

"SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN TRANSPORT"

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European Economic Community

at the opening meeting of the Round Table

Conference on Social Policy in Transport

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Ladies and Gentlemen, as the member of the EEC Commission with particular responsibility for the common transport policy, I am specially happy to welcome you to our Round Table Conference on Social Policy in Transport.

In the first place, I would wish to thank the many observers from countries who are not members of our Community for honouring this opening meeting with their presence. I would also thank the representatives from the various international organizations. Their presence in this room is one more proof of the interest they take in the work and the development of our Community.

But I should also like to say how pleased I am to see gathered together here today so many governmental experts from our six member countries, and the leading representatives from all sectors interested in the social problems which arise in connection with transport. The Commission knows that in carrying out the many tasks laid upon it by the Treaty of Rome it can count on the active and forceful co-operation not only of the Governments of the Member States but even more on the co-operation of the various groups which form part of our economic and our social life. I hasten to add that without this active co-operation, especially from the two sides of industry, our Round Table Conference could not have taken place. The Commission is anxious to pay tribute to both sides of industry; they have given proof of much goodwill in preparing such comprehensive and exhaustive reports at very short notice.

Why has the Commission organized a Round Table Conference on Social Policy in Transport?

You are all aware of the importance which the Commission attaches to the attainment of a highly developed social policy. This is an essential element in Community activity, the main objective of which is constantly to improve the living and working conditions of our peoples. In its pursuit of this end social policy in transport must form an integral part of the social policy of the Community.

But the social policy to be pursued in the transport sector must also take into account the special requirements of the common transport policy. The establishment of sound competition in transport must rest on the abolition of differences in starting conditions, which spring from artificial causes and therefore distorts competition. In the Action Programme for the Common Transport Policy which it put forward in May, 1962, the Commission stated that it considered the great differences existing between the Member States in the composition of teams, in working hours and in rest hours to be artificial in character.

The harmonization of working conditions and pay in the transport sector must therefore form part of the general social policy of the Community, but it must at the same time aim at doing away with the distortions of competition at present found in the Community.

This was the aim of the Commission when last May it submitted to the Council a proposal for a decision concerning the harmonization of certain provisions affecting competition in transport by rail, road and inland waterway. But this proposal, which takes the form of a skeleton programme, is still general in character. To guide its activities in the social context of transport the Commission needs more precise and more detailed information. It will be the first task of this Round Table Conference to provide such information.

Secondly, the Commission hopes that the work of this Conference will provide some guidance on other social problems in the three forms of transport which have not been dealt with in the Commission's Action Programme.

Lastly, the Commission hopes that the discussions of these three days will afford some guidance, from the social angle, on the attitude it should take and perhaps on the measures it should adopt in connection with those transport operations which originate or terminate in non-member countries.

There is no need for me to stress the particular importance of this problem. I would however like to emphasize the basic lines which our future policy could follow in this field, and to elaborate a little on them.

I think that your discussions on this subject could be guided by the following three principles:

- (i) The so-called nationalit_y principle, that is to say, the application in the territory of the Community of the social provisions of a non-member country in which the vehicle or vessel is registered;
- (ii) The territorial principle, that is to say, the application of the Community's social provisions in the territory of the Community to a means of transport belonging to an enterprise which has its seat outside the Community;
- (iii) The principle of harmonization, that is to say, the application in the territory of a non-member country to a means of transport belonging to an enterprise which has its seat in that same country, of provisions identical with those applicable within the Community.

In road and inland waterway transport social issues are still often governed by the nationality principle. However, as soon as a community-wide social system has been established, its application to vehicles and vessels from non-member countries must not put transport enterprises with their seat in the Community at a disadvantage. Likewise, the application of the territorial principle to means of transport belonging to enterprises having their seat in non-member countries can also run into technical difficulties because the social position of transport personnel abroad must, in the nature of things, be more closely linked to the social situation of the country of registration than to that of the country visited.

Nor does it seem impossible that certain legal difficulties may stand in the way of the application of the territorial principle. Nevertheless, these distortions of competition and of social conditions should be avoided. Clearly, therefore, talks with these non-member countries are called for. Naturally the best solution for the Community would be if the Community's social regulations could be adopted by the non-member countries, but we must face the fact that this goal, too, will be difficult to attain.

If in the first part of my address I have paid particular attention to the problems of harmonizing and co-ordinating working conditions, I would ask you not to conclude that the other two themes of the Round Table Conference are only of limited interest to the common transport policy. In fact I agree with the authors of the report on vocational training that the latter constitutes one of the fundamental goals which must be reached if working and living conditions are to be improved and levelled upward in accordance with Article 117 of the Treaty. It is moreover clear that modern transport cannot accomplish its economic tasks unless it is backed up by a skilled labour force. Technological evolution means that the degree of skill required is constantly rising. The Commission therefore greatly appreciates what has already been done in this field by the relevant Working Party.

The third subject, that of industrial health and safety, might at first sight appear to be of less importance to the common transport policy; but to look at it in this way would be to forget that in the last resort the main purpose of the Community, as can be seen in the preamble of the Treaty, is social. And it is of course evident that the importance of industrial health and safety cannot be overestimated in the social context. Here again the working party concerned has explored practically virgin territory and the Commission hopes to benefit in its future work from the very full study which will be put before you for consideration.

We must also beware of thinking that the agenda of our Round Table Conference was meant to include the whole field of social policy in transport. It is true that the official title given to this Conference is a little ambitious. In fact, our subject concerns working conditions and does not include social security, the importance of which need not be stressed.

It goes without saying that social security was not excluded through negligence or forgetfulness; it was excluded for reasons which are easy to understand.

Social security in transport must be regarded from two angles:

- (i) The harmonization of national social security systems at Community level;
- (ii) The co-ordination of these systems.

The harmonization of social security was dealt with in detail at the European Conference on Social Security in December 1962. The deliberations of that Conference have led to very interesting conclusions. The Commission therefore believes that inclusion of this subject in the agenda of the present Round Table Conference would have meant undue overlapping.

As for the co-ordination of national security systems, the Governments, the Administrative Committee for the Social Security of Migrant Workers, and the two sides of industry have suggested that because of its complexity and highly technical nature this subject should not be discussed at the Round Table Conference. The Commission has accepted this view. Nevertheless, it was decided that a working party drawn from both sides of industry should go into this problem. It has also been put before the Administrative Committee. The national delegations in this body have already prepared a report showing the practical difficulties that can face transport workers and the problems created by the simultaneous existence of various international legal instruments. This report will be discussed shortly. You see, therefore, that the Commission attaches great importance to the solution of this problem.

I have tried briefly to sketch the framework of this Round Table Conference on Social Policy in Transport and the angle from which we have sought to approach the subject. You could object that it would be in vain to look for a really round table in the Palais des Congrès in Brussels. But you know that this title was chosen intentionally to show that the three groups of participants gathered together are absolutely equal and will be imbued by the same spirit of co-operation.

I hope and believe that this spirit of co-operation will guide our discussions and that our work will be constructive and effective.

Many times in the past the Commission of the EEC has stressed that the work of European integration undertaken since 1958, and in fact even earlier within the ECSC, is highly political in character, although it is accomplished in the economic field. I should like to add something to this idea by saying that all we undertake should be done as a contribution to the development of man. The individual must not be the servant of either economics or politics, which are not ends in themselves. On the contrary, economics and politics are no more than means to serve human values. And if the preamble of the Treaty of Rome has described the constant improvement of the living and working conditions of the European peoples as the main objective of our efforts, it has no doubt done so because the final purpose of our work must be the improvement and broadening of human personality. The calling of man goes beyond the contingencies of economic life.