

**WILLIE O'DEA, T.D. CLINICS APRIL, 1997**

During the month of April, 1997, I will hold Clinics as follows:

- Thursday: Shanahan's; Mungret, 9 pm. Greenhills Hotel, Caherdavin, 10 pm.
  - Friday April 11: CLINICS CANCELLED due to party leaders visit.
  - Thursday, April 17: Matt Reas, Bruff, 9.30 pm.
  - Friday, April 18: CLINICS CANCELLED due to Fianna Fail Ard Fheis.
  - Saturday, April 19: CLINICS CANCELLED due to Fianna Fail Ard Fheis.
  - Thursday April 24: Community Centre, Knocklong, 9 pm. Reardons, Caherconlish, 10 pm.
  - Friday April 25: Noel Foleys, Murroe, 9 pm.
  - Saturday April 26: Tom Bourkes Bar, Hospital, 9 pm. Hartys Bar, Nicker, 10 pm.
  - Monday April 28: Community Centre, Cappamore, 9 pm. Buckleys Bar, Doon, 10 pm.
  - Thursday May 1: J. J. O'Deas, Mulgrave St. 7 pm. The Track Bar, Garryowen, 8 pm. The Spotted Dog, Janesboro, 9 pm.
  - Friday May 2: John C. Ryans, Oola, 9 pm.
- I will be available each Fri. Evening at Aherns Bar, Kiltleely, from 6.30 pm to 9 pm and each Sat. afternoon at 2 pm. Glenview Gardens, Farranshone, from 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm.
- WILLIE O'DEA, T.D.** (18-4228)



**Airport to target backtrackers**

BACKTRACKING American passengers through Britain and additional US flights are being targeted for Shannon Airport after a meeting between the Minister for Transport and two airport groups.

"I have discussed the ways we can get more of the North American originating traffic into Shannon with SIGNAL and the marketing advisory sub-committee of the Mid-West Regional

Authority," said Minister Dukes.

"We need to get more flights coming directly into Shannon from North America, and more backtrack business coming into Shannon from Britain," he said.

"We haven't been hugely successful in getting more airline links between the US and Shannon, and although Aer Lingus has done quite a good job, we seem to run into a limitation on that

constantly," said the Minister.

"It seems to me a fruitful way to look at this is backtracking, and that means we need to get more links between Shannon and Britain, and Shannon and the major British hubs for North American originating business," he said.

"I found a very positive response from SIGNAL and the Authority's sub-committee. We all agreed that

one of the areas we need to look at for Shannon is getting more links with Britain, so we can get more of the backtracking business.

"That is something that it seems to me is within our compass, and we should use the £1.8m we have for marketing Shannon for that. We should also continue, as we have done in the past, to try and encourage US airlines to bring more services into Shannon," he stated.



Minister for Transport, Alan Dukes: open skies will bring benefits.

**Airport cash 'will not go on roads'**

SHANNON Airport is to keep its capital budget for development after concerns that almost half the money would be diverted into roadworks.

And Knock Airport could benefit from plans to improve access into the West of Ireland, according to Mr Dukes.

Fears that £11m of Shannon's £25m capital budget would be moved into roads and transport budgets have eased after a ministerial commitment that the money will stay at Shannon Airport.

"The threat to that money is gone," said Minister Dukes "as far as I am concerned.

"What is in the operational programme for the State airports stays because we want to see these programmes being fulfilled. Our three State airports are all benefiting from increases in traffic and all three have development programmes."

"Although people who are not in the business have been saying discouraging things about Shannon lately, the fact of the matter is that the investment programme in Shannon is currently about two weeks behind target, so it's on track" he said.

**Airport survival**

MOST of the Western

**Open skies 'will bring air growth'**



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He will be holding Private Sessions in the following venues on the dates listed below.

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**Friday April 25: Jurys Hotel, Limerick**

**Saturday May 2: Jurys Inn, Galway**

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**BY RON KIRWAN**

OPEN skies between Europe and the United States are on the horizon after pressures to deregulate transatlantic air routes and services, Transport Minister, Alan Dukes, told the Limerick Leader at Bunnatty.

Open skies in reality will mean growing air traffic, according to Minister Dukes, a concept, he said, that seems to be particularly difficult for Fianna Fail to grasp.

Minister Dukes, who was in Bunnatty to open the annual three-day conference of the Irish Institute of Training and Development at Fitzpatrick's Bunnatty Hotel, said that open skies are inevitable.

But he predicted that the move will "grow the total air business into Shannon

and Ireland". "We're moving towards open skies policies at the moment with discussions going on between the European Union and the United States. Currently, these discussions don't cover the open skies arrangements, routes or rights, they're concerned with other aspects at present," said the Minister.

"But eventually these talks will go into the question of routes and rights. There is a great deal of pressure from the United States to do that. There is also pressure from some member States of the European Union—and pressure against it from other States—but eventually it will happen, because that's the way the world is going," he predicted.

"Naturally, our interest is in policies that help to increase the amount of passengers flying into Ireland

because we will then have the opportunity to attract more passengers into the Mid-West and the West generally through Shannon Airport."

"Open skies between Europe and the US will give us the same kind of benefits that we've got from open skies in Europe, with constantly rising volumes of air traffic, more services, lower fares, more people travelling, more people flying into Ireland, and, of course, more people flying out from Ireland.

"New things are always difficult for people to grasp," said the Transport Minister, "and new things seem to be particularly difficult for Fianna Fail to grasp, but they are what give us growth.

"I think that, since it's going to happen anyway, we might as well gear our-

selves to take the benefits of what an open skies policy is going to bring. It has grown the total business in Europe and will do the same between Europe and the United States.

"We need to look at what open skies means for aviation policy here, what it means for our airlines, for the way we attract traffic into Ireland, for our airports and the development of our airports to make them viable players in that kind of market," the Minister stated.

The whole idea of open skies is based on the premise that any operator can offer any service to anywhere, he said.

"The limitations centre on getting into an airport. And in the key airports—the heavily trafficked airports—this involves the availability of slots. That will be the next major row in the airport and airline business" he said.

**Hub in for boost Direct flights forecast**

MINISTER Dukes signalled that he is prepared to boost the flagging Aeroflot hub at Shannon.

The Aeroflot hub launched in February 1995 has been losing ground in recent months after the introduction of long-haul aircraft and a growing commercial mandate for the airline on its routes, including those into South America.

The Transport Minister has been considering an application by Aeroflot and Orient Avia to pick-up non-East European passengers at Shannon for an onward daily service to New York.

"There is a particular application in relation to hub type traffic in Shannon that I'm looking at the moment" said Minister Dukes. I'm not yet able to say what my final position is but I'm coming close to a decision," he added.

"I know there are different views on whether a new service should go ahead and I would like to see the total volume of activity in Shannon increasing—from everyone involved in the business" he said.

"That's what I want to see. I'm a firm believer in the principle that more competition brings us more business".

THE number of people who want to fly into Shannon Airport will eventually bring the airlines to operate direct services, according to Minister Dukes.

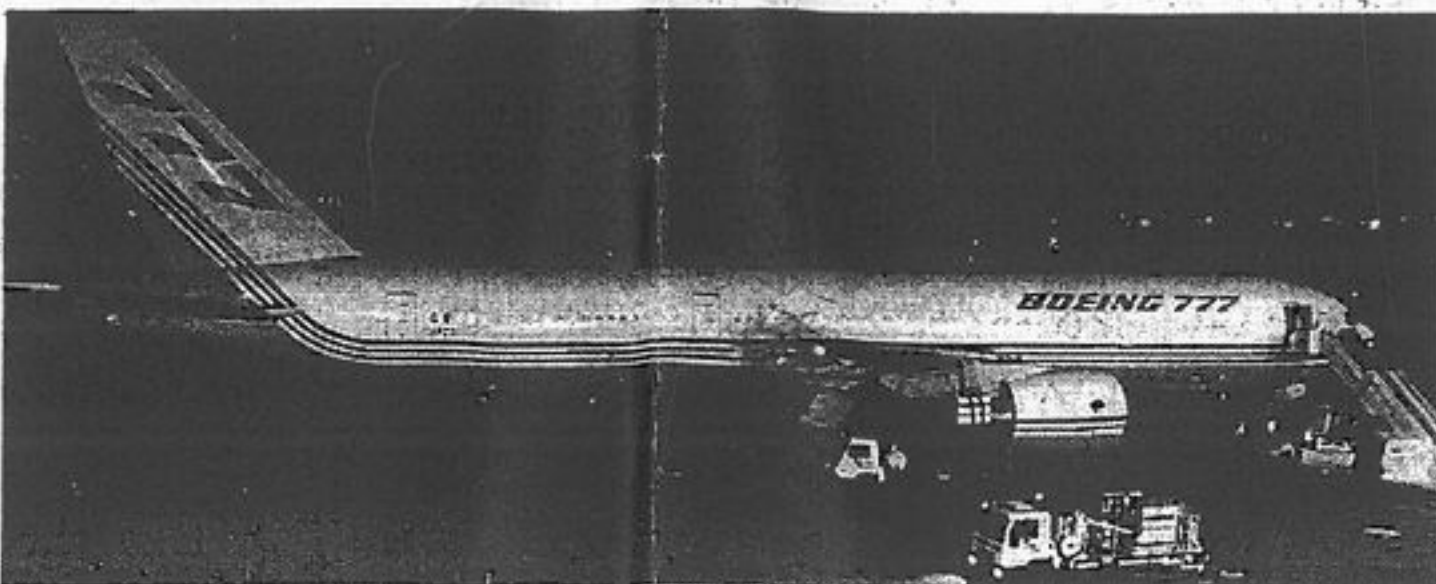
"Airlines will always look at the volume traffic on a route and will tailor their services on that basis. We will combat that by being in an environment where there is more air traffic, where the total numbers of people travelling are growing and where all the routes are going to get busier.

"And if we get to the point where the route gets busy enough there will be a year round service

in Shannon, if there is a demand for it," he said.

"We still have a situation where upwards of three quarters of people who fly into here on a New York-Shannon-Dublin flight want to get off in Shannon," the Minister pointed out.

"I have every confidence, that in a market that is growing in total, the number of people who want to come into Shannon will eventually bring the airlines to having services directly into Shannon, both from Britain coming back and directly from North America," said Minister Dukes.



Minister sees growth in number of direct flights to Shannon. (LL)

seaboard's airports couldn't survive without public money, said Minister Alan Dukes.

He said that Shannon Airport has nothing to fear in competing with the regional airports.

According to Minister Dukes, the West Coast "certainly doesn't need any more airports", but they have a future if they can build up their air traffic and routes over time.

"The regional airports will continue face difficulties until the total volume of air traffic gets past a certain critical stage" said the Minister.

"A number of them are operating routes that are flown on a public service contract — requiring a State subsidy — and they wouldn't survive in the short term without that subsidy," he said.

**Airport firm 'not for sale'**

AER Rianta is not being primed for privatisation after the Government's decision to turn the airports authority into a plc.

The move is designed to give Aer Rianta the flexibility and freedom it needs to operate a proper commercial remit, said Minister Dukes.

"Aer Rianta at the moment is an agent of the Minister, and this year we will give it the status of a plc" he said. "We are doing this in order that the company can have a proper commercial remit.

"This is not the beginning of a privatisation process, but will put Aer Rianta on the same footing as the other commercial semi-State companies. It will also give Aer Rianta more freedom to make commercial decisions."



WILLIE O'DEA, T.D.



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