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**EXTRACTS FROM THE SPEECH BY VICE-PRESIDENT VREDELING BEFORE THE NATIONAL  
CONGRESS OF THE DUTCH TRADE UNION FEDERATION IN AMSTERDAM  
ON 18 DECEMBER 1978**

"Retirement at 60 instead of 65 means a reduction of more than 10% in working time. Early retirement is one of the most promising ways of reducing working time", said Vice-President Vredeling tonight at the National Congress of the Dutch Trade Union Federation (FNV) in Amsterdam.

Mr Vredeling added that early retirement should first of all be introduced for people working under difficult conditions and in difficult jobs. The Vice-President explained that there had been a detailed exchange of opinions within the Commission on the practical proposal that the ETUC had made during the run-up to the Tripartite Conference of 9 November concerning the reduction of 10% in working time over the next four years.

Mr Vredeling stated that since 1960 there had been a 1% reduction in working time each year. If this trend were to continue between 1978 and 1982 then this on its own would mean a reduction of 4%.

"It is obvious that when the Commission puts forward proposals for a redistribution of work with a view to employment, the corresponding reduction in working time (per week or per year) will be higher than the reduction which would have taken place in any case in accordance with the existing trend. But how much higher I cannot say exactly, although to some extent I go along with the idea of 10% over four years", said Mr Vredeling.

He reminded the Congress that the replies given by ministers and employers representatives at the Tripartite Conference to questions put by the Trade Union delegates were not very satisfactory. The conference had achieved less than it might have done, but nevertheless Mr Vredeling considered that the fact that the strategy put forward by the Commission - including practical measures to redistribute work - had been accepted represented a positive element.

Referring to possibilities of improving the working procedures for the Tripartite Conference Mr Vredeling suggested that in future the Commission might negotiate with the two sides of industry concerning subjects which were of importance to them. In this process the Ministers would also have to decide what that position was. "The participants in the Tripartite Conference would have to negotiate seriously on certain proposals before the conference itself. A situation can be imagined where this would lead to the emergence of European outline agreements which could later be worked out in more detail in the context of national negotiations on a collective agreement", said Vice-President Vredeling.

He also criticized the attitude of the Council of Ministers in relation to the accession of Greece to the Community saying "while the Commission view was that the free movement of workers should be introduced gradually, the Council decided that free movement should not be introduced until the end of an eight year transitional period; this means that free movement of workers will be frozen during the transitional period instead of being introduced generally.

The Council also disagreed with the Commission as regards equal treatment in matters of social security. In the Council's view a Greek and an Italian worker both working in the Community and with children living at home with their mother in Greece or Italy should receive different levels of family allowance. The Commission considers this to be completely objectionable since it would involve blatant discrimination as regards working conditions to the detriment of the Greeks who, after all, once they join are supposed to be full members of the Community. As a result the negotiations with Greece which are to be completed before Christmas will probably be very difficult during the coming week".

As regards the socio-economic situation in the Community Mr Vredeling said the social tensions were building up. He pointed out that registered unemployment in the Nine had increased from 3 million in 1974 to 6 million in 1977, and had stayed at this level for a year. In addition, there was still a considerable amount of non-registered unemployment among school leavers, married women, handicapped persons etc. The total number of unemployed in the Community, he claimed, was probably not much below 9 million.

Mr. Vredeling stressed that the socio-economic problems in all the Community countries revealed many similarities with each other and that the only possible solutions for them were European solutions. "This European approach is not to be found in various kinds of bilateral trade and cooperation agreements, but only in an organization which applies an institutionalized approach to economic, social and monetary questions", said Mr. Vredeling.