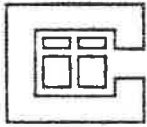


28 Fitzwilliam Place
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 780366
Telegrams
Confincus Dublin
Telex 4711



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The Confederation of Irish Industry

Speech at Conferring of National Certificates and Diplomas,
Carlow Regional Technical College by Mr Liam Connellan,
Director General, Confederation of Irish Industry, on
10 November 1975, at 7.30 p.m.

The Regional Technical Colleges fill a vital gap in the education and training of future industrial employees in all the main regions of the country. Until recently, there was little formal opportunity for third level education and training in technological subjects outside the Dublin area and the Universities. Since the basic educational infrastructure was missing, many people employed in industry had to rely on experience in order to develop the knowledge and skill adequate to do the job.

This can be a long and costly process. Formal education and training programmes can reduce the cost to the community and industry by providing people who have already attained a defined level of proficiency in their chosen field of technology or business studies. The students who have been conferred this evening are, at once, privileged in being given the opportunity of a good start to their working life, and, at the same time, are themselves a valuable potential resource for industry.

Working in industry requires, not only technical knowledge, but also, those personal characteristics which can ensure that this knowledge is applied to best effect. It demands characteristics such as commitment, humanity, patience, loyalty, humility, perseverance, the ability to communicate, and a sense of service to others.

Manufacturing industry is the main dynamic force within the economy. It has the task of providing the 30,000 odd net new jobs which are required annually. It is operating in a free trade zone of 55 million people which will become 250 million within 20 months. It can only expand and develop if it is internationally competitive. During recent years, our cost per unit of output has been rising faster than our competitors. In the short term these can be influenced by reducing the rate of increase of wage and salary costs. In the medium term, they can be reduced by better applications of technology, by new methods, and by developing new processes and products. The employment of young technicians, technologists, and holders of qualifications in business studies should assist in the improvement of efficiency in the business functions where they operate.

The work of Carlow Regional Technical College is of considerable importance to industry, not just in the Carlow region, but also, nationally. The availability of 80 Diplomas and National Certificate holders, this year in fields as diverse as science, applied chemistry, construction engineering, mechanical engineering, electronic engineering, and business studies is a major asset.

I would say to the new graduates, don't expect too much from your work in the beginning. You must learn to adapt. In joining an organisation you become part of a living unit which has its own customs, people and means of communication. Be prepared to learn and be glad to contribute. Never be satisfied with anything but the best in your own performance. This way, you will earn respect and ensure a career which will make a contribution. Finally, at the beginning of your career concentrate on getting the right type of job, rather than the one which pays best.

Despite the current high level of unemployment, there are still almost 200,000 people employed in industry. There are still employment opportunities due to normal retirement, through the decline of old firms and the rise of new firms. Some industrial sectors are expected to expand more rapidly than others over the next few years. These include food

processing, synthetic textiles, plastics, chemicals, engineering, mining. and hopefully, oil and gas exploration and production. Whilst the greatest number of opportunities are still associated with the more technical functions of production, there has been a rapid growth in recent years in opportunities in marketing and personnel. The people who have been conferred this evening are more fortunate than many looking for work at present, because their skills will usually be in short supply.

Although employment in manufacturing has declined by 20,000 people over the last 15 months, I am confident that a new spirit will prevail which will encourage the development of the 30,000 net new manufacturing jobs per annum. This is the number of jobs required to meet the needs of a labour force which is expected to grow by a quarter over the next decade.