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Report of the Commission on Health and Social Services

Sinn Fein

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION
on
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

HEALTH CARE

Resolutions Nos.96,107,110 and 117 to be composite.

"This Ard Fheis reiterates its will for a free comprehensive Health Service both North & South.

In the South we welcome the trend to base Health contributions on an ability to pay and call for health care to be financed directly from taxation in the future.

We are opposed to the upper income limit of the limited eligibility scheme of £5,500 as this would force many workers to pay exorbitant medical consultant fees.

In the North we congratulate the workers in the caring professions for their opposition to the building of private clinics and for their continued opposition to the utilisation of N.H.S. facilities for private practice.

In the South we are opposed to the proposed State subvention of private hospital practice under the Scheme to be introduced on April 1st.

We support the primary health care team concept and call for a planned programme of Health Care building with a full range of services and facilities including a salaried G.P. service.

Recognising that the consumer interests in Health and Social Services in Northern Ireland is not being given its proper place within the present structures despite the reorganisation of 1974, we call upon the 6 Co.Executive to supervise the production of a discussion document on democratisation of Health and Social Services in Northern Ireland.

1/2 Post

Resolutions 100,108 (composite).

"This Ard Fheis requests the incoming Ard Comhairle to;

1. Highlight the socio-economic cause of illness by initiating the necessary research and publishing a document, and;
2. condemns the attempt of Governments North and South to shift responsibility for the provisions of personal social services away from State Agencies and into the hands of voluntary organisations.

Resolutions 104 and 105 (composite).

This Ard Fheis calls for:-

1. The immediate introduction of Legislation providing for paid maternity leave;
2. Comprehensive Health and Safety Legislation to cover all workers as a matter of urgency;
3. Support for the Disabled Persons Action Group.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS IN THE 26 COS.

Resolution 99, as amended and covering Resolution No.106.

That this Ard Fheis calls for the implementation of the following proposals outlined in our Social Welfare Document.

1. The introduction of a State income related Pension Scheme to supercede all existing pension schemes for employees.
 - (a) give all workers and their dependants a proper and adequate pension;
 - (b) provide earnings-related pensions. A worker would receive a pension of at least 2/3 average wage;
 - (c) ensure that pensions were inflation-proofed. Pensions would increase automatically in line with wage and price increases;
 - (d) mean no problems with transferability of pension rights. A workers' pension rights would be protected if he changed his employment, is made redundant or unemployed.

- (e) ensure that adequate pension if he is an invalid, and adequate protection for his dependants if he dies.

A funded state income-related scheme as outlined, would supercede all existing private pension schemes and would insure an adequate income for all pensioners. Part of the income accumulated by the State Pension Scheme would be used for industrial development, in particular the development of State Companies in the manufacturing section e.g. Bord na Mona, the Sugar Company and Nitrigin Eireann Teoranta etc.

2. The introduction of legislation to ensure that all Social Welfare benefits including unemployment benefit, sickness benefits and pensions increase automatically with the increases in average earnings and upward trends in consumer prices.

3. New Social Welfare Legislation which would eliminate all forms of discrimination from the social welfare code especially that against women and young people.

4. Legislation to ensure that the self-employed and farmers contribute to the cost of social welfare services.

5. The reform of the dental benefit and optical benefit schemes to ensure proper coverage for workers and their dependants.

6. The immediate implementation of a comprehensive legal services scheme based upon the ideas of the Pringle Report or Civil Legal Aid and advice and in so doing to take the responsibility of providing legal services out of the hands of the legal professional bodies who have failed to respect the needs of people in this area in the past.

Resolution 98 as amended:

"This Ard Fheis is deeply concerned at the continuing failure by successive Governments in the 26 Co.State to introduce adequate legislation to deal with marital breakdown and domestic violence. Present legislation formalising separations and the law which bans a spouse from the marital home only serve to highlight the pressing needs for a humane divorce law.

The Ard Fheis deplures the lack of finance made available to support law centres or shelters which deal with the immediate and legal needs. In particular, the Ard Fheis is alarmed at the threatened closure of the Coolock Law Centre which is the only such centre in the State. We demand the introduction of domestic violence legislation throughout the Country.

This Ard Fheis calls on the incoming Ard Comhairle to instruct all local representatives and all local candidates to campaign for finance to open refuges for battered wives and their children in every locality or district and to provide a law centre in every locality.

Resolution 93 amended as follows:-

"This Ard Fheis calls for support for the aims of the Cold Comfort Campaign.

SOCIAL SERVICES IN NORTHERN IRELAND.Resolutions 25, 94, 95, 103, 109, 111, 113, 114 and 115.

That This Ard Fheis calls for the introduction of an adequate comprehensive system of benefits to be paid as of right to citizens in Northern Ireland. To this end we call for:-

1. The Repeal of the Payment of Debt Act.
2. The pegging of the level of benefits to the average industrial wage and the C.P.I.
3. For the party to commit itself to seeking the broadest possible support for a fundamental reappraisal of the whole benefit system.
4. An expansion of the role of child benefits and other non means tested benefits and opposition to the attempts by Governments to impose a tax on child benefits and other Social Security benefits.
5. For measures to reduce the cost of domestic fuels to consumers.

DAY-CARE CENTRES

Recognising the beneficial effects of day care provision for both the child and society this Ard Fheis instructs its branches in this the International Year of the Child, to initiate campaigns for the provision of day care facilities for all children from six months onwards as a positive contribution to an improved quality of life for all young people. While welcoming publication of the Government proposals for day care provision for the under 5's this Ard Fheis expresses its concern for the scale of the provision outlined, regarding it as inadequate. In particular we would draw attention to the total failure to make any

provision for the children of working mothers as being a dereliction of statutory obligations and an attempt to prevent women playing a full role in the social and economic life of the community.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Resolution 112.

Having regard to the failure of the Equal Opportunities Commission in N.I. to make any significant impact on the position of women in work, this Ard Fheis therefore supports the demand for:

- a) Bringing the Commission's membership up to full strength, for the first time since its inception;
- b) The use of its legal and educative powers to be implemented.

FAMILY PLANNING BILL.

Resolution 118 covering 102.

That this Party reaffirms its commitment to the provision of a free, comprehensive contraceptive service to be administered by the Health Boards. The Health (Family Planning) Bill 1977 falls far short of achieving this. In fact it limits access to contraceptives even more than does the present highly unsatisfactory situation.

In particular we object to the fact that:

- 1) The Bill seeks to transfer the making of moral decisions to the Medical profession, whose role should be one purely of giving medical advice.
- 2) The Bill discriminates between single and married people;

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a full range of contraceptive services and advice. In practice this means that many people will be discriminated against on the basis of their geographical location.

5) The Bill threatens the existence of the existing voluntary Clinics. It must be recognised that few Irish Doctors are thoroughly trained to specialist level in contraceptive methods and that these Clinics provide a very necessary specialised service in this area. It is our Policy that Clinics be brought under the jurisdiction of the Health Boards.
