

**GENERAL SYNOD 2008**

**THE CHURCH IN SOCIETY COMMITTEE REPORT (pages 239-261)**

**Seconded by the Right Revd Michael Jackson (Diocese of Clogher)**

**EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

The Report of the Church in Society Committee comes at a time when political changes, such as many people never expected to come to pass in Ireland, have happened and are being sustained. These changes have also brought about structures of devolved government in Northern Ireland along with cross-border co-operation which many had never envisaged. But history is always on the move. Those who have brought us to this change are those who for many years have stood at the extremes of politics in Northern Ireland itself and indeed have at times chosen to stand outside politics itself. This transformation is something for which many people prayed but at the same time they were realistic enough to accept that often it was too close to call, at many points self-interest might have triumphed over the need to build a new society radically different from the inherited society. The transformation is tangible. The shift is structural as well as emotional. The improvements are clear to see. The spirit is significantly more confident. But the personnel of leadership changes and indeed has changed. In Seconding the Report of the Church in Society Committee, I should like to point - through this General Synod - to the need to sustain the political momentum which is a vital component in the flowering of the new society.

This need comes at a time of new economic turmoil internationally. This need to sustain momentum will call on the energy of the churches to take the societies in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland beyond where economics of itself has taken them. Internationally we are bombarded by the rhetoric of the clash of civilizations. At home we are increasingly faced in religious observance with what I might call the collapse even of apathy. Yet the questions raised and the human situations - many of

which are addressed year by year on your behalf by the Church in Society Committee – are of the stuff of church people actively engaged in the life of their own society and with a Christ-like concern and compassion for the world to which we belong home and away.

I have great pleasure in seconding the Report of the Church in Society Committee to the General Synod 2008.