



Can we achieve

FULL

EMPLOYMENT?

an address delivered to the
U.C.C. Branch of the Labour Party
Wednesday, 19th January, 1977

By Brendan Halligan

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Introduction

I wish to congratulate all those responsible for the re-establishment of the Labour Party branch in U.C.C. after a lapse of nearly seven years. I was indirectly involved in the dissolution of the old branch, which occurred during a period of intense debate about the nature and the future of the Labour Party in Ireland, as I was then Labour's General Secretary. I deeply regretted the decision of the members to disband in protest against a Party decision, because a political party without the support of the young is a party without a foundation or a future.

That action received a lot of publicity at the time, much of it intended to embarrass and discourage the Labour Party, but it would be futile to anticipate a compensating deluge of favourable comment now that some students here in U.C.C. have decided to reform the branch and re-activate Labour Party activity in College.

However, for my part, I welcome your decision as a very significant political development because it again confirms that the power of the Labour Party to attract the young and the idealistic has not waned or diminished, even in a time of international economic recession

I believe you have made a far-sighted decision to recommence the work of the Labour Party here in U.C.C. and I commend you for it. You can be assured that the new branch will have every help and assistance from the Party.

I wish to thank you for your invitation to speak at this first public meeting organised by the new branch which I had no hesitation in accepting, not only because of the importance of the occasion but also because of the nature of the topic you suggested for discussion.

Background

I have put the title to tonight's meeting on employment in the form of a question, "Can We Achieve Full Employment?" because I am not sure that we can achieve it and I am not certain that some people want it. I am not sure we can achieve full employment in the future because we have never achieved it in the past. There has never been any real, serious, determined attempt to mobilise the resources of our economy to provide employment for those who wished to stay and work in Ireland.

Throughout this century the Irish economy has been unique in its failure to find jobs for the natural increase in the population and for those leaving agriculture to take up work in industry or in services.

Despite terrifying wars involving mass destruction and despite a profound economic crisis in the thirties, other European countries have been able to provide employment and to avoid emigration on the grand scale, but the Irish economy has not.

The extent, duration and intensity of the Irish economic failure is without precedent or parallel. I do not claim to have either an explanation for the past or a solution for the future, but I believe with unshakeable conviction that if we refuse to acknowledge the very existence of this past failure, which still persists into the present, there can be no hope of a future solution.

It is axiomatic that one cannot get the correct answers until one starts asking the right questions. In politics and economics, no less than in the physical sciences, one of the ten the most difficult things to do is to pose the proper questions. In matters of employment policy we have not, until very recently, begun to ask any questions at all.

If we persist in deluding ourselves that the Irish economy is normal by the standards

of our European neighbours and that its present difficulties are merely temporary – caused by a world depression or Government mismanagement, depending on one's political viewpoint – then we shall ask the wrong questions in trying to discover what Mr George Colley recently described as the "Road to Recovery".

Recovery implies a pre-existing state of health to which the patient is returning. But if the patient has never been healthy, then the concept of "recovery" becomes meaningless in terms of economics, although it may have great utility in the game of party politics.

However, this call for recovery is more than meaningless, it is positively dangerous.

It demonstrates either a total incapacity to grasp the extent of past failures and the magnitude of future demands or else it indicates a cavalier disregard for the truth, which can only be excused on the grounds that this is election year, but which will prevent us from formulating new and fundamental policies on the grounds that they are not and never were necessary.

I believe that prescriptions for recovery, coming from either the Opposition or McKinsey or the C.I.I. are more indicative of an inability to face reality than the fallibility of party politicians tempted by a good debating point or private interests tempted by profit.

I believe this because all elements in Irish society, including the Labour Movement, have predicated their policy positions for the last half-century on the supposed normality of the Irish economy.

Normality?

In this century, we accepted as normal a rate of unemployment which at the best of times lay between five to seven per cent, but which today is regarded in other countries as catastrophically high.

For us the abnormal was normal. We tolerated it. We connived at it. We all conspired at its continuation.

In the 1960s, for example, when the world economy was experiencing an unexpected and unprecedented boom, our GNP grew by 50% but the total at work remained unchanged and static, or to be more precise, total employment grew at the breathtaking rate of 250 jobs per year.

At the same time, 135,000 people were forced to emigrate, which was equivalent to about 8 per cent of the labour force.

I do not recall, with the single exception of the Policy Documents of the Labour Party prepared between 1967 and 1969, any political demand for full employment policies during that period. The N.I.E.C. proposals for Full Employment, published in the mid-sixties, fell on deaf or indifferent ears.

Missed Opportunity

During the sixties world conditions were more favourable for development than ever before. At that time we had what was probably an unrepeatable opportunity to embark upon a national programme for full employment. However, due to a supine and spineless leadership which permitted economic growth to be converted into personal consumption rather than into investment and employment, we squandered that chance.

If calls for "recovery" mean a return to the sixties, then I believe they should find no echo within the Labour Movement or from anybody genuinely interested in the welfare of this nation. More particularly, they should not resonate with the young people of this country who were so expendable in the past, but, apparently, now have a previously unrecognisable value. Perhaps it is their vote.

Before we go any further towards answering the question "Can We Achieve Full

Employment?" it is necessary to put our national economic performance over the last quarter century into perspective. The current issue of the Economic Journal reprints the widely admired Presidential address of Professor Kaldor on World Inflation and Unemployment, delivered to the Royal Economic Society last July.

He began his analysis by pointing out that the quarter of a century preceding the oil crisis was one of continuous growth, save for the Korean War Period. It was a period of unprecedented world prosperity reflected in the increase in world trade and growth in national incomes. There has never been anything like it before this century and it is more than unlikely that there will be again.

A study of international economic statistics confirms that this was the case, but it was more than a time of growth in output and trade. It was also a time of growth in the various national labour forces. The "Year Book of Labour Statistics" published by the I.L.P. for 1954 and 1974 show that for the smaller EEC economies during the period between 1950 and the early 1970s, the economically active population grew as follows:

Smaller EEC countries:

Belgium from	3.5 to 4.0 million (m)
Netherlands	from 3.9 to 4.8 m
Denmark	from 2.0 to 2.4

Non-EEC smaller countries:

Finland from	2.0 to 2.1 m
Norway from	1.2 to 1.5 m
Sweden from	3.1 to 3.4 m
Switzerland from	2.2 to 3.0 m

The larger EEC countries:

France from	19.0 to 22.0 m
Germany	from 22.0 to 27.0 m
The U.K. from	23.0 to 26.0 m

The latest applicant for EEC membership:

Greece from	3.0 to 3.3 m
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These same statistics show the economically active population for Ireland not as increasing, not even as standing still, but as falling off from 1.27 million in 1950 to 1.12 million in 1977. And, remember, this was during a period when the world economy was booming and when Fianna Fáil was in power.

It is worth noting, too that over the period of a half a century, the same trait is obvious. The 1926 Census put the number at work in this country at one and a quarter million. Fifty years later the figure is approximately one million and fifty thousand, which is two hundred thousand less.

The Irish economy has been characterised by a system of more or less static equilibrium in which the total working population declined slowly until it became almost stationary. During the sixties, for example, the number engaged in agriculture fell, those employed in industry and services increased, but only just sufficiently to offset the fall in agricultural population. During all the previous periods, the unwanted population balance was exported through the process of emigration.

Thus, today, there are over one million native born Irish living in the U.K., in addition to all those living elsewhere in the world. Emigration has always been the key variable in Irish economic policy - until now.

But before we deal with the current frightening changes in our population structure, it is necessary to deal with what Professor Busted of this University once described, in another context, as "pompous soporific nonsense".

The soporific consists of the delusion that during the sixties we had progressively conquered the heavy emigration of the fifties and the stagnation of the forties and, for the first time, had taken the high road for full employment. Certainly the sixties can be presented as a period

of even spectacular success, if one is sufficiently selective with the economic series to be quoted.

Business interests see themselves as being under siege by a hostile Government and an ungrateful society. They portray themselves as being capable of providing growth and employment (they delicately obscure any sight of increasing profits in this desirable scenario) if only they were let get on with the job by an obstructionist Government and an obscurantist public.

McKinsey paints their plight thus: "The lack of incentive for Irish enterprise has been an important factor in deterring the growth of existing companies and the formation of new ones. Under the impact of eroding profitability, high taxation and the general discouragement of "entrepreneurship" by society, many businesses feel that the effort required to grow is no longer worthwhile".

"Worthwhile" is a synonym for "profitable" and what we are really being told here is that many Irish businesses are now on a work-to-rule or a go-slow until such time as they get more money and have their grievances redressed, precisely the sort of action they are so quick to condemn when it is practised by trade-unionists.

The list of sub-headings in Chapter Two sets out all the reasons why "the effort required to grow is no longer worthwhile":

- Declining Cost Competitiveness
- Escalating Wage Rates
- Slower Productivity Growth
- Inadequate Investment
- Declining Profitability
- Increasing Current
- Government Expenditure
- Lack of Incentive
- Defensive Postures in the Business
- Community
- Short Term Focus of the Unions
- Lack of Economic Leadership
- from Government

The sting, as ever, is in the tail. This litany of woes accurately summarises business's attitude to what the Governor of the Bank of Ireland, Mr W.D. Finlay describes in the introduction to McKinsey with little elegance and less accuracy as "the growingly serious economic situation".

Yet three paragraphs after we have been told "the effort required to grow is no longer worthwhile". McKinsey admits that for the last fifteen years (which brings us back to the very beginning of the sixties) it is foreign companies which have played a critical role in national development (paragraph 2.30). The criticism of indigenous private enterprise is an accurate one because the failure of Irish private enterprise is the root cause of the Irish economy's failure to provide full employment, not the "growingly serious economic situation". The deficiencies have indeed been there for fifteen years, and longer, and are not due to short-term mismanagement of the economy.

Myth and propaganda

But business consoles itself with the myth that during the sixties and early seventies the effort required to grow was worthwhile, that it grew in consequence and that this growth was only stopped by a "growingly serious economic situation" for which a weak Government, rapacious unions and a hostile society are responsible.

However, the outburst of honesty in paragraph 2.30 indicates that the serious economic situation has been "growingly" for fifteen years, in other words, right throughout the sunny sixties, when everything was supposed to be booming. The causes of the problem cannot be both short term and long term simultaneously and it is this logical inconsistency that reduces much of McKinsey's proposals to absurdity.

Until business divests itself of this self-pitying attitude, recognises the dimensions and existence of past failures and accepts the

depth and seriousness of the current world crisis (which has simultaneously plunged all economies into a major recession and which is a problem superadded to our long-term difficulties), then there will be no prospect of generating real growth.

It is difficult to forecast whether or not Irish managers will adopt new attitudes towards investment, expansion and growth, but my guess is they will not. I wish they would.

On the other hand, there are those who do nothing to encourage business interests to accept the past reality of national failure or the current actuality of a world recession. In fact, this group reinforces business in its mistaken belief that our economic difficulties are essentially short term and almost totally domestic in origin.

In opening for the Opposition in the Dáil economic debate last November, the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Lynch, achieved almost the impossible by referring only once, and then fleetingly, to the international recession as an influence on the Irish economy.

"I will not suggest nor have I ever suggested that all our economic ills are of the Coalition's making and I will not suggest that there has not been an economic recession which had its effect throughout the world".

(Dail Debates, 2nd November, 806-807)

Having not suggested that there had not been a world economic recession, Mr Lynch then proceeded to deal exclusively with the current situation in terms which completely ignored the world recession and which looked back nostalgically to the golden era when he was, first, Minister for Finance and, then, Taoiseach.

His speech could have been a straight lift out of McKinsey. It was the same in tone and temper and nowhere recognised or acknowledged that the problems of the Irish economy are anterior to the current recession. There was no hint of

any awareness that our problems went beyond solutions consisting solely of tax cuts and public works.

If our problems were that easy to solve there would have been full employment long ago, not least during the time when Mr. Lynch was in charge of Finance and then of the Government and pursued the very policies which he is now propagating.

Mr Lemass had campaigned in the 1957 General Election on the slogan "One Hundred Thousand New Jobs". That promise was never fulfilled throughout a period when external economic factors could have helped us to create a successful development programme. Instead, the three former Ministers for Finance who now grace the Opposition front bench each in turn, during the sixties, presided over an actual drop in the total numbers at work in the economy.

It says much for the power of myth and propaganda that this reference is more likely to be regarded as unnecessary personal slight against these individuals rather than an accurate observation on what actually happened. It happened all right – but as far as the opposition is concerned, it handed over in 1973 an economy comparable to any in Europe. In fact, in the same speech, Mr Lynch asserted that the Irish economy was then in better shape than most of its neighbours.

I have no doubt he, at least, really believes that to be the case. So there is no likelihood of his party even admitting the possibility of fundamental new policy departures being necessary if we are to get full employment. Campaigning on the basis of supposed past successes they will advocate a return to their policies as the means for generating recovery.

Their approach harmonises with and fuses into that of McKinsey and it is the conjunction of these attitudes which raises a new barrier to the emergence of a national consensus upon which a development strategy could be built.

The business attitude as expressed in McKinsey's go-slow and work-to-rule sees itself as being legitimised within the political process and there will be increasing exasperation within business circles with criticism of past and present employment policies.

Worse, the mental blockage which prevents the great majority in all sectors from seeing the Irish economy as it really was, and is, will be buttressed rather than weakened by this conjunction of business and political interests.

This mental blockage is, in my view, the most serious barrier to devising successful employment policies. If business and political forces reinforce and encourage each other into believing that a series of short-term and essentially superficial policy changes is all that is required then the prospects for full employment will be seriously damaged and may be definitely postponed.

Economists have too often ignored the importance of psychological and sociological factors in the process of economic growth. No input-output model is sufficient in itself to explain growth and not even the most elaborate analysis of comparative advantages can explain why one economy grows faster than another. Economic growth is a function of social change, although it also induces it.

Social change precedes economic growth and the real motor power in an economy is its people, their skills, their attitudes, their approach, their evolution. Yet the study of social change does not normally come within the ambit of economics. I believe this to be a grievous discrepancy particularly when the advice of economists is so readily heeded by Governments.

It is my contention that the pre-requisite for growth in employment in this country is an open admission that so far we have failed on a massive scale and that no conceivable combination of past policies will succeed in the future any more than they did in the past.

Without this change in attitude there will be no willingness to make the sacrifices which are unavoidable if we want growth, no release of the imagination to devise new policies and no sense of urgency to push these new policies through all obstacles with vigour and confidence.

For that reason, I believe, we should be merciless in exposing the extent of past failures. We should be relentless in putting a mirror in front of Irish society and in saying, "look, this is how you really are".

It was for that reason I put the title to this paper in the form of a question, "Can We Achieve Full Employment?" The answer is rather like the formula for stopping smoking. You can - if you want to. But you must first want to, otherwise you are only fooling.

I do not believe that as yet we really want to achieve full employment, because more people do not consciously entertain it as an over-riding national priority and many who think it should be, shy away from its implications, especially in relation to personal consumption.

Social Change in Ireland

But there is another development that may change old attitudes and provide us with the psychological preconditions for growth. There is social change taking place in Ireland which might help us to break out of the old moulds. Some of it is evident in the vital statistics, such as the age at which people get married, the marriage rate and the fertility rate.

Then there are unquantifiable changes that are no less real or recognisable, such as the new attitude to authority and the new role of women in society.

But the change which hopefully will alter Irish society more than any other is the ending of emigration and the growth of our population. During the five years 1971-76, there was an estimated inflow of population amounting to

12,000, whereas in 1966-1971 emigration came to 54,000 and in previous five years reached 81,000.

The increase in the national population over the last five years exceeded the total increase for the previous ten years. It is now clear that for the first time since the Famine we have become demographically normal. (Tables 2 and 3, Economic and Social Development 1976-1980).

The full extent of these population changes were supplied in a study by Dr Brendan Walsh of the E.S.R.I. entitled "Population and Employment Projections: 1971 - 1986" and published two years ago by the National Economic and Social Council. The central conclusions of his paper are now widely known and accepted. They indicate that we are in the middle of a population explosion, especially in terms of growth in the labour force. Put crudely, Dr Walsh estimates that the industrial and service labour force will increase by approximately 300,000 between 1971 and 1986.

This means we will require about 25,000 new jobs each year over a period of fifteen years if we are to absorb the expansion in our population and the drift from the land.

The Government has accepted the general validity of Dr Walsh's projections and their order of magnitude is not in dispute. Closing last year's budget speech, the Minister for Finance forecast that by 1980 the national population will have risen to 3.3 million with a workforce of 1.18 million. He foresaw the need to create 155,000 new jobs in the manufacturing industry between 1976 and 1980, an annual average of 31,000 new jobs. This he described as a massive challenge.

It is more than a challenge. It is a task self-evidently beyond the capacity of existing policies - even in the most favourable economic conditions. In 1973, the true miracle year for the Irish economy when manufacturing output went up by 8.5 per cent, manufacturing employment rose by just under 8,000.

We cannot in all logic expect to generate 31,000 new jobs each year when our best year ever we only managed 8,000. If we want full employment we cannot depend on old attitudes or on old policies centred on the I.D.A. and based on private enterprise.

The demand for jobs is going to exert relentless pressure on the Irish economy. In the absence of emigration we can no longer escape the consequences of population increases – and we now have the fastest growing population in the E.E.C.

For us to grow by conventional policies over the medium term at the European average will not suffice if we wish to provide an exploding population with work or, even putting the motivation at its lowest moral level, if we wish to avoid social chaos and disorder. The Irish economy will have to grow at rates never previously experienced and will have to sustain them for a prolonged period.

The pressure created by an increasing population could be the forging house for social change. We have never had to operate in the past under the impetus of a rising population, but even now as emigration is choked off and the population grows, one can begin to detect an incipient uneasiness about future employment prospects if we continue as before.

Those who want change and who see the necessity for new departures should capitalise on that uneasiness.

Accordingly, in addition to exposing the true dimensions of past failures we should also be preparing the outlines of plans for full employment. We should do this with total honesty, with no attempt to minimise the difficulties or to exaggerate the possibilities of success for a particular policy. The situation is too serious.

We should begin by stating there is no single panacea which will provide salvation. On the contrary, we will need a comprehensive package

of inter-related policies which should include the following elements:

Economic Planning:

I put this as the first prerequisite of a successful employment policy because we must clearly state our objectives, identify our strengths and weaknesses and quantify future employment requirements as well as the other economics variables. We must supplant the market mechanism for allocating resources by a system of conscious decision-making governing investment.

People do not go into business to provide jobs. They do it to make money and jobs are seldom if ever a primary consideration in their decisions. Faced with employment demands of unprecedented dimensions we cannot rely on unplanned random responses to profitable opportunities in which employment is only a by-product. We must manage the volume, the geography and the sectoral distribution of investment so that we proceed towards and eventually reach investment levels consonant with full employment.

I am not suggesting the dismemberment of the Private Enterprise System. This is, and is likely to remain into the foreseeable future, a mixed economy. I might wish it otherwise but as a democrat I must accept political reality. But I am suggesting a new environment in which Private Enterprise operates – the insertion of employment into criteria for allocating resources.

And I am also suggesting that we need to know the difference between the supply and the demand for employment so that we can take whatever remedial action is open to us in order to reduce unemployment to the minimum. This description of the system is necessarily compressed but obviously it puts the State at the centre of the economic process as manager, innovator and partner.

The system would depend on the establishment of a National Planning Commission, analogous to the *Commissariat du Plan* in France. Those who understand the workings of the French Planning Commission know that it is small and independent of existing Government bureaucracy. It is not a new bureaucracy. Neither is it part of the existing bureaucracy.

David Liggins, in his study of the French Planning system demonstrates the need for the Planning Commission's independence from the great Departments of the Public Service if it is to function effectively.

If the Prince of Wales could say in 1895 that "We are all Socialists now", it could equally be said that "We are all Planners now". But I do not mean planning as simply a means for Government to assist in the maximisation of profit. I mean it as a new tool in a democratic state - designed for the purpose of putting people to work.

National Economic Agreement:

During the seventies we have managed growth in incomes through a series of centrally negotiated pay agreements. If one believes in planning, one must also accept that incomes should be planned and incorporated within the planning mechanism and that they should also be related to other variables such as investment, profits, employment, prices, taxation and the level of social expenditure.

It is now clear that the Employer Labour Conference concept is redundant and that a structure intended to deal only with pay cannot adequately cope with even the full range of short-term management problems. It was established in a different economic climate and intended for different purposes.

I have proposed that the State should be explicitly brought into the Annual process of pay negotiation so that income increases can

be determined, not in isolation, but in relation to employment, investment, taxation and social expenditure. All these items should be negotiated by the State, Unions and Employers as part of a short-term economic plan which would comprise the first year of each long term plan on a "rolling" basis.

The budget would be framed as a consequence of each National Economic Agreement, not before it and not virtually in a vacuum as at present. The current minuet between the Employer Labour Conference and the Tripartite Talks is not the most efficient way of determining short-term policies. Neither is it edifying. It is time it was ended and replaced by a National Economic Conference. Such a body would be charged with producing a National Economic Agreement each year within the context of a long-term plan covering pay, other income, investment, employment, taxation, prices, and social expenditure.

If we want to plan for the long term we must begin by planning the short run and doing it properly.

An Independent Currency:

Within the context of proper planning, but only with the context, I advocate the separation of the Irish pound from the pound sterling. I do so because I regard it as firmly established in economic theory that a small open economy with a fixed exchange rate automatically imports the long run rate of inflation of its dominant trading partner. I further believe the British rate of inflation is going to remain high, much higher than the E.E.C. average, and that notwithstanding the apparent resolution of the problem of the sterling balances, the pound will continue to depreciate because of this inflation differential.

If we want to lower the rate of inflation we have to move away from a high inflation regime and opt for a regime with a low rate of inflation

either by linking to the European snake or more preferably to a basket of currencies on a trade-weighted basis.

The theory behind this proposition was well set out in O'Rahilly's "Money" published by this University in 1941, but disregarded and finally forgotten. It was resurrected in Moore McDowell's article in "Studies" of Spring 1975 entitled "Ireland - the Causes of Inflation in a small open Economy" and finally endorsed by the Seminar in that year organised by the I.C.E.M. on Monetary Alignments.

It is now fully accepted in theory by the Central Bank and the Department of Finance and even by Mr Colley.

However, accepting it in theory is one thing. Doing it is another. All these eminent authorities share one characteristic in common: they want to break the link with Sterling, but they do not want to do it now, reminding us of St. Augustine's prayer, "Lord make me pure, but not now".

I first suggested a new currency policy when the pound stood at over two dollars. I said then we could not control inflation by domestic policies and in fact that we have no independent price level.

Between February 1973 and August 1976, Irish prices had risen by 76%. During the same period, U.K. prices rose by 78.5%, a correlation that cannot be contested.

However, a decision to cut off from the sterling connection would not mean a painless, costless transition from an inflation regime of between 15-20% to one between 5%-10%. Nobody who believes in the necessity of a new exchange relationship has ever suggested the like.

The transition would be a most delicate and dangerous period requiring great discipline and control. That is why I suggest it only within the context of a National plan resting on a short-

term economic agreement and supported by an overwhelming consensus in favour of full employment.

Yet without this change we will not move towards full employment within the immediate future because high inflation rates will continue to destroy the economy and weaken social cohesion. We do not really have any option here if we want growth and development. Either we end the sterling link or it will help to end us.

Increased Investment and Savings:

In a command economy one can get growth by centrally determining the rate of investment and leaving personal consumption as a residual. But in a democratic State the reverse happens.

Society determines the rate of personal consumption and leaves investment as the residual. The question is are we prepared to forego future increases in consumption so that we can find the investment necessary for employment?

To meet the job targets indicated by the E.S.R.I. will require an annual investment of over eight hundred million pounds, which is more than twice our current investment levels.

We will need a revolutionary change in attitude to arrive at savings of this magnitude with fundamental implications for taxation policy and budgetary policy. As yet there are no indications we consider the effort to save to be worthwhile.

Other elements:

As part of a process of social change facilitating economic development and ensuring a higher level of savings, we need a completely new system of ownership.

There is no point in asking workers for income restraint when there is no guarantee such restraint will be translated into investment and therefore into jobs. We need a mechanism

such as that outlined by our Party Leader, Brendan Corish, in his address to last year's Annual Conference.

We also need the complete reform of the Public Service, in many ways the *sine qua non* for growth, and a massive expansion in the State Sector.

I have previously proposed the establishment of a State Development Corporation similar to Sweden's *Statsfortag* and the release of state activity from the Cinderella area of the economy to which it has been confined in the interests of Private Enterprise.

Finally we require new policies on Labour Market mobility and training on Marketing and Research and Development, the latter being the Achilles heel of Irish business.

There are other elements which can quickly come to mind, but these ten proposals comprise the very minimum of the structural changes necessary if we are to embark on an industrial and agricultural development strategy with any prospects for growth.

Conclusion:

There is no single answer to the question "Can We Achieve Full Employment?". I have suggested we cannot achieve it until we try to, and that we have never really tried. I highlighted the mental blockage in refusing to face the reality of past failures as the biggest barrier to be overcome. I have said there must be a fundamental change in social attitudes before we can expect growth. I outlined the frightening dimensions of our current population explosion, which paradoxically carry within it the beneficial effect of developing a new psychology under the pressures exerted by a growing population.

Finally, I put forward ten structural changes which, when taken together could give us the skeletal outlines of a full employment strategy. There is no group in society to whom an answer to this question is more relevant than you yourselves.

I propose to you, that the Labour Party is the one vehicle in Irish politics where you can help generate policies with any real urgency or utility. You have greater opportunities and a great challenge than any previous generation. I invite you to accept that challenge on the basis of a socialist philosophy and to assist in giving a positive answer for the first time to the question "Can We Achieve Full Employment?".

- End -

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