

Tanaiste's top priority is jobs for Krups workers

By LAURA RYAN

TANAISTE and Minister for Employment and Enterprise Mary Harney is in Limerick today to meet with management and representatives of the Krups plant, which is to close with the loss of 500 jobs.

"Finding a replacement industry for

Limerick is top of my priority agenda," said the Tanaiste, who has ordered an immediate response to the company's announcement with the establishment of an inter-agency response group, chaired by IDA Ireland.

"It is essential that the huge job opportunities that were on offer in Limerick-based companies could be accessed by the employees in Krups who would be made redundant,"

she stated. "I have asked FAS immediately to carry out a skills profile of the Krups workforce and assist them to find alternative employment among the many companies actively recruiting in Limerick."

FAS would also organise training if required for the workers.

According to Ms Harney, enormous efforts have been made to save the factory. At the start of the company's strategic review, she flew to Paris to "make the strongest possible

case" for the company's Irish operations.

"The focus must now be firmly on the future to secure alternative jobs for the workers and to get a replacement industry for Limerick," she continued. "I will personally lead that endeavour and I am confident that with a co-ordinated response, we will be successful," she concluded.

Ms Harney will also address the first formal meeting of the response group later on today.

Krups boss speaks on sad day for plant

By EUGENE PHELAN

WITH the IDA already working on trying to get a replacement plant for Krups the managing director of the doomed city plant has promised a comprehensive package for the 500 worker who are to lose their jobs.

"We have very, very clearly stated this morning that we will put a comprehensive package forward. We are not in a position to put that on the table until after November 6," Liam McElligott said in an interview with the Limerick Leader.

Beyond the word "comprehensive" Mr McElligott said he could not comment at present on the package to be put to workers, many of whom have been with the company for over 20 years.

Asked further about the deal he commented: "We will be reasonable corporate citizens."

"While to me this is a sad day we now have to get

quickly into the business of selling this resource to prospective incoming employers. We have some excellent people here."

However he said that he was not in the position of "blowing sunshine" on the current situation. The situation is very difficult. How it evolves will only be decided in the coming weeks and months.

He stressed that they were in the business of selling the positive aspects of the Limerick workforce.

"We have a difficult task, but a do-able task, ahead of us," he said.

Liam McElligott, managing director joined Krups in August 1997, from the Finsa Forest timber factory in Scariff.

Chairman of Shannon Development he is highly thought of by his colleagues in management in the region and indeed by the general workforce at Krups.

"Everybody knew that the Krups project was a difficult project," he said of his decision to take the job at the helm.

He says that the Moulinex group had been making positive progress up to mid-1988 and had returned to profitability.

"It is really from the period from April onwards



Liam McElligott, managing director of Krups.

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it became apparent that the Russian market was more than a temporary blip, that it was an absolutely catastrophe," he explained.

Moulinex had a £100 million in sales into Russia which was 10 per cent of group turnover.

"The market went basically because they had no money. We were selling into Russia, we were lucky in that we were not selling

into credit there, but we arrived at a point where we were not being paid for what we were supplying," he revealed.

Hand mixers, slicers, mincers and a variety of blenders were being manufactured in Limerick.

"The group had to review its activities in the light of its global activities, not alone Limerick, to realign itself in terms of the market

situation," he told me.

"The group had to adopt some drastic measures. These measures will be presented to the European Works Council on November 6. Following that the company will be in

a position to ratify the proposal we have put here today."

He described the workforce as "beautiful people" and "absolutely top class".

"The behaviour of the people here this morning, the disposition of the people this morning, the humour of the people this morning, while they are very saddened and I suppose traumatised, I did not get any anger, I did not get any animosity, it was something very nice to see."

Even though only in the plant a short time Liam McElligott has made a big impression, is a regular visitor to the assembly line and is a person who was on first name terms with employees.

"The group is very committed to working on whatever initiatives are proposed. I believe the Tanaiste on radio has proposed certain initiatives. We have worked closely with the Department of Enterprise and Employment and with the development agencies."



Some of the Krups workers in good spirits in spite of the devastating news they received on the future of their jobs.

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Kickers DON'T PUT A FOOT WRONG

LEAVYS