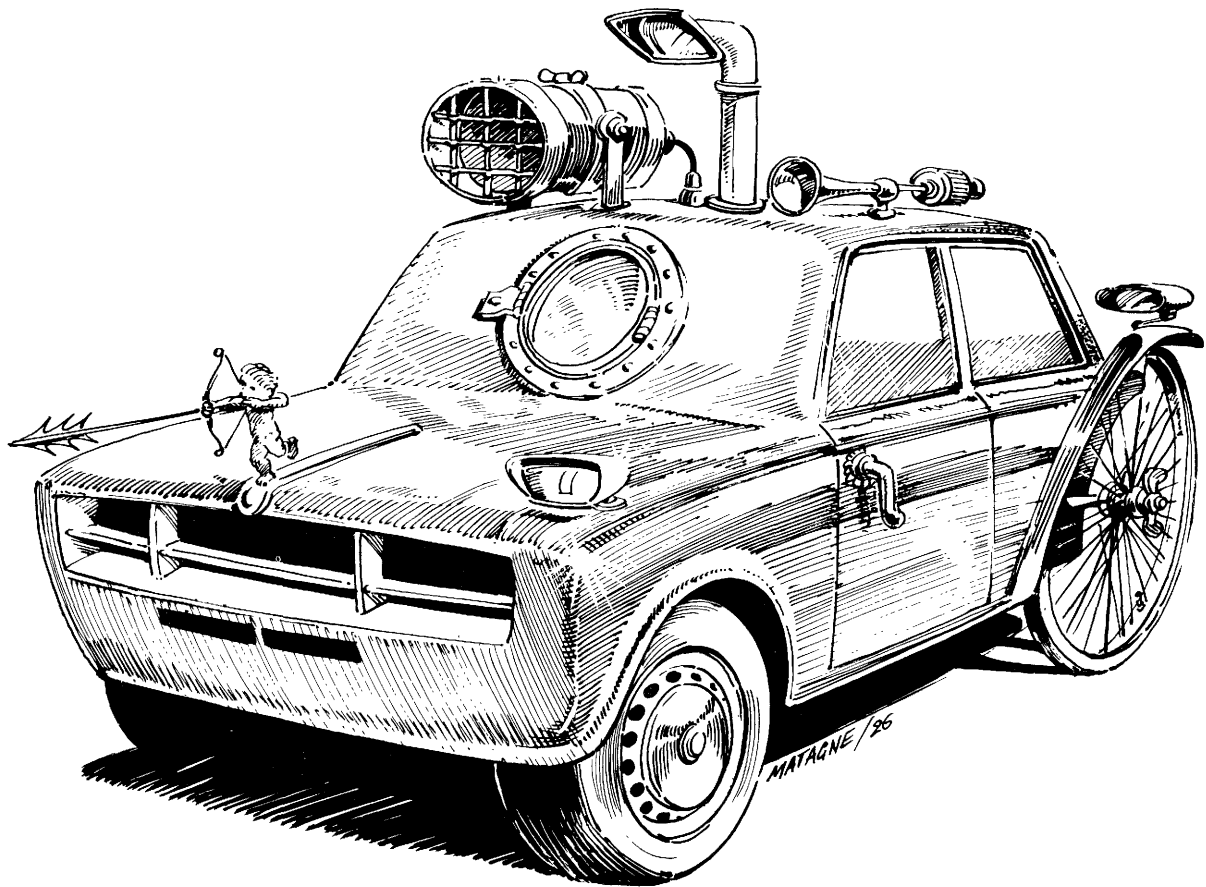


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europe day by day

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• The Community's car safety standards will keep this death-trap off Europe's highways at least. (see page 3.)

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Editor and coordinator : Jean Pirlot.

++ NON-TARIFF BARRIERS TO TRADE : THE MYSTERY SOLVED.....

Five more directives harmonising various technical aspects of automobiles have just been adopted by the Community's Council of Ministers.

Euroforum examines in Annex 1 why the European Community takes so much trouble to get rid of non-tariff barriers to EEC trade.

++ NUCLEAR SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Rather than bury the nuclear fuel that has been used in the Community's nuclear power stations, the European Commission has recommended that it be reprocessed and re-used.

In Annex 2 Euroforum explains why the Commission is in favour of recycling irradiated nuclear fuel.

++ SOLIDARITY AGAINST DISASTERS

Floods in France, earthquakes in Italy Europe has been suffering in recent times and 'post-industrial' man finds himself almost as helpless as his ancestors of the Middle Ages, in dealing with natural catastrophes. Europe needs, at least, to be united in dealing with such disasters and the Community's Council of Ministers has taken the initiative to improve the coordination of emergency resources and facilities in Europe. The Council has asked the European Commission to appoint a coordinator who will be in direct contact with national officials responsible for emergency aid, and will be able to work out the best possible joint action between Community countries.

The Commission will be presenting the Council of Ministers some concrete ideas along these lines in the near future, to ensure that European solidarity can be instigated in face of natural even if not economic disasters.

++ TEXTILES : CRISIS TRENDS

Between 1973 and 1976 imports of textiles into the Community in terms of tonnage increased by 80%. In 1976 the value of imports rose to an impressive 9.3 billion dollars.

The impact of such imports is only to be expected: 3 500 factories have had to close down between 1973 and 1976, and half a million jobs have been lost, 15% of the total work force in this sector.

If things stay as they are, 1 600 000 jobs will be lost between now and 1982, which is humanly, socially economically and politically unacceptable for the European Community. To avoid this, the Community has just introduced measures to limit the imports of cotton fibre and clothing from certain non-Community countries.

The synthetic fibre industry is in such difficulties through over-capacity that the European Commission has just sent a letter to the governments of the Nine requesting that no further aid be given to the industry over the next two years for the construction of additional capacity. The Commission intends to keep track of events by receiving regular information from individual synthetic fibre producers about the market situation facing the firms concerned.

++ AEROSOL GAS

For several months the European Commission has been examining the problem of the use of fluorocarbons in aerosols. The results of the several meetings with national experts, however, have not been conclusive. Considerable doubt still exists as to the real effects of fluorocarbons on the environment. Further reasearch will be necessary before the Commission can begin to think of preparing a possible Community directive on the subject.

Meanwhile the Commission will, naturally enough, keep itself informed of research in Community countries on the use of the gas as an aerosol propellant. In the Community's research programme 1977 - 1980 at the Joint Research Centre, a project has been devoted to studying the effects of halocarbons and other substances on the ozone layer. The governments of the Nine are in favour of the research on fluorocarbons being coordinated at the Community level.

++ MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES

The fifty largest European companies (almost exclusively multinational corporations, many of whom are European operations of American groups) had a combined turnover of 180 billion dollars in 1972 and had some 6.2 million employees. Gross investment by these companies in 1972 came to about 15 billion dollars.

By 1973 these figures had increased. The fifty largest companies employed some 17% of all workers employed in the different industrial sectors.

Of the 4 500 companies in the Community which have supranational activity more than 1 000 are associated

with at least 5 companies located in other countries by way of subsidiaries, shareholdings or partnership.

These figures have been provided by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) in the introduction to its action programme on multinational groups.

++ BUDGET AT THE PARLIAMENT

"The Community's budget is smaller than the advertising expenditure of Europe's larger companies." announced Lord Bruce when the European Parliament discussed the Community's draft for 1978 (see Euroforum No. 23/77).

The budget is not just an accounting instrument but has political implications. It is a forecast of Community expenditure which itself reflects the Community's intentions over the following year.

The European Parliament has the power to reject the whole budget proposed to it. There will be no such crisis this year since the Parliament is strongly behind the Commission and similarly regrets the limited means available to the Community.

Amendments which the Parliament could make to the draft budget do however concern the most sensitive areas: regional policy (6% of total budget) research policy (3.94% of total budget) and social policy (4.68%).

++ A FAIR WEEK'S WORK

According to the latest figures available to the Community's statistical office the average week's work in the Community at the end of 1975 was as follows:

Germany	40 hrs 50 mins
France	42 hrs 24 mins
Italy	41 hrs 30 mins
Netherlands	40 hrs 48 mins
Belgium	37 hrs 56 mins
Luxembourg	40 hrs 54 mins
United Kingdom	41 hrs 48 mins

++ POSTAL TAXES

Small items of a non-commercial nature, sent through the post are exonerated of all taxation both by the customs and the tax authorities. Several Community countries, however, continue to impose a customshandling tax. The European Commission has requested the governments of the Nine to withdraw this tax as of January 1st 1978.

Apart from giving the Community a money-grabbing image, the tax does not, in fact, bring much money into the government coffers. Government officials as well as the general public will both be glad to see this tax disappear particularly as it costs more to collect the tax than the money it brings in.

++ HERRING EXTERMINATION

In 1972, 497 500 tonnes of herring were caught in the North Sea. By 1976, the catch had dropped to 169 200 tonnes. The herring catch in the Sea has continued to drop dramatically and has now reached the critical level.

The International Council for Sea Exploration (ICES) estimates that the total herring reserves have slid from 1.2 million tonnes in 1976 to a current 300 000 tonnes.

The European Commission has, in reaction, proposed to ban fishing of herring in the North Sea from 1978. Fishing has already been forbidden this year from March to July and the Commission has proposed that this ban be continued till the end of 1977.

++ YOUNG CONSUMERS

The habits of the young French consumer have recently been studied by a French association called the New Social Contract (Nouveau Contrat Social) headed by Mr Edgar Faure, as a base for further study of young consumers in other Community countries.

The research undertaken by the New Social Contract is particularly interesting inasmuch as its analysis is based on the Community's Consumer Protection Programme, and tries to link the behaviour of young people to the objectives of the Programme.

The very young consumers (0 to 4 years) are particularly vulnerable to the problems of health and safety. The report insists, among other things, on better feeding habits of mothers both before and after giving birth.

The next group (4 to 10 years) is affected by a wider variety of accidents which could be avoided by better education and awareness of the dangers.

Young people from 10 to 14 years have a certain influence on the purchasing habits of their parents. Parents consequently need a certain amount of protection from the point of view of their economic interests. Also, the role of advertising influencing the children of this age group should be reviewed, it is suggested. Labelling of goods should be made more comprehensible for young people. Even if this age group can only induce purchases, they are still consumers.

As buyers, young people from 14 to 18 years are subject to a barrage of advertising without equal. The last group 18 and over is not characterised particularly by age but by degree of autonomy. More aware than their juniors, they are less sensitive to advertising but are more vulnerable when they have made a bad purchase and seek redress. This group of young people, who are fully fledged consumers, are practically unrepresented and never consulted.

Experts from the New Social Contract will proceed to draw up profiles of young consumers in other countries and see what comparisons they can draw.

++ EUROPE +30

The characteristic feature of a crisis is that it can rarely be forecast. It is therefore logical that governments should try as hard as possible to foresee difficulties which may confront them. Within the European Community it is the European Commission which has the job of keeping track of new ideas, trends and developments so that action can be taken early rather than when things start to get hot. In 1974 the Commission set up a team of experts under the leadership of Lord Kennet to examine what would be the best form of forecasting instrument for the Community to have. (see Euroforum No. 36/75 and 6/76) and this group produced the Europe +30 report.

The Commission has come out in favour of the report's findings on the importance of long-term forecasting for the future development of the Community. However, it does not feel that it has the necessary experience yet to organise, apply and develop a forecasting institute as was recommended in the Europe +30 report. As a first stage, the Commission proposes to have a pilot project lasting five years so that greater experience can be obtained and a better knowledge of the practical side of the techniques and organisational structures to be used for forecasting at the Community level.

During this pilot period the Commission would attempt to introduce the highest degree of coordination between the various centres working in this field, both in the Community and elsewhere. Such centres that exist are the Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU), DATAR (Délégation à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'action régionale), Institut für Angewandte Systemanalyse, la Futuribles Fédération, Fédération internationale des Institute d'Etudes avancées (IFIAS), Institute internationale pour l'Analyse appliquée des Systemes (IIASA) and the OECD with its Inter-Futures project in which the European Commission already participates.

++ QUALITY OF LIFE AND FUTURE OF MAN

France's "Decade de Provence" was this year devoted to the theme of "Quality of life and the future of man". Invited to discuss the European dimension of the quality of life Mr. Paul Collowald of the European Commission's Directorate General for Information stressed that participation and a feeling of being responsible are basic elements of the quality of life.

"The European Commission hopes that a greater number of Europeans feel more concerned because they are more aware. It is truly the moment - over the next few months- to realise that the European dimension can and should be a dimension for action, both more popular-based and more democratic. Whether it's the public debate on nuclear energy at the end of October in Brussels, or European elections in June 1978, a path has been opened for men of good will to surmount frontiers and establish or re-establish a way of life and a better lifestyle."

++ AGRICULTURE AND THE CONSUMER (cont.)

A misleading presentation of figures led us to write that the Community imports 80% of its animal feedstuffs. In fact the Community only has to import one sixth of the products necessary to feed its animals.

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NON-TARIFF BARRIERS TO TRADE : THE MYSTERY REVEALED....

The Community's Council of Ministers has just adopted five new directives harmonising technical aspects of automobiles (rear fog lamps, reversing lights, stop lights, driver's field of vision and safety belts).

These EEC automobile standards can reasonably be expected to be operative before the end of the year. It will then be possible to introduce an EEC type approval system for cars. Once a prototype for a new car has been inspected and approved in one country, this approval will be automatically recognised in any EEC country.

The "Rose and Crown" is normally a quiet pub. One particular evening, however, a gruff Lancashire voice broke the silence with an impassioned bellow: "European beer! They're bloody mad in Brussels! I'm not a member of the Campaign for Real Beer for nothing. I want to keep all our great little local brews. They really taste like beer, not like them there mass produced beers which taste the same in any pub from Liverpool to London. God forbid, a mass-produced European beer!"

He disappeared behind his impressive moustache and sank back into contemplating his pint of local perfection.

What he didn't know was that there will never be any Euro-beer.

Still, the problem of European harmonisation is both highly sensitive and needs to be carefully explained.

Easier trade

When the Common Market was set up it was generally thought that it would only be necessary to progressively abolish customs duties to enable goods to be freely sold in any Community country.

Customs barriers, however, were not the only hindrance to the free movement of goods. Within each country there were also different tax arrangements which were out of step with each other. To bring them into line and harmonise the systems of indirect taxation, VAT (value added tax) was extended to all countries.

This is only part of the problem. In each country there are a remarkable number of regulations which prescribe the technical characteristics a product must conform with before it can be put on sale. These regulations differ

from country to country and the differences effectively amount to technical barriers to trade. These regulations are frequently more powerful than customs duties in preventing or hindering trade.

Good reasons

Let us suppose that for reasons of road safety one EEC country rules that cars travelling at a given speed must be able to brake within 80 yards, while another country reduces the braking distance to 70 yards. Car manufacturers in both countries will either have to equip all their vehicles with the most powerful - and possibly the most expensive - braking system, or provide two different braking systems for the same model. Thus a barrier to trade is created through two countries adopting different quality standards. In a Community of Nine, where different standards may apply, the obstacle looms even larger.

When standards are particularly contradictory, the barrier becomes even worse. Take the case of lifts: one country requires a "stop" button and certain other countries have formally banned them.

Member States have to satisfy themselves that the products sold to their consumers are safe and reliable. In any modern society, regulations of this kind are essential.

In a Community which wishes to establish a 'common market' the solution is of course to reach agreement on common safety and health requirements. This process of harmonisation is however, slow and difficult on account of the large number of specific decisions that have to be taken for each class of goods.

Ten years ago, the first directive eliminating technical barriers was adopted. Exactly one decade later the 100th such directive was adopted.

The earliest solution to eliminating such obstacles to the free movement of goods would be for each government to accept all products which are approved in other Community countries. For practical reasons, however, this is not possible (how can the UK, for example, check whether a product made in Denmark for instance, conforms to Danish standards?) It is also a question of policy since levels of protection required vary from country to country.

These difficulties cannot be overcome simply by systematic standardisation of national regulations. Life-styles

habits and tastes differ from country to country. Consider ordinary bread, for instance, consumers in Holland and certain other countries, prefer bread containing lots of holes, all approximately the same size. The effect can be produced by adding a chemical. Unfortunately this chemical is banned in France. Agreement would be impossible to reach.

The Commission's aim is to enable products to be traded throughout the Community without difficulty to give consumers the widest choice possible. There has never been any intention to reduce the great variety of goods and foods that exist in the Community. This, it has long been recognised, would cause the disappearance of many typical products which in many cases, are part of the charm of our different countries.

Community priorities.

The Community's main instrument for eliminating technical barriers to trade, is the "directive" which is adopted unanimously by the Council of Ministers, and then forwarded to the Member States for them to make the necessary adjustments to their laws and administrative practice.

These directives are adopted on the basis of proposals drawn up by European Commission specialists after lengthy consultation with national experts, industrialists and interested parties, trade unionists and consumer representatives within an advisory committee. Problems of safety or health protection that arise are given special attention.

Before any decision is taken by the Council, the European Parliament and the Community's Economic and Social Committee are invited to give their opinion and, if need be, propose amendments to the Commission's proposals. Thereafter, the representatives of the Member States proceed to a thorough and often lengthy examination of these proposals.

It has been estimated that the Economic and Social Committee needs six and a half months to give its opinion on a proposal for a directive, the Parliament requires 8.4 months and the Council of Ministers, 36.6 months. In difficult cases a proposal can stay before the Council of Ministers for eleven years.

Difficult compromises.

Don't be too surprised at the length of time the discussions take. They are legal texts dealing with technical specifications which have economic and political implications.

Lawyers, technicians, politicians and economists frequently do not speak the same language. Keeping the dialogue going between the specialists in various disciplines from nine different countries is even more difficult as they are not necessarily so concerned or interested about the same things.

Even between technicians and scientists, the difficulties are numerous and include some time-honoured elements such as resistance to change and theological disputes between different scientific schools of thought.

The long discussions are not simply time wasting. The European Commission is able to use the time to ensure that the proposals correspond to the basic objectives of opening up the European market and widening the choice available to consumers whilst, of course, strictly adhering to health and safety standards.

Harmonisation is not a goal in itself. The goal is not to score as many directives as possible, like taking scalps. A directive will only be proposed if it is the only means of sufficiently liberalising the market for a given product. Even then harmonisation will be limited to the minimum necessary. Frequently, technical barriers can be eliminated by simple negotiation with the appropriate authorities.

Certain items such as pressure cookers, for example, are accepted on the basis of inspections carried out by the exporting country in accordance with the regulations in force in the country where the product will be marketed.

Harmonisation and harmonisation

Various sorts of harmonisation are possible. The most common method is known as "optional" harmonisation. Products that comply with Community standards may be sold anywhere in the Community, but national standards are still maintained and a manufacturer wishing to keep his position in a traditional market whether national or local, can continue to follow the original national standards for domestic sales without worrying about Community provisions.

In some cases, however, it is necessary to go all the way to "total" harmonisation, and then national standards are replaced by Community standards. This is especially the case where public health and safety requirements can be harmed by the proliferation of competing national standards. Typical examples of these are the EEC directives on dangerous substances and the biodegradability of detergents.

Whichever approach is adopted, the Community's aim is fundamentally to protect and promote consumer interests by

widening the market and ensuring free movement of an ever growing number of products from the various Community countries. The Commission also takes care to avoid affecting the quality and specific characteristics of the products.

After the Council.

Once the directive has been adopted by the Council of Ministers, the Member States have, on average, 18 months to modify their national legislation and introduce the required administrative change. Frequently more is required than simply printing the new legal texts in the Official Journal. Often national administrations have to equip themselves with new measuring apparatus or become familiar with new verification techniques.

The European Commission for its part, has to ensure that no Member State hinders the free movement of goods by applying criteria different from those laid down in the common regulations. In the event of infringements it is generally sufficient to point out to the country concerned that its practice does not conform to the principles adopted in common. If after 18 months nothing happens, however, the European Commission sends a reminder. The next step is to send them a summons.

After a directive is adopted there is still a certain amount of work to be done in Brussels. If, as is expected, more than 50 directives are to come into force this year, this will require 450 letters to national governments requesting them to prepare their own application measures. Over ten years some 3 000 reminders and summons have had to be sent out to national governments. In a few extreme cases the Commission even had to bring the case before the European Court of Justice.

Community directives have an impact on foreign goods as well as domestic ones. Once a directive is adopted it removes autonomy from individual EEC countries in that field. The regulations concerning a certain product are presented to the rest of the world as Community regulations not national ones. Consequently the Community has been required to negotiate with Japan so that Community specifications and inspections are recognised by their authorities. Also within the Euro-Arab dialogue the European Commission has been active within the "Standardisation and Technical Regulations Group".

Radioelectric interference.

A very simple example of "total" harmonisation concerns radioelectric interference caused either, by electrical household appliances and portable tools (drills etc.) fluorescent lighting, radio and TV sets or scientific

and medical equipment.

The regulations proposed specify measuring techniques and at the same time seek to limit radioelectric disturbances caused by these appliances. If the present proposal is adopted, conformity test - which will be carried out by manufacturers with spot checks made by national authorities - will be identical throughout the Community.

Appliances which do not conform, will not be allowed on the market even in the manufacturer's own country. Conversely, Member States will not be able to invoke more stringent national regulations to oppose the import or use of appliances that comply with Community requirements. Existing national regulations will thus be replaced by the Community standards.

This directive, which will soon be coming into force, will ensure there is a reduction in radioelectric disturbances and secondly it will enable Community manufacturers to sell their products freely throughout the EEC. Consumers will benefit by knowing that they can use any Community-made appliances without difficulty no matter what EEC country it was made in. Another point worth noting is that the draft directive lays down a procedure by which it is possible to update standards and keep pace with future technical developments. When the new Community standards have come into force, the Commission will be able to introduce amendments by agreement with a committee of national experts.

Safety of electrical equipment.

Another problem associated with electric appliances is that of safety. The legitimate but unfortunately different safety requirements in national legislations contribute another obstacle to free trade in this sector. With the adoption in 1973 of a directive in this field, the Community took a major step in bringing national regulations into line with each other. According to this directive Member States are required to ensure that:

- no electrical equipment is marketed unless it complies with the common safety requirements
- there is no administrative hindrance to the movement of equipment which satisfies those requirements.
- authorities supplying electricity do not make connection to the grid subject to additional, more stringent requirements
- common criteria are applied in this sector.

The Member States must also appoint bodies to negotiate the technical content of these safety requirements on their behalf. Thus, harmonised standards are drawn up 'by common agreement' between these bodies and may subsequently

be amended or adapted to new products through regular consultations.

Constant improvement.

The examples quoted above and the approach adopted by the Commission make it abundantly clear that there is no reason to fear that the adoption of common standards will entail excessive uniformity in consumer products, or a lowering of safety standards.

More often than not harmonisation simply means that eight of the Member States will fall into line with more stringent requirements existing in the ninth, rather than having to relax their own regulations. The countries leading the field set the pace for the rest. In addition, the decision to harmonise is often preceded by an enquiry which brings to light any factors that have hitherto been overlooked.

Unless there is some overriding safety consideration, Community directives are usually limited to defining certain criteria or laying down certain limits after which they leave the national authorities or the manufacturers to manage their production according to the wish of the consumer.

After all, it is the consumers who matter and in the Community there are more than 250 million of them. It is they who should benefit as much as possible from the vast range of products manufactured by each Community country.

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NUCLEAR SELF-SUFFICIENCY

The European Community is already too dependent on the rest of the world for its energy: too dependent for economic reasons and too dependent for political reasons. Even being reliant on friendly countries for energy supplies will not necessarily free the Community from the risk of price-rises or political shortages.

Because of this dependence on outside supplies, the Commission has come to the conclusion that nuclear energy is indispensable as a means of diversifying energy sources. The Community's own reserves of nuclear fuel are, however, insufficient for future requirements, and if the Community is to develop nuclear power in its 'energy mix', recycling of spent fuel will be essential. We cannot afford to throw away this nuclear "waste" and where possible it should be reprocessed and reused in advanced types of reactors such as fast breeders.

Reprocessing is a complex chemical operation involving spent fuel taken from nuclear power stations. The spent fuel is a mixture of re-usable products (unburned uranium, and the plutonium created during the irradiation process in the reactor) and of radioactive waste. Reprocessing enables the uranium and plutonium to be used again. The plutonium may be burned together with the uranium in light water reactors, but it is essentially the indispensable fuel for the fast breeder reactors which might permit the Community to ensure the long term future of nuclear energy in the Community.

A few figures

The Community will become one of the largest consumers of nuclear fuel by the year 2000 accounting for about one third of world demand. At present 80% of uranium is imported. Development of a policy of reprocessing would bring both medium-term and long-term benefits.

In the medium term (1985 - 90) reprocessing would secure a reduction in the requirement of natural uranium (on average, -20% per year) and in the workload of enrichment (around -15% per year) in the Community, with the aid of uranium and plutonium recycling at LWR power stations. The present difficulties with regard to reprocessing and the supply of plutonium to the first fast reactor power stations would probably restrict this reduction to half of the percentage indicated above.

In the long term reprocessing would secure the prospect of virtual freedom from dependency on external supplies, thanks to fast breeder reactors. It is no accident that

the countries most heavily committed to the development of fast reactors and reprocessing are in the Community. This commitment has so far been reflected in a very high level of expenditure and investment.

The Commission takes the view that the risks connected with the production and storage of highly radioactive substances, and with plutonium which could be manufactured into an atomic bomb, are manageable because of existing Euratom and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) controls, and measures of physical protection provided by Member States. The Commission has already proposed measures for harmonising the protection of nuclear installations. Radiological risks for future generations might be greater if reprocessing were not undertaken. In that case the plutonium not recovered would remain in the spent fuel elements. This waste would remain radioactive for a very long time, and thus its storage would be a long term risk.

What the Commission proposes

To deal with reprocessing problems the European Commission has proposed to the Community's Council of Ministers to bring together in joint venture the promoters of reprocessing facilities and power station operators; to offer Member States reprocessing services at the lowest possible price, to provide financial aid and finally to make it possible for third countries to participate in these joint ventures.

To study and implement this strategy, the Commission proposes to set up a Committee representing the interests of governments and interested parties.

Most countries with a significant nuclear programme have introduced projects for reprocessing. But there are at present no big reprocessing plants anywhere in the world for treating fuel for existing types of reactors (light and heavy water reactors and the British advanced gas reactors) with the exception of that of La Hague (COGEMA, France) which started operations at reduced capacity in 1976.

Consequently, there could be a world shortage of facilities in future years. In the Community, capacity will remain inferior to needs until at least 1986-89. That means that the stock of irradiated fuel accumulated since 1975 will not be entirely reprocessed until sometime after 1988 at best.

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