DR. FENTON ADDRESSES CAREERS SEMINAR

Welcoming the attendance at a careers seminar in R.T.C., Athlone, on 13 February 1980, Dr. David Fenton, college principal, told those present that the expansion of third level education has been an important development in most countries. This rapid growth has resulted in many changes in the traditional structure of higher education systems. In particular, the number of students has increased in size. In Ireland the introduction of free post-primary education in 1962 has been associated with far higher participation rates in post-primary education. As a consequence far more qualified applicants are now seeking places in third level education.

The advancement of technological developments has also resulted in demands by industry and commerce for personnel with a high degree of expertise and skills. Virtually all informed commentators agreed that the employment opportunities of the 1980s would be in industry where there is a chronic shortage of many different categories of key personnel. Widely mentioned as being particularly in demand are engineers and engineering technicians, production managers, qualified accounting and personnel staff, people with skills in the electronics and computer areas, and employees for the hotel and catering industry.

The Athlone college, as part of a network of Regional Technical Colleges, was established at the start of the last decade to meet the objective of providing these technical and technological personnel. The college has grown rapidly since its development and now offers a wide range of courses on a full-time, part-time, block-release and day-release basis in the fields of engineering, science and business studies. The demand by industry and commerce for its graduates has been so great that the size of the college has had to be increased. A new extension is almost complete and the college is expanding its range of courses.

Science department acquires liquid chromatograph

The recent acquisition by the science department of the college of a high performance liquid chromatograph ensures that students will be using the most modern analytical methods available to the chemist. The instrument cost £8,000.

High performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) is an instrumental technique which separates complex mixtures into their components in a matter of minutes and provides quantitative as well as qualitative information about each component. The technique is reliable and highly efficient: nanogram (10^{-9}g) quantities of material can be readily detected by the instrument. Thus the method finds application in a wide variety of areas of analysis, of which the following are typical:

(i) analysis for organics in water and waste-water;
(ii) analysis of preservatives in food;
(iii) drug analysis in animal feeds;
(iv) polymer analysis;
(v) detection of organic pollutants in the environment;
(vi) analysis of pharmaceutical products;
(vii) pesticides residue analysis in fruits and vegetables.

The purpose of the seminar was to provide a forum for the principals and career teachers in the region to enable them to update their knowledge of the type and variety of courses offered at the college and to gain a clearer insight into the kind of job opportunities taken up by R.T.C. graduates.

Other speakers at the seminar were: Mr. C. Power, director of economic policy, Confederation of Irish Industry; Mr. R. Murphy, personnel manager, I.M. Ericsson; Dr. D. Fitzgerald, assistant director, Federation of Irish Chemical Industries; Mr. P. Beirne, former plastics engineering student; Mr. G. Murtagh, former science student; Mr. T. Lyons, former business studies student.

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Dr. David Fenton, principal, R.T.C., Athlone.

Mr. Martin Knox, lecturer in chemistry, operating the liquid chromatograph.
NATIONAL BOARD FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE ON THE ROLE OF POLYMER TECHNOLOGY IN IRELAND

The National Board for Science and Technology held its first materials conference on the role of polymer technology in Ireland at R.T.C., Athlone, on 14-15 December 1979. The conference was held in association with the Institute of Physics (Irish Branch), the Institute of Chemistry of Ireland and the Institute of Engineers of Ireland. The aims of the conference were (a) to promote an awareness of materials science as an important contribution to Irish scientific and industrial development; (b) to stimulate research in materials science and technology in academic and research institutions and in industry; and (c) to encourage greater interaction between disciplines and between industrial, academic and other research institutions. Speakers included Dr. A.A.L. Chalis of the Science Research Council, U.K.; Mr. R. Devlin, R.T.C., Athlone; Dr. R.S. Charneck, Loctite (Ireland) Ltd.; Prof. V.J. McBririty, T.C.D.; Mr. T. DeLasa, G.P.E. Teoranta; Dr. R.J. Crawford, Q.U.B.; Dr. P.J. Mallon, Beckmann Instruments Ireland Inc.; and Mr. Paul Toal, I.D.A.

GOLD MEDALLIST

Patrick Roddon.

Patrick Roddon, a student of the C.E.R.T. training course for chefs in the catering section of the college, won the gold medal at the National Catering Exhibition in Dublin. Patrick, who is in his second year at the college, serves in the army at Custome Barracks, Athlone, and attends the course on a day-release basis. Top-brass in the defence forces clearly subscribe to the Napoleonic adage that an army marches on its stomach! Training facilities for C.E.R.T. at the college have recently expanded with the provision of extensive new kitchens. Whole-time and day-release students, accompanied by staff members J. Ryan, Mrs. P. McTiernan and Ms. K. McNulty, attended the International Catering Exhibition at Olympia, London, at the end of January 1980.

MINERAL SCIENCE GRANT

Dr. David Fenton, principal, R.T.C., Athlone, receiving the Irish Industrial Explosives Ltd. grant from Mr. M. Kelly.

The three-year mineral science diploma course at R.T.C., Athlone, places major emphasis on the practical approach to exploration, mining and mineral processing. Much of the students’ timetable involves work in the field, away from Athlone, learning the techniques of exploration and allied mining subjects. Such field work is expensive to undertake and Dr. Fenton was delighted therefore to accept, on behalf of the students, a grant of £750 from Irish Industrial Explosives Ltd. to be used in meeting essential expenses involved. In addition the Irish Mining and Quarrying Society donated £100. Mr. M. Kelly of Irish Industrial Explosives Ltd. formally presented the grants to Dr. Fenton at a ceremony in the college on 19 March. Speaking on behalf of the mineral science students, who will be the beneficiaries, Miss Aisling Reid joined with Dr. Fenton in expressing thanks to the donors.
New Staff Member

Dr. Nessa Ní Ghóigín, lecturer in biology.

Dr. Nessa Ní Ghóigín, who joined the staff of the college in February of this year, is a science graduate of U.C.D. Having attended the Mercy Convent in Dundalk, she graduated from college with honours in botany and chemistry in 1975. As a postgraduate student in the department of botany, U.C.D., she worked in the areas of gene regulation, molecular biology and tissue culture. In 1978 she joined the staff of the nuclear medicine department in St. Vincent’s Hospital, Elm Park, Dublin as a biochemist, where her particular interest was in the field of radioimmunoassay applications, both routine and research. Coming from an Irish-speaking family she has spent many years as an active member of Na Campai Duibre (the Irish work camp movement) involved in manual work and the organisation of Irish summer colleges on Cape Clear Island. Among her interests are traditional Irish music and sport. Nessa says she finds Athlone an interesting diversion from the hustle and bustle of city life.

Table Tennis Stars

R.T.C., Athlone, staff table tennis team recently won two major competitions in Athlone: the 1979–80 Division 1 Championship and the 1979–80 Division 1 League. Picture shows (left to right): Peter McAlister, James Coyle, Martin Knox, Tom Rosney and Eddie Byrne.

Martello Tower, Dalkey

Fortresse de l’esprit conservateur
Devenue temple des druides rieurs
Célébrant les rites supérieurs
De leur race Pindarique et visionnaire.

(Fortress of the conservative mind/became a temple of the laughing druids/celebrating the superior rites of their Pindaric and visionary race.)

—Colm Caffrey, M.A.

CONFERRING DAY

195 students received certificates and diplomas at the conferring ceremony at R.T.C., Athlone, on 9 November 1979. Pictured here with Mr. T. White, A.I.C.E.A., are (left to right): Evelyn Mulligan, Certificate in Business Studies; Una Kearns, Certificate in Art & Design; and Deirdre Farrelly, Certificate in Business Studies.

Conferred with Certificates in Business Studies were (left to right): Terri Coyle, Gerry Somers and Gerry Shirres.
National Institute of Industrial Safety
Poster Competition

Presentation of N.I.S.O. awards to R.T.C., Athlone art students. Left to right: Mr. J. Hall, Irish National Insurance Company; Sheila Begley (second prize); Mr. Simon Healy, lecturer in art and design, R.T.C., Athlone; Sandy Hughes (first prize); and Mr. Patrick Deavy, R.T.C., Athlone.

Sandy Hughes and Sheila Begley, second year students in the art and design course of R.T.C., Athlone, won first and second prizes, respectively, in the Regional Technical Colleges section of the regional poster competition organised by the midland branch of the National Industrial Safety Organisation. Sandy Hughes’s poster was entitled Industrial safety—it’s in your hands and Sheila Begley’s Carelessness causes accidents.

The adjudication panel consisted of Mr. P.J. Connolly, general manager, Guer and Western Ltd.; Mr. Giaran Temple, Temple Printing Ltd.; Mr. Simon Healy, lecturer in art and design, R.T.C., Athlone; Mr. T.F. Murphy, Irish National Insurance Co. Ltd.; Mr. T. O’Mahony, department of labour; Mr. P. Rowan, lecturer in industrial engineering, R.T.C., Athlone; Mr. M. Doyle; and Mr. D. Gaffney, president, N.I.S.O. Presenting the prizes, Mr. Gaffney stated that Irish-designed industrial safety posters are widely used in advanced industries in such countries as Japan, U.S.A. and Australia.

DIPLOMA COURSE IN ANALYTICAL CHEMISTRY

Outline approval has been received recently from the National Council for Educational Awards for a new science course to be called the National Diploma in Science (Analysis). This will be an advanced course to train people for opportunities as research and development technicians in the rapidly growing chemical sector of Irish industry. It is intended that the course will be open to students who obtain a national certificate (with credit) in either applied chemistry or applied biology. Many former students, presently working in industry, have expressed interest in the course and it is expected that several will return to study, thus lending their experience in the early years of the course. The course will be heavily biased towards the areas of analytical chemistry that are most important to Irish industry, e.g., food and drugs, environmental plastics and polymers etc.

The extensive range of relevant laboratories and equipment at present in the college will be increased to ensure that course graduates are fully conversant with all modern methods.

It is planned to commence this course in September 1981 and students at present considering entering the science technician course at Athlone would be able to progress to this advanced qualification.