

# O'Sullivan claims public is being mislead on open skies

By COLM WARD

The Minister for Transport, Mr. Michael O'Sullivan, has today claimed that the public is being misled on the issue of open skies. He said that the current bilateral agreement between Ireland and the United States is not a liberalised market and that the public is being misled by the media and the public into thinking that this decision is inevitable. It is not inevitable, he said, and the public should be aware of the fact that the current bilateral agreement would be "devastating" for Shannon.

Minister Brennan added that this liberalised market "will allow Shannon to retain its position as an important destination for US Ireland transatlantic traffic and to seek to develop itself as a hub for passengers and cargo".

However, Deputy O'Sullivan rejected this, claiming that the abandonment of the current bilateral agreement would be "devastating" for Shannon. "The threat to Shannon's future cannot be appreciated at national level. The Government cannot be allowed to mis-

lead the media and the public into thinking that this decision is inevitable. It is not inevitable. They cannot be allowed to make such a potentially disastrous decision without any analysis of the economic consequences," she said.

Minister Brennan said that he had taken into account a number of factors, including the impact on Shannon airport and its hinterland, the opportunities for Aer Lingus to increase its business and the opportunities that might be opened up for other airports in Ireland.

A major part of my thinking regarding Shannon was the fact that an EU/US liberalised market is the inevitable outcome of this whole process in Europe," he said.

Minister Brennan added that this liberalised market "will allow Shannon to retain its position as an important destination for US Ireland transatlantic traffic and to seek to develop itself as a hub for passengers and cargo".

However, Deputy O'Sullivan rejected this, claiming that the abandonment of the current bilateral agreement would be "devastating" for Shannon. "The threat to Shannon's future cannot be appreciated at national level. The Government cannot be allowed to mis-

# Labour on the restoration of St John's has borne fruit

By MAIRÉAD NÍ CHAOIMH

WORK on restoring St John's Cathedral to its former glory is now complete.

The culmination of the €4 million restoration of the roof, spire tower and interior was celebrated with a special Mass on Sunday.

Along with the Papal Nuncio to Ireland in his address to the packed congregation and all four dioceses and your labours have not been in vain but they have grown abundant fruit. Today is a day of joy, the Lord sees your good work and he is on your side. I would encourage you to continue your good work as an expression of your love for the Cathedral and all it represents.

The Bishop of Limerick, Dr Donal Murray, chief celebrant at the Mass said, "The work we celebrate today is an act of respect for and recognition of our heritage and more importantly an expression of our faith in

God whose house this is." During the Mass many uplifting and celebratory hymns were sung by the Limerick Diocesan Choir. A professional TV film crew recorded the proceedings, while afterwards a pipe band welcomed the parishioners and guests into the specially constructed marquee for refreshments.

A Castletroy parishioner who attend the celebration said, "The restoration work done is marvellous and fabulous, and done so quickly too." She said the atmosphere was lovely.

Fr Joe Cussen said, "I would like to thank the people of St John's parish who have great affection and love for this church. The restoration has been a daunting prospect but through a great deal of co-operation and goodwill it succeeded."

A lot of effort had been invested in making the occasion special. The floors of the cathedral were polished and gleaming, stewards beavering around making sure everyone had a seat, local councillors in full garb were in attendance and the altar was packed with bishops and guests. The flower arrangements displayed around the church were tastefully created by Noreen Storan of Our Lady of the Rosary Parish.

An interesting dance movement for the liturgy was performed by a group of students dressed in black from the Gabrielle Wallace School of Speech and Drama.

"It is a big day and everything has gone according to plan," said



The Bishop of Limerick, Dr Donal Murray, celebrating Mass for the completion of the conservation work at St John's Cathedral

diocesan secretary.

The Cathedral Administrator Fr Denis Mullane commented, "When we began this major project of restoring St John's it became apparent that we were walking on the sweat and dreams of those who laboured lovingly to build this fine cathedral. In a time of difficulty the spirit of our ancestors rose above their own hardships and struggles to build this monument of faith. The restoration of this building is not only a renewal of the building but also a renewal of faith. St John's towers into the Limerick sky inviting us to reach upward and outward."

The cathedral was first opened for worship in 1860 and this is the fifth major work of refurbishment since it opened. The scaffolding was a familiar sight on the Limerick skyline and it even included a lift. All the stonework was raked out in the spire and the tower and repointed. Carbon staining was removed from the stone and water repellent was applied.

About half the roof was replaced with 2,500 sheets of copper and a new lightning protection system was installed on the tower.

The copper roof of the cathedral was replaced at a cost of €2.1m, the spire and tower at a cost of €2.1m and internal works were carried out at a cost of €2.3m.

Work was also completed on the exterior of the cathedral, the car-parking facilities and landscaping, with the total spend coming to €8.4 million.

Inside the Cathedral, the new floor is laid out in the form of a labyrinth, which represents the path of Christian life. This path is walked at significant times such as on the eve of baptism or confirmation or during Holy Week. Italian white marble and Irish limestone are used and polished to appear dark.

During the restoration large areas of nineteenth century tiles were uncovered within the side chapels. These have been cleaned and repaired. The main aisle has been retiled in the manner of the original.

Around 70 per cent of the walls had to have the plaster removed and replastered with lime.

The cracked and broken surface of the paving around the cathedral has been replaced and upgraded, with the



The Bishop of Limerick Dr Donal Murray, on his way to celebrate Mass for the completion of the

# Voluntary group gets €25,000 to fight abuse

A VOLUNTARY group fighting domestic violence in Southill has secured a badly needed Government grant, writes, Gerard Skehan.

The once-off sum of €25,000 is being provided to support the Southill Domestic Abuse Project in their efforts to stamp out domestic violence in the city.

Project co-ordinator, Ca O'Neill said that she was thrilled with the news of the funding, especially in view of the fact that the project might have closed with out it.

"We are delighted to receive this funding, which will ensure the continuation of our work. Previous funding was about to dry up but thanks to this the work of the project can continue," she said.

The project was established in 2000 as a three year pilot programme. However, the funding was due to finish this June. Minister Willie O'Dea recognised the value of the project's work and made the first steps to secure more funding.

Said Minister O'Dea, "The reason I took a personal interest in the project is because of the tremendous work they do in fighting domestic abuse. Obviously there's a huge need for it there judging by the demand levels for the service."

Minister of State also paid tribute to the work being done by all those involved with the project.

"The Southill Domestic Abuse Project is a very worthwhile initiative and does great work in the local community in attempting to tackle the persistent evil that is domestic abuse."

"This grant will prove very useful in supporting the group in its valuable work and in particular in raising awareness among young people that domestic violence is



Cllr Bridget Teeff, Cathaoirleach Limerick County Council, Mayor John Cronin, Noreen Storan, Limerick City Council and