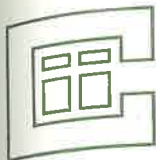


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The Confederation of Irish Industry

PRESS RELEASE

Speech by : Mr Liam Connellan, Director General C.I.I. at Reception in the Player-Wills Conference Centre & Theatre, South Circular Road, on the occasion of the presentation of the awards for the Junior Chamber Dublin Shop Window Competition. on 1 April 1974

I am very pleased, as a representative of Irish manufacturing industry, to be given the privilege of presenting the 1974 Awards for the Junior Chamber Dublin Shop Window Competition sponsored by Player & Wills (Ireland) Ltd.

The home market consumes over half the output of Irish industry. It follows that over 100,000 jobs in Irish factories depend upon the ability of these products to compete with imported products in terms of price, quality, availability and presentation. In our small open economy, with its negligible tariffs against British goods, and its rapidly declining tariffs against goods from all other countries, it is not surprising that competing imported goods now account for a quarter of the range of manufactured products consumed in Ireland, and which could also be produced locally. This is the quid pro quo for tariff free access of Irish goods to foreign markets. It is worth noting that, in general, Ireland is a net exporter of those goods which it has capacity to produce.

Consumer taste has become more varied, and more discerning with increasing affluence. In an open market the consumer tends to buy the best value, irrespective of country of origin. The Confederation of Irish Industry recognises that, given cost competitiveness, the only way in which home market penetration can be increased, or defended, is through effective marketing.

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This implies, first of all, finding out what the consumer wants, then keeping up to date with his or her changing taste, spending money on promotion, getting the price and quality right, having adequate stocks to meet demand, delivering on time, and presenting the goods in an attractive way.

The fact that Irish industry exports almost half its output is clear evidence that it can meet these criteria on international markets. Irish industry has the ability and capacity to hold its share of the home market in free and fair trading conditions.

The distributive industry is the link between the manufacturers and the consumer. All other things being equal, it is clearly in the interests of the distributor, wholesaler or retailer, to foster the sales of home products, since wages earned in the production of goods in Ireland increase the spending power of the people who form his market. Indeed, retailers should take a more positive rôle in stimulating local manufacturers to fill gaps in the market. This is not a plea for protectionism, but rather for sound commercial policy. We all gain if the gross national product can be increased from 4% to 5% by mutual help.

This leads on to standards of presentation of goods. The consumer wants the best in presentation. The value which we in this country place on excellence should be evident in all aspects of trade. It must be seen, not just in the quality and design of goods, but also in how they are presented in our shops. Just as the retailer in a small town has to compete in presentation with larger towns within commuting distance, so also, international competition for shoppers may become a reality. There is a risk that, not alone the visitors to this country, but even the Irish themselves, may find it more attractive to arrange shopping expeditions abroad. There is no reason why the reverse should not be true. There is a real challenge to create a reputation for the quality of presentation in Irish shops which will, not only attract foreign visitors, thereby contributing to exports and tourism, but will also improve the appreciation of us all for the highest standards of quality.

I now have very great pleasure in presenting the 1974 Junior Chamber Shop Window display prizes to those firms which achieved the highest standards in presentation of manufactured goods, reflecting our way of living, during St Patrick's week this year.

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