

**NESC REPORT NO. 22**

**INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR  
REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Price: £1.60**

# NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

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## *Institutional Arrangements for Regional Economic Development*



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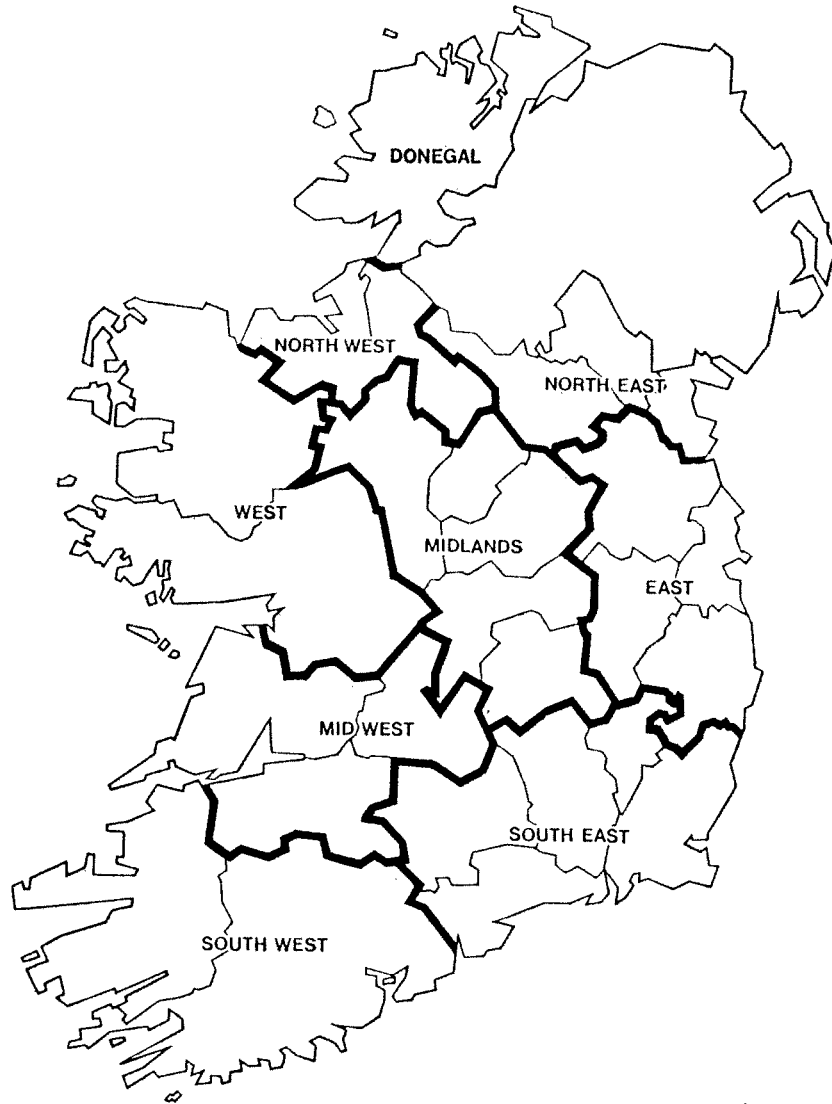
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THE PHYSICAL PLANNING REGIONS



**ABBREVIATIONS USED IN REPORT**

AnCO	An Comhairle Oiliúna (The Industrial Training Authority)
BC	Borough Corporation
BFE	Bord Fáilte Éireann
BIM	Bord Iascaigh Mhara
BNM	Bord na Móna
Buchanan Report	Regional Development in Ireland Colin Buchanan & Partners 1968
CBC	County Borough Corporation
CDC	Central Development Committee
CIE	Córas Iompair Éireann
Devlin Report	<i>Report of Public Services Organisation Review Group 1966-1969</i>
ESB	Electricity Supply Board
GE	Gaeltarra Éireann
ICC	Industrial Credit Company
IDA	Industrial Development Authority
IPA	Institute of Public Administration
NBA	National Building Agency
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NMS	National Manpower Service
RDC	Regional Development Committee
RDO	Regional Development Organisation
SFADCo	Shannon Free Airport Development Company Ltd
TC	Town Commissioners
UDC	Urban District Council

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION\*

1.1. At present, there is no clearly articulated policy for regional economic development. Until such a policy is spelt out, it is not possible to devise the full range of institutions that would be required to implement it. In this report, the Council is not concerned with these broader issues. The aim is much more modest, namely, to identify the *minimum* institutional changes required to provide a coherent organisational framework, which would help to ensure the effective and co-ordinated performance of existing work at regional level; to help towards the formulation of a regional policy, and to facilitate the spelling out of the regional implications of the National Economic Plan (whose publication is expected later this year).

1.2. The recommendations in the final chapter of this report could be implemented quickly. They would not prejudice the outcome of the major and much wider inquiry which has recently been instituted by the Government "on the appropriate organisation and structures for the planning, co-ordination and discharge of the functions of Government at subnational levels".† The Council would welcome an invitation to make a submission to the Inter-Departmental Committee established to undertake this inquiry.

\*Following discussions in the Regional Policy Committee and in the Council at its meetings on 19 February 1976 and on 22 April 1976 the successive drafts of this report were prepared by Dan Brennan in the Council's secretariat.

†The full text of the Statement by the Minister for the Public Service is set out in Appendix A.

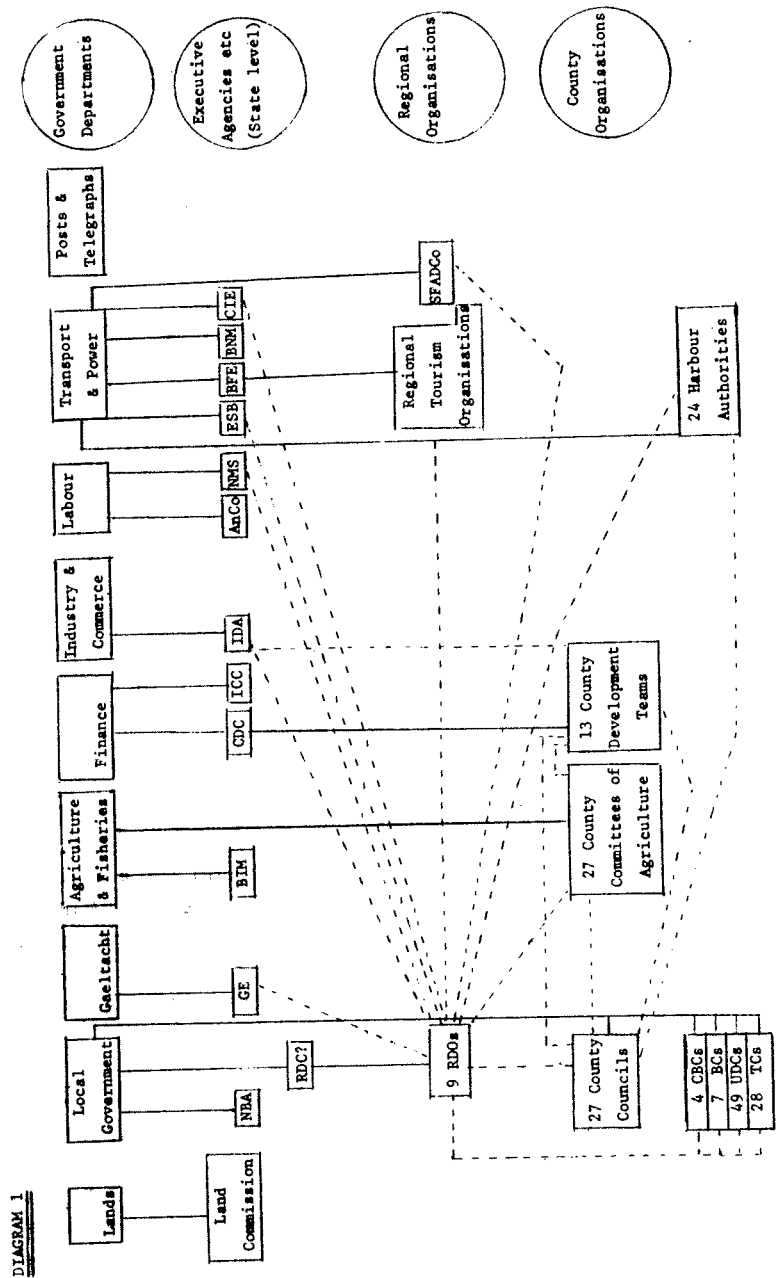
## Chapter 2

### EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2.1. At present there is a wide range of bodies at different levels with responsibility for various aspects of regional development. Diagram 1 indicates schematically the principal bodies and the relationships between them. This diagram lists a total of some 200 bodies. This figure is significant only in that it indicates the number of public bodies involved in the regional development process and suggests the need for structures for co-ordinating their policies and activities. The diagram shows that there are existing bodies with limited co-ordinating roles—at regional level, the Regional Development Organisations (RDOs) and at county level, County Councils. The effectiveness of these arrangements is examined in Chapter 3.

2.2. The work of the Government is carried out by Government Departments with responsibilities allocated on a functional basis. The departments perform some of these functions directly, others are carried out by specialised State-sponsored bodies. This system has developed largely on an *ad hoc* basis. The Department of Finance exercises control over the finances of other departments. Many of the field services of the departments and State-sponsored bodies are organised on a regional or district basis, e.g. the Post Office, the Department of Agriculture, CIE, ESB, and the IDA. These regions and districts have been delineated in most (though not all) cases to meet the particular needs of the bodies concerned and without reference to co-ordination of activities with other bodies.

2.3. The Regional Development Organisations are non-statutory co-ordinating bodies which do not have executive functions in their own right but may act, on agreed terms, as a medium for joint action by their constituent bodies. The Regional Development Organisation



boards are made up of elected representatives and staff of Local Authorities and Harbour Authorities, together with nominees of Government Departments and State Agencies. The effectiveness of the Regional Development Organisations depends on the willingness of the participating bodies to co-operate.

2.4. The Regional Development Organisation in the Mid-West Region was set up in 1968 and the Regional Development Organisations in the other eight physical planning regions were established in 1969. The organisations were given the initial task of preparing a report for each region indicating the principal considerations, with emphasis on physical infrastructural aspects, relevant to the development of the region. These reports were completed for all regions and were drawn on by the inter-departmental Regional Development Committee in its review of regional strategy which formed the basis for the Government Statement—Review of Regional Policy, 4 May 1972. The preparation of the regional reports has been the principal task of the Regional Development Organisations to date. In addition to these reports, Regional Development Organisations have prepared reports on issues related to their regions such as transport and land use. The Map shows the physical planning regions and counties.

2.5. An examination of the Regional Development Organisations reveals that performance has varied greatly from region to region. All Regional Development Organisations performed the initial task of submitting a report on their regions but in this and other matters the quality has varied greatly depending on the enthusiasm of the members. Perhaps the most successful Regional Development Organisation has been in the Mid-West where, with the assistance of SFADCo, the Regional Development Organisation has produced a number of reports on various aspects of development in that region.

2.6. The Local Authorities—County Councils, County Borough Councils, Borough Councils, Urban Councils and Town Commissioners—perform a number of different functions for their areas. Some of these functions must be organised on an area basis, e.g., sanitary services, housing, etc., while others could be the responsibility of a central authority but for historical reasons are still the responsibility of

local authorities (See para. 3.1.1—White Paper, *Local Government Reorganisation*, 1971). Overall control of Local Authorities is exercised by the Department of Local Government.

2.7. The full range of State and semi-State bodies and organisations that have regional functions or provide services of relevance to regional economic development is as follows:—

BODY	SERVICES
IDA, SFADCo, Gaeltarra Éireann or County Development Team (depending on location and size of projects)	Capital grants etc., Advance Factories, Industrial sites.
County Council	Planning Permission, Sanitary Services, Roads, Housing
Department of Local Government	In the event of a Planning Appeal
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries	Functions in regard to the extraction of waters from rivers, and quality of effluent
ESB	Electricity Supply
CIE	Transport
AnCo	Industrial Training
National Manpower Service	Manpower information and recruitment
Industrial Credit Company	Finance
National Building Agency	Housing
Revenue Commissioners	Taxation
Valuation Office	Rateable Valuation
Harbour Authorities	Port facilities
Department of Transport and Power	Permission to develop foreshore (if required)

A firm wishing to expand or set up a new factory would not, of course, have to deal directly with all of these bodies. The IDA, SFADCo, Gaeltarra Éireann or a County Development Team (depending on the location and size of the project) would provide assistance and advice to industrialists in dealing with the other agencies.



2.8. The institutions which have been described above are those which operate throughout the country as a whole. In two areas of the country—the Gaeltacht Areas and the Mid-West Region—special development bodies, namely, Gaeltarra Éireann and the Shannon Free Airport Development Company Ltd., have been established with a wide range of functions.

2.9. Gaeltarra Éireann was established by the *Gaeltacht Industries Act, 1957* as a semi-State body with responsibilities for rural industries and the encouragement of the use of Irish as a spoken language in the Gaeltacht. Gaeltarra's powers and functions were extended in 1965 into the field of the development of manufacturing industry on the same lines as the IDA, and also into other sectors including horticulture and service industries. Gaeltarra therefore acts as an overall development agency for the Gaeltacht.

2.10. The Shannon Free Airport Development Company Ltd. was established initially in 1959 to promote the development of Shannon Airport, which was threatened with closure following the introduction of long distance jet aircraft. SFADCo has developed an industrial estate in the Customs Free Zone and has established a new town at Shannon to provide accommodation for workers in the estate and in the airport. In 1968 SFADCo was appointed as agent for the IDA in the Mid-West region, and the company is building industrial estates at a number of centres throughout the region. The company also participates in other development activities in the region including housing and tourism. SFADCo plays a major role in the Mid-West Regional Development Organisation.

2.11. In addition, there is a County Development Team for each county in the Designated Areas.\* These teams are co-ordinated by a Central Development Committee. They are staffed by the Department of Finance, they work closely with the local authorities, and they perform some of the functions carried out by the IDA in other counties in relation to small projects.

\*For a fuller discussion of the origin and work of the County Development Teams, see *Regional Policy in Ireland: A Review*, NES, No. 4, January 1975.

### Chapter 3

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EXISTING INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

3.1. At national level, Government Departments and State-sponsored bodies in Ireland are mainly organised on a functional basis. The division of functions between bodies at State level has the usual benefits associated with the division of labour. A major difficulty in structuring regional organisations arises from the problem of prescribing a clear-cut co-ordinating role on a geographical basis to such organisations in respect of a variety of separate functions, particularly where central bodies have subordinate offices at local levels responsible directly to them. In some cases, such as agriculture and the health and social services, the administrative structure is so specialised in function at all levels that co-ordination with other functions at regional level, apart from contributing to a comprehensive regional statistical picture, may be neither practicable nor desirable.

3.2. At present there is extensive consultation and co-ordination, much of it informal in character, between central bodies, and between them and local authorities. For example, the IDA maintains close liaison with government departments, with bodies such as AnCO, and with local authorities, in formulating its projections and in dealing with particular projects. This consultation is clearly valuable, and indeed essential, to effective and expeditious performance. Consultations with the Regional Development Organisations, however, revealed the need for clearer lines of communication between them and the central bodies, the desirability of more effective co-ordination between the different bodies at regional level, the absence of a clear definition of the functions of the Regional Development Organisations and more guidance on the performance of their work.

3.3. Regional development requires more than mere co-ordination—it requires the preparation of integrated strategies or plans for overall development and an executive agency or agencies to implement these strategies. In this way the various components in the development process can be harnessed to produce positive development rather than merely react passively to events as they occur or are generated by other agencies. The existing arrangements have achieved a great deal in the past and the growth which has occurred at national and regional levels is a measure of the success of these arrangements. However, if full employment at rising living standards is to be achieved in the next decade together with a reduction in regional imbalances (e.g. in living standards and employment opportunities), a much greater level of achievement will be required.\* It is important therefore to identify the main weaknesses and deficiencies of the existing arrangements so that remedial measures can be proposed. The following is a list of the principal weaknesses:

- (1) There is no comprehensive regional policy or set of integrated regional plans.
- (2) A comprehensive regional policy or plan cannot be formulated in the absence of a national programme or plan. A national development plan will be published later in 1976.
- (3) There are a number of Government Departments (principally the Departments of Local Government, Industry and Commerce, Finance, and Transport and Power) and State-sponsored Bodies with responsibility for various aspects of regional development and there is scope for greater co-ordination between these bodies at state and regional levels.
- (4) The bodies which have been established to co-ordinate development at regional level—the Regional Development Organisations—have been ineffective with a few notable exceptions. The Regional Development Organisations have been ineffective because:

\*See NESC Reports Nos. 5 and 7 which discuss the implications of achieving full employment at rising living standards over the period to 1986.

- (a) They have not been adequately supported by all the bodies concerned.
- (b) Either as a cause or a consequence of (a) above they have neither statutory recognition or powers.
- (c) They have not been backed up by regional executive agencies. (The one example in which a Regional Development Organisation has been backed by such an agency—the Mid-West—has been the most successful.)
- (d) In some instances the boundaries of the regions have been unsuitable.
- (e) There has not been effective co-ordination or monitoring of the Regional Development Organisations from the centre.
- (f) Following the completion of their original reports, the Regional Development Organisations have not been given any specific tasks to perform.

3.4. Any proposals for the reorganisation of institutional arrangements for regional development must try to remedy these defects without forming an extra layer of government, duplicating the activities of existing authorities.

## Chapter 4

### PREVIOUS PROPOSALS FOR INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1. The defects in the present arrangements exist despite a number of proposals for reorganisation of institutional arrangements for regional development which have been put forward in recent years. The principal proposals are summarised below.

#### Regional Studies in Ireland—Colin Buchanan and Others

4.2. In October 1966 the United Nations, at the request of the Minister for Local Government, commissioned Colin Buchanan and Partners working in association with Economic Consultants Limited and with assistance from the staff of An Foras Forbartha, to prepare a report. The Buchanan Report was intended to help the Minister for Local Government in exercising his responsibility to co-ordinate local development plans under the *Local Government (Planning and Development) Act, 1963*.

4.3. The Report argued that comprehensive planning must start at the national level with policies and forecasts worked out for the country as a whole, mainly in economic, social and demographic terms. These national projections should then be regionally articulated (that is to say, broken down among the different parts of the country), and policies devised for achieving a desirable balance of prosperity and growth between the areas (policies for the allocation of public investment, distribution of industrial development and main arterial transport routes, etc.). This stage of planning would have to be carried out primarily in terms of a relatively few—and fairly large—areas which might be called "economic regions". Otherwise there would be a danger that it would get overwhelmed by excessive and inappropriate detail.

The regional articulation stage of national planning should set the context for the preparation by planning authorities of "overall development plans". Both stages of planning at the national level would, of course, be the responsibility of Central Government.

4.4. The Report concluded that the country should be divided into eight planning areas based on major urban focal points—Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Galway, Sligo, Athlone and Dundalk. The eight new planning areas should form the territorial basis for eight new joint planning committees with adequate staffs whose task would be to prepare overall development plans for each area. The assumption would be that the constituent local authorities would accept these plans and work to them, even though they would not (in advance of new legislation) have statutory force.

4.5. The boundaries of the proposed new planning areas involved three existing counties being split (Cos. Mayo, Cavan and Roscommon). The counties involved could have representation on both the joint planning committees concerned. This arrangement was seen as no more than the immediate step for the purpose of bringing the situation under control. Planning being of such importance, the Buchanan Report recommended that a joint planning *authority* should be set up as soon as possible, for each area with full statutory responsibility for all significant planning decisions. This would be in line with the trend in many countries to use large areas for all such major decisions.

4.6. The Buchanan Report did not say whether these new statutory planning authorities could be set up without at the same time radically reorganising local government. It hoped that these matters could be treated separately—but if, in fact, it became clear that local government reorganisation would be involved, then the issue would have to be faced. In this event, the area suggested for planning purposes would be found to have much relevance for many aspects of local government. The Report recommended that the Government should help this overall development planning by encouraging the setting up of the joint planning committees and by adopting the planning areas as the regional units for central government departments and other public sector organisations and as standard areas for statistics. In addition, a special

committee should be set up to co-ordinate development in the Cork and Limerick planning areas where expansion would be particularly rapid if the Report's recommendations were implemented. The Report also recommended that special attention should be given to the particularly difficult problems of the north-west. On account of the unprecedented scale of development proposed at Cork and Limerick-Shannon, it would also be essential for the government to set up special development agencies for these centres. These should be responsible both for drawing up master plans for these towns and for organising all major new construction, by putting out work to contract with the local authorities, the National Building Agency or private builders, or by fostering private development.

#### **Report of Public Services Organisation Review Group 1966-69**

4.7. This report was commissioned by the Minister for Finance and the Review Group was given the following terms of reference:

"Having regard to the growing responsibilities of Government, to examine and report on the organisation of the Departments of State at the higher levels, including the appropriate distribution of functions as between both Departments themselves and Departments and other bodies."

The Review Group examined the Public Service in detail and made proposals. This summary only deals with the sections of the "Devlin Report" which relate to regional development.

4.8. The Devlin Report recognised that there was, to some extent, a conflict between the concepts of the functional and the regional organisation of the services of government; by "regional" was meant (in this context) the organisation of groups of services on a territorial basis as opposed to a central organisation broken down by functional areas. The best attainable system would combine elements of both concepts. In the context of broad national policy, there must be co-ordination at the centre; for detailed execution and day-to-day policy, organisation would be functional or regional depending on the requirements of the service.

4.9. In the local authority sphere, the territorial unit had been the county; for certain aspects of physical planning, the Department of Local Government had, on the advice of An Foras Forbartha, divided the country into nine planning regions. In the area of the central Departments, while the broad distribution of responsibilities was on a functional basis for the field services, each Department had taken its own road towards regionalisation with no regard to any overall plan. The public bodies with extensive field services had found it convenient to use some kind of region, often with sub-districts which might be smaller or larger than the county according to the volume of business to be discharged.

4.10. The Devlin Report recommended separation of the policy-making and executive functions in the Public Service in order to free policy-makers from day-to-day matters of execution. The Report also recommended regionalisation of departmental field services and the appointment of departmental regional directors. The main feature in this concept was the co-ordination of differing field activities at regional level by a Regional Director so that the decision on a matter which involved two or more functional areas could be taken at regional level without reference to the central authority.

4.11. The co-ordination of Departmental planning and executive activities at regional level was dependent on the co-ordination of regions. The field activities of all Departments and of local authorities should be co-ordinated at regional level. This raised organisational possibilities of great importance, which called for very early examination by the central organisational unit for the public service and, because it impinged so much on local government, in conjunction with the proposed Department of Regional Development.

4.12. In addition to these general proposals for the reorganisation of the Public Service as a whole, the Report made specific recommendations for each department. The proposals for the reorganisation of the Department of Local Government are of particular relevance here. The Department of Local Government is responsible for the main components of the man-made physical environment in local authority areas. Its role is predominantly a regulatory one; detailed financial control is exercised

over the local authorities, which are its executive agencies for these functions; and technical supervision has accompanied financial control. The Report recommended that the scope of the Department should be extended to enable it to lead co-ordination of all aspects of development in local areas. This co-ordination should be on a regional basis. In the light of this recommendation and in view of the increasing emphasis on regionalisation, the Department's name should be changed to "Department of Regional Development". The Report also recommended that since there were so many regionally managed activities in the public service, a possible first step would be the appointment of an official Regional Co-ordinator.

#### **Addendum to Report of Public Services Organisation Review Group 1966-69**

4.13. In an Addendum to the Devlin Report, a member of the Review Group, Mr. T. J. Barrington was critical of the majority report as not being sufficiently concerned "with the contribution here of an effective geographical system". He argued that an authority was required in each region comprising in itself the developmental (and executive) functions of all the administrative agencies operating in the region. The proposals for the field services of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Lands in the main Report showed how this would work at regional level for one major service; but in addition to agriculture, all the major services—physical planning, tourism, education, justice, revenue, health and welfare, communications, etc.—would need to be linked together in some similar way.

4.14. In Mr. Barrington's view, a great deal of development discretion should be given by the relevant departments to their regional directors if any such scheme was to have a chance of working, and the regional authority must be able to bind together the general activities—as distinct from the specialised ones—of the regional directors. The regional directors should, if there was to be any real deconcentration, be given real managerial discretion by the appropriate agencies so that there could be rapid and effective response to varying regional needs. The respon-

sibility for functions that seemed to fall between individual agencies should be borne by the regional authority until an appropriate allocation of function was made by the central administration.

4.15. Mr. Barrington proposed, therefore, a regional authority concerned with the whole range of public administration—specified or emergent—so far as it was relevant to the region. It would have functions, to a greater or less extent, co-extensive with the functions, of nearly all of the departments. The relationships of the regional administration with the central departments would vary with the function—police functions, for example, would have a different relationship with the centre from, say, educational ones.

4.16. Mr. Barrington argued that the history of local government at the county level and the experience of the Shannon Free Airport Development Company showed that effective devolution of discretion was meaningless unless the authority to which the discretion was devolved was given real authority and funds, and that it was a clearly executive authority, not a consultative or ornamental one. If planning for regional development was to be meaningful, a co-ordinating regional director, an officer of the Department of Regional Development, should be charged with the co-ordination of regional plans and their execution, so that the directors worked as a team with sufficient discretion to discharge their overall developmental and executive responsibilities, to make compromises, and to subordinate some departmental aims to the general welfare. The relationship of the regional co-ordinating director with the other regional directors should be one of planning, co-ordination and review, and he should have no executive control over them. The co-ordinating director, as *primus inter pares*, would be the Government's main, and residual, representative in the region, and should be equipped at the least with a finance staff and a planning staff disposing of skills in addition to those of environmental planning.

**White Paper on Local Government Reorganisation**  
**February 1971**

4.17. The White Paper set out for public discussion the Government's proposals for the reorganisation of the local government system.\* These proposals followed a review of the system which was carried out in the Department of Local Government. The White Paper was primarily concerned with the authorities defined as "local authorities" for the purposes of the Local Government Acts and for which the Minister for Local Government was responsible. These were the county councils, the county borough corporations, borough corporations, urban district councils and town commissioners and certain committees and joint bodies formed by these authorities. In general, the White Paper was concerned with other local bodies only in so far as they had relationships with the local authorities.

4.18. The Public Services Organisation Review Group recommended that any new regional bodies "should not form an extra layer of government duplicating the activities of existing authorities". The White Paper argued that this made sense as in area, population and resources, this country was much smaller than those in which regional administration (as part of a multi-tier system of government) had come to be accepted—regions elsewhere had populations, areas and resources as great as, or even greater than, the entire Irish State. The majority of regions in European countries, for example, had populations of from one to five million. To interpose regional authorities with executive powers between existing central and local authorities in this country would give rise to problems of function and responsibility, provide further scope for conflict between different levels, and create additional demands on existing resources, not least on qualified planning and other professional staff, who were already in short supply.

\*It must be noted that this White Paper does not represent the position of the present Government on Local Government Reorganisation. The views of the Minister for Local Government on this issue are summarised in: *Local Government Reorganisation: Discussion Document*, Department of Local Government, December 1973.

4.19. In view of the foregoing, regional authorities should only be considered as *alternative* (in whole or in part) to the present county and urban authorities—they might assume but should not duplicate the functions of existing authorities. From the local government viewpoint, the case for the establishment of such authorities (which would be responsible in a typical case for a number of counties) rested mainly on the view that larger areas of administration were necessary if local authorities were to be able to cope with the increasing range and sophistication of local services, provide the resources to carry them out effectively and achieve maximum economies of scale. Regional authorities need not, of course, take over all local government functions. However, because the major functions of local authorities (including physical planning and the provision of roads, housing, water and sewerage services and other forms of infrastructure) were so closely inter-related, it would be essential that this group of functions should be the responsibility of one and the same authority in each area. It would, of course, be vital to ensure that the transfer of local government functions to regional authorities would not reduce local involvement and participation or diminish the responsiveness of local government to local needs; indeed, any reorganisation which would destroy these features of local government would not be acceptable.

4.20. The Government would not wish to establish statutory regional authorities with executive powers in the absence of clear evidence of their desirability and acceptability. The White Paper concluded, therefore, that the best approach would be to ensure effective co-operation at the regional level between local authorities. Should evidence emerge, however, of the desirability and acceptability of regional authorities with executive powers, the Government would be prepared to consider the matter afresh. Existing statutory provisions provided a flexible framework under which local authorities could voluntarily combine in the interests of efficiency and economy in the provision of particular services. There were, for example, powers to form joint committees (either advisory or with delegated powers) for any purpose in which authorities were jointly interested, and it was open to any authority to arrange for the discharge, on agreed terms, of any of its functions by another local authority where it was of the opinion that this would be advantageous. In the past, however, local authorities had not resorted extensively to joint action or

other forms of co-operation. A few joint committees had been established and in particular cases (e.g. the construction of bridges, the upkeep of roads, the provision of water supplies) local authorities had acted together.

4.21. If the county system was to remain, co-operation and joint action between local authorities would be necessary on a much greater scale. The Government would prefer that co-operation should come about as the result of a full understanding and acceptance by the bodies concerned of the benefits involved. One useful step towards the development of this understanding would be the establishment of a unit charged with the responsibility for examining the scope for co-operation and joint action and reporting to the authorities concerned on the likely benefits—financial and otherwise. But something more than this would be needed if the change in attitudes—which was so necessary if the full benefits of co-operation were to be achieved—was to be brought about. The Government believed that the solution lay in the promotion of a wider understanding of the regional outlook.

4.22. The need for greater co-operation and co-ordination between local authorities in the provision of local government services would suggest a progressive widening of the role of the regional groups which had already been established to act, on a non-statutory basis, as co-ordinating bodies and as instruments for joint action. It was vital that these bodies should grow naturally: their ultimate effectiveness would be all the greater if they developed in response to real, practical needs felt by the authorities which comprised them. Their development to date on this basis was judged very encouraging. They had developed satisfactorily on the present informal basis but the Government were prepared to give statutory cover to their activities as required. Such legislation could cover their development in stages. For instance, it could put their staff functions on a more formal basis. It would enable them to provide services or perform functions for their constituent bodies on an agency basis. It could provide, at least, at a later stage, for the statutory definition of the regions, the constitution of the regional organisations, and their functions in co-ordinating local development plans and the plans of other bodies with responsibility for aspects of development in the region.

4.23. It was desirable that regions should be standardised and it would be the Government's aim to achieve this as far as possible. But standardisation might be difficult to achieve completely or quickly and it should be recognised that complete standardisation might not necessarily be the best arrangement, bearing in mind the wide range of interests which might need regional organisation. A special regional structure might have such advantages for a particular service or function as to offset any disadvantages for other services of not having total uniformity of areas. On the other hand, a proliferation of overlapping regions would be unacceptable. It was particularly important that there should be a common set of regions for purposes bearing on physical planning and development. Following the Government statement on regional planning of 19th May 1969, the same nine regions applied for local government purposes, for regional planning and for industrial promotion. It was the intention that these standard regions should be reviewed in due course in the light of experience.

4.24. Effective co-operation, co-ordination and exchange of information was necessary at regional level among State Agencies and between them and local authorities. The setting up of the Regional Development Organisations was seen, therefore, as a significant step towards the co-ordination of public services at regional level. Any further steps would have to await decisions on the Report of the Public Services Organisation Review Group.

#### **More Local Government—A Programme for Development**

Institute of Public Administration, Dublin 1971.

4.25. This paper was prepared by a study group set up by the Executive Committee of the Institute of Public Administration in February 1971, in response to the request by the Minister for Local Government for comments on the White Paper on the reorganisation of local government, published earlier in that month. The paper concurred with the White Paper's proposals for the establishment of four representational levels (region, county, district and community) but recommended three

principal decision-making levels: the region, the county and the district. A three-tier structure corresponded with the practical needs of a large number of services, central and local. Representational or consultative bodies without powers of decision tended to lose effectiveness and responsibility and to become merely centres of demand. A structure comprising four representational levels but only one effective administrative level would therefore be unbalanced. It would lack the equilibrium (more or less) which should exist between, on the one hand, demand, and on the other the hard decisions which would have to be taken in allocating scarce resources.

4.26. At regional level the IPA paper recommended that formal statutory recognition should be accorded to the regional pattern which had emerged from the *Local Government (Planning and Development) Act, 1963*. This would mean giving statutory authority, powers and duties to the regional development organisations, as a necessary step towards establishing regional centres for four categories of essential functions: (a) strategic or major planning, (b) economic development, (c) co-ordination of public services, and (d) provision of certain services. Co-ordination of public services on a regional basis would be effected through the representative body for the region, and by means of an executive board comprising the regional executive or director and the appropriate officers for other services. The regional executive officer would occupy the same position *vis-à-vis* the region as the county manager in a county. Planning and other specialist staff would be required at regional level. A personnel unit would advise on recruitment, training and other aspects of staff development. Management services units would be located at the regional centres.

4.27. Certain aspects of the major local government services would benefit from regional administration: large water supply and drainage schemes; water resources management and pollution control; the fire service; specialist and reference libraries. Responsibility for the arterial roads programme should be devolved to the regions. The question of setting up regional machinery pools should be examined. Valuation for rating purposes, and other central services for local government, should be dispersed to the regional centres.

## Government Statements on Regional Policy\*

19 May 1969  
(extract)

4.28. "A regional co-ordinating body has already been established in the Limerick Region, and the Government propose that co-ordinating groups should now be established in all regions. The main function of these groups will be to co-ordinate the programme for regional development in each region. The purpose of the programme will be, principally, to identify the potential in each area, including the factors which make for economic expansion (such as growth centres) and the factors which impede expansion."

4.29. "It is not intended that the regional groups will assume any executive functions. Industrial promotion in each region will be the responsibility of the Industrial Development Authority. The existing nine physical-planning regions will be retained for the present, subject to adjustment of the Dublin region to conform to convenient administrative boundaries."

4th May 1972  
(extract)

4.30. "The Government consider that the Regional Development Organisations established in the regions are performing a useful role which should be developed further and that they should accordingly continue to receive assistance and support. This does not imply any departure from the intention to preserve the county as the basic local government unit. Further consideration will be given to the possibility of increasing harmonisation of regional systems which have grown up for different purposes."

\*Both of these statements predate the change of Government in February 1973. The status of these statements is not clear as the present Government has not stated its position with regard to institutional arrangements for regional development. The Government statements of 19 May 1969 and 4 May 1972 are re-produced in full in NESC Report No. 4, *Regional Policy in Ireland: A Review*, Appendix IV.



**Extract from Address by Minister for the Gaeltacht on  
4 October 1975**

"Where do we go from here in regard to Western Development? I submit to this Conference that there are two basic and absolutely necessary pre-requisites for a successful regional development policy. Firstly there must be a comprehensive integrated over-all development strategy covering all aspects of development. This policy must not be exclusively aimed at industrial promotion, but must embrace all aspects of development, economic, social, cultural, community and environmental. Secondly to effectively implement such a policy and to co-ordinate the work of the various State, Semi-State and Voluntary Agencies already operating in the region, there must be a special development agency with overall responsibility for the implementation of this special regional policy. Applying these two basic criteria to the West of Ireland what do we find? We find that these two criteria have been combined and applied very effectively in the Mid-West where the Shannon Free Airport Development Company operate and in the Gaeltacht regions where Gaeltarra Éireann are the development agency.

In the non-Gaeltacht parts of the province of Connaught and Donegal which together comprise a region where the need is greatest and the need for action is most urgent no such co-ordinated policy nor overall development agency is yet in operation.

I believe that the time has come, in fact I realise that in the opinion of most of you, the time is overdue, when such a policy and such an agency must be brought into being so that the serious economic and social problems to be found in the region and which are without parallel in any part of Western Europe can be tackled effectively and satisfactorily. Indeed the need for such a policy and such an agency has been recognised long ago by most of the delegates at this Conference. I am pleased to say that the Government also recognise the need for such a policy and such an agency. I am pleased therefore to announce to this conference that the Government have decided in favour of the establishment of a Western Development Board. This decision obviously affects many different local bodies and agencies and it is our intention to engage in very full consultations with all concerned so as to ensure that the Board when established will be able to work effectively with the enthusiastic co-operation of everybody concerned."

**Extract from Address by Minister for Foreign Affairs on 8 April  
1976**

"Ultimately, I believe that the economic development of the region could best be undertaken by a North-Western Development Board whose responsibilities would extend on either side of the Border. Such a Board would, as I would envisage it, be one of three such bodies, the others being the Shannon Free Airport Development Company, with responsibilities for the Mid-West region, and the proposed Western Development Board, which is at present in process of establishment by the Irish Government. I believe that the problems of regional development in the West and North-West can not be solved without a three-tier system—assistance from the European Community, action by the two Governments involved, and, finally, a system of Boards each of which is rooted in a particular region and which will have responsibility to foster the growth and development of the region for which it is responsible."

## Chapter 5

### NESC QUESTIONNAIRE ON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATIONS

5.1. Having examined the existing institutional arrangements for regional development and the various proposals which have been put forward for reorganisation, a number of alternative arrangements presented themselves. It was decided to draw up a questionnaire in order to obtain the views of the relevant bodies on these alternatives.

5.2. The questionnaire was circulated to the following bodies:

- The nine Regional Development Organisations
- The Department of Local Government
- The Department of the Public Service
- Roinn na Gaeltachta
- The Department of Agriculture
- The Department of Lands (Forest and Wildlife Section)
- The Industrial Development Authority
- Córas Iompair Éireann
- Bord na Móna
- The Electricity Supply Board
- Bord Fáilte Éireann
- The Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- Association of Chambers of Commerce of Ireland
- The Irish Port Authorities Association
- The Central Development Committee
- Shannon Free Airport Development Company Ltd.

5.3. Questionnaires were not sent to individual Planning Authorities as these bodies are represented on the Regional Development Organisations. A total of 24 questionnaires were sent out and replies were received from 22 bodies. The questions put in the questionnaire, together with a representative selection of replies, are given in Appendix B.

5.4. It is apparent from the replies quoted in Appendix B that there was no overall consensus on any of the points raised except that there was a need for change. The replies varied from strong support for the granting of statutory recognition to the Regional Development Organisations, to condemnation of Regional Development Organisations as unnecessarily duplicating the work of existing bodies. There was very little support for the granting of statutory powers to the Regional Development Organisations. The strongest support for the granting of statutory recognition to Regional Development Organisations came, not surprisingly, though not exclusively, from the existing Regional Development Organisations, who had previously made a submission requesting this to the Minister for Local Government. The Regional Development Organisations were generally in favour of their being allocated co-ordinating and advisory functions in their regions in relation to physical, economic, social and cultural development. The Regional Development Organisations generally favoured maintenance of the status quo in relation to nomination of the boards of Regional Development Organisations and to existing regional boundaries. No Regional Development Organisation favoured the reduction of its own boundaries. Most Regional Development Organisations expressed interest in involving voluntary bodies in their work on a consultative basis. More significantly, the Regional Development Organisations emphasised the need for some form of central co-ordinating body for regional development. This emphasis on the need for more effective co-ordination and guidance confirmed the findings of the Devlin Report.

5.5. The Government Departments and State-sponsored Bodies were in general more cautious and less enthusiastic about the granting of statutory recognition or powers to the Regional Development Organisations. These bodies tended to view the question of administrative arrangements for regional development as part of the overall re-organisation of the Public Service. They were critical of the proliferation of regions for different purposes and also of the boundaries of the Physical Planning Regions. The Department of the Public Service stated that it was considering the whole question of public service sub-national structures, while the Department of Local Government said that it was considering the status of Regional Development Organisations.

## Chapter 6

### PROPOSALS FOR INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

6.1. Chapters 2 and 3 above examined existing arrangements for regional development and identified defects in these arrangements. In Chapter 4 the proposals which have been made in various reports to remedy these defects were summarised. Chapter 5 and Appendix B outlined the views of the bodies actually involved in regional development. This chapter draws these threads together in an attempt to identify the minimum change which is desirable and feasible at this junction.

6.2. The primary objective of regional development is to remove, or at least reduce, regional inequalities in living standards and opportunities, within the overall national objective of full employment at rising living standards. The achievement of this objective requires the creation of employment opportunities and amenities in particular places and regions. This objective cannot be achieved by any single body or agency but requires co-ordinated effort by the relevant Government Departments, State Agencies and Local Authorities both at the policy-making and day-to-day executive levels. This co-ordination is required both at national and regional levels. There is no single body or agency at national level with overall responsibility for all aspects of regional development (the Regional Development Committee which was charged with this task has not met since early 1972), while at regional level the performance of the Regional Development Organisations has been uneven. Any proposals for institutional arrangements for regional development must try to remedy these defects.

6.3. In making proposals for change in the institutional arrangements for regional development it must be borne in mind that radical institutional changes may be impossible or self-defeating, and that changes

must be gradual, building on existing arrangements to work towards a more satisfactory system. Equally, the creation of an extra layer or layers of government should be avoided because it would in all probability exacerbate the existing problems.

6.4. Given the importance of regional development it is essential that there should be, and should be seen to be, a real commitment to regional development at the very highest level. It is our view that, without political involvement it will be difficult to achieve progress towards the development and effective implementation of regional plans and policies. We recommend, therefore, that a Minister should be assigned responsibility for regional policy. The question of the appropriate Minister was discussed by the Council, and differing views were expressed regarding which Minister should be given this responsibility. However, the Council feels that this is primarily a matter for decision by Government. The Council would see advantage in also having a Cabinet Committee, to be chaired by the Minister responsible, and to include other Ministers concerned in regional policy, i.e. Local Government, Industry and Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, Lands, Labour, Finance, the Gaeltacht, and Transport and Power.

6.5. We recommend also, the establishment of a Central Committee for Regional Economic Development, to report to the Minister with responsibility for regional policy. The nucleus of the staff of the Committee would be provided from the staff of the Minister's Department, but staff would be drawn from other sources as well, as required. The Committee would consist of officers of the relevant Government Departments and the IDA, and should have power to co-opt additional members, as required. The Departments represented on this Committee should be those whose Ministers are members of the Cabinet Committee. For special studies and analyses of regional problems, the Committee should use experts drawn from bodies that depend wholly or mainly on public funds—for example, the ESRI, the IDA, the IIRS, the IPA, An Foras Talúntais and An Foras Forbartha. Where necessary, this expertise should be supplemented by the use of consultants. These arrangements would ensure that the Committee would be supported by the necessary range and quality of expertise to enable it to carry out its appointed tasks.

6.6. The primary task of the Central Committee for Regional Economic Development should be to articulate regionally the national development programme which is to be published during 1976. In approaching this task, the Committee should examine, at an early stage in its work, the suitability of the existing Physical Planning Regions and the feasibility of defining uniform regions for the whole range of inter-related development activities and functions.\* The Regional Industrial Plans of the IDA might form the focal point for integrated planning for each region. The practical difficulties involved in this task will be substantial but they are not a sufficient reason for not facing up to it. The new Committee should not become involved in preparing detailed plans for the individual regions but should, in consultation with the Regional Development Organisations, prepare an overall framework within which the Regional Development Organisations could prepare more detailed regional plans for their regions.

6.7. In the preparation of these detailed plans, the Regional Development Organisations could be given assistance in dealing with particular problems by the experts drawn from the bodies referred to in the paragraph 6.5. The subsequent task of the new Committee should be to monitor the progress made towards achieving the targets of the regional programmes or plans and to make appropriate reviews and revisions. The new Committee should also monitor and co-ordinate the work of the Regional Development Organisations.

6.8. The desirability of granting statutory recognition to the Regional Development Organisations should be examined by the new Central Committee for Regional Economic Development. Such recognition could facilitate the day to day operations of the Regional Development Organisations in enabling them to enter into contracts, hold property, employ permanent staff and act on an agency basis for local authorities. In addition, statutory recognition could, together with the other proposals outlined above, greatly add to the status of the Regional Development Organisations in dealing with other bodies and would consequently

\*At present the Physical Planning Regions are used by the IDA, the Regional Development Organisations and the Department of Local Government, while other bodies such as Bord Fáilte, the Regional Health Boards and the ESB use different regions.

improve their work. On the other hand, statutory recognition of Regional Development Organisations could be interpreted as giving permanence to the present arrangements and might therefore reduce both the likelihood and scope for change. In our view, therefore, a review of the composition of the Regional Development Organisations,\* the question of whether or not they should be given statutory recognition, and how their present functions might evolve and develop in the context of a national economic plan, would best be left to the new Committee. That Committee should also consider the future position of the County Development Teams and their relationship with other bodies in the regions, and of the Central Development Committee.

6.9. Whether or not they are granted statutory recognition, the Regional Development Organisations should be allocated specific functions. These functions should include the updating of the reports prepared by the Regional Development Organisations in the early 1970's, consulting with the Central Committee on Regional Economic Development on the regional articulation of the national programme or plan, preparing detailed plans for their regions within the national framework in consultation with the Regional Development Committee and the local authorities concerned, and participating in the periodic revisions of these plans. The Regional Development Organisations could also assist in co-ordinating day to day activities of member bodies.

6.10. The proposals set out in paragraphs 6.4 to 6.9 above would help to remedy some of the defects in the existing system that were referred to in the earlier chapters of this report. Moreover, they would have the advantage of being relatively easy to implement since no new legislation would be required, expertise already available would be mobilised, and existing arrangements would be disturbed to the minimum extent. These proposals would not result in the creation of a new layer of government. The changes proposed could be made without prejudice to the work or conclusions of the inquiry recently instituted by the Minister for the Public Service (See Appendix A).

\*This review should include an examination of how organisations representing farmers, workers and employers could contribute most effectively to the work of the Regional Development Organisations.

6.11. The above proposals would need to be modified substantially to accommodate the establishment of the Western Development Board and possibly similar Boards for other areas of the country. However, it is very difficult to comment on the implications of the new Board for regional structures in the absence of any clear statement of its scope and functions. If a Western Development Board were established, and the existing number of Regional Development Organisations in the area retained, the process of planning and co-ordination could become very complicated. Consideration might, therefore, have to be given to the possibility of disbanding the Regional Development Organisations in the area covered by the Western Development Board, and their replacement by a single Regional Development Organisation for the area covered by the Board. The larger area within the responsibility of the Board would, moreover, justify an executive and planning staff responsible to the Board and some devolution of decision-making from the centre. The Council would expect that if the new Central Committee for Regional Economic Development were set up, it would be consulted on the establishment of a Western Development Board and its implications.

NSC 22-10

## APPENDIX A

### **Statement from the Minister for the Public Service on the setting up of an inquiry into the organisation of the functions of Government at sub-national levels**

The Government, in the course of its continuing review of the institutions of the public service, has been considering the organisational arrangements for the discharge of its functions at sub-national levels. The evolution of the arrangements at these levels has been one more of historical growth rather than of planned development. Over the years, almost all Departments of State have developed their own arrangements for the delivery of their services at local and regional levels. To-day, the increasing requirements of balanced regional growth, the need for more responsive and participative administration, allied to the constant need for effectiveness, efficiency and economy in administration indicate that a fresh look should be taken at existing institutions at sub-national levels. The Government has, therefore, decided to institute an inquiry with the following terms of reference:—

“To examine and report on the appropriate organisation and structures for the planning, co-ordination and discharge of the functions of Government at sub-national levels”.

The inquiry involves a fundamental appraisal of the total structure of Government at sub-national levels. This will not inhibit on-going work on particular aspects, such as the review of local government being carried out by the Minister for Local Government and work relating to the establishment of a Western Development Board being undertaken under the aegis of the Minister for the Public Service.

This inquiry will be undertaken under the direction of a Cabinet Committee consisting of the Ministers for the Public Service, Finance, Local Government, Industry and Commerce, Health, the Gaeltacht and Agriculture and Fisheries, under the Chairmanship of the Minister for the

Public Service, Mr. R. Ryan T.D. The inquiry will be carried out by an inter-Departmental Committee reporting to the Cabinet Committee. The inter-Departmental Committee will be under the Chairmanship of Dr. Noel Whelan, Deputy Secretary, Department of the Public Service.

It is hoped that the inquiry will be completed as quickly as possible. In due course, persons and organisations interested in the subject matter of the inquiry will be invited, through press advertisement, to make submissions to the Committee.

## APPENDIX B

### **NESC Questionnaire on Regional Development Organisations**

The questions posed in the questionnaire together with a representative selection of replies are reproduced below. The term representative is used in this context as being representative of all of the views which were put forward. In answering the questions it was requested that consideration should be given to the recommendation in the Devlin Report that "if there are any new proposals for regional bodies, they should not form an extra layer of government duplicating the activities of existing authorities".

A letter accompanying the questionnaire explained the purpose of the questionnaire and stated that:

"The Sub-Committee (of the Regional Policy Committee of the NESC) is anxious to obtain the views of relevant bodies and has therefore decided to seek your comments on possible alternative lines of development for the Regional Development Organisations. These alternatives are not in any sense proposals at this stage but are an attempt to encourage debate on the issues involved.

The alternatives are set out in the form of questions in the attached document. The questions have deliberately not been put in normal questionnaire form, as the Sub-Committee is aware that the issues are too complex for yes/no type answers. Also as the Sub-Committee does not wish to constrain or limit the debate, comments will be welcomed on relevant issues which may not have been raised in the questions and the Sub-Committee would refer in particular to the Council's publication *Regional Policy in Ireland: A Review*. It would, however, be desirable if the answers provided related as closely as possible to the questions and if the answers were kept as brief as possible."

The following are the questions and replies.

Q. (i) Should the Regional Development Organisations continue as at present ?

or Should the Regional Development Organisations be given statutory recognition and, if so, what are the implications of such a step ?

or Should the Regional Development Organisations also be given statutory powers, and, if so, what should these powers be ? Are there any powers which should be devolved by central government or conceded by local authorities to Regional Development Organisations ?

A. "The Regional Development Organisations have been in their present form for up to seven years now, and they should not continue for any longer in their present form. They have no authority or staff to progress on problems, and they only made progress through the good will of the constituent bodies. They therefore need statutory recognition and some independent revenue to carry out the many planning tasks, and studies that require to be done."

A. "We can see no reason why the Regional Development Organisations should continue in their present or any form, with the notable exception of the mid-western region they have been singularly unproductive since their inception. They aspire to works which if carried through would only tend to duplicate and in some cases compound the work of organisations such as the IDA, the County Development Teams and An Foras Forbartha. They should certainly not be given any further finance as the bulk of their present subventions is spent on maintaining unnecessary headquarters facilities and staffs.

If the Regional Development Organisations must continue then the sensible thing to do would be to integrate them with the Local Authority under the control of the Local Authority, in which case some use and value may be had from the money expended on them.

We are totally opposed to any suggestion that statutory recognition and/or power be given to these organisations as this would suggest the setting up of a controlling organisation at the centre resulting in a further exercise in Empire Building which the country cannot afford."

A. "The Board of the Regional Development Organisation strongly supports the case for granting statutory recognition to Regional Development Organisations having an advisory and consultative role, but not executive powers."

A. "Regional Development Organisations should have statutory recognition and they should be given the appropriate powers of development corporations in their respective areas. They should have devolved authority in respect of their budgets and have a supervisory/co-ordinating role in their respective areas in terms of the local authority involvement, *inter alia*, in physical planning, infrastructural development and education."

A. "If the present arrangements are maintained statutory recognition for the Regional Development Organisations would not itself be of fundamental importance in that it would not confer any greater benefits than permanent and pensionable status for the staff. If, however, the Regional Development Organisations were given the functions of determining regional priorities in infrastructure investment and some of the new functions which are referred to in the following paragraph, some form of legislative basis for their existence would seem desirable. There is evidence to suggest that the absence of a clearly defined statutory role is causing frustration in the Regional Development Organisations and the fact that the Directors are not permanent and pensionable must eventually affect their performance.

Formal powers for the Regional Development Organisations could also include a reference to the following:—

- (i) Responsibility for keeping regional information and statistics;
- (ii) Identification of regional employment needs;

(iii) Technical co-operation with developing counties in the field of local administration."

- A. "The Board (of the Regional Development Organisation) considers that the Regional Development Organisation should continue as at present until such time as the Western Development Board is set up. The Board is anxious to ensure that there is one co-ordinating Board and that there is not a proliferation of Committees and Boards engaged in the same activity."

"The Regional Development Organisations as presently constituted are useless and should either

(a) be dissolved, or

(b) be given statutory powers including the power to levy monies on the existing local authorities. This of course creates another tier of government with all the attendant problems of remoteness of contact and control."

- A. "The Regional Development Organisations should be given statutory recognition. The question as to whether they should have statutory powers also can only be answered within the context of the development of a national regional policy. We do not see the need for them at this stage."
- A. "At the regional level the Sub-Committee (of the Regional Development Organisation) sees the main problem as being, essentially, one of achieving effective co-ordination of the Development Plans prepared by the Local Planning Authorities. It considers that Regional Development Organisation is the proper body to undertake the task and it endorses the views already put forward in the submission made to the Minister for Local Government seeking that statutory recognition should be accorded to the Organisation. It is further of the view that the case for a co-ordinating body operating from a statutory base exists in the Eastern Region irrespective of the case that can be made for similar bodies in the other regions."

Q. (ii) What are the appropriate areas of interest of the Regional Development Organisations and what role should they play in these areas?

Should they be concerned with the overall economic and social development of the regions? Should they participate in the formulation of regional programmes, either directly, or by the preparation of reports on particular issues, or on the overall economy of the region? Should their role be confined to any or all of the following fields?

(a) industry

(b) training

(c) tourism

(d) vocational and general education

(e) infrastructure

(f) agriculture, either generally or in relation to processing

(g) the environment

(h) social services

(i) the service sector

- A. "The Regional Development Organisations should be concerned with the overall economic and social development of the regions. The formulation of regional programmes is a desirable aim and this should be the primary objective of the Regional Development Organisations. The regional report initially prepared by each Regional Development Organisation should form the basis for this regional programme. These reports would set out the basis for the determination of regional priorities in the provision of services, infrastructure, housing, etc. The



Regional Development Organisations would not assume or duplicate the functions of national agencies, such as the IDA, in that they would not go further than indicating where different kinds of development should be allocated to different areas and what priorities should be given to any particular type of development for each area."

A. "If the Regional Development Organisations are to be given statutory powers their role should initially be concentrated on the following broad areas:

- (a) physical planning including the co-ordination of local authority development plans, and
- (b) development of the infrastructure with particular reference to co-ordination of major road works to ensure uniform standards and optimum use of financial and manpower resources. Under this head might also be included the planning and co-ordination of major regional water and drainage schemes."

A. "The appropriate areas of interest of the Regional Development Organisations are in the fields of regional planning and development and the protection of the environment. The role of the Regional Development Organisations should be to co-ordinate long-term physical, economic and social planning within the framework of national regional policy. The main functions would be:

- (a) To prepare regional strategies, taking into account both national and local considerations, setting out the desired long-term pattern of economic, physical and social development for the region and providing a broad framework for Local Authority Development Plans and for the policy decisions of Central Government.
- (b) To monitor developments in the region.

(c) To advise Central Government Departments of implications for the region of Central Government Policies.

A. The Regional Development Organisations should be concerned with the overall economic and social developments in the regions. They should participate in the formulation of regional programmes by preparation of reports and studies on particular issues.

The Regional Development Organisations' role should not be confined to any number of the fields listed, whilst the fields of infrastructure and the environment would be of particular importance to Regional Development Organisations, all the fields listed are inter-related in terms of regional planning."

A. "In a situation where capital resources are not sufficient to meet the demands for the provision of services, infrastructure, housing, etc., the existence of an organisation at regional level which would consider and agree on investment priorities would be most valuable. Such an organisation could be a consultative body in relation to the planning aspects of major development proposals and provide a forum for discussions on any aspects of development between representatives of local and central government agencies. As the implementation of the development progressed the organisation could have a role in ensuring that the various services would become available when required. If the Regional Development Organisations cannot fulfil these roles their potential would be very considerably diminished."

A. "It is the view of the Sub-Committee (of the Regional Development Organisation) that the legislation giving statutory recognition to the Regional Development Organisations should also:

- (a) acknowledge the co-ordinating, consultative role of the Organisation in all matters appertaining to the physical, economic and social development of the Region;
- (b) provide that the powers reserved to the Minister for Local

Government in regard to the co-ordination of Development Plans generally, as provided in Section 22 of the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act 1963, should be devolved to the Regional Development Organisations insofar as they relate to the co-ordination of Development Plans within each Region;

(c) provide that the Regional Development Organisation would have the power to act on an agency basis for its constituent Local Authorities in such circumstances and to such extent as might be agreed between them from time to time;

(d) make appropriate provision with respect to the Organisation's right to hold property and enter into contracts as well as putting its finance and staffing arrangements on a formal basis."

Q. (iii) Should the boards of the Regional Development Organisations continue to be nominated as at present or should they be directly elected or appointed by Government. Is the representation on the boards of the Regional Development Organisations as effective as it might be? Does it ensure adequate liaison between the bodies represented. Is the representation of the statutory bodies at a sufficiently senior level? Should there be opportunities for participation in the work of the Regional Development Organisations by local interests, such as chambers of commerce, trade unions, farming organisations, and, if so, what form might such participation take, particularly if the work of the Regional Development Organisations is not to be rendered too cumbersome?

A. The present arrangements whereby the majority of the members of the Board of the Regional Development Organisations are indirectly elected by the Local Authorities while other members are appointed by Government should be continued. The representation on the Board would be more effective if elected representatives had continuity of membership of the Regional Development Organisation, i.e. by being elected for the full

term of the life of their respective constituent bodies rather than on an annual basis, otherwise the representation ensures adequate liaison between the bodies represented. Representation of the Statutory Bodies is at a sufficiently senior level.

There should be opportunities for participation in the work of the Regional Development Organisation by Chambers of Commerce, Trade Unions and Farming Organisations through the Committee system, provided that members are appointed as regional representatives of their respective organisations."

A. "The constitution of the Board and Technical Committees of the Regional Development Organisations requires review. There are too many elected representatives on some of the Boards. There is no formal representative of industry, commerce, trade unions and farming interests. All these sectors would have a role in relation to investment and development in the region. If, however, the Regional Development Organisations are not given the functions previously suggested, it would be pointless to extend representation."

A. "The Boards of the Regional Development Organisations would probably function best initially if made up of a combination of nominated representatives from the local authorities and other developmental-type bodies, including Chambers of Commerce, Trade Unions, farming groups, etc. much as at the present time, but supplemented by Government nominees."

A. "In regard to the representation on the Regional Development Organisations the members are satisfied with the Organisation as at present constituted and are further satisfied that it is working effectively and so should not be changed. They feel strongly that elected members of Local Authorities should have the major say in the Organisation and are against either direct election or direct appointment by the Government of the whole Board. The Government and Semi-State Bodies are, of course, now represented on the Board."

It considers that the representation of Statutory Bodies is at a sufficiently high level. Where very important matters relating to a specific Semi-State Body are being discussed it is the practice that officials from Head Office attend in addition to the ordinary representatives.

In relation to the participation of non-statutory bodies the Farming Organisations are already involved here on the Agricultural Sub-committee.

The Board would welcome the greater participation of Chambers of Commerce, Employers Organisations and Trade Unions. It considers that this involvement should be at Sub-committee level or in relation to special projects. This should be so for two reasons

- (a) it would guarantee the primacy of the elected members,
- (b) it would ensure that the Board did not become too large and consequently ineffective.

We already involve these Bodies in the work of the Organisation in so far as we issue the main reports on Regional affairs to them. We have had discussions with them to ascertain how they might contribute to our work. This has not been very successful because:

- (1) the Bodies have not themselves effective Regional structures,
- (2) they seem to infer that because we have not got statutory recognition that our role is ineffective and
- (3) the representatives whom we met were more concerned with the immediate problems of their particular areas rather than with the longer term development of the Region."

- A. "Boards are too large and unwieldy as a consequence. Chairman, Manager, County Surveyor of each County Council would ensure representation at satisfactory senior level.

Chambers of Commerce and Trade Unions should be given consultative status on Executive Committees as proposed in the mid-west Region under their new constitution."

- Q. (iv) If the Regional Development Organisations are given a wider role in relation to regional development is there a need for a central co-ordinating body to oversee these activities, to set guidelines and to monitor progress?

What should be the role, membership and function of a central co-ordinating body for Regional Development Organisations? Would a Central Development body be less effective than a unit linked to a particular Government Department which would assume direct responsibility for the Regional Development Organisations? If so, which Government Department should be given this responsibility? What degree of independence should such a unit be given and how should this independence be assured? What should be the relation of such a unit with the Regional Development Organisations and with other Government Departments and Agencies.

- A. "It is just as necessary to have a co-ordinating body at national level as it is to have a consultative body at local level. The Regional Development Committee fulfilled a very essential role in relation to the co-ordination at national level of the regional development activities of a large number of Government Departments and State agencies. This committee has not met for some considerable time. It could be an effective co-ordinating body and should be revived. The value of reviving the Committee would be greatly diminished unless there is a formal role given to Regional Development Organisations at local level and to the Committee at national level."

- A. "With reference to Question (iv), it was agreed that there was no need for a Central Co-ordinating Body to *oversee the activities of the Regional Development Organisations*. It is felt that such a body could affect the independence of the Regional Development Organisations. Regard should be had to views

previously expressed by the Board in January 1974 when making formal representation to Government to the effect that initiative at regional level should be encouraged, that the Regional Development Organisations should be made feel that they have a role to play in the formulation of regional policy and programmes, that a Consultative Committee representative of the Regional Development Organisations and appropriate Government Departments should be established and should meet on a regular basis to consider regional policies and programmes."

A. "There is a need for a central co-ordinating body to oversee the activities of the Regional Development Organisation. This might be a central body comprised of the managers of the various Regional Development Organisations, and the Regional Development Organisations themselves reporting to the Department of Finance, or the Department of Local Government who would appear to have the most important roles in Regional Development."

A. "If a Department of Regional Development, with a lead role in all matters appertaining to local development, is established as recommended at Paragraph 25.4.1. of the Report of the Public Services Organisation Review Group (Devlin Report) it would appear that the co-ordinating body should most appropriately be linked to that Department."

A. "Central co-ordinating body is certainly necessary but co-ordination is necessary at both national and regional levels. Giving responsibility to one Government Department would create negative co-ordination. Overlapping should be avoided. The roles of the County Development teams and the Department of Finance committee responsible for co-ordinating these teams ought to be examined with a view to their integration in the regional framework."

A. "One government department should be given responsibility for administrative arrangements. While there are several departments

with roles in regional development, either the Department of Finance or the Department of Local Government would appear most appropriate.

The Department of Finance deals with economic planning, while the Department of Local Government is closely associated with the local authorities which provide democratic representation on the Regional Development Organisations."

A. "The optimum solution to the problem of co-ordination which will arise, is the establishment of a department of State with responsibility for regional development. At the present time we do not have a coherent national policy for regional development and only in this way, that is through the establishment of a specialised department of State, can the existing policy be given the necessary degree of coherence."

A. "It is considered that there should be a central co-ordinating Committee to co-ordinate the activities of all the Regional Development Organisations while the day to day co-ordination of activities would be best obtained through the Department of Local Government."

A. "In an ideal planning situation a central co-ordinating body would be desirable to oversee the activities of the Regional Development Organisations. Such a central body, however, would need an agreed set of guidelines and policies. In our view adequate guidelines do not exist at present and if these are to be formulated they should be presented in the form of a National Physical Development Plan. Without this we see the role of the central co-ordinating body as being extremely difficult and unproductive. In the present circumstances, therefore, we feel that the most effective co-ordinating body would be a unit linked to a Government Department such as the Department of Local Government. In order for this unit to work effectively, a fair degree of independence would be needed. At this stage without firm proposals it is difficult to say how this independence can be assured or to comment on the relationship of this unit with the

Regional Development Organisations and other Government Departments."

A. "If the Regional Development Organisations were to be given a wider role in relation to regional development matters, it may well be that changes would be required in present co-ordinating arrangements. It would not, however, be possible to determine the appropriate co-ordinating machinery required until the precise functions and powers which might be assigned to the Regional Development Organisations had been identified."

Q. (v) "Should the Physical Planning Regions as defined at present continue to be used? Are there too many regions? Could the position be improved by making relatively minor alterations to the regions e.g. by grouping some regions or by minor changes in regional boundaries?"

A. "The Physical Planning Regions as defined at present should continue to be used—a degree of identity has been established and to disrupt this by the alteration of boundaries would not achieve anything as any new boundaries arrived at will be unsuitable for some activities."

A. "Adjustment of geographical anomalies is needed. For example, Tipperary Town which is only 20 miles from Limerick is part of the South East Region. Donegal combined with Sligo-Leitrim could bring about a boundary alignment similar to those already obtaining in areas such as tourism and health."

A. "Lack of performance by Regional Development Organisations in some regions is not necessarily attributable to considerations of status and definition of functions but is rather due to defects in the composition of the regions themselves. The composition of the majority of the planning regions is reasonably logical. However, the existence of Counties Sligo and Leitrim and of County Donegal each as a separate planning region does not make sense. It is pointless to talk about the establishment of regional investment priorities in relation to a single county or in

relation to two counties having the same chief executive. The position of certain other counties in their particular region e.g. County Roscommon, is not entirely satisfactory. It is accepted that no grouping of counties could be perfect. However, it would appear that the composition of the planning regions requires to be reviewed, particularly in the context of the regions comprising one or two counties in the north-western part of the country. It would also be important simultaneously to standardise the regions so that all the public services operating within each region could be co-ordinated. The development of a regional outlook and the achievement of an effective regional strategy are greatly inhibited by the existence of a multiplicity of regions for various purposes."

A. "The physical planning regions as defined at present coincide with administrative boundaries and should in general continue to be used. However, there could be a case made for inclusion of all or part of County Meath in the North Eastern Region, although it is also recognised that Meath people may have reservations in regard to any such proposal. There may also be a case for a grouping of those regions which have not the population base and urban structure to form a viable economic unit. Regions so grouped could be considered for physical planning purposes as sub-regions of the larger economic regions."

A. "In our view the physical planning regions as defined at present should continue to be used. Ideally, one would like to see the tourism regions and physical planning/IDA regions being similar. Obviously, we favour that the tourism regions should be adopted; however, we fully understand that in terms of industry, agriculture, etc. these may not be the most appropriate."

A. "In the absence of the broader policy framework, continued use of the present Physical Planning Regions has much to commend it. With minor modifications it is our opinion that the Mid-West Region as presently defined constitutes an optimum area."

- A. "Finally the physical planning regions, defined at present coincide with administrative boundaries, and should continue to coincide with administrative boundaries, although it is possible still to carry out this exercise by having minor changes in certain Regional Development Organisations where there is an attraction or a tie with another region. This could be done by taking certain district electoral areas but still keeping to known administrative boundaries, which are essential in regard to population, planning and such statistical information. In this regard it is of extreme importance that the other regional divisions in the country should be re-assessed to ensure not so much that they coincide with the physical planning regions, but that they use boundaries which are of some administrative significance, so that the statistics can be accurately assessed. In this way it would be possible to apply corrective factors so that one type of region can be compared with another."
- A. "There are not too many regions. What is required is more Local Government and more planning closer to the people, not larger units remote from the scene of activity."
- A. "The Advisory Regional Plan and Final Report prepared for the Dublin Region in 1967 by Professor Myles Wright treated the Borough of Drogheda as part of the Region and recommended that it should become one of the major Development Centres in the Outer Dublin Metropolitan Area. It is the view of the Sub-Committee (of the RDO) that the Borough of Drogheda still comes within the sphere of influence of Dublin and that its supporting hinterland and likely area of further development is so orientated south and westwards towards County Meath that the Borough should, for regional planning purposes, be regarded as part of the Eastern Region. Subject to that reservation in regard to the Borough of Drogheda the Sub-Committee considers that the Eastern Region otherwise forms a coherent and homogeneous area for Physical Planning and Economic Planning purposes."