Speech by Mr Liam Connellan, Director General, Confederation of Irish Industry at Seminar held by The National Federation of Business & Professional Women's Clubs of the Republic of Ireland at Downshire House, Blessington, at 8 p.m. on Friday, 24 February 1978.

WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

Introduction

During this paper I would like to discuss the participation by women in the industrial workforce. Before doing this, however, it may be useful to examine the participation by women in full time paid employment throughout the whole economy.

Women comprised 26.6% of the workforce in Ireland in 1975. This proportion was lower than the European average of 35.9% but higher than that in the Netherlands. The Irish figure may be somewhat distorted by the high proportion of the workforce in agriculture.

In 1975, 19.5% of all women were in full time paid employment. Again, while this was less than the EEC average of 28.1%, it was marginally higher than the proportion in Italy and significantly higher than that in the Netherlands.

This participation rate varies considerably with age. For example, 65% of women in the 20 - 24 category are in paid employment; 35% in the 25 - 29 category; and approximately 20% in the 30 - 64 category. These figures did not show any significant variation between 1961 and 1971. This age distribution pattern is particularly important when one examines the type of work carried out by women in industry.

Women in Industry

Whereas 31% of all industrial employees are women, some sectors have a much higher proportion. For example. 75% of the employees in the clothing and footwear industry are women and they comprise 47% of all employees in the textile industry. In fact, close to half of women employees in industry are in the textiles, clothing and footwear sectors. The next largest employers of women are the food industry- almost 20% -and engineering industry, 14%.

The status of industrial employment has improved considerably in recent years, and it is frequently more attractive in pay and working conditions than employment in other sectors of the economy.

With advances in technology, knowledge and skill requirements for male and female staff in industry are increasing rapidly. At present, the technology used in Irish industry is, at least, equal to that in countries such as Britain and Italy, but still lags behind that of the central areas of the EEC. I would now like to examine some aspects of the type of training and education chosen by girls, and its relevance to employment in industry. Given the ambitious but attainable output and employment targets of the recent White Paper, the demand for higher levels of skill and technology is likely to continue as the gap in productivity levels between Ireland and the central areas of the Community is closed.

Training For Industry

During 1977, the Industrial Training Authority trained 12,000 people in their direct training centres. Approximately 20% of these trainees were women. This was a considerable improvement on the 13% recorded in the previous year. It is interesting that, whereas applications for all courses were open to both sexes, almost half of the women trainees opted for the more traditional skills, such as clerical, and sewing machine operating. Some, however, chose newer technologies such as electrical and mechanical engineering. It is, therefore, probable that women tend to apply for industrial vacancies in those skill categories for which they have received training.

Second Level Education

An examination of courses taken by Leaving Certificate students provides some indication of the ambitions and aptitudes of both boys and girls. I recognise that it also reflects the availability of teachers.

Approximately 44% of girls are still attending school at 17 years of age. The main school subjects of interest to industry are the science group, which includes physics, chemistry, biology and applied mathematics; and the commerce group which includes accounting, business organisation, economics and economic history. In 1977, 8% of girls took science subjects compared with 14% of boys; whereas 12% of girls took commerce subjects compared with 11% of boys.

Since about three quarters of all industrial employees are engaged in production or research, design, and development activities, the demand from industry places a much greater emphasis on science based activities.

Thus, since 44% of girls take the Leaving Cert. and, in turn, only 8% of these do science subjects, this reduces considerably the

potential applicants for those jobs in industry which require secondary education in science.

Women In Management

In 1973, approximately 60% of managers in firms having more than 100 employees had a university degree or professional qualification. This figure compared with less than 40% in 1964. Approximately half of these qualified managers were university graduates. There is a clear tendency for the great majority of new managers to have a third level qualification.

Let us now look at the type of qualifications which managers tend to have. In 1973, 50% of managers, having qualifications were technicians or technologists i.e. with engineering, science or a technical qualification. A further 30% had accounting or business administration type qualifications. Thus, 80% of managers with qualifications were either technical people or accounting/administration types.

I would now like to examine the proportion of girls who qualify from our universities in these disciplines. First of all, the NESC Report No. 25. indicated that approximately 4½% of girls in the 20 to 24 age group participated in third level education compared with 9% of boys. Of 344 women graduates taking up employment in Ireland in 1976, almost two thirds went into health or education. Only 20 i.e. 8% were employed by industry.

On the other hand, out of 1,090 male graduates obtaining employment in Ireland in 1976, only 30% went to health or education and about 20% i.e. 202, took up employment in industry.

Where young graduates went abroad, a similar pattern emerge; in fact, almost 40% of boys took up industrial employment whereas the proportion of girl graduates doing so, dropped to 6%.

The explanation for this disparity lies to some extent, at least, in the type of qualification obtained. For example, 90% of boys entering industry had either technical or accounting/ administration qualifications. A similar proportion of the girls who entered industry had technical, or accounting/administration qualifications.

Further evidence of the importance of a relevant qualification is provided by the results of the scholarship scheme for a B.Sc. in Clothing Technology, sponsored by the Apparel Industries Federation of the CII. Usually 3 of the 6 awards are made to girls who find no difficulty in getting placed in junior management positions in the clothing industry on completeion of their studies.

It seems, therefore, that there is a strong relationship between the type of education received and the number of people who take up work in industry. Thus, almost half the engineers who qualify each year go into industry; and little more than 10% of science, commerce, and business studies graduates. On the other hand, less than 1% of those who take up arts, law, social science or medicine go into industrial employment.

Thus, the situation appears to be that, mainly because of their choice of qualification, less than 2% of girl graduates take up industrial employment compared with 11% of male graduates.

The contribution of the Regional Technical Colleges, the National Institute of Higher Education, and the Vocational Education system to expanding the volume and changing the nature of third level education has already been of major significance to industry. It is expected to be even greater is the future. Unfortunately, I am not aware of any published statistics on the proportion of boys and girls taking particular courses in these third level institutions which currently account for about 8,000 of the total of 35,000 third level students in the country.

However, there is a significant number of lady managing directors of industrial firms particularly in the clothing industry. There is also a large number of highly successful women managers, not only in production but, also, in the design, purchasing and marketing of consumer products. Whereas a formal qualification in a particular discipline is a help, personal characteristics such as leadership qualities, energy and drive can often be even more important.

A further factor must be taken into account when considering the proportion of women engaged in managerial positions in industry. This is the question of age. The average age of an industrial manager is 40, but only 20% of women are in paid employment over the age of 30.

Conclusion

I would now like to draw together some broad conclusions :

1. Although women comprise 27% of the total paid workforce they contribute a higher proportion, 31% of industrial employees.

2. Almost 70% of the women in industry are employed in the textiles, clothing, footwear and food processing sectors which, together, account for only 45% of total industrial employment.

3. Almost two thirds of women employees are less than 30 years of age, and only 20% of women over 30 are in paid employment.

4. The proportion of women participants in AnCO training programmes, designed to teach new skills, has increased from 13% in 1976 to 20% in 1977.

5. Less than 2% of women graduates take up employment in industry compared with 11% of male graduates. This reflects the emphasis in choice of qualification. Most male managers have a third level qualification.

6. Only 8% of girls take science subjects in secondary school compared with 14% of boys. A science training is relevant for the majority of industrial occupations.

7. There is a significant number of lady managing directors, design and marketing managers in consumer goods industries. This number is likely to increase.

Finally, there is a clear trend towards women becoming more involved in industry at supervisory and managerial levels. However, the rate at which this change occurs depends on the proportion of women in paid employment over 30 years of age, and the willingness of women to acquire relevant skills and qualifications. When these factors are combined with the personal qualities of leadership, enthusiasm and drive, I have no doubt that women will contribute much more to the development of industry.

END

file with
Women in Industry speech

CONSTRUCTION — 1976 MANPOWER SURVEY

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL	WOMEN AS % OF TOTAL
MANAGERS	2,600	138	2,738	4.0%
SUPERVISORS	1,859	16	1,875	0.7%
ADMINISTRATION	1,215	435	1,650	16.7%
PROFESSIONAL	404	34	438	1.4%
TECHNICIAN	327	11	338	2.0%
CLERICAL	875	1,586	2,461	60.3%
CRAFT	9,739	154	9,893	1.0%
APPRENTICE	3,150	-	3,150	0%
OTHER	18,443	402	18,845	1.3%
TOTAL:	38,612	2,776	41,389	4.4%

ENGINEERING NON MOTOR

1976 MANPOWER SURVEY

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL	WOMEN AS % OF TOTAL
MANAGERS	2,000	58	2,058	2.7%
SUPERVISORS	1,623	131	1,754	7.4%
ADMINISTRATION	1,016	190	1,206	15.8%
PROFESSIONAL	326	16	342	4.1%
TECHNICIAN	1,506	39	1,545	2.5%
CLERICAL	933	1,929	2,862	64.5%
CRAFT	4,483	93	4,576	1.3%
APPRENTICE	1,539	-	1,539	0%
OTHER	12,951	6,317	19,268	30.2%
TOTAL:	26,377	8,773	35,150	23.2%

ENGINEERING

MOTOR

1976 MANPOWER SURVEY

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL	WOMEN AS % OF TOTAL
MANAGERS	1,932	87	2,020	4.0%
SUPERVISORS	744	26	770	3.3%
ADMINISTRATION	1,032	119	1,151	10.3%
PROFESSIONAL	19	1	20	5.0%
TECHNICIAN	23	2	25	4.0%
CLERICAL	486	1,374	1,860	73.8%
CRAFT	3,880	37	3,917	0.6%
APPRENTICE	2,242	-	2,242	0%
OTHER	3,501	371	3,872	3.3%
TOTAL:	13,860	2,017	15,877	11.1%

PRINTING

1976 MANPOWER SURVEY

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL	WOMEN AS % OF TOTAL
MANAGERS	955	44	999	4.0%
SUPERVISORS	597	127	724	17.5%
ADMINISTRATION	878	556	1,434	38.9%
PROFESSIONAL	715	88	803	8.9%
TECHNICIAN	41	7	48	14.6%
CLERICAL	187	844	1,031	81.9%
CRAFT	3,637	1,411	5,048	26.8%
APPRENTICE	521	-	521	0%
OTHER	2,325	1,364	3,689	34.0%
TOTAL:	9,856	4,441	14,297	30.0%

TEXTILES

1976 MANPOWER SURVEY

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL	WOMEN AS % OF TOTAL
MANAGERS	648	25	673	3.7%
SUPERVISORS	646	37	683	5.4%
ADMINISTRATION	312	182	494	36.8%
PROFESSIONAL	90	18	108	17.0%
TECHNICIAN	136	42	178	23.6%
CLERICAL	136	582	718	81.0%
CRAFT	380	-	380	0%
APPRENTICE	100	1	101	0.9%
OTHER	7,060	3,403	10,463	32.5%
TOTAL:	9,508	4,290	13,798	31.1%

CHEMICALS

1976 MANPOWER SURVEY

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL	WOMEN AS % OF TOTAL
MANAGERS	1,459	45	1,504	3.0%
SUPERVISORS	1,141	112	1,253	8.9%
ADMINISTRATION	923	199	1,122	17.2%
PROFESSIONAL	456	90	546	13.6%
TECHNICIAN	503	154	657	22.0%
CLERICAL	704	1,655	2,359	70.0%
CRAFT	2,032	17	2,049	0.74%
APPRENTICE	747	-	747	0%
OTHER	9,350	4,394	13,744	31.4%
TOTAL:	17,315	6,666	23,981	27.3%

FOOD, DRINK & TOBACCO — 1976 MANPOWER SURVEY

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL	WOMEN AS % OF TOTAL
MANAGERS	3,250	114	3,364	3.0%
SUPERVISORS	2,037	289	2,326	12.0%
ADMINISTRATION	2,801	1,082	3,883	28.0%
PROFESSIONAL	416	60	476	12.0%
TECHNICIAN	510	200	710	28.0%
CLERICAL	1,136	3,887	5,023	77.0%
CRAFT	2,442	14	2,456	0.04%
APPRENTICE	860	-	860	0%
OTHER	27,797	8,740	36,537	24.0%
TOTAL:	41,249	14,386	55,635	26.0%

CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR

1976 MANPOWER SURVEY

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL	WOMEN AS % OF TOTAL
MANAGERS	955	I26	I,08I	II.3%
SUPERVISORS	436	572	I,008	56.2%
ADMINISTRATION	360	I85	545	32.8%
PROFESSIONAL	72	7	79	7.6%
TECHNICIAN	-	-	-	-
CLERICAL	87	960	I,047	91.2%
CRAFT	55	4	59	6.7%
APPRENTICE	I7	57	74	77.0%
OTHER	5,043	I5,9I6	20,959	76.8%
TOTAL	7,025	I7,827	24,852	72.5%