



TOGETHER
for a sustainable future

OCCASION

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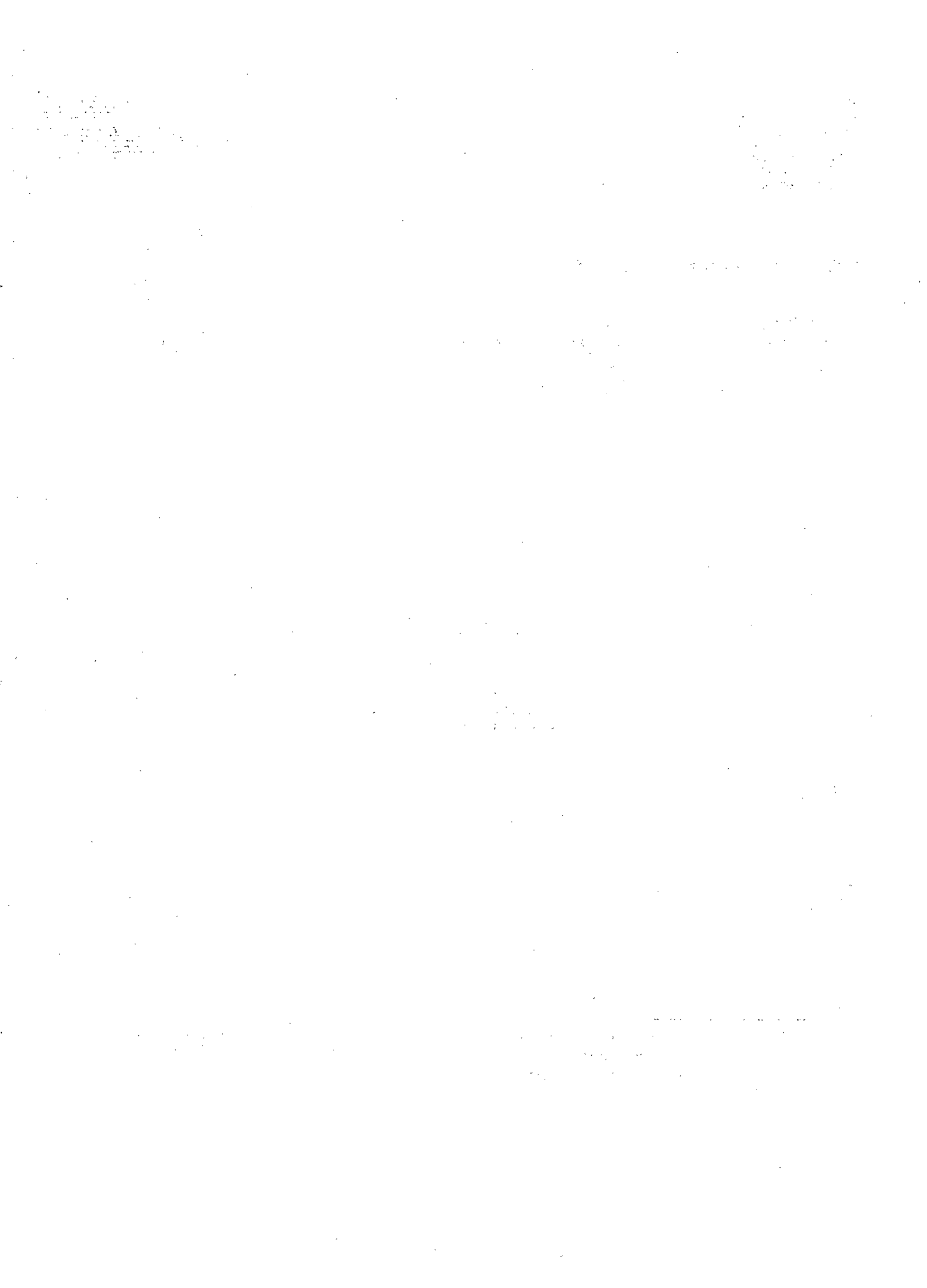
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Speech of Mr. Des. O'Malley T.D., Minister for Justice

It gives me great pleasure to officiate at the opening of the Training Workshop in Industrial Free Zones. I should like to begin by wishing our visitors from abroad a "Cead Mile Failte" which is the traditional Irish greeting meaning "A Hundred Thousand Welcomes".

The basic idea of this Workshop is to reveal to the participants what might be called the anatomy of a successful industrial free zone. Many developing countries have indicated their considerable interest in establishing such a zone to intensify expansion of their manufactured exports. We in Ireland are making rapid strides in the process of new industrial development and we are at the same time preparing for the full challenge of free trade which we must face as members of the European Economic Community. For several years past our manufactured goods have accounted for a growing proportion of total exports, and when we enter the EEC we expect to avail of the greatly increased market to develop our export potential still further. Shannon Free Airport has played and will continue to play a key role in growth of industrial export which is so vital to the national economy.

The world's first Customs Free Airport has evolved here in Shannon from a rather humble origin in 1947 to the thriving industrial complex and cross-roads of global air traffic we see today. Although the Airport was already some years in operation at that time it was the advent of the Customs Free Zone which provided the impetus which has since raised it to one of the finest and best equipped international air terminals. The introduction of the Customs Free Airport Act led to complete exemption from custom restrictions for all passengers and goods as long as they remain within the free airport area. It was also to provide an outstanding bonus in the shape of the airport duty free shop - the first in the world - which has become an internationally renowned magnet for the air traveller and has proved an invaluable dollar earner for this country.

A decade later the revolutionary development in jet transport posed a problem for Shannon in that direct long range services could operate non-stop between North America and Continental Europe. The Government responded to this challenge by embarking on a programme designed to develop the commercial potential of Shannon to ensure its expansion both as a major airport and as a source of industrial employment. Hence the formation in 1959 of the Government sponsored Shannon Free Airport Development Company, one of whose earliest activities was the construction of the Industrial Estate.

The success story of the Shannon Industrial Estate has not been without its difficulties. The initial growth of business activities was slow but received a welcome boost through gradual streamlining of procedures. The foundation for successful expansion was also firmly laid by the many valuable State incentives designed to attract external industrialists to establish projects in the Country.

The most important of these are freedom from taxes on profit exports, provision of advance factory bays, available for purchase or leasing, and generous cash grants towards cost of construction, plant, machinery and training. The promotion of tourist traffic through Shannon was a further contributing factor towards the realisation of the full potential of the area.

This workshop will, therefore, operate in an environment which has all the ingredients for success and which should prove an inspiration to the participants. Shannon today is not only a thriving industrial estate with a work force in excess of 4,000 engaged in almost 50 companies but is also a flourishing community in its own right, a progressive residential town rapidly becoming self sufficient in housing, social and cultural amenities. May I express the hope that this will inspire all taking part in this training workshop to achieve similar success when they return to their own countries.