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JH: That leads us to the work of Fr. Harry Bohan and his work that began in the sixties and I think he was appointed as a consultant on community affairs to Shannon at that time? You must have had a role in that?

BO'R: I did. I asked the Bishop for an appointment that would make sure we didn't make any major mistakes in the town in the planning of the town, the social end of it, and I don't think we did actually. I think the town, which was the only New Town in Ireland, has worked out quite well and of course Cian had a lot to do with that. A big job.

CO'C: I mean that was very rewarding and I think the success of it goes back to the work that was done on the planning side in the early days, that was a big factor. Another big factor was that it didn't grow as quickly as anticipated and that gave an opportunity for reflection as the job as progressed. There was also Fr. Liam Ryan a professor Liam Ryan from Maynooth he did a major social study of the town and that influenced things out in a very positive way because planners are sometimes inclined to get carried away with bricks and mortar and to make move too quickly.

BO'R: We went to see the British New Towns and we went to see the Scandinavian New Towns and then we had a debate as to whether we would produce an Irish New Town concept and I think we made the right decision.

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JH: It's vibrant and successful now.

BO'R: It could have been a mess; it could have turned out like Ballymun very easily. Ballymun was a competitor to Shannon because Blaney decided he wanted to build the town in Shannon and we felt, the management felt, that whoever built the industrial zone had to build the town. They were both linked together and that the two were related to one another and we didn't like the idea of giving up the power that we had got. We fought for it and held onto it. Which was an interesting little battle went on between Lemass and Blaney. He left the town to the Shannon group.

JH: Of course, Shannon anticipated in many ways developments that occurred much later. For instance, it had one of the first immigrant communities, non-Irish immigrant communities, people who weren't just Irish people returning home I mean we had a number of those. It had the Chilean group who came in the early 70s, '73 I think onwards. It anticipated that something that is happening now on a much wider scale in the country.

CO'C: In the early days, do you remember Pat McNabb at all?

BO'R: Yes

CO'C: He was a sociologist a really interesting guy, Bishop Jeremiah Newman the late bishop advised a lot because there

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was a lot of social research done at that time, which was sort of very relevant to the whole development of the Industrial estate. A group came from Holland as well, Vermuellan I think it was.

BO'R: Yes, Vermuellan, I knew that during the war the capitalists and the non-capitalists in Holland had joined up and united against the Nazis and that they had a policy of no industrial trouble during all of this period - "we will have no industrial trouble" - and I invited them to introduce the same rulings into the Shannon estate and they did. We only failed in regards to one company and that was General Electric, who were called EI at the time, and when we didn't get it all done, we couldn't do it but it was to have a no industrial trouble during the war of any kind.

That's where Tom Sheedy played a big role in this, we introduced. In the early days of catering we had a situation where there was no union in the Sales and Catering and there wasn't any, as it were, campaign. My father had, I had said to him "What do I do about the Union?" and I wasn't as au fait as I am now about it. Oh, he said "keep backing away from them, they will not allow what you want to do in what you are trying to do", and then we ran into the first winter where we had to reduce staff and we had a short and lightning strike, which, the union were looking for. It was a ridiculous situation. Sales and Catering were not unionised, the rest of the airport was and Sales and Catering would be getting on-board the buses and all of the rest of the people on the buses would be union. So, we

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had a strike that lasted six days, and during that time I had asked for intervention from the Labour Court to decide and the decision was made that people could be in the union or not the union. They were free to be in it and when they came back, I called the staff meeting and said "will you all join the union and let's make it a force of value to all of us". That was done and in thirty years we hadn't even a threat of a strike. Then we had a very interesting situation in Sales and Catering where we had a full working union but no conflict but we did it by trying to bring about a policy of profit-sharing in the Sales and Catering. I forget how successful we were in that but, at that time, there was a hope that profit-sharing would become the answer to trade union problems. I'd say that we did to a great extent succeed because we never had any union trouble and we tried to introduce the same idea into the industrial zone.

JH: Dr. O'Regan that brings us to an area that we would like to explore with you. Going back to that time the initial force or the initial pressure was to maintain jobs, to maintain Shannon and to maintain the jobs that were in existence. Then the whole industrialisation process began and the development the establishment of companies and the employment situation began to improve rapidly in Shannon certainly in the early '60s. We were just curious to know at some point did a shift occur, where it became as important, if not more important, to look after other aspects of people's needs than employment. That we get that impression that employment fine but as you have said before you couldn't do anything more patriotic for your

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country than create work for somebody. At some point you realised that there was more to maybe the creation of work, that human beings needed more than just that. We get that impression that at some time during the sixties you began to see that. Your philosophy began to change in that regard. Could we talk to you about that?

BO'R: We of course, we were a very unusual organization. We had no board and I had a direct line of communication with the secretary of the department and with the Minister and as far as I know, that they had named the post that I held comptroller, catering comptroller. I remember Paddy Saul who was Chief control officer because he sarcastically said to me "Controller" but comptroller was the way of I think, probably Tim O'Driscoll of expressing that you are responsible for the money end of it too. It has to make pay or not lose money. I felt that we had a possibility of doing things that couldn't otherwise be done because of the freedom that I seemed to have been given under Lemass. Lemass was so anxious to ensure the Shannon succeeded that the Sales and Catering agreement seems to have got a completely all clear. So simplified that it was on the telephone, speaking to JCB McCarthy, that I said we need a name that will give us the authority that has been given. The catering agreement is not adequate; he said "what name do you want? I said well we want a name as powerful as the River Valley Authority" the American?

JH: Tennessee?

BO'R: Yes, Tennessee. Just that word "authority". Alright he said, he was the assistant secretary of the department, he gave it to me on the telephone which was an extraordinary step and it worked of course and my relationship with the airport manager worked very well because we were good friends and he realised the job that I had to do required authority. Now you were asking me?

JH: Yes, I was asking you that at some point initially job creation was very important but at some point in the 1960s it began or certainly that period maybe the early 70s. It would seem that you began to see the importance of other possibilities than job creation, social dimension the community dimension and I would like to raise the name with you, of Fr. Harry Bohan at this stage maybe and I would just like to know how those ideas began to evolve in your mind at that time.

BO'R: Well in 1950 I went as one of four Irishmen who were invited to join a group of Europeans going to America to study what the Americans thought Europeans could learn from America in the rebuilding of Europe. That of course was a six-week intensive study of American tourism and of American industry and promotion and how to sell tourism. The Americans saw that they were going to win the war and that Europe had to recover from the extraordinary bombing that it had been given. The Marshall Plan was in abeyance at the particular time. So, I found myself in a group of Europeans who

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were studying the American system and how it could relate to tourism and to Ireland. At that particular time the civil servants were nervous about the team of four who went from Ireland, who included the CIE Hotels and the tourist board and myself, would be making recommendations which they wouldn't be very happy about and we were told to make a statement of what we had seen and what we had learned but not to make recommendations. But I was rather disloyal, I must say, to that situation and I decided I would make a series of recommendations. Two of the board couldn't agree with me because they were working with Bord Fáilte, but one of the four, he was a manager in CIE Hotels, said he would agree with me. So, he signed the report which I put in ...which contained about 20 recommendations that we should implement and those had an effect on me in the Shannon job having made recommendation so that is the answer to the question you were asking me about social obligations.

JH: Did that tend to come from your own philosophical and religious beliefs? That was the time of Vatican II, when documents were coming out of the Vatican II at the time in relation to man's human development and the wider development of man.

BO'R: Yes, there was a good deal at that time in the fifties and the early sixties, there was a good deal of discussion going on at Catholic levels in regard to...and the Pope was involved and all that kind of stuff and anyone who was in a position of power

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felt a responsibility to try and do something about it. So, I did see the Shannon Free Airport Development Authority as a power that had developed expertise as regards to restaurants and mail order and the various other things that we added on to the shopping expedition. Apparently because we were making money, making enough for Lemass to have said you can spend fifty thousand on the ideas you are talking about, which was just money being made by the restaurant and the shops then beginning. There was the beginning of a social attitude in Sales and Catering and not objected too. All I can say is that Sales and Catering became a very busy operation and one that might have a relationship to the problem that Shannon is posed with now because we developed an extremely active money-making machine. It had mail order, a very big mail order operation which could be started again and, of course it had the biggest airport shop in the world. No airport shop came for fifteen years, in other words Shannon was fifteen years ahead of the rest of the world and then the Dutch began it. Gradually others began it, at one stage we had a visit from the Queen's husband, Prince Philip, and I walked across the tarmac with him to his plane which was at the other side and he said "we haven't been able to get the civil servants on our side to agree to do what you are doing here on the Duty Free", an interesting kind of comment for him to make. The English Duty Free came later but Sales and Catering was a very active money-making operation and quite a number of the things that made money in those days were no longer really necessary as we became successful on the industrial estate and the town and so (forth).

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There are a number of them that could be looked at again I think in regard to ensuring that Shannon is successful. It's going to be successful if it's money successful and if enough of people get off the planes there, but to get enough of people off the planes there will have to be a lot of things that will attract them. The one-day medieval tour was an example of a unique Shannon operation where you got off a plane, you got onto a bus and you had a very good commentary which described the airport and it's unusualness as you left it and went through villages, Sixmilebridge, Newmarket-on-Fergus and Ennis and so on and in each of them got off the bus to experience Irish music or Irish dancing, a little bit of acting or whatever it was. That medieval tour became a great success and could be probably revived again and maybe given free to everybody who got off the flight at Shannon en-route to Europe. Anyway, it's the unusual drastic thing that will probably be required in the competitive situation that Shannon has to deal with now.

CO'C: There was a plan to build high-rise buildings prepared by Fred Rogerson, this would be high-rise buildings surrounding the town centre but fortunately that didn't proceed and then Fr. Liam Ryan of Maynooth did a major study of the town years later and he absolutely validated the decision which had been made, by saying that people wanted to live in low-rise rather than high-rise buildings particularly in Ireland.

BO'R: Yes, that's interesting I didn't know about that or else I forgot about it

JH: That taking on Blaney and if we look back at the period, Blaney was an up and coming Minister, he was beginning to make his presence felt in the cabinet of the time. He was the Haughey generation and Kevin Boland and a few others in the cabinet. In retrospect now do you think that might have created problems for you later on?

BO'R: He met me privately afterwards and he said "I never intended to block you from what you were doing", but I said "you were doing that weren't you?" "Yes" he said "I thought we could do it better" but I said "we didn't want high-rise buildings there, anyway". Lemass won the battle anyway. Or I may have won it, I don't know! (Laughing) It's quite evident apart from any other considerations that those who are getting industry into the zone have to be associated with the houses. The houses mustn't come faster than the zone or the zone shouldn't come faster than the houses.

It was a strange thing but I had gone earlier, I had gone to America with one of the men from his department who was going to do this job and I had to disagree with him in America in regard to what kind of a report we should make because the civil servants had decided it would be embarrassing for us to make a report which was recommending what should be done since we hadn't been in the war. I said that's no reason for us not to make recommendations and I wrote a separate report with about thirty recommendations on it. Some of which included Bunratty and the rented cottages and things of that

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kind. The size of the town should be, I mean there are sizes that towns can be. We went and studied the New Towns in England had a good look at them and got to know the rules and we also looked at the towns in Sweden which were high rise towns and indeed there was a situation where there was one manager at the time who was endeavoring to take away the town building operation from Shannon and give it to his department.

JH: This was Blaney wasn't it?

BO'R: Yes, Blaney and he wanted to do the very beginning of it and I said no that the two things have to be done together. The town and the industrial zone have to be done together by the same group. He was very adamant that he should do it that his department should do it. I stuck it out and eventually I met him with Childers being the debater on my side. Nothing like Lemass of course, in that situation anyway and we got to stay with it.

JH: Could I ask about O'Malley? I am talking about 1967 or thereabouts, Minister for Education, would have been a very powerful man locally. Today they talk about the absence of a strong Minister at the cabinet table from Limerick from the Shannon region, and O'Malley was certainly a very powerful man with a strong personality. Do you have any recollections of that?

BO'R: Yes, there was a very delicate situation where we were urgently in need of evidence of accommodation for management people and we had got a quote from a Dublin architect in regard the two first high-rise building that were put there on the hill just as it were a start of a town and Donogh O'Malley quoted at the same for something similar and I had already visualized the ones that we were getting and felt they were right and decided that I couldn't shift. That decision was made and those other two that are there now. It wasn't a very satisfying decision for me to make vis-a vis O'Malley but it was alright. We were then proceeding with success because, up to the time that the two blocks of flats were built for management workers, people had been saying that this is a nonsense situation, it will never happen and they switched the situation around once they saw that there was accommodation for those we were going to run what was being built because what we had decided to do was build factories of a certain type that could be occupied quickly by people and that's what we had built. We had just built half a dozen factories and the two lots of accommodation for their managers. That's what it was and it was all of course associated with the belief that Shannon could become a centre of air transport and on the other side it was regarded as a bit of a brainwave and mightn't work, but it did work.

JH: As we are speaking about Donogh O'Malley he was faced in Limerick, again a neighbouring constituency in terms of his political powerbase, he was faced with serious decline of

industry of the traditional industries in Limerick itself the clothing trade etc. That would have become obvious in the mid to late sixties. What influence do you think that might have had on say the IDA policy then began to emerge about regional development and regional industrial development?

BO'R: Well I think with what we were involved in trying to bring about at Shannon was in comparison to the other news that was coming about Shannon that within a year we would have one flight a day and that we would have a thousand redundant. It was that situation that we were contending with. What you have talked about is the decline in Limerick was evident there, but we were looking to create new product, a new concept something that would use air freight and that would hold the 18,000 (sic) people who were working at the airport we were trying to hold onto that situation and we weren't in a position then to try and change the unemployment in Limerick itself although we were conscious of the fact that we had to help if we could help the Limerick situation because it was the same labour pool that was supplying Shannon. In fact, Limerick became wealthy anyway as a result of Shannon and there was a balancing up of the situation brought about by the success at Shannon created a better atmosphere for Limerick business.

JH: Just to lead on from there, one thing which was quite unique I would imagine at the time there was no direct political representation on the Shannon board and that essentially you

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could operate without that type of political interference say from local representatives or from councilors or whatever. Could we talk a little bit about that?

BO'R: Well we had the development company had organized a local group who were in fact the local democratic input into whatever we were doing and we were part of it and we regularly had meetings with the County Councillors and I think that Shannon Development has over the years recognized that it has a duty to relate to local councilors and local elected people and I think that has been one of the very good things of the regionalisation at Shannon is that we have a very good relationship with the County Council. So, I don't feel any worries about that situation. I think we have a very good understanding with local authorities.

JH: That seemed to be part of the magic solution, if you like, for want of a better phrase. That Shannon had hit upon that importance of local democracy, of local people making decisions locally the important decisions that affected themselves. That was part of a formula that Shannon seemed to hit upon and you would have been a strong component of local involvement as against nationally imposed solutions or attempted solutions. Can we look at that or when that had begun to occur to you or would that have gone way back into your experience from the early days of Rineanna.

BO'R: Well, I think that all of us who have been involved in the Shannon region had been conscious of the importance of regionalisation and have been very convinced that there must be a strong input from the local regional authority. I think our relationship between the Shannon Development Company and the county councils has always been very good. There is a very good relationship there and that that had to be because the effect of success at Shannon on Limerick and Ennis and of course the villages and towns all round was ever uppermost in mind. Local representation was in fact the important input into the thinking that we were doing and I think we have had a very good relationship with the local grouping from the beginning. I think that Shannon is now so isolated as it were in what's coming in the future it's going to have to work very closely with local authorities of Limerick and Ennis, Sixmilebridge, Newmarket-on-Fergus, all of the villages around and the counties and it's going to be a very effective regional body. I don't think we have to worry about that end of it. What we have to worry about is making certain that things that have to be done for Shannon are done. That more flights are brought into it and more flights are taken out of it. There's an increase not just in passengers but in air freight and it's going to be a hard, difficult operation because it's not small stuff it's got to be big enough to keep Shannon very busy. I think it will be done by the development of a relationship between the local councilors, business people and so on. In other words, the Shannon region is going to have to become an effective local region.

JH: Going back to the original vision, the original philosophy that the strong regional identity, there is a question that occurs to me at this point. It's a hypothetical question, if Brendan O'Regan had been a Corkman or if Brendan O'Regan had been a Tipperaryman or if, God forbid, he had been a Dubliner how would things have been different? Do you think things would have been different because the impression I get was that Brendan O'Regan was first and foremost a Clareman and that that was a very important part of the driving force?

BO'R: Well if I had been a Dublin man I must say, I think I would be enormously active in regard to delegation from Dublin of developments to other parts of the country because I think it's very bad for Dublin and very bad for the people who live in Dublin that they are choked up with traffic. They needn't be. I think the cost is enormous, including the cost of going underground, and we are only a small island and really, we should be able to delegate to the rest of the country much more than we do. Dubliners and I am sure a lot of them are delighted at the idea of Shannon being a counter growth situation and this is what Lemass was thinking about, but undoubtedly that is the situation. I am told that at the time a decision had to be made as to whether the seaplane base would be made at the same time of the landplane base that Lemass said "do them both, do them both, we will be right whichever way it comes". I think that area of 300 acres that was prepared for a lagoon for sea planes may one day yet be used, we don't know what

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tremendous changes make yet take place in airways but we are only at the beginning of the air age and Shannon will come into it's own in the future, there is no doubt about that.