

Symposium on the Buchanan Report

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1 NEW PATTERNS OF DEVELOPMENT

A contribution to the Discussion on the Proposed National Growth Centres and the Future of the Smaller Communities

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Introduction

The aim of the regional development studies was to work out a strategy for regional development which would offer the best possible prospects of achieving the aim of a full employment society, equated in the National Industrial Economic Council's Report on Full Employment, with bringing unemployment down to 2% and net emigration down to 5,000 a year. These target figures were regarded as implying success in achieving a wide range of social and economic objectives—for example, not only enough jobs for all requiring them, but jobs sufficiently attractive in work satisfaction, in pay and in location, not only more development of industry, but also development of agriculture to enable people working on the land to enjoy living standards more comparable with those of people in the towns, not only economic progress, but also improvements in social facilities, for example, in housing, health, education and recreation, in short, a range of opportunities in both towns and country for people to have all they need for a full life in Ireland without recourse to emigration overseas.

The first step was to prepare some basic forecasts on the one hand of potential future population and the number of people likely to be wanting jobs, and on the other, of the number of jobs in each of the main economic sectors likely to be actually available. We concluded that to get a full employment society by 1986, it would be necessary to get somewhere in the region of an extra 30,000 to 40,000 jobs in manufacturing industry additional to those that could be expected on the basis of current trends and policies.

We therefore went on to postulate four hypothetical alternative regional policies for industry and considered the extent they seemed likely to succeed in securing the increase in employment required. The first alternative, to concentrate new industry as much as possible in the Dublin area, offered good prospects of getting the necessary increase in employment, but would have brought serious congestion to Dublin and would have accentuated the problems of the rest of the country. The second alternative, to concentrate new industry instead in two large new centres based on Cork and Limerick—Shannon also offered good prospects of getting the necessary expansion, but still left large parts of the country without adequate development. A third alternative, of concentrating new industry in nine regional centres, offered a much wider regional coverage, but seemed unlikely to secure the full increase in

employment needed for success. And the fourth alternative considered, dispersing new industry very widely over the country on the basis of need (as measured by emigration rates), offered in theory the chance of somewhat higher levels of population and employment than present policies in the areas which have suffered most from emigration. In practice, however, it seemed clear that it would not be possible to get such a large share of industrial development to the areas in greatest need of it, with the result that many new projects would fail or be diverted to other countries, so that the areas with high emigration would be likely to get only a fraction of the help intended, and the country as a whole would suffer from the consequences of a very much slower rate of economic growth.

These theoretical alternatives were intended merely to illustrate the main implications of different approaches. The proposals actually recommended drew elements from each of them in an attempt to get the most advantageous balance—a neutral policy for Dublin allowing for natural growth only, two new national development centres based on Cork (to be built up to about 250,000 population) and Limerick-Shannon (to increase to about 175,000 population) designed to provide major, modern industrial centres and city amenities in places other than Dublin, six regional centres at Waterford, Dundalk, Drogheda, Galway, Sligo and Athlone (each to roughly double in population) to provide focal points for development of employment and social facilities to serve these regions, and in the rest of the country, continuing natural growth in the stronger local centres combined with special efforts to get more development of suitable kinds in the areas with particular problems.

Obviously, the decisions on these questions will be taken not by outside consultants but by the government and people of Ireland. The function of the report therefore is not to present proposals in a take-it-or-leave-it spirit as the last word on the subject, but rather to initiate a constructive discussion, and, more specifically, by bringing together various facts and figures and ideas and arguments, to try to help ensure that the discussion is a well informed and rational one, focusing on the real issues, so that whatever decisions may in the end be taken will be based on an awareness of their full implications.

Accordingly, it is gratifying to see that the report does indeed seem to have given rise to considerable discussion. And it is still more so to be invited by the Society to make a further contribution to that discussion. So many points have been raised that it would clearly not be possible to deal with them all adequately in a single paper. It may therefore be more fruitful to concentrate on only two questions which seem to have been the subject of especial controversy (and perhaps also misunderstanding). First, are the proposed new national growth centres based on Cork and Limerick-Shannon really necessary? And second, what is to become of the smaller places, particularly in the West? Both these questions have many aspects, and as the social and agricultural issues in the report are to be the subject of separate papers, it may be best to concentrate mainly on the industrial considerations.

Need for new national growth centres

In part the case for the proposed two new national growth centres based on Cork and Limerick-Shannon is a social one. It is significant that even in places where there are local jobs available, a proportion of the young people nonetheless leave them to go to Dublin or cities in Britain.

If built up with speed and imagination, the two new centres would be able to offer a range of jobs and social facilities increasingly comparable with those in cities overseas, plus the appeal of being modern, well planned and located in Ireland. They should therefore be well placed to attract people who would otherwise add to the pressures on Dublin or leave the country altogether. And the jobs and the social amenities of the new cities would also, of course, be of value to the people living in the areas around them, and help to check the flow of people and money from them to Dublin and overseas.

However, the main case for the two national growth centres is an economic one—they offer the best, perhaps the only, chance of achieving the rate of industrial development needed for getting a full employment society. Recent policies have succeeded in getting many new industrial enterprises established in Ireland, and they have been particularly successful in getting them to the regions with the greatest emigration problems—in the past decade and a half the designated areas qualifying for preferential treatment have got about twice as many extra jobs from new grant assisted enterprises as they would have had if their share had been proportionate to their previous industrial employment, while Dublin has got only about half as many as it would have had on the basis of its previous share. Unfortunately, however, even if forecasts are made on the basis of a fairly optimistic combination of assumptions, there is no reason to suppose that if present policies are continued they will bring anything approaching the industrial expansion needed to achieve a full employment society.

If this objective is to be met it would seem to be necessary for more new enterprises to be established, and for these to be of a kind likely to grow fast themselves and to stimulate growth in other sectors, and likely also to be fully capable of meeting the stronger international competition to be expected with the operation of the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement and entry into the European Economic Community. The case for the new national growth centres is that they offer the best possibility of getting them.

Features of industrial development overseas

In the industrial countries in Europe it is conspicuous that the principal impetus to expansion has come from the strongest industrial centres, such as the Midlands and South-East in Britain, the Rhineland in Germany, the northern plain in Italy, and the Paris area in France, while growth in other centres has mostly been much slower and the

smaller places in remoter areas have tended to decline—indeed government policies have succeeded in inducing some of the growth generated in the strongest centres to be diverted to the places with unemployment problems. The weakness of Ireland by comparison is that it has no industrial base of its own sufficiently strong for some of its expansion to be creamed off and spread around the areas in need of it, and the bulk of the impetus to expansion has therefore had to be provided by new enterprises drawn in from overseas. The aim of the proposed new centres at Cork and Limerick-Shannon is to create in Ireland the conditions which have generated industrial growth in the strongest centres in other countries, making industrial development in them faster, more internationally competitive and, the vital point, increasingly self-supporting, so that the country does not become dependent on an ever increasing flow of new enterprises from overseas and a correspondingly increasing flow of grants to attract them to come.

The impetus to rapid expansion in strong industrial centres such as, say, Birmingham or Dusseldorf or Milan, may be regarded as arising from two sets of favourable conditions: first there are *general* conditions, associated mainly with size and location, and second there are *specific* conditions, associated with the particular kinds and combinations of industrial activities carried out in them.

General advantages of major industrial centres

Among the general conditions which favour industrial expansion in large centres are

- 1 Availability of a large labour force with a wide variety of skills, so that even a big plant can recruit all the people it needs without acquiring an embarrassingly dominant position in the local labour market, and new plants know that labour would be available for expansion later,
- 2 A sizeable local market, and good transport facilities for reaching national and international markets,
- 3 Availability of suitable sites with access roads and full services, and a high standard generally of public services such as water, effluent disposal, power, post, telephones,
- 4 Presence of a wide range of commercial and professional services, giving easy personal contact with people involved in such fields as marketing, advertising, law, finance, accountancy, insurance, exports and imports, research, design and trade associations, and
- 5 A good range and high standard of social amenities of all kinds, making it easier to attract and keep staff.

Now it is true that there are many new plants which have gone to small and remote places in Ireland, places meeting few if any of the above conditions, which have nonetheless been able to operate very successfully, to the benefit both of themselves and of the communities

in which they have settled. However, it would also appear to be the case that many plants never came to Ireland at all because no suitable large centre was available for them to come to, and some of the plants that went to the smaller places have experienced difficulties of one kind or another since—for example, not enough labour for expansion, insufficient water, lack of housing for key staff, delays in making up access roads, infrequency of shipping services, telephone hold-ups, land acquisition problems, and so on. Of course, some of these difficulties have been temporary or unimportant, and some of them may be mitigated or ended altogether by careful planning and selective improvements in local infra-structure. Even so, it remains broadly true that relatively small and isolated places tend to be at a disadvantage to major centres for certain kinds of industrial activities, and accordingly that these kinds of industry cannot be expected to develop successfully on any scale in Ireland unless favourable locations are available.

Production advantages of major industrial centres

However, it is in the second, more specifically industrial, conditions that the advantage of the stronger industrial centres is more often decisive. These centres do not usually have a random cross-section of industrial activities, but clusters of plants in related fields—for example, motor vehicles in Coventry, cotton textiles in Manchester, petrochemicals in Stanlow, shoes in Nottingham, and so on. The presence of plants with characteristics in common makes possible a specialisation of activities, with some plants making final products, and others supplying components, carrying stocks, providing industrial services, and so on. Similarly the local labour force develops the special skills required, and suitably orientated training, research and marketing organisations are likely to grow up.

This subdivision of activities, in particular the use of specialist subcontractors can result in important economies by enabling specialist plants to use advanced machinery or highly skilled labour which could not be kept fully occupied, and hence would not be economic to use, if required for only a single manufacturer. It also helps expansion, not only by keeping costs competitive, but also by making it easier to meet sudden increases in demand or introduce new product lines or open new plants if some of the processes or components (and hence some of the initial investment costs and some of the risks) can be undertaken by specialist firms. The linkages involved in this kind of interdependent complex of activities are complicated and the advantages are difficult to quantify, but recent studies in Britain and Italy have examined them in some detail and come to the conclusion that they can be important enough to make the difference between a strongly growing centre and a weak one.

These considerations may be easier to follow if we take as an example a plant making, say, washing machines. If it is in a major industrial centre with a complex of other light engineering activities, it should

have no difficulty in finding enough labour with appropriate skills. While the plant will undertake the main assembly operations itself and make some of its own components, it may well find it advantageous to buy in the electric motors from a specialist manufacturer, to get a local foundry to cast its door handles, to use local machine shops for maintaining tools and machinery, setting up jigs and making components to its own specifications, to use local stockists for supplies of standard items like bolts, fasteners, springs, bearings, electrical components and steel tubing, and to use local research institutes, training schemes and other industrial services which are specially geared to the needs of the light engineering industries in the area.

The ready availability of these facilities should enable the plant to lower its costs by farming some processes out to specialist units which, by supplying a number of manufacturers with similar needs, are able to operate specialised plant and labour on a more economic scale. It should also give it greater operational flexibility, with the possibility of subcontracting out more of the work when production has to be stepped up quickly to meet a sudden rise in orders and the possibility of seeing suppliers easily and frequently when a change in design is required. It should also be much easier for the plant to expand into some new lines, say refrigerators or vacuum cleaners, if its initial investment can be kept low by sub-contracting much of the work out to other plants, and if most of the prospective suppliers of components, etc., are local plants with which there are already close operational links for the existing product line. Thus with keenly competitive costs, and a minimum difficulty in the way of expansion or diversification, the plant should be well placed to grow, both in the original product line and in new ones. And as it grows it not only provides additional employment itself—it also generates additional employment in all other specialist plants which are supplying its various needs.

But if this same plant were to be considering a location in a small town in the West of Ireland, it would not have the advantage of the same range of labour and support facilities. Local labour would need training in the special skills required and a number of key workers and managerial and technical staff would probably have to be brought in for a while at extra cost from overseas. With few if any sub-contractors and specialist services available locally, the plant would have to undertake some additional operations internally, again probably at extra cost—for example, it might set up a foundry to make its own door handles, but because it would be supplying only one manufacturer it would probably be below the most economic size, and again it would probably be necessary to bring in more key workers from outside.

Most of the components would probably be bought in from distant suppliers, probably from other plants in the same group of companies, or from suppliers with existing links with the group, in both cases probably overseas in the country of the parent company. This would tend to increase transport costs and make for rigidity of operation—if a consignment of components arrived damaged or not to specification,

for example, it would normally take much longer to get it put right if the supplier was an overseas firm working on a contract from the head office than if it were a local firm working on a contract negotiated locally. The resulting production holdups could be very expensive, but the alternative of holding large stocks to guard against this could also be expensive, and make it more difficult to bring in design changes quickly.

Similarly, with capital tied up in its own foundry for making metal door handles, it would not feel well placed to keep investing more to make use of the most advanced processes, still less to write off the investment altogether in order to go over to plastic handles instead. And if all went well and production were to be greatly increased, or new product lines introduced, there would be similar problems—for example, the foundry might be of the wrong type or of too limited capacity, or time would be needed to arrange for additional bought-in supplies, and there could be a check to expansion if more labour were required than was available locally. Thus the need to rely on doing more processes internally and to buy in components from more distant suppliers will normally tend, for a plant of this kind, to make it more difficult to start up operations initially, more difficult to keep costs competitive subsequently, and also more difficult to increase production and diversify into new lines.

Consequences of lack of major industrial centres

Even so, it is possible that a washing machine manufacturer might decide to locate a plant in Ireland, conceivably even in a town that was relatively small and remote, if these disadvantages appeared to be offset by other considerations, such as investment grants, tax concessions, cheap sites, plentiful and adaptable labour, and so on. Indeed many manufacturers have already done so. However, the resulting pattern of industrial development, with new plants being spread widely over the country, and relatively few going to places which could grow into major centres offering the advantages of the complex linkages possible in them, has had important implications.

Most of the new plants that have been established in Ireland since the war have naturally tended to be of kinds where dependence on the support facilities of a major industrial centre is less than the average and where the disadvantages of remoteness from one are therefore less important. They have mostly been of two kinds, plants making relatively simple products, where all or most of the processes can be done conveniently in a single plant of only moderate size, and plants doing relatively straight-forward processes in the construction of a somewhat more complicated product, either assembling a final product the most difficult components for which have been made elsewhere, or making components for assembly into final products elsewhere.

Both kinds of activity tend to depend mainly on semi-skilled labour, and accordingly do not normally pay very high wages. The more com-

plicated processes, involving advanced technologies and special skills, and hence high wages, tend to be done in the main factories of the overseas companies, in Britain or Germany or the United States. Likewise the white collar activities in top management, technology, research, design, marketing and general office work tend also to be done in the main units of the parent companies overseas, and it is these activities which normally provide the highest incomes and the best opportunities for acquiring and using professional qualifications. Thus development has been taking a form which in the main has involved the overseas countries keeping the main units undertaking the higher paying activities, and Ireland getting only the subsidiary units undertaking the lower paying activities.

A second point of consequence is that with increasingly rapid changes in technology there are increasingly important economies of scale becoming possible in certain processes, and it is accordingly becoming increasingly advantageous to sub-divide the work so that these processes can be undertaken by specialist units operating the most advanced plant at the most economic scale—and this can best be done with a complex of interdependent plants in reasonably close proximity. Moreover, it is the industrial sectors in a position to take advantage of these technological developments that tend to be showing the most rapid expansion. Thus, so long as new industrial development in Ireland continues to take a predominantly dispersed form, the proportion of industries suited to Irish conditions may be expected to become smaller, and the plants that are set up will tend to be in the slower growing sectors. Moreover, some of them will be vulnerable to becoming less competitive internationally in the event of future changes in technology whose advantages cannot be realised in Irish conditions.

A third consideration is that small subsidiary units undertaking relatively simple processes tend to be the marginal units in the operations of an international group of companies, and are often the first candidates for cut-backs or closures if the group runs into difficulties. The main production units using highly specialised labour and machinery to do intricate processes and the central departments concerned with such things as research, design and marketing, tend to be essential to a company's operations and anyway very difficult to build up or replace. Even a subsidiary unit, if it is a major one, doing complex processes, with many linkages with local industry and employing a high proportion of skilled workers and senior staff, is not likely to be readily dispensable in times of difficulty, because the key staff, once lost, and the local links, once broken, may take a great deal of time and difficulty to build up again if times are more promising later. But a small subsidiary branch unit, like most of the ones that have gone to the smaller places in Ireland, is quite another matter. Because its processes are fairly simple and it makes few demands for special skills or outside support services it is a kind of industry which can be started up fairly easily almost anywhere. But for precisely the same reasons it can be easily closed down again, if the parent company faces some temporary

setback, for the company can be confident that, with such undemanding requirements, the unit could as easily be started up again some other time or some other place if circumstances changed, or the products could easily be bought in from an outside supplier if necessary

The fourth, and most serious, implication of the present pattern of industrial development in Ireland is that it does not generate secondary growth. Apart from Dublin, the links of Irish manufacturing industry are predominantly overseas ones. Even at Shannon, which has deservedly won an international reputation as a well-run and dynamic industrial development, the plants have almost no links with each other or with plants elsewhere in Ireland, either for supplies or for markets or for specialist services. What links they have are mainly with associated companies overseas. Consequently, when they expand they do so alone, without generating any secondary expansion in Irish industry.

This is in marked contrast with what happens in the major industrial centres in other countries. The plant making washing machines in Birmingham, for example, may buy its electric motors from a manufacturer in nearby Wolverhampton, but a subsidiary unit making washing machines in the West of Ireland would be unlikely to find an Irish manufacturer of electric motors nearby and so the parent company would most likely arrange for it to be supplied by the same Wolverhampton firm as the Birmingham factory. Thus when production of washing machines increases in the Birmingham factory it places more orders for electric motors and generates additional industrial activity in Wolverhampton also. But when production expands at the washing machine plant in Ireland it generates no additional Irish employment but merely additional Irish import bills—and part of the benefit goes to the economy of Wolverhampton instead of to the economy of Ireland. Thus repeatedly each impetus to growth is in part siphoned off overseas instead of generating a cumulative expansion in related sectors in Ireland. In consequence the growth rate of established plants tends to be relatively modest in Ireland and the main source of major expansion has to come from repeated injections of new enterprises from overseas—each of them having to be induced to come with generous grants and each of them increasing the degree of dependence on overseas plants under foreign control.

To sum it up then, a policy of dispersed industrial development involves reliance on the less sophisticated kinds of plants with a few local links, and this involves the kinds of industries which tend to have lower than average wages and requirements for white collar workers, which have less than average growth rates and more than average risk of closure, and which do not generate secondary expansion in other sectors. In consequence they offer little prospect of providing sufficient total number of new jobs to remove all *necessity* for emigration, still less the range and variety likely to be needed to remove all *desire* for emigration.

The role of the new national growth centres

The suggested alternative, therefore, is to build up the proposed new national growth centres so that they can provide increasingly suitable locations for the industries with more demanding requirements in the way of size of centre and availability of support facilities. In this way it should be possible to develop an increasingly strong interdependent complex of the more sophisticated kinds of industry with greater specialisation and fuller use of new technologies, with a greater proportion of the more highly skilled and highly paid occupations, and with much stronger long-term growth prospects—in particular the prospect that each impetus to growth in one plant will directly generate further growth in the other plants with which it has local links, setting off a cumulative growth process which will become increasingly self-sustaining and increasingly independent of infusions of new industry from overseas and of the additional grants needed to attract them. Ireland should then have genuine industrial growth points which, like Coventry or Turin, could not only be self-supporting, but could make a most valuable contribution to solving the economic and social problems of the country as a whole.

It should be noted that this industrial development would not in general be at the expense of industrial development elsewhere in Ireland—for the most part the sort of industries envisaged would not come to Ireland at all in the absence of suitable centres, so their establishment should be seen as predominantly a net addition to the total of development in Ireland rather than as a transfer of industry which might otherwise have gone to other parts of the country. Also it should be noted that, while Dublin might be the easiest place to build up into this kind of an industrial centre it should be no less possible to get this sort of development on the basis of the proposed two new national centres eighty miles further west based on Cork and Limerick-Shannon—provided they are given adequate priority and systematic planning to achieve the required tempo of expansion.

Changes in population distribution

So much for the national growth centres. The other area on which discussion has been focused is at the far end of the size scale, where people are concerned about the future of the smaller communities, particularly in the West. In part this concern is due to a simple misunderstanding. Some people have tended to assume that if a particular place was not mentioned in the report it was because its future was too horrific to bear mentioning. The real explanation, of course, is less dramatic—it is merely that the purpose of the study was to work out the broad outlines of a *national* strategy for regional development. To have gone into considerable local detail would have diverted attention from the main shape of the strategy and would have prejudiced the position of the separate plans for each of the regions which are the

appropriate vehicles for giving the smaller places the considered attention they deserve

The aim of the strategy was to achieve sufficient development in total to staunch the flow of emigration out of the country and achieve full employment and at the same time, so far as possible, to shift the emphasis of the less developed parts of the country further west. The proposals envisage an increase in total population of no less than 21% over the twenty-year period 1966 to 1986, a falling away of emigration to unimportant proportions, an increase in population not only in the east but in the remainder of the country as well, a rate of increase in population in Cork two and a half times as fast as Dublin, in Limerick-Shannon five times as fast as Dublin, and in the six regional centres twice as fast as Dublin. The proposals thus represent a decisive shift from east to west and from Dublin to the other centres. However, no proposals can have all the virtues, and part of this particular package was the expectation that in all the areas other than the sixteen main towns, taken together, there would be a decline in population of perhaps somewhere in the region of 6%, but appreciably more in some counties.

Employment in agriculture

The reason for expecting the decline in population in the more rural areas to continue is their dependence on agriculture, employment in which is expected to continue falling. No doubt it would make development planning in these areas much easier if there were compelling reasons for expecting an increase in employment in agriculture, or at least a halt to the very long period of decline. Unfortunately, however, it is not easy to find grounds for optimism here—whatever you look at, the trends by area or by type of occupation or by size of farm, whether you analyse the age structure of farmers, or whether you examine incomes, productivity or market prospects or experience in other countries—all the main indicators seem to suggest a continuation in the decline in numbers employed.

This does not mean, however, that agriculture need be impoverished—on the contrary a fall in the numbers engaged would seem in many areas to be an important pre-condition of better incomes. And nor does it mean that country areas should be denuded of their populations or left to become depressed backwaters. Certainly some decline in rural population would seem inevitable, but the vitality of an area is not just a matter of numbers alone—far more it is a question of the sort of people who live there and the quality of the life they lead in it. The aim must be to ensure that as the numbers become smaller at the same time the opportunities to lead a full and satisfying life in these areas became greater. This implies improvements in social facilities, and, probably more urgently, diversification of employment, so that even if there are fewer people in agriculture there are also more alternative job opportunities available locally for people who want to live in the country areas.

Importance of suitable new industry

In some areas there may be scope for more employment in mining or fishing or forestry, and in some there is great potential for the further development of tourism (although because it tends to be seasonal and mainly female employing it is likely to be more effective in raising incomes than in checking emigration) However, in most areas the key element is manufacturing industry which, in addition to providing more jobs, and greater variety of jobs, has the merit of tending to generate additional jobs in services—if more people are working in industry more people are needed also in shops, schools, hospitals and all the other services which meet their needs and those of their families In general it appears that each extra job in manufacturing industry may be expected to generate at least one extra job in services and, if allowance is made for dependants, to support a total additional population of about six people So even quite a modest number of new industrial jobs can go a long way towards meeting the problems of areas where agricultural employment is falling

And here there might seem to be a possible conflict between the need to get industrial development concentrated in the new national growth centres and the need to get it dispersed around the areas with the unemployment and emigration problems In practice these aims are not as much or as often in conflict as they might seem because there are many different kinds of industrial activities with widely varying requirements and the important thing is usually to arrange things so that industries are developed in the places that are most suitable Industrial activities which need very large plants or complex linkages need to be in or near the new national growth centres There would be little point in trying to get them to go to small and isolated places not suited to them—they would be unlikely to do so or to be successful if they did, and hence they would bring no lasting benefit But conversely, there are many other kinds of industrial activities which do not have these requirements and could operate efficiently and more usefully in other areas The point then is not to try to concentrate *all* new industrial development in the major centres, or to try to disperse *all* of it over the remainder of the country, but rather to arrange things so that each area gets the kind of industrial development that is suited to it

What is needed for this is full surveys of the industrial potential of different areas to set against the requirements of the different kinds of industrial activities, so that the two can be brought together to work out which kinds of industrial development will be most suitable for each area within the framework of a regional industrial development plan For example, some areas have agriculture or fisheries of kinds which could support processing industries, some have forests which might support wood using industries, some offer scope for tourist based manufactures, some have deep water access essential for metals and heavy chemicals, some have good access to airports or container terminals or roll-on ferry services of importance to export based industries,

some have good transport links for industries serving the home market, some have public utilities of greater capacity than others, some have special facilities like research institutes or colleges of technology, and some have particularly large labour catchment areas, or traditional skills or other distinctive characteristics. And some areas have existing industrial activities and facilities which could be of value for possible new enterprises. What is needed, then, is to bring all this information together on a systematic basis so that when a new project is under consideration the most suitable areas can be identified and encouragement given for location in the ones from among them where it would be of greatest value. At the same time this information should provide the basis for selective public investment — such as a new telephone exchange, an increased water supply, an advance factory — in places where it would do most to promote industrial development where it is wanted.

In most areas it is likely that for a number of years to come the main impetus to industrial growth will continue to come from overseas based firms. Characteristically, particularly in the smaller places, they are likely to be branch units undertaking relatively straightforward processes with their main links overseas. Accordingly they will be subject to the limitations inherent in this form of development discussed earlier. Nonetheless, more new enterprises of this kind will still be useful, indeed essential, if an adequate scale of development is to be achieved, and it will therefore still be desirable to go on offering inducements for them to come, while at the same time trying to ensure that they will go to the places where they will be the most successful and valuable within the framework of regional plans.

Scope for small enterprises

Where a greater emphasis may be needed is in measures to increase the role played by Irish enterprises, both new ones and existing ones, private ones and State ones and co-operatives and joint ventures. In particular, there are many Irish firms which operate, or could operate, in places too small or remote to be attractive to big overseas companies, and they have the advantage of presenting no problems of foreign exchange or foreign control. And where a plant set up by an overseas company may introduce alien ways and disruptive influences into a largely rural community, a small existing enterprise is more likely to fit in with traditional ways and customs because it is already an accepted part of the place. Thus if the aim is to preserve and strengthen the distinctive qualities of rural life, the greater the extent to which industrial development can grow naturally on the basis of existing local concerns with real roots in a place, the more satisfactory it is likely to prove.

Already there have been some spectacular successes by small local firms, such as the hand-knitted woollens which have won a top place in the New York fashion world and the wooden bowls and lamps and

the handmade silverware which have sold well in the most competitive export markets. No doubt there are many other concerns which could repeat their success, and others which could sell effectively in the domestic market, and others again which could expand successfully as sub-contractors supplying components or industrial services to the more sophisticated new industries in the national growth centres. It is not easy to know, in advance of a full survey, exactly how much extra employment small local firms of this sort might provide—however, their importance lies not so much in the size of the total, as in the consideration that the jobs would often be in precisely the sorts of places which would need them most and have least chance of getting them in any other way. What is needed to make full use of this potential is a full survey of existing enterprises, coupled with appraisals of their development prospects and support where it will be useful—for example, in research, design, marketing, accounting and paper work generally and, of course, finance. In this the work of the Small Industries Scheme and Gaeltarra Eireann is of crucial importance.

Need for rural centrality

Improving the local job opportunities may be the first requirement for rural areas, but certainly not the only one—improvements in social facilities will also be required so that country people can have the benefit of more of the amenities which city people already take for granted. Prospects for this will depend very largely on how far it is possible to apply the principle of rural centrality—the selection of particular settlements to be focal points for local development. If in each small area the village which is largest or best equipped or most central or in other ways most suitable is selected as the local centre and given preference when a site in the area is being considered for such things as a new church or school or clinic or shop or post-office or community hall or housing project or workshop, it will be in a position to support facilities which would have been less useful, or possibly not viable at all, if scattered around in a number of different small settlements, and so will make possible a higher standard of provision not only for the inhabitants of the centre itself but also for the people in the area around who, with increasing car ownership, can also benefit from the development. Moreover, this concentration in one place of the facilities to serve the area around it will tend to help it to thrive and grow in population (even if it is in an area which as a whole is declining in population). It will thus become a local nucleus for further development, for it will become strong enough to support additional facilities which would not otherwise be set up in the area at all. These principles, when expounded so cogently in the writing of Monsignor Newman, make very good sense, but this does not mean they will therefore be easy to apply in practice. For selecting one place as the village centre for an area implies *not* selecting all the others, and while the inhabitants of the chosen place may think it is a good idea, the people in all the other places (who will

probably be far more numerous) may not be so readily convinced—and in a democracy the idea is unlikely to get very far until a fair proportion of them *are* convinced. It may therefore need a great deal of patience and persuasion and compromise and delay before what seems so clearly sensible in theory can be translated into physical reality on the ground.

The problem of costs

It must also be remembered that no discussion of rural development can begin to be realistic without taking account of the problem of differential costs—the brutal fact is that most kinds of services such as schools, libraries, buses, post, telephones, electricity, water and drains tend to be more expensive to provide for a scattered rural population than for a densely packed urban one—and not just slightly more expensive, but sometimes as much as several times as expensive per person served. This problem should be mitigated to some extent by a policy of rural centrality, since it will normally be more economic to provide water, electricity and the rest for people living in one of the proposed village centres than for people dispersed over the open countryside. Even so, considerable cost differences are likely to remain. In a *laissez-faire* system, no doubt the policy would be to charge the users the extra costs incurred, but in circumstances where the people in the rural areas tend to have incomes well below the national average very few of them could afford to pay the higher costs and so the services simply would not be provided. But if the improved services *are* to be provided the extra costs are real, and if they are not to be paid by the users in the rural areas then they will have to be paid by somebody else. In the past, and no doubt in the future also, this somebody else has tended to be people in other parts of the country paying either in the form of prices higher than would otherwise be necessary in more easily served areas or in the form of subsidies financed from taxation at higher levels than would otherwise be necessary. And in Ireland the extent to which this is practicable is at present probably far less than in the more heavily industrialised countries. In Britain, for example, the rural population is a very small part of the total and the leading industrial areas are strong and prosperous, so it is relatively easy to effect the necessary transfer of resources from the latter to help the development of the former. But in Ireland the proportion of the population living in rural areas is high and the industrial base has not yet reached the stage of development where adequate resources can readily be made available.

Need for balanced development

And so the argument comes full circle. If it is a matter of prime concern to get development in the rural areas, then the most important requirement for achieving this is to build up the two proposed new national growth centres—for that is the most promising way of getting the kind of industrial development that alone can provide resources on

the scale needed for development of the rural areas. Thus development of the rural areas and development of the two national centres are not so much conflicting as complementary, with success in the one dependent on success in the other also. The proposals in the report should therefore be seen as an integral whole designed to secure the wide range of kinds of opportunity that people want. For those who want the country life the prospects should look more promising than for a very long time before, with a more prosperous agriculture, a wider range of industry and a higher standard of social facilities, while those who want the higher incomes, wider choice of jobs and more extensive range of facilities associated with city life, are likely to be attracted by the new national growth centres which will provide the new kind of industrial base needed for the welfare of the nation as a whole. Thus, taken together, the proposals should offer every prospect of achieving a genuinely full employment society where the tragic drain of emigration is finally halted and all kinds of people, in both the country and the towns, can find the sort of opportunities they need for a full and satisfying life within their native land.

2 THE BUCHANAN REPORT—LAND USE IMPLICATIONS

By PIERCE RYAN

Introduction

The Buchanan Report has raised important issues about rural and urban development on a national scale. It is a worthy document and probably the most comprehensive study of its type conducted to date in this country. The task of appraising a nation's resources, of correlating the physical resources with the human and economic, whilst taking account of social considerations and of putting forward alternative strategies for development is a very difficult one. The Buchanan team have made a valiant effort to do so.

Naturally, a multi-dimensional study of this order covering a broad spectrum of interests will have its shortcomings. It is not a study in depth of any one sector of the economy or of the elements of a particular community or locality. If it is interpreted and found wanting at sectoral or local level this is no reflection on the study which was designed to outline "the most advantageous and practical pattern of development" (Buchanan Report, p. 1), at regional and national level. The alternative strategies put forward were intended as guidelines to a developmental framework and not as outline plans in themselves. The Buchanan study is a means to an end and not an end in itself. Whether the proposals of this report or alternative proposals deemed more acceptable are employed in evolving a national framework for development the need will still remain for more intensive local studies before rational development can be planned and executed. The overall framework must

be established first and the Buchanan study has suggested alternative strategies as a means to this end

Probably the most serious weakness in a study of this nature is the inadequacy of the fundamental factual information on which the study is based To plan and promote the co-ordinated use of resources to greatest advantage requires a thorough knowledge of these resources, their quality, extent and distribution as well as a proper understanding of the objectives most conducive to the well-being of the entire community

Changing needs for land

The Buchanan Report emphasises the need for a positive approach to land use planning Land is many things to many people—to the farmer his livelihood, to the urban dweller a site for his home and space for recreation, to the economist a factor of production, to the patriot a symbol We all depend in one way or another on the land and our well-being is influenced by the manner in which we use this valuable resource The greater proportion of our land can contribute in more than one way to the satisfaction of our needs, in fact, relatively little of it is restricted to the output of one product or service

In a progressive and changing economy one of the most vital considerations concerns the alternative uses to which land can be devoted to give the most remunerative returns The efficient use of soils is basic to competitive agricultural production and to rational land use With developments towards greater intensification, more specialisation and increasing efficiency of production in our agriculture and with the additional demands of a modern society for land for social, amenity and recreational purposes, it is more important than ever before that we know our soil resources Not only must we know the foremost use under which a particular soil is most productive at any one time, but we must be able to assess alternative uses in order of merit so as to be able to cater for changes in economic and social demands

Most of the advanced countries have long realised the importance of soil resource knowledge to guide rationalisation of land use These countries include some of our foremost competitors in the agricultural market-place In this regard also the increasing emphasis on soil resource appraisal in the EEC countries is significant If the EEC concept is to proceed according to plan, then it is envisaged that economic and social developments will entail major changes in land use, e.g., land taken out of agriculture and devoted to social, amenity, recreational or industrial purposes and the creation of larger and perhaps more specialised production units in agriculture A knowledge of soil resources is a basic need in planning and promoting these changes to best advantage It is the responsibility of individual EEC member countries to be in a position to make the necessary restructuring in the most rational manner and to the greatest national good If Ireland becomes a member of the EEC she must face the same challenge but even

outside the E E C an advancing economy of itself will entail major land-use implications. Some of these implications are apparent throughout the Buchanan Report.

Our soil resources

The need for wise use of our soil resources may not be fully appreciated here as Ireland relative to most European countries may be regarded as having a very generous "land per capita" ratio. Early in the Buchanan Report the latter point is mentioned. But what proportion of the national acreage has sufficient potential, within the context of current technology and economic circumstances, to compete favourably in the economic production of a given set of commodities or to cater for the many needs outside of agriculture.

The extensive deficiency in knowledge of our soil resources—knowledge so important for a study such as Buchanan and even more fundamental to the planning and development that would normally follow such a study—is gradually being made good through the work of the National Soil Survey of An Foras Taluntais in association with a number of other agencies. The recent publication of the General Soil Map of Ireland on the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Soil Survey marked an important milestone in our knowledge. This map is the most accurate record of our soil resources and the most reliable basis to date for national land-use planning and related studies. Unfortunately this document was not yet available during the Buchanan study, so much of the information provided at the time was of a provisional nature. The map shows the distribution pattern and extent of the different soils of the country, these can be grouped into four broad land use classes.

Class I soils have a wide range of potential uses and may be considered "economically competitive" in agricultural production. Somewhat less than one-third (32%) of our soils would qualify for this class.

Class II soils have a moderately wide use-range and can be greatly improved through advanced research, technology and management skills, but it is unlikely because of their very nature and the extra inputs, that they can attain the same level of economic competitiveness as our Class I soils at least in the context of current technological and economic standards. Roughly 9% of our soils fall in this class.

Class III soils have a limited use-range. They can be improved considerably but for agriculture will not be economically competitive with Classes I or II because of the greater maintenance and management inputs necessary. These constitute 30% of our soils.

Class IV soils have a very limited use-range. They are undoubtedly capable of improvement in the majority of cases but it is highly improbable that they can be expected to support better than low-intensity livestock production. However, they may play a valuable role elsewhere in the national economy.

It is fairly certain that agriculture will continue to play the dominant role in the land-use pattern on Classes I and II, it is vital to the national economy that it should do so. The future of Class III land-use calls for deep consideration at the moment. Can this land be improved and the farming restructured to give more adequate farm incomes and to contribute more to the national economy? What role can forestry play in the productive use of these difficult soils? Perhaps in certain areas part-time farming and forestry may be the answer. How far can the wildlife and recreational assets of these areas be developed and integrated with farming and forestry? The scope for development of these areas is substantial but the best approach to follow is still far from clear. Class IV land offers far less scope for agriculture and forestry but perhaps more for wildlife, tourist and recreational purposes, here, however, for several good reasons agriculture must be maintained in some form or other even on a reduced scale in terms of land requirement.

Even more important than the national picture is the more detailed information at regional and county level that is required for planning and execution of development strategies. The National Soil Survey is building the fund of information at these levels too and already a number of county maps have been prepared and published. The Buchanan team attempted inter-county comparisons of soil suitability and agricultural productivity, basing potential for improved productivity, numbers engaged in agriculture and other projections on the relative quality of the land. They were aware of the great inter- and intra-county variation in soil quality and of the consequent shortcomings in the comparisons drawn but because of the general nature of their study they could not cater for such differences. The variation in soil resources within and between counties can be appreciated from Table I showing a county breakdown into the four broad land classes described earlier.

TABLE 1—*A land classification for some Irish counties*

| County | Land class % | | | |
|-----------|--------------|----|-----|----|
| | I | II | III | IV |
| Carlow | 67 | 4 | 23 | 6 |
| Wexford | 60 | 13 | 22 | 5 |
| Monaghan | 28 | 41 | 18 | 13 |
| Limerick | 38 | 8 | 43 | 11 |
| Roscommon | 35 | 38 | 18 | 9 |
| Mayo | 23 | 20 | 12 | 45 |
| Cavan | 23 | 53 | 13 | 11 |
| Sligo | 21 | 41 | 16 | 22 |
| Clare | 14 | 14 | 46 | 26 |
| Donegal | 13 | 25 | 2 | 60 |
| Kerry | 10 | 14 | 23 | 53 |
| Leitrim | 1 | 2 | 64 | 33 |

Agriculture and land use

Although agriculture will continue to occupy its dominant position in the land-use pattern of the country, significant changes on the agricultural front that affect land use are taking place or foreseen. With the emphasis on greater efficiency the general tendency will continue toward intensification and specialisation on the better lands accompanied by a reduction of agricultural activity on the marginal areas.

The whole concept of land quality for agriculture has changed radically in recent times mainly due to changes in technology. For instance the advent of fertilisers has overcome the problem of low nutrient fertility and put a premium on well drained, friable soils, that are adaptable to a wide range of uses. On the other hand, the heavier-textured and more poorly drained soils that previously had a relatively high rating because of their more adequate natural nutrient status are far less amenable to modern cultural and management practices. Their physical drawbacks have become greatly accentuated with the change from manpower and associated cultural methods to mechanised operations. With the emphasis on competitive economic production, these soils cannot compete favourably except perhaps for a very restricted commodity range. Therefore, they cannot cater for the range of commodities necessary to meet changes in consumer demands and economic returns.

The degree of intensification attainable is exemplified by the level being achieved at the Dairy Research Centre at Moorpark, Fermoy, where stocking rate is being pushed toward an unprecedented one cow equivalent to less than three-quarters of an acre, with the more progressive farmers moving rapidly in the same direction. Of course these norms of production cannot be expected on all soils, indeed on many of our difficult soils such norms could only be attained on most unrealistic economic terms.

Non-agricultural uses of land

Apart from intensification of agricultural production, the other big change affecting land-use is the growing awareness of the need for land for purposes other than the economic, e.g., social, amenity and recreational. Rational decision-making and programming, where conflicting or complementary uses of land, e.g., farming/forestry, forestry/wildlife/recreation, are concerned, must take account of the nature of the soils and of such environmental features as climate, geology and geomorphology. In other words, the entire local eco-system must be considered. This information is required particularly for the extensive poorland areas, that are marginal for economic agriculture and in developing new lands such as the cutover peat areas of the midlands for agriculture/forestry and perhaps wildlife and recreation.

The need for quantitative data

To make the necessary shifts in land use to meet the needs of our modern society even the qualitative assessments discussed above are not sufficient for the rational judgments and decision-making governing the best alternative uses of physical resources. We need to quantify the parameters that underlie the decision-making. This is particularly important in maintaining the most productive land in agriculture as far as possible. Recent studies by colleagues in An Foras Taluntais¹ examining the relative productive potential of different soils for different crops on county, regional and national levels provide valuable information in this direction. In terms of soil potential there is wide variation in crop yields attainable and in the capacity of our grasslands to support livestock production—the keystone of our agricultural economy. Excluding the mountain and peat areas which comprise some 30% of our national acreage, the eleven million acres (approximately) remaining comprise 7.3 million with a grazing capacity of 80-100 livestock units per 100 acres and 4.5 million with a capacity of 30-70 L U /100 acres.

The distribution of the soils concerned in these capacity ratings are mapped. The difference in potential between soils is accentuated by the economic consideration that the capacity of the high-producing soils can be realised with lower inputs than is necessary in the low-producing ones. Fertilizers are an essential input in both cases, but in addition, the latter in many cases require drainage and a higher proportion of conserved winter feed, all of which adds to production costs. The gap between present production and capacity is not exclusive to the poorer soils, many of the better soils are producing far below their capacity.

The Buchanan study makes inter-county comparisons for agricultural productivity. Lee and Diamond in the studies referred to above estimate that present stock densities in Counties Roscommon and Leitrim are 75% and 50% respectively of those in Counties Limerick and Wexford. Of these four counties the greatest percentage improvement can be attained in Roscommon where an increase of over 100% representing an additional 0.2 million livestock units is possible. The least possibility for improvement is in Leitrim where the possible increase is 65% representing an additional 0.05 million livestock units. The average potential of the mineral soils (peats excluded) are 83, 79, 75 and 45 L U /100 acres respectively in Wexford, Limerick, Roscommon and Leitrim. But inter-county comparisons are not very valid in regional planning. No county is sufficiently uniform in soil quality to be treated as a homogeneous unit. For instance, intra-county variation in grazing capacity is substantial. Possible stock densities in Roscommon range from 40 to 95 L U /100 acres according to soil region, in Limerick from 55 to 95, in Wexford from 65 to 100, in Leitrim they rarely exceed 50 L U /100 acres.

1 J. Lee, S. Diamond 1969, Farm Research News (July-August) An Foras Taluntais, Dublin

In land-use planning, particularly on the physical and economic side, the need for quantitative assessments of inputs and outputs that are amenable to economic appraisal is obvious. Only then can the true merits and demerits of alternative land-use enterprises be assessed and a rational allocation made to provide for economic and social, amenity, recreational and other purposes.

Imbalance between resources and demands

An obvious thread permeating this resource appraisal by the Buchanan team is the imbalance between resources and the population number depending on them, this is most apparent in western rural areas and particularly with regard to agriculture. Buchanan has this to say (p 81) "The future of the whole north-west must be a matter of anxiety, on the agricultural side the hard realities of its potential need to be faced and future policy should be based on a realistic evaluation of what is possible"

A realistic evaluation of what is possible in West Donegal, in the form of a total resource survey of the Glenties Rural District (with proposals for agricultural development), has been completed and the findings published recently by An Foras Taluntais. Of the 263,050 acres in the region only 45% is capable of a moderate to high degree of intensification in farming and to attain this would require major restructuring of holdings to give farms of sufficient size to carry a livestock enterprise sufficiently large to return a minimum target family farm income of £900 per annum. Such developments would entail a hard core of viable farms on the 45% of better land, whilst the remaining 55% of the area would remain in low intensity (part-time) farming or be devoted to non-agricultural pursuits. The number engaged in full-time farming would reduce from the current 3,000 to the region of 1,000 over time. The number of holdings is declining already due to a series of circumstances not peculiar to West Donegal alone. The survey leaves little doubt that the development of agriculture alone could not ensure the economic survival of this area, developments in agriculture must be accompanied by expansion in such fields as industry, tourism, fishing and forestry to provide greater employment opportunities especially for those leaving farming, to reduce the extreme rate of depopulation and to create a more productive population structure.

The gross imbalance between soil resource capability and farming population is very obvious in West Donegal. By comparing the region with an area fairly similar in size but much superior in land quality, namely, Co. Carlow, the imbalance in the former region becomes all the more apparent (Table 2).

Of the soils of Co. Carlow some 71% have a moderate to high capacity for the economic production of a range of agricultural commodities compared with 7% in West Donegal. Notwithstanding the ten-fold difference in the proportion of good quality soils, Co. Carlow has approximately nine holdings per square mile compared to eleven in

TABLE 2

WEST DONEGAL AND CO CARLOW—LAND QUALITY AND FARM HOLDINGS

| Area (st acres) | Number of Holdings | Land quality—use range% | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|-------------------------------|
| | | High quality wide use-range | Mod quality Slightly limited use-range | Poor quality Restricted to very restricted use-range | Poor quality (Undeveloped) |
| West Donegal 263,050 (Glenties R D) | 4,456 | 1 | 6 | 90 | 3 |
| Co Carlow 221,540 | 3,101 | 67 | 4 | 28 | 1 |

West Donegal Of the holdings in Carlow, 37% are under 30 and 55% are under 50 acres in size, compared with 72% and 83% respectively in West Donegal This means that the proportion of holdings under 30 acres in West Donegal is roughly twice that in Co Carlow Moreover, many of the farms under 30 and even under 50 acres in Carlow are not guaranteed economic viability

The maladjustment between land and people is not peculiar to West Donegal Indeed, it is a major underlying cause of the serious social and economic problems besetting many of our rural areas, particularly in western counties The numbers farming in areas like West Donegal are there not by economic design but mainly because of historical circumstances In a modern economy these poorland areas cannot be expected to provide a living by present-day standards from farming alone for as many people as depend on farming there today Furthermore, it is unlikely that land which scarcely supported a subsistence agriculture in the past can provide for the competitive market-orientated agriculture now developing It must be an important objective of a national approach to land-use to rectify the imbalance between land and people in these areas

Sources of employment

In rectifying the imbalance between resources and people and in the very desirable interest of maintaining as many people as possible in rural areas the immediate question is how to absorb people, say those leaving farming, in worthwhile employment in the local community or at least in the general locality In considering sources of employment and income outside agriculture, fishing, forestry, tourism and industry are usually looked upon as the four important potential sources of development The Buchanan team examined these possibilities on a

broad front. They paid particular attention to the policy of dispersing industry to those parts of counties where the extra jobs are most needed with the aim of reducing emigration rates to lowest possible common level. Their report has this to say (p. 113) "We found then, however, that the required distribution of jobs involved rates of industrial expansion in some counties which could not be considered realistic. For example, County Donegal would have to get about 17% of all the future jobs whose location is susceptible to Government influence—that is, five times its share of the new jobs in grant-aided enterprises in the period 1956-67. Whatever the special inducements offered, there is no reason to believe that such a dramatic increase could be achieved, particularly as at the same time increases only slightly less spectacular would be required in a number of other counties."

In its recommendations on growth centres, the Buchanan Report (p. 121) suggests that "there may be scope at village level for concentrating new development in public services, such as primary schools, post-offices and community halls, as far as possible in a limited number of village growth centres, so as to provide better services and focal points for development in areas of very scattered population."

It is obvious that the development in many rural areas cannot depend solely on agriculture because of the incapacity of the soil resources to provide for a flourishing agriculture. The integrated development of agriculture, forestry, fishing, tourism, industry, services and other sectors, making the fullest possible use of the physical, economic and human resources available, offers most promise. A flourishing agricultural sector in itself can provide considerable local employment in contract work, servicing and agriculturally-based industry. The Buchanan study was too broadly-based to examine these possibilities in the local context.

This contribution has dealt largely with the land-use implications of the Buchanan Report and the importance of the rational use of our soil resources in national, regional and local development. The emphasis on physical resources is not intended in any way to detract from the importance of the economic, social and human considerations that must be taken into account in planning and development for the greatest common good.

3 SOME SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE BUCHANAN REPORT

By REV LIAM RYAN

To do justice to a document so closely written and so well organised would require a volume as long as the Buchanan Report itself and a skill equal to its author's. He lays the statistical facts before us, he indicates the conclusion at which they point, and where the conclusion is drawn, he leaves us with a clear-cut strategy for development in Ireland over the next fifteen years. Yet, somehow, the argument fails to convince. At least, it has failed to convince a great many people in

Ireland Possibly, many of its most vocal opponents have never read it, possibly they looked on it from the biased viewpoint of prejudice or vested interest, possibly they do not like the shape of the new map of Ireland which the implementation of Buchanan would inevitably produce Possibly, the Report itself may be partially responsible for some of the criticism it drew In reading it, you feel that you are in the hands of an expert of the very highest powers, yet they are the powers of an intellectual wizard rather than of a master who commands your confidence You are astonished at the skill which is displayed and unable to explain away the results, but you are conscious somehow that you are being played with, you are perplexed but you are not attracted, and unless you bring a Buchanan conclusion ready-made with you to the study, you probably will not arrive at it

This may seem a rather harsh judgment on what is undoubtedly the most comprehensive planning study ever published in this country It is not even a judgment, but my own personal impressions on reading the Report I would hesitate to put them in print were it not for the fact that it is now eighteen months since the Report was published, and in that time I have yet to meet a single person outside Dublin who accepts the Report as a blue-print for future development in Ireland This unfavourable reaction may be partly due to the knowledge that no Irish Government will ever publicly endorse the recommendations of the Report, it may also be due to a very human and emotional aversion to a future that is so coldly, logically and statistically planned, but it is mainly due to the belief that this is a somewhat drastic solution to a *national problem* which in any case seems to be now under control, and no solution at all to a *regional problem* of Connaught and the North-West whose decline is hastened rather than halted by the recommendations of the Buchanan Report

So much for the sentence, now for the evidence Here we shall select just a few of the major points for discussion and, unfortunately, these will have to be the shortcomings of the Report rather than its better aspects

Problems of planning in general

At this level there are several observations that must be made about the Buchanan Report Planning and future projections must be made on the basis of facts, and facts in this context are equivalent to statistics In this regard, the Report does an excellent job, it has one of the most useful collection of economic and social statistics ever assembled in one book in Ireland However, planning on the basis of statistics means planning on the basis of past performance, and after all the only reason we need a plan in Ireland is because we are dissatisfied with past performance This is not a mere quibble Of course we must build on the foundation we have, but to select for expansion only those centres which have already established themselves is to exaggerate the trend of past performance rather than to change it To take the larger centres of

population and make them larger may make sense in statistics and economics but it does not make sense in the wider social and historical context of modern Ireland

Ireland all but collapsed as a nation in the 19th century. It lost its government (Act of Union), its language, its people (famine and emigration), it saw the collapse of one national movement after another, it saw the decline and disappearance of much of its industry, and the mood became one of despair and disillusionment. People rightly felt that the "good life" was not to be found in Ireland, and they opted out of life in various ways. The most obvious form was emigration—physically going away. But there were other forms. Late marriage and no marriage is also a form of opting out of life, and for the first time in our history over 25% of the Irish population did not marry at all. There were lots of other symptoms—for instance, our mass banning of contemporary novels, our addiction to alcohol, even our excessive nationalism with its emphasis that present life is no good and that we need to restore a sort of mythical past before Ireland will once again be a light to the world and a glory to God! When one meets an Irish emigrant in England, one is invariably told that there is no work in Ireland. This is the twentieth century line with emigrants—no work. But the nineteenth century line is different, it is the one still found in America where one is told not so much that there is no work but that "there is nothing in the old country." Nothing! Ireland and all its microcosms and local communities had become defined as a place of no hope and no future.

What has all this got to do with the Buchanan Report? A great deal in fact. This process which we have been describing lasted right down to the late 1950's. By then the crisis had been reached. Emigration was more than 50,000 per annum, a level almost as high as the annual number of births, and considerably more than half of those reaching maturity were leaving the "stricken" land. In parts of the country the sense of decay and doom were overwhelming. Unless something were done, Ireland and her people were on the way out. Since the process which we have been describing is an anti-life process—a flight from present life—the only effective force to counter it is a redefinition of what life means. Defining life in new terms was what Nationalism tried to do at the end of the nineteenth century, it was what "Whitakerism" or "Lemassism" did in the late 1950's. The way of life was redefined in such a manner that hope, opportunity, promise, success, and all that made life meaningful were seen in purely economic terms. Our vision of life became that of Mr Micawber:

"My other piece of advice," said Mr Micawber, "you know Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen pounds nineteen six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds and sixpence, result misery."

There are some who criticise this philosophy of life and who condemn the Buchanan Report for being an exaggerated version of it. This is

not my argument. In fact, I think that this new definition of life offers the first real hope and optimism that Ireland has had in fifty—perhaps even in one hundred and fifty—years.

This new philosophy began in Dublin, and Dublin was the first to reap its benefits. Gradually, Ireland was again seen as a land of hope and opportunity. *Time Magazine* ran an article on “New Spirit in the Ould Sod”, and a sense of enthusiasm tended to replace the earlier pessimism. Gradually, too, this new attitude spread outward from Dublin. Leinster towns like Carlow, Drogheda, Dundalk and Mullingar which had struggled for years in quiet resignation became suddenly alive and good places in which to live. Cork and Limerick, after lean periods in the 40’s and 50’s, began to reawaken to the realities of the jet age. Gradually, too, the new enthusiasm began to seep down to the smaller towns and villages and to the rural areas—at least, in Leinster and Munster. Only slowly is it taking root in Connaught, but there are signs, especially in Galway, Castlebar and Sligo, that the West too is no longer asleep. However, while Ireland as a whole is now seen as a place where “the good life” may be found, the aversion to present life can continue in many of the microcosms of Ireland, especially in those which continue to define life in terms of an earlier model.

And here we come to the heart of the matter. Buchanan made his report at a time when part of Ireland had been transformed by this new philosophy and new-found spirit, and when the remaining part was still living in the pessimism that was really a legacy from an earlier age. By and large, his Report came down heavily in favour of the former and tends to neglect the latter. Not merely does it tend to neglect the latter, but it tends to re-emphasise that they are places of no hope. It deals them a deadly psychological blow at the very time when they are on the verge of recovery. The West and North West will not always be composed of people who stand idly all day because no man has hired them, they will not always be waiting for someone to build a factory for them in which they will then docily go to work. They will not always sit in apathy and look beyond the Shannon or beyond the Irish Sea for a solution to their problems. Not so very long ago the whole nation was as Connaught is today. In ten years the transformation has been remarkable—at least in the South and East. The process of recovery should be allowed to run its course.

National plan or regional plan

We have spoken of a process of economic and social recovery in Ireland. What Buchanan does is to recommend that this process be speeded up where it has already been successful and that people be encouraged to move out of the areas where it has not been successful. This favours the cities rather than the towns and rural areas, it favours the East and South rather than the North and West. In paragraph 126 of the Report we read: “The results of this analysis confirm the impression that the areas with the most potential for growth are along the

east and south coasts, and that it is the north-west that has the worst social and economic problems and the greatest need for improved urban opportunities" This is a theme that runs right through the Report. It emphasises what has often enough been emphasised, that the real problem of Ireland is the problem of Connaught and the North West, the real problem is a regional one, not a national one.

I accept the main themes of the Report—that rapid economic development is necessary for achieving our objectives of higher personal incomes, more resources to pay for better social facilities, more exports, more jobs to end unemployment and emigration, that all this can be achieved through rapid industrialisation, and that this implies concentration in a few major centres. What I cannot see, and what Buchanan fails to prove, is that this development must take place mainly in the east and south, and not in the west and north where the problems really are. With present policies, we are well on the way to achieving most of these objectives. Were it not for the west and north we would not need a Buchanan Report at all. Munster does not need a Cork of 250,000 nor a Limerick of 175,000 people to solve its problems. Apart from the difficulties created by an influx of uprooted people, the economic cost of resettling such a vast number would be enormous. These numbers are recommended for Cork and Limerick only because these cities must absorb the migrants from the west and north.

In short, what Buchanan appears to be saying is that in the national interest the decline in the west and north must continue, that things must get worse before they begin to get better. In the Buchanan Plan, the North West and mid-West regions will have almost 30,000 people less in 1986 than they would have if present policies were continued, and almost 45,000 less than they have at the present time. And this in a period when the total population of the country is expected to rise by well over half a million to reach 3 500 000 by 1986. It would seem that the attempt to save the west from Cork and Limerick will be even less successful than the effort to save it from Dublin.

The Buchanan Report is a national plan where a regional plan is needed. As a national plan it would seem to be unnecessary. Already the fruits of the new economic philosophy would seem to be achieving in much shorter time what Buchanan promises for 1986. The recent review of the economy issued by the Department of Finance indicates that emigration may have been as low as 10,000 last year. But meanwhile the population continues to fall in the west and north-west. A little bit of dole here and a little bit of Bord Failte there will not be enough to change the trend. The people grumble but do nothing. But their grumbling has at least produced the beginnings of a sceptical scorn for any more of those half-measures—each hailed successively as a messiah, each failing in turn—which litter the path of decline for the past one hundred years.

If we accept with Buchanan that rapid industrialisation is the solution to our problems and that this must be concentrated in a few centres, do we have to accept that the main centres be Cork, Limerick-Shannon

and Dublin (paragraph 387) Why could we not have four instead of three? And if we have resources only for three, surely Galway and the West deserve priority? It is difficult to be convinced solely on the basis of the statistics in the Buchanan Report that Galway does not have the infra-structure to support major industrial development Perhaps the problem with the Report is that when it thinks of industrial development it thinks of the English Midlands or the Ruhr Valley, or Milan and Northern Italy These are scarcely working models for the Irish economy, and maybe we could look with profit at more practical but less spectacular patterns of development in countries like Switzerland or Norway

Urban or rural development

Much of the public discussion on the Buchanan Report tended to revolve around the respective benefits of rural and urban living In many ways this is a false problem Mankind is among the most adaptable of creatures, and whether he lives in urban or rural areas does not really matter in the long term The important thing is that it be possible for people to live where they want to live In Ireland last year there was a decline of some 12,000 in the numbers engaged in agriculture It is reasonable to assume that these not merely left agriculture but also left rural Ireland Buchanan recommends that these be absorbed into the main urban centres in Ireland, but this is just one alternative among many others What are the alternatives to them

1 *Remain in agriculture* Many, including Raymond Crotty and General Costello, would argue that this is possible, and they produce impressive statistics to prove their contention It is true that the numbers engaged in agriculture are actually increasing in most countries of Europe The percentage of the population in agriculture is decreasing, but the numbers are increasing Thus, for example, a comparison of Ireland and Holland reveals that Ireland has 30% of its population in agriculture compared to Holland's 8%, but this means that Ireland has approximately 900,000 to Holland's 1,000,000 in a country more than twice the size of Holland However, while it is possible to retain the present population in agriculture, it is very doubtful if it will remain The present decline of 10,000 per year is likely to continue for some time

2 *Remain in rural areas* Here we touch on Dr Newman's theory of Rural Centrality It is possible to select particular settlements, whether villages or small towns, for development so that these rather than the larger towns absorb the numbers who leave agriculture This type of development is actually taking place in many of the villages within a fifteen mile radius of the main cities There are obvious problems involved in a strategy that would attempt to extend this pattern to the entire country

3 *Concentrate in the larger towns* The Buchanan Report examines some aspects of this strategy in detail so that it is not necessary to repeat them here. However, since we find many examples of this type of development in several European countries, it may be an indication that industrial development does not necessarily need to be concentrated in a few large centres in order to be successful. This is certainly the type of development which the West of Ireland needs. For example, if the towns of Ballina, Castlebar and Westport were to receive preferential treatment for a period of fifteen years, Mayo would surely come to life again. Roscommon, Carrick-on-Shannon and Longford form a somewhat similar triangle which could be singled out for special development, so too do Athlone, Mullingar and Tullamore, and further north, Cavan, Monaghan and Dundalk. Indeed, it is possible to sub-divide the entire country into areas suitable for this type of development.

4 *Large cities* Since this is the development favoured by the Buchanan Report, it is hardly necessary to develop it further. Were such a city planned for Connaught not many people would quarrel with the recommendation, but in the absence of this it is difficult to see in what way the Buchanan strategy is a solution to present problems.

5 *Emigration to British cities* In the past this has been the alternative which the vast majority of Irish people selected. For some it will continue to be the solution in the future but only, we hope, for those who voluntarily opt for it.

The pattern of settlement and development in European countries would seem to indicate that any of these alternatives are possible and viable. The real question is which do we want for Ireland. This is a question of values which can be solved only by the people of Ireland. The task of Buchanan was that of telling us the consequences of our choice. This he has done in a stimulating and excellent report. It is now our task to make the choice.