

**The Labour Party
Outline Policy:**

WORKERS' DEMOCRACY



As adopted by the Labour Party Annual Conference, January 1969

WORKER DEMOCRACY

SECTION ONE — INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This policy is a statement of progress towards socialism. It will be quite clear that its proposals envisage a real change in society.
- 1.2. There is a great deal of current confusion in relation to the meaning of 'industrial democracy' — for many it means little more than an improved system of industrial relations. In this document worker democracy is defined as full participation by the workers in all decisions involving the utilisation of the resources employed by an enterprise or organisation. The proposals made here concentrate on the long rather than the short term because Labour is intent on changing Irish society, not just shoring up an imperfect and unjust one.
- 1.3. The main argument for participation in decision-making is not economic, in that it would lead to a more stable system of industrial relations. Far more important is its ethical or philosophical significance in applying the democratic principle to work.
- 1.4. This policy outlines Labour's initial proposals for Worker Democracy. They are not in any way complete and do not represent the final word on the subject. We must chart our own path to democracy in our work places. The outlines of the present day unjust society are known. The end objective of this policy is also known. The problem is to lay down the guidelines for the transition from an autocratic system to a democratic one. On the Continent at one end of the spectrum there is the approach based firmly on public ownership with workers' councils and self management. At the opposite end there is the other experience of trying to achieve industrial democracy within an orthodox capitalist system. Some want to change society while others want to extend worker influence over the industrial process without making any fundamental changes in society.
- 1.5. The aim of worker democracy is to make the decision takers in the place of work and in the control of the enterprise responsible to those who work in it. The vague word 'participation' can mean anything or nothing, the frills of profit-sharing or the irrelevancies of works councils. Labour rejects these approaches on the ground that there is nothing more pointless than participation in something over which you have no control. 'Participation' is often a device to ensure co-operation with managements for the purpose of controlling and exploiting for private profit.

