondents used the open-ended question to express a wide range of often diverse views on what should be the Party's attitude to organisation and development in Northern Ireland. But, although the responses were often contradictory, the tone was measured and thoughtful – as if respondents themselves were trying to grapple with a situation which was not an immediate priority for them but with which they felt needed to be addressed. There was a clear consensus that the Labour Party needed to be represented in some form in Northern Ireland and there was no doubt that the overwhelming preference was for some kind of arrangement with the SDLP. It was widely acknowledged that that party was already in some preliminary negotiations with Fianna Fail but it was also assumed that many in the SDLP would feel more comfortable with the Labour Party. The more opportunistically minded were prepared to play a waiting game:

When the SDLP's FF element jumps ship we should sort out the rest'.

the more Augustinian-minded were prepared to wait a little longer:

'Steer clear of Northern Ireland for at least 20 years';

while the historically minded wanted to avoid history repeating itself:

'We allowed Sinn Féin a clear run in 1918. We must not allow FF and the SDLP to get a head start in Northern Ireland. We must develop structures in Northern Ireland with like-minded people on the Left.'

A number of respondents would settle for some form of loose arrangement, preferably with the SDLP, and many made the point that the immediate priority was to re-structure and strengthen the Party in the Republic, adding that Northern Ireland simply wasn't a priority. However these views were balanced by the fear that the Labour Party could be the only one without an all-Ireland presence. Very few respondents were prepared to accept that position.

Defining the Party.

The last section of the questionnaire gave members an opportunity to expand on their views and opinions of what the Party should be doing and where it should be going without the constraints of the pre-coded questions. Members eagerly accepted the opportunity and there was an enthusiastic response to all four open-ended questions: why I am a member; core values of the Party; desired legacy of the Party; and any other comments.

Why I'm a Member.

Although there was a huge volume of over 600 varied responses to this question, the main reason given for membership of the Labour Party could be summed up in a word: equality. Members passionately want a more equal society in Ireland; whether this is expressed as 'a level playing field', 'a fairer society', 'social justice for all' or more specifically 'equal access to education and health', it all came down to the need for a more equal society, with the obvious implication that we are currently living in a society that tolerates an unacceptable level of built-in inequality.

The second biggest cluster of responses was similar in intent but more specifically concerned with identifying the Party as the voice of the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalised in Irish society. Others simply stated that Labour was the party that most closely represented their own views, while a significant number of members reflected on their pride in the fact that Labour was the only party untainted by corruption.

Pride in the socialist roots of the party was also mentioned, some respondents were members because of their Trade Union commitments, while others joined because they were either fed up or dismayed or disgusted by Fianna Fáil.

On a more philosophical level, a number of respondents were alarmed at the increasing drift to individualism in Irish society and looked to the Labour Party to restore a sense of community and civic virtue.

'The Labour Party is the only party that promotes social democracy in Ireland – the only party concerned with the less well off in our society'.

'Social democracy – the best defence against unfettered capitalism'.

'I am a member of the Labour Party because it represents a philosophy that all the people are equal in every way'.

'It is a party of honesty and principle'.

'I have always felt that through the Labour Party I could contribute to helping the less well off, improve their conditions and help them gain their rightful place in our society'.

'I am a member of the Labour Party because I believe that if the Labour Party were in government it would dramatically improve the country and the wellbeing of the Irish people'.

What Makes Labour Different?

The main distinction between Labour and the other parties was perceived as Labour's commitment to equality and social justice. This was defined in slightly different ways but it revolves around an activist commitment to change the existing nature of society to achieve a more equitable distribution of resources. A significant number of party members who made this point added that, although at times most other parties paid lip service to these ideals, Labour was the only party fully committed to achieving them.

The second major distinction between Labour and other parties concerns representation. Labour very clearly represents the less well off, the marginalised, the ordinary people, the weak and the vulnerable in our society.

The third most frequently mentioned distinction concerned the Party's essential honesty. Many members said how proud they were that unlike the other parties Labour had never been involved in the bribery and corruption that has tainted Irish politics for so long. A significant number of respondents stated that one of the reasons for this, apart from the innate propriety of the Party, was that it has never been in the pocket of big business or other vested interests.

There were, however, many comments from members expressing the view that Labour wasn't 'different' enough and regretting the 'drift to the centre' which they regarded as an unwelcome trend in modern politics. When asked what made Labour different, one member replied somewhat wistfully: 'I wish I could'.

'I have never heard of a corrupt Labour politician and if this country is to become truly great it needs to be governed by real people and not people with vested interests'.

'Labour is the Party of political, social and economic equality. It is the progressive voice in a conservative wilderness'.

'Labour believes in a society where health, education housing and transport should be accessible to all regardless of the size of your bank balance – and not seen as the privilege of the chosen few'.

'For me other parties care more about the profits of big business than they do about ordinary people. Some of the other parties are in my opinion 'valueless'. I believe that we in Labour have a history of supporting people through health education and housing whereas other parties almost see people as an inconvenience'.

'Banks, bribes and bodies – we don't rob banks, we don't take bribes and we don't bury bodies'.

'FF are pragmatic but have no integrity, FG are reasonably honest but have no imagination, SF are socialist but you couldn't trust them to run the economy – not to mention the army. Labour have all the positives listed above with none of the drawbacks'.

Labour Party Legacy.

As would be expected from the previous responses, there was widespread agreement among members that a critical Labour Party legacy should be a more equal society, in particular a society in which everyone had genuinely equal access to healthcare and education, and that Ireland would be a society characterised by a pervasive sense of social justice. Many members also used the opportunity to remind themselves of Labour's heritage and hoped that the Party's legacy would be true to the ideals of Connolly and Larkin. However the overwhelming majority of responses revealed a burning ambition to be in power on the practical grounds that the Party's legacy would be all the greater if Labour were the natural majority Party in Ireland. Some respondents would be prepared to settle for 40 or 50 seats and a Labour Taoiseach but the majority wanted to be a majority party. The predominant mood was summed up by one simple response:

'Only in power can Labour do anything'

The scale of ambition was so high that many members were annoyed with the question:

'Silly question – get into government, sort out health and education: legacy is for old men to look back on'.

'I would not like to talk about legacies – that's what people leave when they're dead'.

But there were also many moving and inspiring responses as members tried to articulate what legacy they would aspire to for the Party:

'That its influence on Irish society through its participation in government and local authorities has left Ireland an enhanced place for all its people and that it concentrated on giving a voice to the marginalised, speaking for people who cannot speak for themselves'

'That it always stood for its principles'

'That it created a caring society rather than a greedy individual society'

'That everyone in the Labour Party have looked long and hard in the mirror of time and says I've worked my socks off for my fellow beings to help them and their children to have dignity and a better standard of life. Then you can turn the mirror to the wall, have a good cup of tea and get stuck in again until you can look in the mirror again and answer yourself with the same scrutiny'

And finally, after answering 41 often detailed questions, respondents were given a chance to offer opinions on anything they felt that had been missed or to re-iterate points they had made earlier. Not surprisingly there was a huge range of responses are impossible to summarise into a few neat conclusions. However a number of themes came through loud and clear, in particular the need for the Party to be set its sights a good deal higher and to act in a more confident manner. It would be impossible to reduce such a range of responses to a single word but, if the Party is to respond to the courage of its members' convictions, that word would be 'ambition':

'We need ambition'

'Be bolder. Set the agenda'

'Go forward young man. Be adventurous. Don't be afraid to be different'

'The Party should stop seeing itself as second best. The leadership need to push the Party forward as the key player in Irish politics'

'The Labour Party needs to believe in itself. We have great policies and great people we just need to tell people what we believe'

'Labour have a confidence problem. It does not believe itself confident of leading a government. Until it does the Party will remain as it is-static and marginal'

'What needs changing most are the intangibles—our mindset, ambition, energy, passion, pride, drive and confidence'

'We need a new vision of the type of society we need in Ireland and explain how we consider this will improve life in the country'

If ambition was the dominant theme, another consistent message with obvious implications for a more ambitious approach was professionalism. The clear message here was not that the Party was

unprofessional but that, because the political arena has become so much more professional in recent decades, the Labour Party needs to at least match the other parties in this area and ideally become even more professional than anyone else.

Another constant theme was the concern about the aging profile of the Party:

Nearly all the Labour Party people are my age or not much younger. We need more and more young people or the party will simply die of old age'.

Allied to this point was the need for a much more active recruitment drive all over the country, particularly in areas which currently lack a strong local organisation. Some respondents proposed that all members should be charged immediately with recruiting at least one new member. However reservations were expressed about the reluctance of some constituency organisations to actively recruit new members as it might represent a future threat to sitting TDs and councillors. This practice was deplored:

'Some Labour TDs are looking after their seats as if they owned them. These seats belong to the Labour Party'.

Some of the calls for a more active recruitment drive were accompanied by warnings that the current branch structure would have to be reviewed if meetings were to be made more attractive to younger people.

Appendix 4: Proposed Functions of the Central Council and the Executive Board.

Executive Board

Members

Power to admit to life membership and to waive annual fees for life members

Power to declare the objects or activities of an organisation, publication or institution to be injurious to the interests of the Party or inconsistent with its Principles and Objects and to refuse membership to associated persons

Power to deem a member who has publicly declared or otherwise made clear an intention to stand as a non-Party candidate at an election to have resigned from the Party

Power to admit (or refuse) group members

Branches and Constituency, Divisional and Regional Councils

Power to hear appeals against suspension of branches

Power to convene meetings of Party members outside the State and to establish support groups of such members

Power to decide the minimum sum that must be contributed by each constituency to the National Election Fund

Power to approve the establishment of Divisional and Regional Councils

Power to confer additional functions on Regional and Divisional Councils

Power to draw up rules and standing orders for branches and Constituency, Divisional and Regional Council

Powers relating to the amalgamation, division, dissolution or suspension of branches and Constituency, Divisional and Regional Councils

Power to inspect the records of branches and Constituency, Divisional and Regional Councils

Power to direct a meeting of a branch or a Constituency, Divisional or Regional Council or the postponement or adjournment of such a meeting

Power of members to attend and speak at any meeting of a branch or a Constituency, Divisional or Regional Council, or of a committee or Executive thereof

Power to approve constitution or rules or standing orders of a Party Section (other than the PLP).

Party Conference

Power to fix time and place for annual Party Conference and to summon a Special Party Conference, to consider only those proposals that are submitted to it by the EB

Power to appoint Conference Arrangements Sub-Committee and to submit motions and policy statements and other reports to Conference agenda.

Power of EB members to attend and speak at the Party Conference

Power to fill vacancies amongst its own members elected by the Party Conference

Sub-Committees and Officers

Power to establish committees, appoint their members and to delegate functions.

Power to appoint General Secretary

Power to appoint and remove Party trustees and to direct trustees in relation to the property and assets of the Party

Power to borrow or receive money and to mortgage or otherwise charge the assets of the Party

Party Leadership

Power to appoint returning officer, to fix closing date and to make rules for the conduct of leadership elections

Power to elect an acting Party Leader or Deputy Leader in certain circumstances

Power to postpone leadership election

Power to enable the Party to remain in Government where there has been a change of Taoiseach without a general election

Finance

Power to fix the rate and scale of annual membership, group membership, affiliation and Conference delegate fees

Power to impose special levy on members, group members, branches or Constituency, Divisional or Regional Councils

Power to waive or extend time for payment of group membership fees

Party Treasurer an officer of, and reporting to, EB

All funds received by the Party and the Party Leader from the State to be paid to, and administered under the direction of, the EB

Elections

Power to prescribe the procedure for selecting Party candidates and to convene and organise candidate selection conventions

Power to ratify or refuse to ratify candidates selected by a selection convention

Complaints Procedure

Power to appoint a Complaints Panel and a Committee on Suspensions and to make rules for and hear appeals against decisions on complaints and appeals

Interpretation of Constitution

Power to decide any matter in relation to which the interpretation of the Constitution is in doubt and to make provision for any matter on which the Constitution is silent

Central Council

Power to submit motions and policy statements and other reports to Party Conference agenda

Power to approve and publish the Election Manifesto

Powers relating to Policy Committee and the development, formulation and publication of party policy

Power, on a two-thirds vote, to remove Party Leader or Deputy Leader from office

Power to receive and accept or reject the report from the Party Leader, following a general election

Power to appoint International Secretary.