

TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH BY MINISTER MICHEÁL MARTIN

At the opening of the new TPN Hub Blanchardstown December 13th 2007

Seamus, and Owen and Maurice, Director of the NSAI agus daoine uaisle go leir...[gaelige]..

It's a great privilege and pleasure to have been invited along this afternoon in my capacity as Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment and to pay a very warm tribute to the network, to TPN for the outstanding progress you have made in the relatively short space of time and you are giving hauliers an opportunity to have not just a nationwide but a UK and European-wide service to rival the very best across the globe and this is a very very exciting initiative and one that witnesses people thinking outside the box here domestically in terms of the indigenous sector and moving to improve competitiveness, environmental performance, technological advancement and of course facilitating the creation of jobs but more critically the facilitation of trade both inward and outward which is the lifeblood of my department and my Ministry and what we are all about in essence. We depend very much on the haulage business and system, transport network to facilitate business and trade in Ireland.

The bottom line statistic you always have to keep in the back of your head, and this isn't an exact figure, but always remember that we export over 85, up to 90% of everything we produce and that's not just in merchandise trade its in services as well and so Ireland has to continue to innovate and develop best practice in terms of the distribution of goods and services across the country, across Europe and across the world and I see this as evidence of people putting their thinking caps on, marrying that with investment and an entrepreneurial spirit and a good cooperative approach to make a difference and to become more competitive as a result.

We welcome the jobs that have been created as well because it seems that membership of the network makes people more efficient, creates additional business, and in turn creates additional jobs and I was interested in Seamus's comments in terms of the added value that inward migration has meant for your industry and your sector. We have developed in Ireland in a very rapid period of time a fairly sophisticated inward migration policy that obviously since our decision in 2004 to welcome in all citizens of the new European states to our labour market, that's had a dramatic impact. But also we have a high skilled inward migration policy for those countries outside of the EU whereby in technology or any professional area, or indeed any area where we are short and if its of a high skilled nature we facilitate people to come in through a Green Card system now, which is a pathway to citizenship in essence, and a work permit system so that we have a good flexible model and we have increased the staff in my department to facilitate the efficient rolling out of that process and to have good customer service for those who require additional skills to supplement their own indigenous skills and I was delighted at your reference to FÁS because we are very keen on obviously upskilling the entire nation and the entire workforce and there is a huge programme on the way in terms of in-company training and I am delighted that FÁS is such a strong relationship with you, and I think you mentioned DIT as well, and the Institute of Technology sector has a critical role to play in that

upskilling agenda, and the County Enterprise Board, great to see them being of some support and perhaps as you internationalise your product offering and your service, Enterprise Ireland may be in a position to facilitate your geographic spread across Europe because we have offices through Enterprise Ireland in every country almost in Europe and indeed in about 36 locations globally. And that's a useful service as well in terms of facilitating introductions and access to the key clients and the key people that you would require access to into the future.

The environmental agenda is particularly strong and I can't stress enough today how central that's going to become in the next decade, indeed in the next five years. The Spring Summit of the European leaders will, in all probability, set very exacting percentages, targets, in terms of the reduction of carbon emissions and I know that Sustainable Energy Ireland is producing two reports today in relation to emissions from the transport sector and I've been holding the fort on this in terms of industry for quite a long time and advocating that we have to have a balanced approach to fulfilling our Kyoto commitments and our international agreements and that competitiveness has to be centre stage as we seek to fulfil that agenda. But allowing for that, there is no going back and it is very clear that we must become very smart and very innovative in asking ourselves questions every single day: How can we become more energy efficient? How can we reduce energy consumption? And how can we make a difference in terms of enabling Ireland to reach those targets that are going to be set for us at European level next year. However realistic we are about it in my department and we keep telling everybody else including all the advocates, look, you have got to get the scenario right and you have got to spell it out to people, what it actually means, what these targets mean, and when I come across something like this today, The Pallet Network, I think, yes, that's the kind of thinking we need, across the board in transport, because that will make the difference. We have to think way outside the box and different to the way we managed things in the past and that's how we organise residential developments, educational developments, transport and so forth, really there is no other way, if we are to achieve the targets that are being set. And I think your leadership in that regard is appreciated and I will be feeding it back to the Department of Transport and indeed others as examples of where industry itself is leading, ahead of the game and ahead of even official thinking in some regards.

The utilisation of top-class technology is something we appreciate and Ireland is very strong in ICTs and our indigenous software base is particularly strong and I know the particular software is not indigenous to Ireland but as the business expands and so on it's important to realise that the utilisation of advanced technology is positive for Ireland's future and is a key sector for us in terms of development and growth and we have some very exciting electronic and technology companies and software companies in this space as well as in other sectors in terms of environmental and energy efficiency as well.

Finally the standards issue is extremely important and I think Maurice has outlined the role of the NSAI and the ISO 9002. I know the exacting processes you have to go through, I think its fantastic that not just the central hub has achieved this but that each of the 18 members has achieved this as well and

I congratulate each and every one of you on putting yourself through the paces and going through that and coming out the other end and that speaks volumes for your commitment to excellence and to high standards which is what guarantees performance on the global world and attracts investment to this country. If we do things right, right across the supply chain and right across the ecosystem in Ireland, people investing in Ireland say they get all bits of the jigsaw right here and they do it to a high standard here, all pieces of the jigsaw. And that does enable us to pitch for Ireland when we get foreign direct investment coming in, we can sell a good story, if people like you driving the agenda at this level and achieving very high standards in that regard.

There was a lovely short story which was written, which I read in secondary school about My First Flight which I think captured the essence of that poem where the mother bird, the seagull does push the baby, or the signet, over the edge and he had got to fly. Well you are flying by now and according to Seamus, I'd say Owen must be always worried because Seamus really wants to soar into the skies which will continually require investment and more investment [laughs] but as he continues to soar we wish him well and wish you, Owen, and the company and the network well into the future and *agus mar a deireann and sean-fhocail, 'ni neart go cur le feile'*.
Cairdeas libh go leir.