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Confederation of Irish Industry

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PRESS RELEASE

Speech by Liam Connellan, Director General, Confederation of Irish Industry, at meeting of Limerick Chamber of Industry, at University Club, Plassey Technological Park, on Thursday, December 4th, 1986, at 8.00p.m.

BUY IRISH THIS CHRISTMAS TO CREATE JOBS

- A £10 weekly switch to Irish made products would create 13,000 jobs.
- Working together we can reduce unemployment.
- Not advocating protectionism but self-help at a time of a national employment crisis.
- Manufacturers, consumers, and retailers must cooperate for the common good.

During the Christmas shopping period everyone can play a part in creating jobs in Ireland. The need for doing so has never been greater. There are more than 230,000 people unemployed and the number of people seeking work is continuing to grow rapidly. Because of unemployment, one-sixth of our people will be confronted with very difficult conditions this Christmas.

BUY IRISH

It is time for a strong effort of national solidarity which can help to set the country on the road

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to recovery. We can all help one another in this exceptionally difficult period by giving a high priority to buying and selling Irish made products.

I would ask every consumer to make sure that they are at least given the choice of Irish made products in the shops this Christmas and in the post-Christmas sales.

Each week the average Irish household spends over £120 on consumer goods of which about £50 is spent on imported consumer products. Imports account for almost 40% of spending on consumer goods. If every household switched £10 of its weekly spending on imported products to buying Irish products this action alone would result in additional sales of about £500 million per annum and the creation of 13,000 additional jobs in the economy.

The impact of this action would reverse the trend of rising unemployment. It would also save Government some £50 million in a year because of higher tax revenue and lower unemployment payments.

The switching of £10 a week from imports to Irish made products should not be an impossible task. It means an increase in the share of the home market taken by Irish made products from about 62% to 69%.

The recent NESC report showed the products in which import penetration is greatest. For example we import 70% of the textiles, clothing and footwear products consumed in Ireland. We import 50% of the furniture products consumed. We import almost one-quarter of food consumption. The majority of these goods are already produced competitively in Ireland.

I am not advocating protectionism. But I am recommending self-help at a time of very serious difficulty. Every fourth household is directly affected by unemployment. Exceptional efforts must be made by all of us who can stimulate demand for local products to do so. As consumers we can all help by buying Irish to create jobs.

I would also urge retailers to ensure that Irish products are given prominence on their shelves, and to "sell Irish". The creation of demand for local products must be a co-operative effort between consumers, manufacturers and retailers. We must have the confidence and willingness to work together for the common good. The purchase of high quality Irish goods is one very practical way in which we can show commitment to the development of our country.

Ireland is an open trading economy and it must remain so. This year Irish industry will export two-thirds of its output, valued at almost £10,000m, and most of these exports are sold to high income economies where competition is intense and quality standards are high. It should not be impossible to increase sales by £500m. on our home market. Irish industry is successful in selling Irish-produced products in the most competitive and sophisticated markets in the world. Let us recognise this fact by supporting our own products at home.

Irish products are now more competitively priced than they have been for many years. Continued vigorous efforts must be made to improve the marketing of Irish products on the home market. Marketing begins and ends with the consumer. It is up to all of us as consumers to ask for Irish-made products and to recognise fully the role we can play in providing jobs for the thousands who are out of work. I would, therefore, strongly urge every consumer to adopt a policy of enlightened self-interest and to Buy Irish this Christmas.

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