

SYMPOSIUM ON INDUSTRIAL POLICY IN IRELAND

OPENING ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT

R. O'CONNOR

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Since its formation in 1847 the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society has always provided a forum for discussion of the more important economic and social policy issues facing the country. Throughout its long history, the Society has always sought papers on the more topical issues and this procedure has continued to the present time. Indeed, governments now expect that green and white papers, as well as important reports, will be discussed by the Statistical Society, so that in formulating policy they will have before them informed opinions on the issues involved and on the problems which certain proposals may bring about.

Over the years the Society has always been very interested in the question of employment and industrial development and we return to this topic again to-night in order to tease out some of the issues raised in the recent NESC report on industrial policy, more commonly referred to as the "Telesis Report". This report which questions certain existing industrial strategies and makes suggestions regarding new options, has received very wide coverage in the media and considerable pressure is being exerted in some quarters to have its recommendations implemented immediately by Government. As some of these recommendations are, to say the least, controversial, the Council of the Society feels that the report should be examined in depth by competent people so that when new policy is being formulated, the Government and its advisors will have before them the *pros* and *cons* of the various recommendations. If we are to throw aside some existing strategy, let us examine what we are putting in its place.

In accordance with usual practice for symposia of this nature, we commence with three short papers of about 20 minutes' duration each, given by three experts in the field of industrial development. The three speakers who are well known to you all are:

Professor Kieran Kennedy, Director of ESRI
Dr. Frances Ruane, Lecturer in Economics in TCD, and
Mr. Padraic White, Managing Director of the IDA.

At the end of the formal presentation, the debate will be thrown open to the house and anyone who has a point to make is welcome to do so. Remember that many of the most influential people involved in formulating future industrial development policy are present in the audience and this is your chance to influence them if you feel like doing so. I would, however, request speakers to be as brief as possible. I must give time to the three main speakers to reply to the points raised in the debate.