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REPLY BY VICE-PRESIDENT HILLERY AT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT IN STRASBOURG TO AN ORAL QUESTION CONCERNING COMMUNITY ACTION TO ENSURE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITIES AND THE STATUS TO WOMEN

The development of Community action for the promotion of equal treatment between men and women in relation to employment preceded International Women's Year, benefitted from the favourable climate engendered by this important event and continues now as one of the main planks in our Social Action Programme.

The Commission's first task was to deal with the question of equal pay. This subject was of course already covered by Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome but despite this provision and a subsequent Recommendation adopted by the Member States the principle of equal pay had not been fully implemented. The Commission therefore judged it necessary to propose a Directive to the Council defining more closely the obligations of the Member States in this matter and extending the notion of equal pay for equal work to also include work of equal value. This Directive, which received the support of your Parliament, was adopted by the Council and came into force on 10 February of this year.

Important as it was to eliminate discrimination in pay this, of course, is only part of the problem confronting women in the field of employment. The Commission, therefore, took the next logical step with the preparation of a second Directive on equality of opportunity to fight against discrimination in matters of access to employment, promotion and vocational training and equality in working conditions. This second Directive which also received the full support of your Parliament was adopted by the Council ^{at its meeting} last December.

These two Directives represent a major step forward in the social progress of millions of women in the Community. But that is not the end of the road. A more long-term job needs to be done in changing traditional anti-feminist attitudes and creating a climate in which it will be regarded as normal that women be treated as men are on their individual merits. This is why the Commission published simultaneously with its proposal for a Directive on equal opportunity a Memorandum dealing with the range of obstacles facing women in the employment field and possible approaches to solving them.

Our next task is to extend equality of treatment into the field of social security where at present there are serious discriminations to the disadvantage of women. Preliminary work is well under way in my Services for the preparation of a first Directive in this field and Parliament will have an opportunity of debating our proposal in the Autumn.

Vocational training and vocational guidance are also of major importance for women at work. As a follow-up to a seminar on this subject held in Paris last November we are now working on a draft Recommendation which will also be submitted this year.

The Commission has since 1962 published at intervals eight different reports on the situation on equal pay in the Community. Moreover our Services have been collecting and analysing data and commissioning surveys relating to the broader question of women's employment. National and independent experts have been associated in this work and several publications have been issued of the various findings.

A study scheduled for this year will concentrate specifically on the problems of women working in agriculture.

Another source of information of interest in the women's question is the Commission's Annual Report on the social situation in the Community which covers developments affecting women's rights in the Member States.

Side by side with legislative measures the Commission is promoting greater information on the rights and obligations which devolve from the Community Directives and the ways open to women to enforce these rights.

An important development in this connection is our commissioning of a film on the subject for the television net works of the Member States.

Before concluding I want to tell you that the Commission has just taken the decision to set up a Women's Bureau in my department - to be operational by the autumn of this year - to ensure the active and continuous development of a vigorous policy to promote equality of men and women in relation to employment.