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INFORMATION MEMO

CONCLUSIONS OF THE ROUND TABLE ON SOCIAL POLICY IN TRANSPORT

The Round Table on Social Policy in Transport, which began two days ago at the Palais des Congrès, ended today.

After the presentation of the working parties' conclusions by the Rapporteurs for the three subjects (Professor Devreker on "Harmonization and co-ordination of working conditions", M. Peter on "Vocational training and employment", and M. Messina on "Industrial health and safety - social services") and after speeches by representatives of workers and employers and by a Government representative, M. Levi Sandri and M. Schaus made the closing addresses on behalf of the EEC Commission.

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"Before assessing what we have gained from these three days of work" said M. Schaus, "we must consider what exactly we were aiming at: our aim was to tackle these problems with the workers' and the employers' representatives and with those of the Governments. I feel that the spirit which has obtained in our discussions - a spirit of free confrontation of opinion - has been a good one. The themes chosen for discussion have presented our problems in two contexts: there are social problems common to all the economic sectors but there are others which are peculiar to transport, and this second kind can be solved without our waiting for an overall solution, since they are problems which might otherwise distort the conditions of competition. It could be argued " concluded M. Schaus, "that competition questions are of no consequence from the social point of view; but if social problems can be solved because the conditions of competition would be distorted if they were not, then they must be solved, even though we should prefer to see this done for purely social reasons."

M. Levi Sandri stressed that the usefulness of this kind of consultation extended beyond the subjects discussed. "We have moved beyond social policy to general problems of method in achieving European integration: these consultations are important because they introduce a broader democratic spirit into discussion of European problems."

"At this very moment, when the European integration process is beset with major difficulties due to the resurgence of individual interests, it is important that all those concerned should participate in the study of Community problems.

"The results of the Round Table are positive because it has placed at the Commission's disposal a number of new guiding ideas, proposals, suggestions and facts.

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"In the course of this conference we have noted that most of the participants take the view that the subject of working hours in transport deserves absolute priority.

"Vocational training in transport must be based on the General Principles adopted by the Council. In accordance with these Principles all forms of regimentation or dirigist policy must be shunned, but exchanges of experience encouraged and opportunities provided for reaching the same level of skill."

Winding up, M. Levi Sandra warmly supported the proposal that a Tripartite Committee be set up to study problems of working conditions in transport.

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A summary of the conclusions of the three working parties is attached.

Annex

A. Harmonization and co-ordination of working conditions

- (a) The main problems discussed were those of "harmonization" of working conditions within each type of transport and "co-ordination" between the various types of transport. Most of the participants feel that both harmonization and co-ordination are necessary, but the working parties differ on the question of priorities: the railway employers feel that co-ordination should enjoy absolute priority; the representatives of the inland waterways employers and the road transport employers emphasize the difficulty of such action.
- (b) A broad exchange of views was held on the following points:
 - (i) The number and composition of crews in the various types of transport;
 - (ii) Driving hours for workers in road transport and the number of hours at the helm for workers in inland waterway transport;
 - (iii) General working hours and rest periods;
 - (iv) Overtime arrangements;
 - (v) Supervision and enforcement of rules.
- (c) The workers' representatives asked the EEC Commission to set up a Tripartite Committee to examine more fully the documents which are to be assembled on working conditions in transport.
- (d) Most of those taking part laid stress on the problem of working hours and gave priority to problems raised by international transport. Specifically, the workers felt strongly that the implementation of the "European Agreement concerning the work of crews of vehicles engaged in international road transport" (AETR) should constitute the first step in this direction.
- (e) It was acknowledged by all that rules governing working conditions established under Community standards require effective supervision and enforcement.

B. Vocational training and employment

The following points were dealt with:

- (a) Education systems in the EEC countries.
- (b) The need for standardization of requirements in the field of vocational training. For this purpose minimum conditions must be established which will in the future have to be fulfilled by those desiring to take an examination for the award of a certificate. This certificate will be recognized throughout the Community.

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Annex

- (c) Trade monographs are to be drafted. For the inland waterways these will cover the occupations of deck boy, deck-hand, stoker/engine room operative, engineer, steersman. In the case of road transport they will cover: long-distance lorry drivers, bus drivers. For legal and technical reasons the railways prefer not to prepare trade monographs at the moment.
- (d) Participants were unanimous on the need to create opportunities for further training in the different types of transport. A recommendation will be made to all the countries to make available the necessary facilities.
- (e) The establishment of forecasts of labour needs in transport, particularly of skilled labour, is proving very difficult, mainly because of technical development, and this means that an annual review in this field will be needed.
- (f) Primary education of the children of boatmen. It was felt that there was an urgent need to give the children of boatmen living on board the same opportunities for primary education as to all the others.

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C. Industrial health and safety - social services

For road transport, the participants called on the Commission to work out Community standards to be proposed to Member States with a view to standardizing physical fitness requirements.

For the same problem in inland waterway transport, the Commission should bear in mind the need to work out minimum standards, notably for workers at the beginning of their careers.

In the field of industrial safety, it was hoped that research on the question of dangerous freight would be continued with a view to unifying the relevant rules.

On the question of industrial health, the working party acknowledged the need to examine more fully questions of the environmental conditions of work, residence and rest, and also questions concerning the place of work.

The working party feels that the Commission should instruct the experts who drew up the list of occupational diseases now the subject of a recommendation to the Governments to consider whether various categories of transport workers are not particularly exposed to certain maladies.