

Euroforum



Jenkins follows Eastern trail of Marco Polo. See page 8.

Euroforum

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Jenkins pledges a citizen's Community

European Monetary System or EMS to be initiated; Common Agricultural Policy or CAP. These are just two of the labels which appear regularly in our daily newspapers. The tendency in modern life is towards abbreviations, initials and acronyms, and European Community jargon is, unfortunately, no exception.

No wonder the average citizen often finds reading about Community activities baffling. One of Euroforum's aims is to help the man (or woman)-in-the-street to understand what is going on and to feel involved in decisions taken at Community level.

The President of the European Commission, Roy Jenkins, underlined his own concern for the need to involve the citizens of the Community more and more in its activities when he outlined to the European Parliament the Commission's priorities for 1979.

In his annual presidential address to the Parliament on 13 February, Mr Jenkins said he believed that the first direct elections to the European Parliament, to be held on 7 and 10 June next, would play an important role in making people more aware of what the Community is doing and what it means to them in their daily lives.

Said Mr Jenkins: 'All the issues with which we deal, remote or technical as they sometimes seem, are directly and crucially related to the welfare of the citizen. The European Monetary System is ultimately about the value of money in people's pockets. The Common Agricultural Policy is about the balance between the money in the pockets of the farmer and of the housewife.

There are many issues, some controversial, which will, I hope, become the themes for the electoral campaign which will shortly be opening. If the campaign can focus the attention of the Community's electorate on the essential purposes and problems of the Community, then it will have achieved something which we have found to be a major obstacle in our work, whether it be in the Commission, the Parliament or the Council, namely to make a reality to the

individual citizen of the sometimes complex and obscure processes of Community life.'

Some areas of Community activity are, of course, easier for the average citizen to relate to than others. One of these is consumer policy and Mr Jenkins told the Parliament that the Commission will shortly present a new programme to give consumers more protection and more information about their rights.

'I want to reaffirm' he said 'that the interests of consumers, and their protection by Community law, remain central to the Commission's policies. The tasks assigned to the Community by the Treaties mean that all our actions have repercussions on consumers; and the Commission, with its particular responsibilities, has the duty to provide a better balance for the interests of consumers than they can obtain individually through the interplay of economic forces. The Commission will not evade that duty.'

As an example of concrete action, Mr Jenkins said that among the Commission's specific proposals would be one for a system of rapid exchange of information between the nine Member States on the hazards of dangerous products. A call by the European Consumers' Bureau for such an 'Interpol' was reported in the first issue of Euroforum.

Consumers will also be glad to hear that Mr Jenkins is determined to avoid harmonization for harmonization's sake. The Euroloaf and Eurobeer have been long forgotten but there have still been some over-zealous attempts to harmonize.

Said Mr Jenkins: 'We have determined to avoid interference in consumer choice by legislative proposals for harmonization that is unnecessary or unimportant. We cannot do a better service to the consumer, and to the Community's image, than to concentrate our efforts on what is really worthwhile.'

This realistic policy will also dictate the Commission's activities in its efforts to improve our environment. It will concentrate in the coming months on three priority areas which

are of major concern to the Community's citizens—improving the quality of water, reducing the effects of chemicals on health and lowering noise levels.

Community citizens can also help the Commission to achieve its aims. Energy is a good example of a field in which we can all help to guard against shortages in the future. Mr Jenkins painted the picture in stark terms.

He said: 'We have recently had a vivid reminder of the fragility of the technology on which our way of life is based. Large parts of Europe were paralysed by deep snow and ice; entire regions were cut off; electricity supplies were stretched to their limits and beyond; communications broke down; many of our citizens were faced with a lack of means to keep themselves and their families warm.

It is in just such a situation that our dependence on electricity, on oil, on coal and on other energy supplies is brought home not just to governments but to almost all the people of the Community. The vagaries of the weather underline yet again the urgent need to recognize our limited energy resources, the need to exploit new and additional means of supply, and the need to reduce our own consumption of energy.'

ENERGY

Global strategy essential to bridge the gap

Song writers may claim that love makes the world go round but everybody else knows it's energy. Europe gets through plenty of it.

Every man, woman and child in the European Community currently uses about 3.1 tonnes of oil equivalent (t.o.e.) a year. This guzzling compares with a mere 0.3 t.o.e. for citizens of the Third World.

What is even more disturbing is that we will need even more energy by the turn of the century if present patterns continue.

But, with global energy demand accelerating and supplies—especially of

oil—unable to keep pace, the years ahead could be difficult ones for the Community.

Despite the efforts now being made to reduce its dependence on external supplies of energy, oil imports in the 1980s and 1990s could still account for around 40% of the Community's gross energy consumption and 80% of its gross oil consumption. The Community will also be dependent on imports of natural gas (as much as 50% of requirements may have to be imported) and natural uranium.

Given this high external dependence and the uncertain future of the world energy market, the European Commission has sensibly concluded that the Community needs an energy 'foreign policy' to help ensure supply diversity and stability and has just submitted a communication to this effect to the Council of Ministers. The Commission has examined the energy supply outlook on a sector-by-sector basis and has put forward a number of proposals for each sector which, it believes, could contribute to a more secure energy future.

Oil poses by far the greatest problem not only because the Community is so heavily dependent on external supplies, but also because at present, as our table shows, it relies on a relatively small number of suppliers, many of which are in the politically volatile Middle East.

The Community's main oil suppliers

	(in million of tonnes, 1977)	%
Saudi Arabia	148.9	30.7
Iran	77.9	16.0
Iraq	47.8	9.8
Libya	39.3	8.1
Kuwait	30.3	6.2
Nigeria	29.6	6.1
Abu Dhabi	25.3	5.2
Algeria	17.3	3.5
Quatar	8.5	1.7
Norway	7.0	1.4

The Commission would like to see the Nine improving relations with the oil producers and at the same time trying to keep within a reasonable annual oil import ceiling of 500 million tonnes by 1985.

A move has already been made to get a dialogue going with the Arab oil producers grouped within OPEC (the Organization of Arab Oil Exporting Countries) but the Commission suggests also that bilateral agreements

between the Community and countries with energy export potential (e.g. Algeria with its natural gas, Mexico or Nigeria with their oil) be drawn up in such a way as to include energy supply provisions.

The Commission would also like to see steps taken to encourage oil prospecting in non-member countries through the provision of financial and other incentives.

Long term contracts already concluded make the *natural gas* supply outlook more secure but here, too, three countries will be accounting for the vast bulk of Community imports as our table shows.

The Community has considerable *coal* reserves and provided production capacity can be maintained there should not be any major supply problems in the years to come. Nevertheless, to be on the safe side the Commission is in favour of European coal companies being encouraged to participate in joint production ventures in non-member countries and of long-term supply contracts being concluded between Community users and overseas producers.

The same will have to be done as far as *natural uranium* is concerned. In 1985 and 1990 Community requirements could top 20 000 and 30 000 tonnes respectively with internal production at the same time running at not more than 4 000 tonnes. Clearly the Community will have to have recourse to external supplies which may, in an increasingly restrictive nuclear supply climate, prove difficult to obtain. The Commission urges a

joint approach by Community users as the best way of securing supplies at reasonable prices.

The Commission is also likely to be renewing an appeal in the near future for energy cooperation with the developing countries in general and in particular with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States with which it has signed the Lomé trade and aid pact.

These countries are more heavily dependent than the Community on imported oil and without the wealth

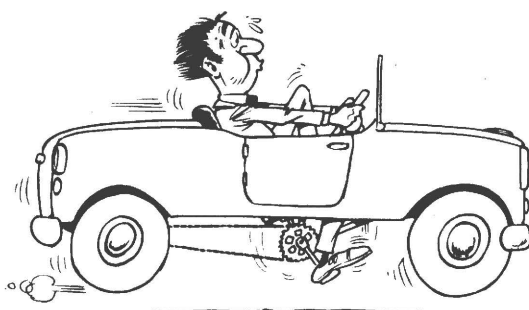
Type of energy consumed in the ACP States (1975)	
Coal	4.3%
Oil	82.8%
Natural gas	6.3%
Hydroelectric power	6.6%

necessary to compete in what will be increasingly a sellers' market for energy, they could face grave difficulties. The Commission believes that these countries can be helped to make the most of their energy potential by bringing to bear the Community's financial resources and technical know-how (for example, to help develop alternative energy sources such as solar power).

In return ACP countries might be prepared to help European companies discover and develop as-yet untapped energy reserves which might contribute significantly to world energy reserves and to the Community's energy supply.

Community natural gas imports 1978-1990 (in billion t.o.e)

Source	1978	1985	1990
Algeria	6 110	63 310	75 560
Libya	3 770	4 290	4 290
USSR	22 230	30 940	33 280
Norway	22 100	45 760	60 060
Iran	—	10 530	13 000
Others	—	—	5 720
Total	54 210	154 830	195 460



Not everyone can call for the Ombudsman

Victimized consumers in some Community countries can take their complaints to special Ombudsmen or neighbourhood legal advice centres, but in others they are on their own.

All too frequently the expensive formalities of hiring a lawyer and going through court proceedings for a relatively small amount actually deters the consumer from pursuing his complaint to the end.

The Community's Economic and Social Committee, an advisory body composed of labour, industry and consumer representatives, wants the ordinary citizen to have more information and better access to the legal process. Usually the group acts only to give advice on pending Community laws, but it has just undertaken a study of this problem on its own initiative.

The report surveys the legal situation throughout the Community and makes a number of recommendations for follow-up Community action.

First and foremost, it found that the consumer is too frequently unaware of his rights and of the laws protecting him. In some countries it found that prohibited high-pressure sales tactics or contracts terms are still being used by business primarily because there is a lack of information about what is lawful.

As a first step towards ending this confusion, the Committee proposes that consumer and government agencies expand information for the public through mass media campaign in language that the average consumer can easily understand.

Another deficiency it wants corrected is the virtual absence of sound legal consumer training in Community law schools that could turn out consumer law experts who could confront the teams of lawyers which businesses usually hire to defend them.

It would like to see more government-sponsored services such as the 600 Citizens' Advice Bureaux in the United Kingdom and the 100 'wets-winkels' (law shops) in The Netherlands. In France a Post Office Box '5000' was opened in 1976 for help and advice on consumer problems.

The Committee would also encourage the establishment of conciliation or arbitration bodies like the ones already in existence in some countries. The Danish Consumer Complaints Board opened in 1975 and by 1977 it was receiving almost 8 000 applications a year. Some help can also be obtained from the 'tribunaux d'instance' in France or from a magistrate in Belgium.

The arbitration boards found in Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany are also recommended because they are less cumbersome, less formal and quicker. They are generally formed with the help of the industry involved and therefore can deal expertly with problems and complaints. In the Netherlands and Germany they cover varied fields such as laundries, dry-cleaning establishments, tourism, home furnishings and car repairs.

Another major reform it would like to see more generally adopted throughout the Community is the ability of consumer organizations to undertake collective actions on behalf of others. The 'class action' suits which can be undertaken in the United States are virtually unknown in Europe, the report states. This is particularly useful where the number of victims is large and the individual claims are so small that individual suits would be pointless. French, Belgian and German laws have granted consumer organizations the right to represent blocks of consumers in certain limited instances.

In Germany 'general interest' actions have been more successful since they began in 1965. Since then consumer organizations have brought action in nearly 1 000 cases involving over 700 firms.

The conclusion of the Economic and Social Committee's study is that in almost all cases, the European Commission should act as a stimulus for expanding the types of legal practices and systems found in some countries but not others.

It proposes that the Commission presents measures that would help create uniform procedures throughout the Community for enlarging the entire scope of consumer services. They range from information on the law to revamping the legal systems to allow for small claims by the consumer.

What is most needed is that these procedures be made easily accessible, cheap and relatively informal and simple. In some cases, it advocates that lawyers not be involved.

Focus on the need to protect our senior citizens

Some societies idolize their elders as experienced and wise counsellors. Other more primitive cultures virtually abandon the aged who can no longer care for themselves.

The attitude in Europe is probably somewhere in between, but the status and problems of the elderly are beginning to get special attention. One such occasion was the Fifth Consumer Forum, organized by the European Consumer's Bureau recently in Berlin.

A number of special issues of concern to older citizens were discussed. The problems were broken down into three major categories: health, housing and leisure.

The participants and organizers are hoping that future contacts amongst themselves and with national and Community officials will lead to more proposals, more attention to the needs of the elderly and more action.

For instance, there was a suggestion for a Community-wide card giving reductions to the elderly for transport and other activities such as theatre attendance.

Some of the other recommendations focussed on the need to increase old-age pensions in Community countries, on the need for new laws to protect the elderly from high pressure sales tactics that exploit their desire for company, and on the desirability of closer contact between consumer groups and organizations which cater specifically for the elderly.

Out of the latter proposal may come such joint activities as information campaigns on the rights and benefits of the growing number of elderly people in the Nine.

The Community was also asked to take into account the needs of the elderly when policies and programmes are being formulated. Basically, what is needed, it was felt at the Berlin meeting, is for the elderly to receive the same type of attention the Commu-

nity authorities have directed towards other special groups such as women and youth.

One specific recommendation was for the Community to consider uniform rules to control the advertising of medicaments, since the aged are particularly vulnerable to misuse or overpricing of such products.

The conference participants and organizers are hoping that future contacts among themselves and with national and Community officials will lead to more attention to the needs of the elderly and more action.

New attempt to help shopper choose wisely

If the European consumer has trouble coping with the plethora of product package sizes and prices, so do Community authorities.

Just about everybody agrees that there should be more uniformity and common sense in packaging, but achieving that goal has taken years. Now the European Commission is trying another way of getting an agreement on this difficult issue.

Back in 1974, all nine Member States agreed in the Community's Consumer Action Programme that more informative packaging would give better protection to the consumer. After working with industry, consumer groups and national government authorities, the Commission proposed new regulations aimed at standardizing unit pricing laws for foodstuffs in 1977.

The measure was designed to ensure that prices would be shown per 100 grammes or some other easily calculable measure, as well as the total price. In this way, shoppers would have more information on which to base their choice.

The first proposal did not include pre-package items sold in standard-size containers, nor did it cover non-food items. During the early stages of consideration it provoked considerable comment and numerous changes were proposed.

As a result of these discussions, the Commission has just added some additional details. Its amended proposal covers non-food items.

In addition, exemptions will be granted for prepackaged goods only if they are presented in such a way that consumers can make an informed choice.

Trade unionists launch plan for more protection

In addition to their traditional efforts to win better employment and more pay for their members, European trade unions are beginning to expand their interests towards the protection of the worker-consumer.

The 39-million member European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has just released a consumer policy statement that is the result of 18 month's preparation and pledges it to can active campaign of consumer protection.

'We want a new type of growth', noted an official of the ETUC in presenting the programme in Brussels. And he explained that eliminating wasteful and poor quality goods might cost some jobs but in the long run would be better for the worker and consumer.

'We want useful work, not the wasteful production of gadgets'. More emphasis should be put on service jobs, he said.

The programme, which will be promoted throughout the ETUC membership in 18 European countries, in national and European Community actions, and in the election campaign for the European Parliament this year, will be a broad-based one.

It seeks action on the price front; on the excessive layer of middle-men who also push up prices; on behalf of truth, moderation and information in advertising, and such issues as quality and safety of products.

It feels that prices should be democratically controlled through a European prices commission. 'We have always been interested in improving the purchasing power of workers', commented an ETUC official, 'and it is impossible to talk of an effective consumer programme without talking of prices.

The distribution and advertising of products should also be changed to remove inefficient and costly intermediaries and to ensure objective information to the consumer rather than persuasive publicity. On the latter point, the programme advocates the use of clear and informative labels on consumer goods.

Concerning product quality and safety, the ETUC programme would seek to ensure that all manufacturers be made

legally responsible for the safety and performance of their products, and that stringent penalties be levied for infringement of such laws. Built-in obsolescence should also be attacked. 'We know that a refrigerator that can last 20 or 30 years can be built', an ETUC official observed.

As part of this ETUC programme, the membership will also push for enlargement of the small consumer protection staff at the European Commission and for more consumer representation in the Community decision-making process.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

The grass may not always be greener

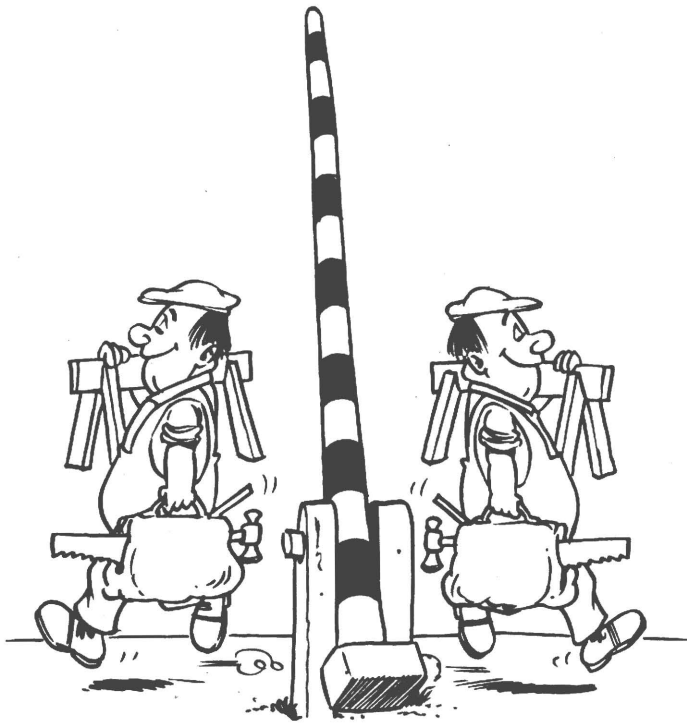
Are there 'second-string' workers in Europe?

The several million migrant workers in the European Community, who have attracted interest for years, are sometimes looked on as a secondary labour force. But recently another hidden group has become the centre of attention.

These are the so-called 'frontier workers' of the Community who live in one country but regularly work in another.

A number of representative groups have begun to look more closely at the problems faced by thousands of frontier workers because of their special situation. In the past few weeks both the Economic and Social Committee, (ESC) which brings together representatives of employers, trade unions and special interests groups at Community level, and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) have urged better protection of these workers.

Figures about the number of such workers are hard to come by. But it is clear that there are more than 200 000 of them. Some countries, notably Belgium, Italy and France tend to be the country of origin for many of them, while Germany, Luxembourg in the Community and Switzerland outside are the places where many such workers are employed. France and Holland are both the suppliers and host countries for a sizeable number.



What happens is that these workers are subject to two sets of laws and administrative procedures, which tend to complicate their lives. They also sometimes fall between the cracks when it comes to things like social security, vocational training, taxes, employment and labour laws. For instance, frontier workers are sometimes taxed by both countries. Their purchasing power may also suffer because of exchange rate differences between the two countries.

The Economic and Social Committee has just issued a report on its own initiative calling for solutions to these

problems. While it notes that the conditions are complex and might not be easily resolved by a document or law, it urges closer cooperation between the countries involved to achieve a fair treatment of the frontier workers.

At the same time the ETUC has recommended that the Community take steps to eliminate discrimination against frontier workers. The 39 million-member group has written Commissioner Richard Burke, who is responsible for tax issues, asking for a meeting on the tax problems of frontier workers.

Movement of frontier workers (1975)

	→	←	
* Germany	750	21 388	Netherlands
Netherlands	4 862	23 350	Belgium
France	3 750	15 000	Belgium
* Germany	79	4 240	Belgium
* Germany	1 400	100	Luxembourg
France	4 720	—	Luxembourg
Belgium	6 030	11	Luxembourg
* Germany	1 407	25 530	France
France	—	1 100	Italy
Intra Community Total	113 717		
France	49 719	—	Switzerland
Italy	32 845	—	Switzerland
* Germany	18 065	—	Switzerland
* Germany	125	13 316	Austria
France	—	2 076	Spain
Italy	—	—	Austria
Italy	—	—	Yugoslavia
Extra Community Total	116 146		
Grand Total	229 863		

* = 1972

The Commission is currently examining special income tax problems faced by frontier workers and is expected to make specific proposals to help them later this year.

New Community law will protect workers' rights

An important new law to protect the rights of workers becomes applicable throughout the European Community this month.

By now, the nine national governments should have adopted the provisions of a law they passed at the Community level in 1977 to safeguard the jobs and benefits of employees involved in company mergers or take overs.

This measure takes on special meaning in view of the growing trend towards mergers and consolidations in business. Many of these mergers involve the takeover of a firm in economic difficulty and often a reduction in the work force.

In future, a new business emerging from a takeover or merger must accept for at least a year trade union contracts negotiated prior to the consolidation. This includes company work rules and manning specifications.

Workers will also have to be informed of merger negotiations that are taking place and will have to be consulted if manpower reductions are being considered by the new entity. National governments will also have to be forewarned.

The measure was considered a high priority one in the Community's Social Action Programme when it was introduced in 1974. In the past, workers in some countries have lacked protection of these rights, which could result in layoffs, loss of seniority or of benefits in the new firm.

Court's decision favours safety

A European Community law designed to increase road safety and improve lorry drivers' working conditions must be implemented in the United Kingdom, the European Court of Justice has ruled.

The ruling follows a legal dispute between the British Government and the European Commission over the law,

which required installation of a tachograph in the driving compartment of lorries. This measuring device registers the amount of time a driver is at the wheel as a way of ensuring better safety performances and compliance with limits on hours worked at a stretch. It has already proven its value in other Member States.

Arguments against the plan stressed that installation would be costly and would cut back on drivers' overtime income in a time of economic need. As a result, the British Government did not apply the law, which was in force in seven of the Member States and is being introduced in an eighth, Ireland.

Asked to decide the matter, the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg came down on the side of safety by saying the Community law had to be followed and the tachograph had to be installed.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Jenkins follows Eastern trail of Marco Polo

When a quarter of mankind takes a great leap forward, the rest of the world feels the impact.

The dramatic political and economic changes which have taken place in China in the past year are virtually unparalleled in history. Once an isolated, underdeveloped giant, the new China has given itself until the end of the 20th century to become a major economic power.

Even with a population of 950 million and vast resources, the new leadership in Peking knows it cannot achieve this goal without the help of the existing world powers.

While, the recent rapprochement between China and the United States has attracted world-wide attention, relations between China and Europe have existed for decades.

In the 1950s and 1960s, it was not uncommon to see European leaders journey beyond the Great Wall and for trade to flow between the great ports of Shanghai and Rotterdam. This is perhaps why visits such as the

one begun by European Commission President Roy Jenkins on 21 February for talks with Chinese leaders has not received as much attention as some of the other recent contacts with the west.

The visit by President Jenkins was even preceded by those of Community External Affairs Commissioners Sir Christopher Soames and Wilhelm Haferkamp in the past few years. These contacts have paved the way for a special relationship between China and the European Community which in the coming years may radically change the course of history for both China and Europe.

While the impact of the new ties between China and the United States have not yet been defined, Chinese officials have taken pains to specify what the recent links with Japan and the European Community mean to it.

When China signed a new long-term trade agreement with Japan a year ago, it called for an increase in trade between the two of about £10 billion over the next eight years. Chinese officials told their Community counterparts that the commerce between China and the Nine would reach the same level as that of Japan in the aftermath of the EEC-China non-preferential trade pact which the two sides signed last year. This had been preceded by China's decision to accredit an ambassador to the Community.

The European Community is already China's second largest trading partner, after Japan. In 1976, two-way trade totalled £12 billion, with Chinese exports to the Community amounting to £424 million and imports from the Nine totalling £770 million. In 1977, China imported 40% less from the Community, down to £454 million, and its exports to the Community increased slightly to £430 million.



But in the first nine months of 1978 the Community increased its exports by 88% to £670 million and imports from China went up 8% to £463 million.

Commissioner Haferkamp recently stated that China will become one of the Community's most important trade partners in the next 20 years. Restating what he had said upon his return from China in 1978, he said that China's economic modernization plans up to the year 2000 offered European industry spectacular possibilities in contrast to the past. He noted that at present China was still a limited market for Community products, buying about as much as Kuwait and less than Israel.

But visits such as the Haferkamp and Jenkins ones and the reciprocal ones by Chinese officials to Europe have already led to mammoth transactions in recent years. Chinese officials bent on speedily acquiring the means to develop their resources and economy studiously examine what Europe has to offer in visits that have ranged from Toulouse to Birmingham and Hamburg to Naples.

Major orders have already come in for oil-drilling equipment and coal mining technology that should reach into factories in many regions of the Community. Expert observers have suggested that China will turn to Japan for the major part of its supply of complete plants but that the Community will become an important source for advanced types of machinery.

There is another side of the coin, namely that China expects to whittle down its traditional balance of trade deficit with the Community by exporting sizable quantities of goods. These may come in the form of raw materials, such as minerals and eventually petroleum, but also as processed and industrial goods which might compete with Community production.

Already textile producers, hard-hit by imports from developing countries, have expressed fears that fabrics from China might increasingly compete with European production.

China first emerged from its obscurity (in Western terms) centuries ago when a European named Marco Polo blazed a trail to establish lucrative caravan routes linking East and West. After another period of isolation, European and Chinese traders are again discovering each other and the years to come should be filled with new revelations.

COMPETITION

European Court rules against giant drug firm

Competition and anti-trust laws aren't drawn up and enforced just for the health of the authorities or to inflict pain on businessmen.

The intention of the European Community rules is to ensure fair competition for companies throughout the nine Member States and to benefit the consumer.

But it just so happens that a major case recently decided by the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg was good medicine for business and for the health of the customer.

In this instance, the Court supported a ruling by the European Commission in Brussels that a major drug and pharmaceutical manufacturing company had violated Community rules by abusing its dominant position in the market for several vitamins.

The decision was that the giant Swiss multinational firm Hoffman-La Roche, the world's leading vitamin manufacturer, had taken advantage of its lion's share of these markets to block out competition by concluding contracts with bulk vitamin users who incorporate the drugs into their own medicines. This tended to make them buy exclusively or largely from this firm.

Faced with a fine of £200 000 for this conduct, the company asked the European Court to throw out the charges and the fine as well.

After nearly three years of carefully reviewing the facts, the Court has now ruled that the company did violate the law in most of the examples charged by the Commission. Its share of the sales of some vitamins was so strong that it amounted to a monopoly and in others it was clearly dominant, the Court judged. But since this wasn't the case in all the vitamins in question, the Court ruled that the fine could be lowered to £135 000.

As happens in so many cases between the time the complaint is made and the Court decides the company has already stopped the business practices which the Commission had complained about. This is primarily what the Commission is after.

By enforcing the competition rules and ensuring fair and open competition, the Community aims to improve the choice of the consumers. In general, this means the more manufacturers the merrier as far as the customer is concerned.

THE INSTITUTIONS



Court of Auditors begins to make its presence felt

The newest European Community institution, created a little more than a year ago, works quietly to ensure that taxpayers' money is spent efficiently. It has just published its first annual report.

From its base in Luxembourg, the new Court of Auditors carries out the important but little publicized role of examining expenditure under the Community Budget. And, as the size and scope of the Budget expands, this watchdog role should also increase in significance.

'Sound financial management' is the motto of the nine members of the Court appointed for terms of six or four years beginning in late 1977. They work independently of the other institutions and of the Governments of the nine Member States.

These experienced men, one from each of the Community countries, scrutinize income and spending and have the right to carry out inspections of Community books.

With a Community Budget that reached some £18.3 billion in 1978 and which will be even higher this year, the Court's task looms as a monumental one. That's why the other institutions agreed that Community auditing would have to be carried out in a more structured and systematic way.

To better inform the public of this new body, a booklet entitled 'Court of Auditors of the European Communities' has been made available free of charge. It can be ordered from: The Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, PO Box 1003, Luxembourg, or from any of the Information Offices listed on our back cover.

BUSINESS

Businessmen are more optimistic

Despite the winter gloom businessmen in the Nine Member States are marginally more confident about prospects for the coming months.

According to the recently-released business survey carried out last November among managers in the Community by the European Commission, 19% felt that production would increase in November compared with 17% in October.

British businessmen were, surprisingly, the most optimistic. 39% felt that business would improve or 6% rise on the October figure.

As regards order books the improving trend continued even if the improvement was slight. In November 13% considered that their order books were full compared with 12% the previous month and 9 per cent in July.

On the other hand 50% of business managers felt that their order books were normal and 37% felt that they were poor.

AGRICULTURE

Drinks pinta milka day

The European Commission is making a big effort to encourage people to drink more milk.

The effort is needed because the Community's dairy farmers are too efficient and are producing far more milk than is needed. The unwanted milk is bought by the Community at a price agreed each Spring by the Farm Ministers of the Nine.

The milk is then turned into powdered milk and butter so that it can be stored. At present there are about 700 000 tons of powdered milk and 400 000 tons of butter in storage.

During the 1978-79 season the Community is spending £17.4 million on a promotional campaign to encourage people to consume more dairy products. These include yoghurt and cheese as well as milk.

The campaign is being financed by money collected from a co-responsibility levy applied to surplus milk which farmers produced last year. They had to pay a levy of 0.5% on the price they received for their milk. The funds available for the promotional campaign have been divided between the Nine Member States according to size of their population and their production and consumption of milk and dairy products.

1978/79 Dairy Promotional Campaign

	£
Germany	4.2
France	3.8
United Kingdom	3.7
Italy	2.0
Netherlands	1.4
Denmark	0.87
Belgium	0.73
Ireland	0.67
Luxembourg	0.06
EEC Total	17.3

Man's best friend...

The protection of what might be classified as a most important 'silent majority' in the European Community will be the subject of a conference this spring.

The meeting in Amsterdam will focus on ways of protecting our animal population.

It will be attended by animal producers, veterinarians, consumers, politicians and animal welfare advocates.

There will be sessions on pig, poultry and cattle production where the producer, consumer, welfare and scientific views will be discussed.

Another important part of the conference to be held on April 17 and 18 will be devoted to discussion of the European institutions and legislation and the roles they play in animal protection.

Food prices: role of middlemen is scrutinized

Community consumers spend about 20% of their budgets on food so it's not surprising that they pay considerable attention to food prices.

But the price the farmer is paid is not their only concern. Consumer representatives are becoming increasingly worried about the gap between the prices paid to the farmer and the price paid by the consumer in the shops.

The European Commission has begun detailed studies with the aim of assessing more accurately what percentage of the final price the consumer pays goes to the producer. The result of these studies will be communicated to the national governments.

The annual report on the agricultural policy in the Community, which has just been released, indicates that in 1978, farm producer prices were expected to rise by only 3%, while the price the consumer had to pay for food rose by 7.5%. About two-thirds of that increase was attributable to higher processing and distribution costs.

Additional figures in the report also show the discrepancies between producer and consumer prices. In Germany, for example, producer prices in 1977 went down by 4.4% while consumer prices for food still climbed by 3.4%. Another wide margin was registered in the United Kingdom, where prices paid to producers went up by only 1.4%, but food prices still shot up 18%.

The European Commission has been reminded of the situation on several

occasions by the consumer group representatives and by members of the European Parliament. It hopes that the studies currently underway will give it a more complete understanding of the problem.

Consumers' body acts as watchdog on farm prices

Farmers aren't the only ones interested in the current debate over the level at which farm prices in the Community should be fixed for this year. In fact, probably the biggest group involved are the millions of consumers throughout Europe.

As the nine Agriculture Ministers meet in the coming weeks on this controversial subject, they will have the consumers watching over their shoulder as well as the farmers.

This was made abundantly clear in a recent statement by the Community's leading consumer organization, the European Bureau of Consumer Unions (BEUC). As the Ministers met for the first time for their annual price-fixing debate, the group issued a strong call supporting the European Commission's proposal that overall prices for the 1979-80 farm year be frozen.

In addition, BEUC, which represents national consumer organizations throughout the Nine, observed that the so-called Monetary Compensatory Amounts (MCAs), which nullify currency exchange rate impacts on farm prices, had led to inflationary increases. It sided with the Commission proposals on the phasing out of the MCAs.

The group commented that price stability was the only way to bring about a reduction in the costly surpluses in sectors like dairy products. The European taxpayer has had to foot the bill for these surpluses and should now receive some advantage the group argued.

As a more far-reaching measure, the consumer organization has called for a Community food policy conference that would bring together farmers, distributors, nutrition experts and consumers to take a more sober look at long-term food needs. The goal of this conference would be to lay the foundation for a long-term strategy to cope with the existing situation and the forthcoming enlargement of the Community.

Bid to ensure more humane treatment

Spare a thought for the poor sheep crammed into the back of a lorry, hungry and thirsty, on the long haul down from Scotland to Southern Italy.

More than three million live animals—cattle, sheep, goats, horses and pigs—are traded by road, rail, air and sea within the Community each year. Another two million are imported mainly from Eastern Europe into Italy.

Not many agents or handlers spare such a thought. Why not? Because of the volume of trade in live animals which provide us with many of the necessities of life such as meat, as well as not—such—necessary items like luxury leather goods.

Big business, because live animals are much more valuable than dead car-casses. But inhumane.

However there has been growing public disquiet, especially in the United Kingdom, about the way animals are transported. There have been calls to ban exports from Britain to the Continent, mainly of calves and sheep.

A lot of this growing trade, it must be said, derives from the reduction of

trade barriers between Community Member States. Because of this, the Community has a responsibility to ensure that the animals are properly treated.

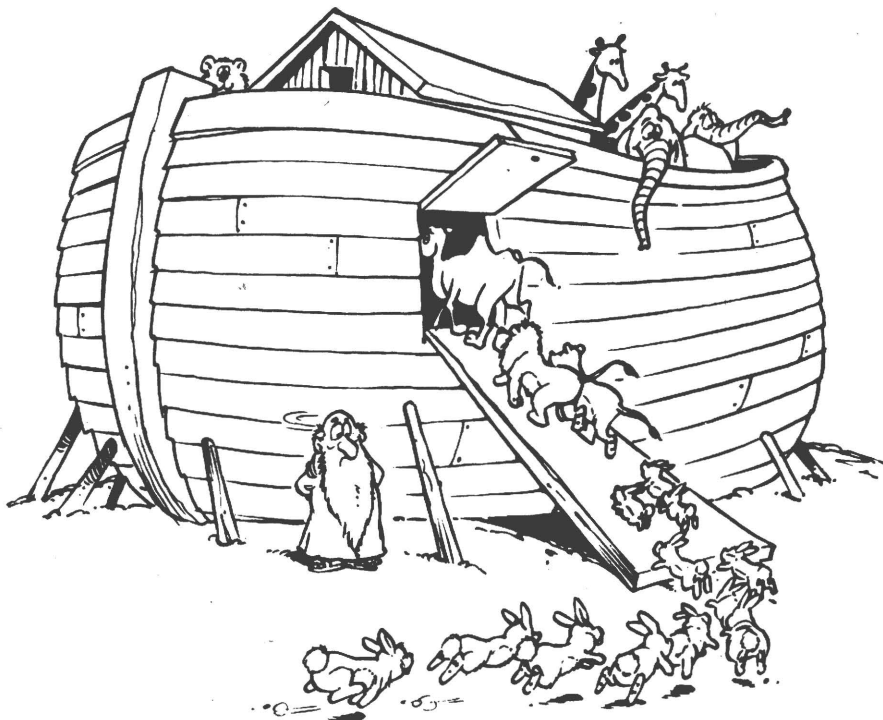
The European Commission has now stepped in with proposals to improve the situation. It has proposed ways of applying more effectively a Community law, which came into force last August, concerning the protection of animals during international transport.

The Community law lays down how often different types of animals should be fed and watered during a journey. It also states how they should be loaded and transported.

The main loophole was that there was no provision for carrying out controls to see that the transport conditions were respected. The Commission has now proposed that travel documents should be issued for each consignment of animals. These would give details about the way in which the animals are loaded, fed and watered during their trip.

The documents would accompany animals being taken on a journey of more than 18 hours and would be stamped at each stage in their journey. The time and place of each watering and feeding would be recorded.

Within 24 hours of arrival at the destination the documents would be delivered to the nearest competent authority.



Negotiations for Spain's membership open formally

Negotiations for Spanish entry into the European Community were officially opened in Brussels recently.

The speed with which the negotiations began, only a few months after Spain had applied for membership, is evidence of the political support given by the Community to Spain's lately-restored democracy.

Spain is now in the middle of its first general election campaign since a new democratic constitution was approved at the end of last year. Polling day is March 1.

The negotiations with the Community will not start properly for several months. The Nine have still to work out detailed mandates to give to the European Commission concerning the terms of Spanish entry.

Only about one Community citizen in three currently thinks that Spanish membership will be a good thing for his or her own country. The Italians, Irish and Germans are the most enthusiastic. The Danes and Luxembourgers are the most lukewarm.

On the other hand, 70% of the people contacted in the latest Euro-Barometer poll published by the European Commission think that membership will be a good thing for Spain. The Dutch are the most convinced—83% think it will benefit Spain.

The negotiations will probably be much longer and more difficult than those for Greece, which should be completely finished by this summer. Spain has a population four times greater than that of Greece while it is the world's tenth-ranking industrial force.

Unlike Greece, which is expected to join in 1981, Spain has not has an Association Agreement with the Community. This means that it has not been gradually preparing for membership.

Problems will arise over Spanish citrus fruit, wine and olive oil. The Spanish

produce is much cheaper than that of the Midi of France and of Italy. Similarly Spanish textiles, steel and ships are cheaper than those produced in the Community.

Great care will therefore be needed to make sure that Spanish membership does not cause an economic upheaval in the Community.

Spanish agenda

A symposium on the problems involved in Spain's bid to join the Community will be held at Louvain-la-Neuve in Belgium on 25 and 26 May. It is being jointly organized by the Catholic University of Louvain and the Free University of Brussels.

Mr Henri Simonet, Belgian Foreign Minister, will open the symposium. Those taking part will mainly be Belgian and Spanish academics. The working language will be French.

Discussions will range from the problem of integrating the Spanish legal system into that of the Community's to the difficulties faced by Spanish workers in the Community.

More details from:
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Institut d'Etudes européennes
39, avenue F.D. Roosevelt
1050 Brussels
or
Miss Arnaud
Centre d'Etudes européennes
1, place de l'Université
1348 Louvain-la-Neuve

PUBLICATIONS

Learn more about the Community

Two new booklets to help you to learn more about the Community have just been published. For those of you who have not too much time to spare, there is a 16-page booklet 'The European Community, Your Future'. It describes briefly in layman's terms how the Community began, how it has developed, and the significance of the forthcoming first direct elections to the European Parliament. For the more specialist reader there is a 64-page booklet, 'The European Community, Today and Tomorrow', which gives a more detailed description of the Community's development and policies. Both can be obtained free of charge from any of the information offices listed on our back cover.

THE ECONOMY

Silver lining begins to show

Economic conditions in the European Community towards the end of 1978 tended to improve slightly in most member countries. These are the findings of the latest analysis published by the Commission in January.

In general this meant either improvement or stability for production, jobs, inflation and trade balances.

Slight economic growth was registered in Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom while the situation was unchanged in Belgium. As a result, the over-all industrial growth of the Community in October showed an increase of 3.7% over the previous year.

The unemployment rate in November stayed at the 5.6% level and there was an improvement in Germany, the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland. There was no change in France and the Benelux countries but an increase in the number of jobless in Italy.

There was also relatively good news in November concerning the prices consumers and businesses paid. This meant that by November there had been a 7.2% increase in prices in the year since November 1977, which was termed a 'very stable' record in view of the double-digit inflation which has hit many countries in the last few years.

After fairly wide fluctuations during the year there was a strong surplus in the Community's balance of trade in September and October of close to £680 million. The balance sheet levelled out in November.

LIFESTYLE

Who does what in 1979

Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief. Girls used to chant this when trying to guess the profession of their future husbands. The rhyme is now strangely dated, since one out of two people in the Community is either a teacher, civil servant, banker or in one of the many service professions.

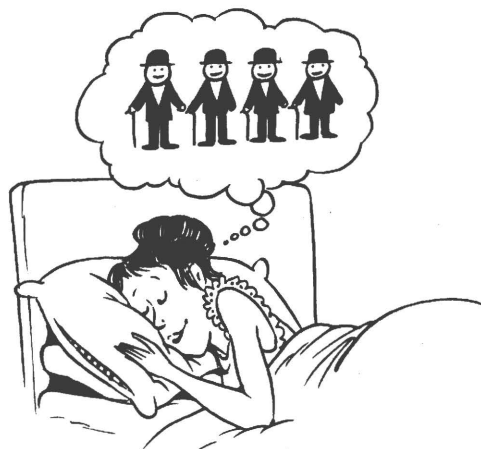
Recent statistics show that of the three major sectors in 1977—industry, agriculture and services—the latter employed on average 50% of the population in each of the nine Member States. Denmark and the Netherlands followed closely by Belgium—

all around 60%—have the largest services sector.

Ireland, Italy and Luxembourg have the least developed. But here again the sector provides employment for just over 4 out of 10 people.

Ireland is still one of the most agrarian societies in Europe. Almost one in four of the population works on the land. In Italy it is one in six and in Britain one in 30.

It is in highly industrialized Germany and the smallest Community country, Luxembourg, that one finds the highest percentage of people working in industry. While the German manufacturing might of the Ruhr and elsewhere is well known, the extensive coal and steel works of the Grand Duchy are often forgotten.



INDUSTRY

Key to future lies in more investment

Economic recession and business uncertainty due to monetary instability have led to a decline in investment in the European Community. Whereas investment accounted for 24% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1973 it had fallen to 21% by 1977.

The European Commission is worried by this falling trend and has called for a 'vigorous drive' to step up investment. It argues that economic recovery and the reduction of unemployment depends on a growth in investment.

At their European Council 'summit' meeting in Bremen last July Community leaders agreed on a joint strategy to boost investment. In December they agreed to set up a European Monetary System which when implemented should provide a more stable economic climate that will increase confidence and encourage businessmen to invest more.

The Commission stresses the need for investment in small and medium-sized firms as these create proportionately more jobs than larger investments.

The Community recently created a £670 million facility to encourage investment in energy, infrastructure and industrial reorganization projects.

THE REGIONS

£40 million aid for development

The Community's Regional Fund has made a flying start to 1979. The Commission has just approved a first installment of 139 projects totalling £40 million.

The United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands were the countries to benefit.

The United Kingdom received £13 million for 45 projects. Scotland was

the main beneficiary. Its two projects were worth £4.2 million. While the North West England had 22 projects these were only worth £2.7 million. Other regions to benefit were Wales (2 projects), Yorkshire and Humber-side (14), South West England (4) and Northern Ireland (1).

Ireland received £4.1 million for 20 projects. All except one were in South West Ireland. The exception was a multi-regional project.

Since the Regional Fund was created in 1975, 6 487 projects have been financed for a total value of £1.1 billion.

THIRD WORLD

Seeking for a new world economic order

Since the 1973 oil crisis, talks between rich and poor countries otherwise known as the North-South Dialogue have made little progress. Another big conference is due to take place in Manila, capital of the Philippines, in May. It is the fifth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD V).

Since the last UNCTAD ministerial meeting at Nairobi in 1976 very little has been done to set up the new world economic order demanded by the developing countries. The Paris Conference on International Economic Cooperation which ended in June 1977 also failed to provide any impetus.

The European Commission which is responsible for the Community's trade negotiations, is worried that unless something is done quickly UNCTAD V could become a battleground between frustrated developing countries and industrialized countries.

In an increasingly interdependent world this would be a serious setback for the well-being of both sides. The western world needs the oil and raw materials of the developing countries. They in turn need western financial assistance and technology. But, with continued world economic recession, the industrialized countries in the Community and elsewhere are wary about growing competition from the Third World.

In order to improve the atmosphere the Commission would like agreement to be reached on three key issues before the Manila meeting takes place: — Common Fund: This is the fund the developing countries want to set up to help stabilize the price of important commodities which are the mainstays of their economies.

— International Commodity Agreements: The Commission wants agreement on supplies and prices of rubber to be reached soon. It also wants progress on talks on cocoa and olive oil.

— Third World Debt: Agreement should be reached before Manila on how to relieve the massive debts of developing countries.

If these issues could be cleared up then UNCTAD V could concentrate on how to restart the world economy. This would benefit both sides.

Another major issue is the question of the international division of labour, in other words, reaching broad agreement on which country can produce which goods most efficiently so as to avoid duplication and wasteful competition. Developing countries are becoming extremely competitive in certain industries such as textiles and shoes. The problem is how to encourage their industrial growth without disrupting the developed countries' economies, thus encouraging their return to protectionism.

UNCTAD V must also discuss a strategy for helping the Third World economies to develop in the 1980s. This will be one of the main topics at the UN General Assembly next year.

Poorest countries food production is falling

The whole planet is involved in the quest for a stable food supply—especially to feed the world's poorest.

Some regions of the world such as the arid Sahel part of Sub-Sahara Africa and some Asian countries, are threatened with famine. And while there are substantial world stocks of some basic foods such as cereals, these are far from secure.

A disturbing fact is that farm production per person has been declining in a large number of these poorest countries. The Community, together with

a number of international organizations is trying to cope with this serious problem.

A new international agreement is currently being negotiated to ensure lasting world food security. There is also a plan to set up an internationally coordinated system of national food reserves. The Community is paying special attention to the needs of the developing countries in these negotiations.

It can also help through its external aid programmes which are increasingly geared to the development of food output in the Third World. It spent nearly £150 million for these aid efforts in 1977. This goes to countries linked to the Community by association treaties, and others like India, where it is backing a massive plan to supply dairy products to urban areas.

Vicious circle for countries in debt

Developing countries face many serious problems, not least of which is debt. Since oil prices more than tripled in 1973 their import bills have shot up dramatically.

At the same time costly development plans have necessitated heavy international borrowing.

The situation has grown so serious that some countries are using nearly all new aid to pay interest on old debts.

This problem will be one of the main subjects discussed at the 5th UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) Ministerial Meeting in Manila in May.

Several industrial countries have decided to act now. They have cancelled the debts of the poorest developing countries. In other words they have altered loans into gifts.

Germany is the latest member of the European Community to act in this way. It has followed the example set by Denmark, Belgium, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

France has said it will do likewise. Luxembourg and Ireland do not have any debts to cancel.

This leaves Italy the odd one out among the Nine Member States. But there is still time for it to act before the Manila meeting.

TRADE

Nine's exporters selling more

There was a big improvement in the Community's trade balance with the rest of the world in 1978. Its deficit was nearly halved to £2.7 billion.

However Germany was the only one of the nine Member States to enjoy a trade surplus—a record £8.7 billion.

France and Italy managed to reduce their trade deficits but the United Kingdom's rose to £2.1 billion.

The reason for the improvement in the Community's trading position was the higher growth of exports compared with imports. The exports of the Nine rose by 7% to £117.2 billion. Imports rose by only 5% to £120 billion.

As regards trade between the Nine this grew by 7% in 1977. Measured in terms of imports this was worth £121 billion. Ireland and the United Kingdom registered the biggest increases in trade.

Full details of Community trade can be found in the new monthly bulletin of the Statistical Office called 'Euro-statistics'.

EDUCATION

Robert Schuman Scholarships 1979

The European Parliament awards scholarships for research in subjects relating to the Community and to European integration.

The Robert Schuman scholarships were established by the European Parliament in memory of one of its most distinguished presidents and are awarded to students who have completed a degree course at a university or have attended an institute of higher education for a least three years (six terms). Scholarship holders are usually nationals of a member country of the Community. Applications are not normally considered from employees of

the Community institutions, or members of their families, or from holders of scholarships at one or other of these institutions.

The holder of a scholarship studies at the European Parliament in Luxembourg under the supervision of a senior official of the Directorate-General for Research and Documentation who is available to aid him in his research. The student is also given the opportunity, in appropriate cases, to assist research projects of the Directorate-General and is able to use the facilities of the Parliament's library, etc. There are opportunities to attend sessions of the Parliament in Strasbourg and to visit Community institutions in Brussels, if suitable dates can be arranged.

The normal duration of a scholarship is three months. Dates can usually be adjusted to meet a student's requirements.

The value of the scholarship is BF 20 000 per month (around £330), payable monthly.

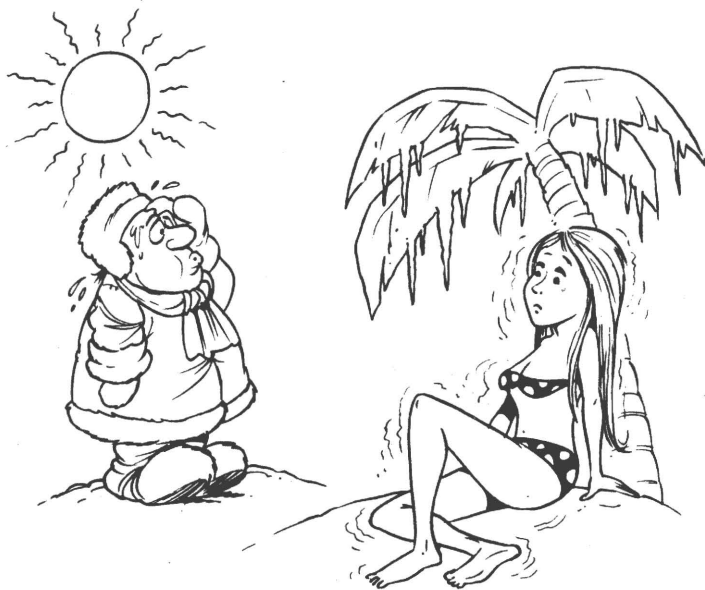
Applications forms are available on request from:
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for Research and Documentation,
European Parliament,
PO Box 1601
L - Luxembourg.

IN BRIEF

The Community's Office for Official Publications has just published the 1978 Report on 'The Agricultural Situation in the Community'. It can be obtained directly from Sales Offices in the Member States (see our back cover for addresses).

Catalogue number:
CB-25-78-510-EN-C,
price: £13.00.

Britain's National Coal Board is to receive a £49 million Community loan. The aid will be used to increase production and develop new reserves in nine coal mines. These include the Daw Mill Colliery, Trelewis Drift Mine, Thurdroft Colliery, Cortonwood Colliery, Kinsley Colliery, Shireoaks Colliery, Brookhouse Colliery, Warsop Colliery, Kellingley Colliery.



Why do some shiver while others roast?

The dramatic winter storms which have gripped England, Ireland and much of Northern Europe in recent weeks are the latest in a series of weather upheavals which have baffled scientists in the past few years.

Even after years of research, no one can explain extreme conditions such as the hottest, driest spell that engulfed Europe for months in 1975 and 1976 but which still saw Arctic ice returning to Iceland for the first July this Century.

Despite modern technology contribution to weather forecasting, such as the new meteorological satellites drifting around the earth, Europe and other regions of the world are still the victims of freak and unpredictable storms, droughts and other calamities.

In a determined effort to seek explanations or perhaps only a better understanding of the unnatural weather patterns that have affected Europe in recent years, the European Commission

has proposed to the nine member countries a concerted research programme of £ 5.4 million for the next five years.

The weather record that prompted this serious effort at examining the situation was indeed disruptive in recent years. To take only the case of England and Northern Europe, 1974-75 saw the mildest winter in England since 1834. That was followed by the record-setting heat wave of August 1975 and the drought conditions throughout western and central-northern Europe, especially England, where rainfall from May 1975 onward for 16 months was the lowest since 1727 when records were first kept.

Similar unusual weather disturbances have been registered with sufficient frequency throughout Europe and the rest of the world in this decade to have caused massive upheavals in growth patterns and harvests and make officials and scientists sit up and take notice.

The research to be undertaken would have two main parts. One would be the study of the

behaviour of climate. The objective would be to improve our understanding of the mechanisms of climate and of the causes of climatic changes. Computer tabulation and modelling would form a part of this effort. The studies would be performed by various existing research operations in the Community, such as the British Meteorological Office and the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecast in Bracknell.

Another phase would delve deeper into the relationship between man and weather. This two-pronged effort would look into the impact of climatic changes on land, water and energy resources and would also examine the consequences of man-made pollution on the weather. The emphasis in this latter part of the project would be on the effect of carbon dioxide and energy on weather.

The Commission has observed that in the last 100 years carbon dioxide accumulation in the atmosphere increased by 10%. It also estimates that by the year 2020 this amount of gas will double, which could result in a 2% temperature increase near the earth's surface. Energy-generated thermal pollution from the burning of fossil fuels and nuclear energy will also be looked at more closely to determine their impact on weather.

This research programme will be open to non-Community countries which participate with the Nine in the European Cooperation of Scientific and Technical Research (COST). It will be coordinated and managed by the Commission organs as to avoid duplication of research effort and to mesh in with the efforts of the World Meteorological Association and other bodies.

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