

achievement"! These words were delivered by Prof. Declan Larkin on the occasion of the conferring of the degree of Doctor of Laws by the National University of Ireland on Brendan O'Regan in 1978.

Twenty one years and multiple awards later, in 1999, Dr. O'Regan was again similarly honoured; this time by Queens University of Belfast. In his opening remarks, Martin O'Brien, a Lay Member of the Senate at Queens, said of Brendan O'Regan, "He is without doubt one of the most remarkable Irishmen of the twentieth century. His achievements as a peacemaker and as an industrial visionary have been immense." The Queens University awarding of the second Hon. Doctorate of Laws was primarily in recognition of his

denominational and non-party political. Its aim is to overcome violence and unemployment through widespread and ongoing economic, cultural and social co-operation between the people of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. It has no political agenda and threatens no one. With offices in Dublin, Belfast, New York and London, it now boasts an annual turnover of almost £2 million. It has the distinction of having H.M. Queen Elizabeth II and Her Excellency President Mary McAleese as joint patrons.

When Dr. O'Regan founded Co-operation North, originally in Limerick, as it then was, he was sixty-one years of age. He had just retired after a remarkable and uniquely successful business career in which he had transformed the economic, social and industrial life of the Mid-West of Ireland, centred on Shannon.

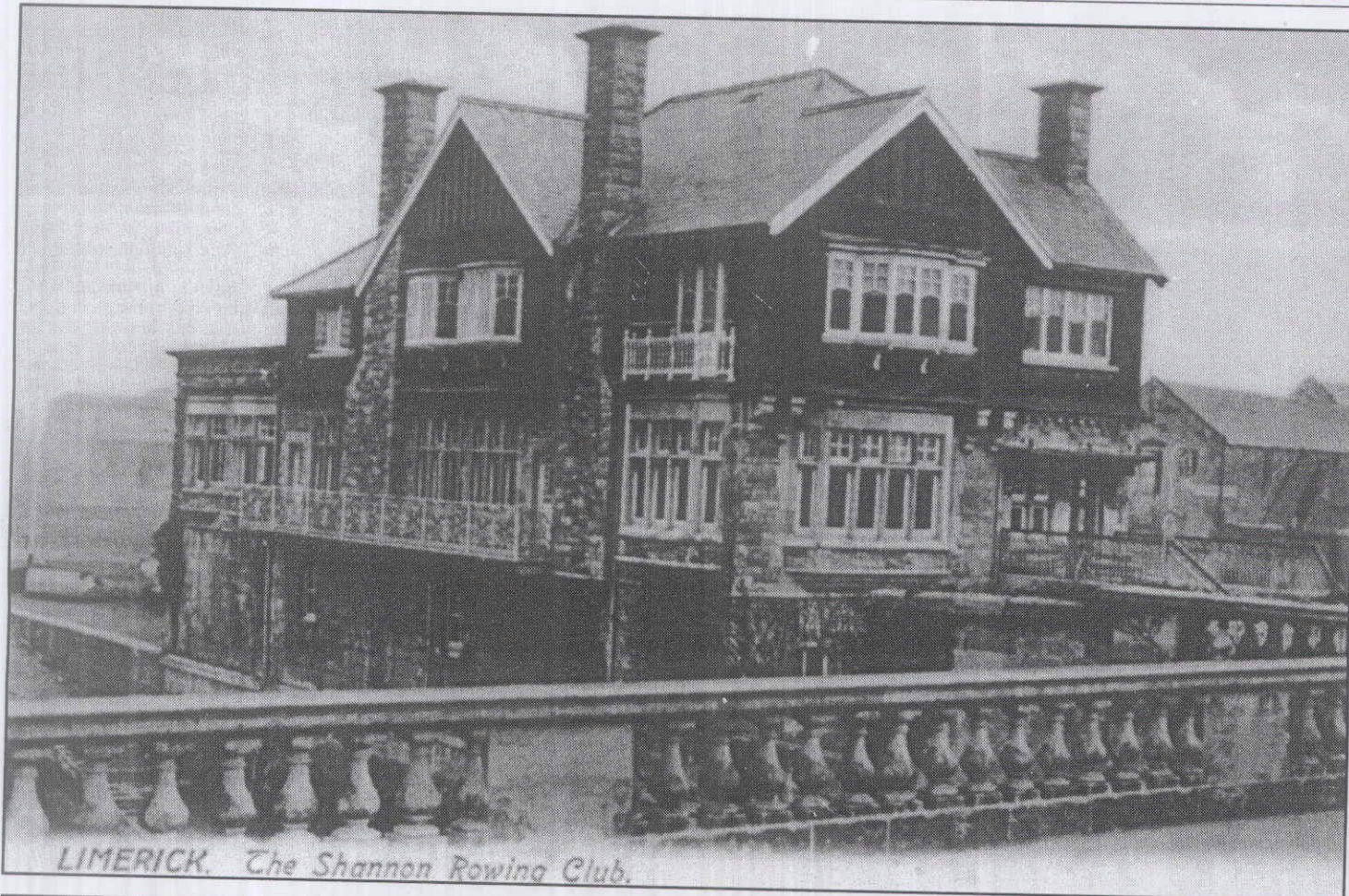
practical experience in the hotel trade.

On his return to war-time Ireland the young O'Regan subsequently became manager of the Stephen's Green Club in Dublin. There he came under the eye of the Minister for Industry and Commerce and future Taoiseach, Sean Lemass, who selected him to head the new catering corporation serving the flying boat base at Foynes on the Shannon Estuary. He was just twenty-five. Very soon he was to show just what he could do. His return to the region of his birth was to be fateful not just for him but for the region itself and indeed for the rest of Ireland. For it was in and around Shannon over the next forty years that Brendan O'Regan deployed his remarkable personal skills to such an extent that the Mid-West of Ireland today is dotted with living monuments to his

idea which saved the airport from terminal decline. The concept caught on around the world. Then came arguably the most crucial creation of his professional career, Shannon's tax-free industrial zone, another first in the world.

Such was the pace and scale of these developments that Shannon became Ireland's first and only new town in two hundred years. The government made him Chairman of Bord Fáilte, the Irish Tourist Board for sixteen years until 1973. He has left his mark on tourism also. He started mediaeval banquets at the restored fifteenth century Bunratty Castle and at two other castles. Other achievements, were the adjacent Bunratty Folk Park and the Shannon College of Hotel Management. He also pioneered the Rent-an-Irish-Cottage vacation scheme, increasing tourist revenue and preserving traditional

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LIMERICK. *The Shannon Rowing Club.*



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