

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

ADDRESS BY DR. RENATO RUGGIERO

Director-General for Regional Policy,
Commission of the European Communities

Londonderry, Monday 27 September 1976

Your Excellencies, Your Worship, Mr. McNiff, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is with the greatest pleasure that I come again to this part of Europe. I am also happy that my visit comes about as the result of a very practical step in European cooperation that the three of us are taking together - that is the Governments of the United Kingdom and of Ireland in partnership with the Commission of the European Communities.

As Director-General for Regional Policy in the EEC I well know that each of our various regions, that lie astride a border dividing two Member States of our Community, has its own special features and its own problems. But experience throughout Europe shows that areas that are distant from their national centres experience quite special economic difficulties. They suffer emigration, and a poverty of job opportunities for those who stay. The region of Donegal and Londonderry is an obvious example of this. Londonderry is a handsome city and Donegal a beautiful county. Both have a great potential. More is the pity that they have two of the lowest standards of living in the whole of Europe, and more than their share of other economic problems.

In recognition of the particular problems of border areas throughout Europe, the rules of our new European Regional Fund make special provision for them. They stipulate that when we have to choose between the various applications that come to us from Member Governments, we must take special account of projects in border areas. We have taken very special account of your particular project here, the communications study, and I

.../am

am glad to announce formally today - though I think it has long been generally expected - that the European Regional Fund is contributing thirty-five thousand pounds to the cost of this study. Though in the past we have contributed from other EEC sources to cross-border studies elsewhere in Europe, yours is the first study anywhere to which a grant is being made by the new Fund.

Studies are of course relatively inexpensive in financial terms. The bulk of the Fund is going in grants to help attract new factories to bring new jobs, and for supporting industrial infrastructure. In the not quite twelve months during which the European Regional Fund has been making grants, almost thirteen million pounds has been allocated to Northern Ireland. I might remind you that some two million of this total has gone as a European financial bonus to the various harbour authorities in the province, to help them carry out important new developments. For the Republic the total so far is nearly sixteen million pounds. There will be a further substantial instalment in November.

I should perhaps make clear exactly what the EEC's contribution to regional development is about. We are not concerned with domestic political matters. That is not our business, neither here nor anywhere else in Europe. Nor is it our business to take economic or administrative decisions that are the responsibility of others. What the European Community offers is a partnership in the wider interests of Europe, a partnership based on consensus between our member countries. Included in the partnership is a degree of financial partnership, based - to put it

plainly - on the contributions of taxpayers in Germany and other countries. The new Regional Fund is the latest expression of this financial partnership.

Aside from the financial aspects, the European Commission will be fully associated, in partnership with the two Governments, in the supervision of the communications study here. We shall follow its progress closely - exercising our responsibility for the expenditure of European money, contributing our experience of similar ventures in other parts of Europe, and learning about special local problems from those who know them best. It is our hope that success in this joint venture may strengthen the prospects of soundly-based progress, in a constructive spirit, towards a steady coordinated improvement in the economic position of Londonderry and Donegal. We consider them top-priority European development regions.

I myself am from the South of Italy. That is a region which in recent decades has lost by emigration four million people - and which even so knows unemployment as you know it. With this background I can assure you that, to my intellectual conviction of the European priority that an attack on the economic problems here deserves, I add a profound and sincere desire to see a fruitful practical outcome to the joint undertaking which we are launching now with the Donegal-Londonderry communications study.
