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Address

by

PROF. LIONELLO LEVI SANDRI

President of the Social Affairs Group
of the EEC Commission

at the Round Table on the Social Aspects
of the Common Transport Policy

Brussels

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Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Among the objectives we are pursuing in the integration of Europe, social aims are undoubtedly of particular importance. The Treaty of Rome stresses this repeatedly: in the preamble, where social as well as economic progress and the constant improvement of the living and working conditions of the peoples of Europe are set forth as the motives, and the real purposes, which led the six countries to form the Community; in Article 2, which places on the Community the task of raising the standard of living at an increasingly rapid pace; and finally in Article 117, which repeats the need to promote better living and working conditions of workers in order to ensure that they be levelled upward in the course of the general progress.

These social aims may be achieved in large part through the working of the common market itself. The setting up of customs and economic unions will inevitably lead to a gradual and spontaneous harmonization of living and working conditions; if, in accordance with the Treaty, this levelling upward comes about, it will constitute a definite step towards achieving the Treaty's objectives in the social sector. But in order to guarantee that the levelling shall be upward and not downward, with generalization of the status of the less favoured (and the danger is a real one), the Treaty lays down certain procedures, including some aimed at approximating legislation and others intended to promote, on the initiative of the Commission, close collaboration between Member States in the social field.

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The need to make use of these special procedures is even more evident in those sectors where common policies must be implemented.

One step that must be taken if a common policy is to be achieved is to do away with disparities between the law of different countries, as these may lead to distortions in competition and hinder the institution and working of the common market. The need for this type of action is particularly manifest in the case of agricultural policy and also of transport policy, which is our subject today.

I hasten to add that the Community's social action does not stop here, does not stop at satisfying those needs which are linked with the establishment of common policies. As President Hallstein reminded us just now, the Treaty of Rome also lays down that the Community shall have a general social policy which embraces all sectors of production - from agriculture to industry, from trade to transport.

This policy finds expression in the action taken to establish, within the EEC, free movement of workers, to put an end in every country of the Community to discrimination between workers of the six countries, whether it concerned employment, wages and other working conditions; in the action taken to promote mobility of labour between countries and between industries by granting financial aid from the European Social Fund, by the action taken to promote the social progress of the workers by introducing a common policy of vocational training; and, finally, in close

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collaboration between the Commission and Member States in order to promote social harmonization, that is, to ensure the levelling upward of living and working conditions as part of the general progress.

In the field of transport, too, social policy is not limited to measures aimed at aligning provisions of a social nature in order to eliminate obstacles that stand in the way of a common policy. Economic and social policies must be kept in step, and the development of economic activity, its continuous and balanced expansion, and the increase in stability (all specific objectives of the Treaty of Rome), must be accompanied by more rapid improvement of living standards (another objective expressly stated in the Treaty), so that, in the long run, the benefits of expansion are shared equally amongst all those that have contributed to it, in an improved framework of social justice.

It is advisable that this should be borne in mind during our work, even if the provisions, which are linked, in the sense that we have already explained, with the establishment of a common transport policy, are of more immediate importance and urgency and are therefore submitted for your attention at this meeting.

Your main concern will be to examine the problems of harmonizing and co-ordinating working conditions, that is, the rules which, for the various types of transport, regulate the composition of working teams, lay down the length of working hours and rest periods, and govern the conditions for overtime. The differences and disparities existing between the provisions in the individual States may well produce distortions of competition which must be eliminated.

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This is no easy task because many such provisions involve the independence of trade organizations of employers and of workers and are the result of collective bargaining. Action to harmonize them therefore raises extremely delicate problems on both the legal and the political planes.

These problems cannot be dealt with successfully unless we deal also with vocational training. This raises questions of importance at the level of general social policy, so much so that the Treaty provides that they should be dealt with under a common policy. In the transport sector they are of particular interest, partly because of the question of safety, in connection with the need to harmonize diplomas and to recognize them in each other's countries, with the problem of training instructors, and with the need to decide on requirements and programmes.

Finally there are the specific problems of health and safety. These include study of the physical aptitude required of transport workers and the need to harmonize the relevant provisions, problems of ensuring the safety of workers and third parties, and the possibility of fixing minimum standards.

This brief survey demonstrates the complexity of the subject before us, and the multiplicity of the problems and the difficulties involved. These difficulties are in part due to the fact that the problems impinge on fields which vary from the strictly technical to the legal and administrative, from medicine to economics and politics. The variety of types of transport - rail, road and inland waterway - and the fact that Community enterprises operate outside the Community as well as within it and so must

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observe the different rules in force in other countries, and that conversely enterprises from those countries may operate within the Community - all these points increase the difficulties in the way of harmonizing such provisions. Moreover the very concept of harmonization presents aspects which are neither well defined nor clear; for even if it is easy to say that harmonization is not synonymous with making things uniform or identical (and therefore does not necessarily mean replacing the variety of existing systems by a single one), it is not so simple to define what harmonization in fact does entail.

What is certain is that it is intended to eliminate any differences that do not seem justified by special situations or conditions, in the interests - we may add - of creating, on the one hand, equality in the face of competition and, on the other, of levelling living and working conditions upwards. But how far harmonization must be taken in order to achieve this is a question which must be decided in each individual case on essentially pragmatic lines.

And the means of attaining harmonization may also be varied. It may - as we have already seen - spring from the working of the common market, or it may be achieved by the close collaboration, which Article 118 of the Treaty envisages between the Commission, Governments and trade organizations; again, it may arise from the approximation of laws under Article 100 - in the transport sector - or from special arrangements established under Article 75.

And so the problems that confront us are not easy. The European Commission, adopting a method it has already used on other

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occasions, has therefore thought it wise to call upon the collaboration of all those who occupy positions of responsibility in the public service or in trade organizations representing both sides of the industry, or those who have undertaken studies or other activities in this field, and can consequently make a useful contribution on account of their knowledge and experience. That is the origin of this Round Table which unites us today and which constitutes one form of the consultations referred to in Article 118 of the Treaty of Rome as a very suitable means of preparing the harmonization of social systems.

The subjects chosen have been treated in reports which will serve as a basis for our discussions. These reports have been drafted by experts whom, in particular, I should like to thank warmly for their painstaking patience and difficult work. It was difficult because, in the main, it was a question of reporting on subjects which until now have not been investigated systematically and which are regulated by a host of widely varying provisions. It was difficult, too, because the rapporteurs had to keep to a very strict time-table and the Commission was not able to put at their disposal in good time all the reference material now available, since the Commission itself had not received it. This is one more reason for being grateful for the work - not always a pleasant one - which they have performed.

We are sure that your discussions will lead to concrete proposals on the action the Commission must take to ensure that, in establishing the common transport policy, it rightly assesses and meets the requirements of an economic and social order, and

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that the harmonious development of our Community is assured in this field as in others.

This is a need to which we all attach special importance, not only because the Treaty requires that we shall do so, but also because we consider that achievements in the social sphere - improvement of the conditions in which the peoples of our countries live and work - constitute the best guarantee for a stronger and more closely knit Community, without which we shall not achieve the political unity of Europe.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the President of the Social Affairs Group of the European Economic Community I have pleasure in joining the President of our Commission, Prof. Hallstein, in his welcome to all present at our opening meeting today: M. Servais, the Belgian Minister of Labour and Employment, the representatives from the Governments of Member States and associated States, the representatives of other States and international organizations, the representatives of other European communities and of other community bodies, and the representatives of employers' and workers' organizations. I hope that the days we are to spend together will prove rich in interest for all those taking part in the Round Table's work and that they will enlarge your experience and ours. I should like to thank you

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for your acceptance of our invitation by taking part in this meeting which, by the very fact of ensuring close contact between the Community organizations and the forces of labour and production and, we may say, social reality in general, will guarantee that the decisions taken on the social plane to implement the common transport policy correspond to this reality.

I sincerely hope, Ladies and Gentlemen, that our work will be fruitful.
