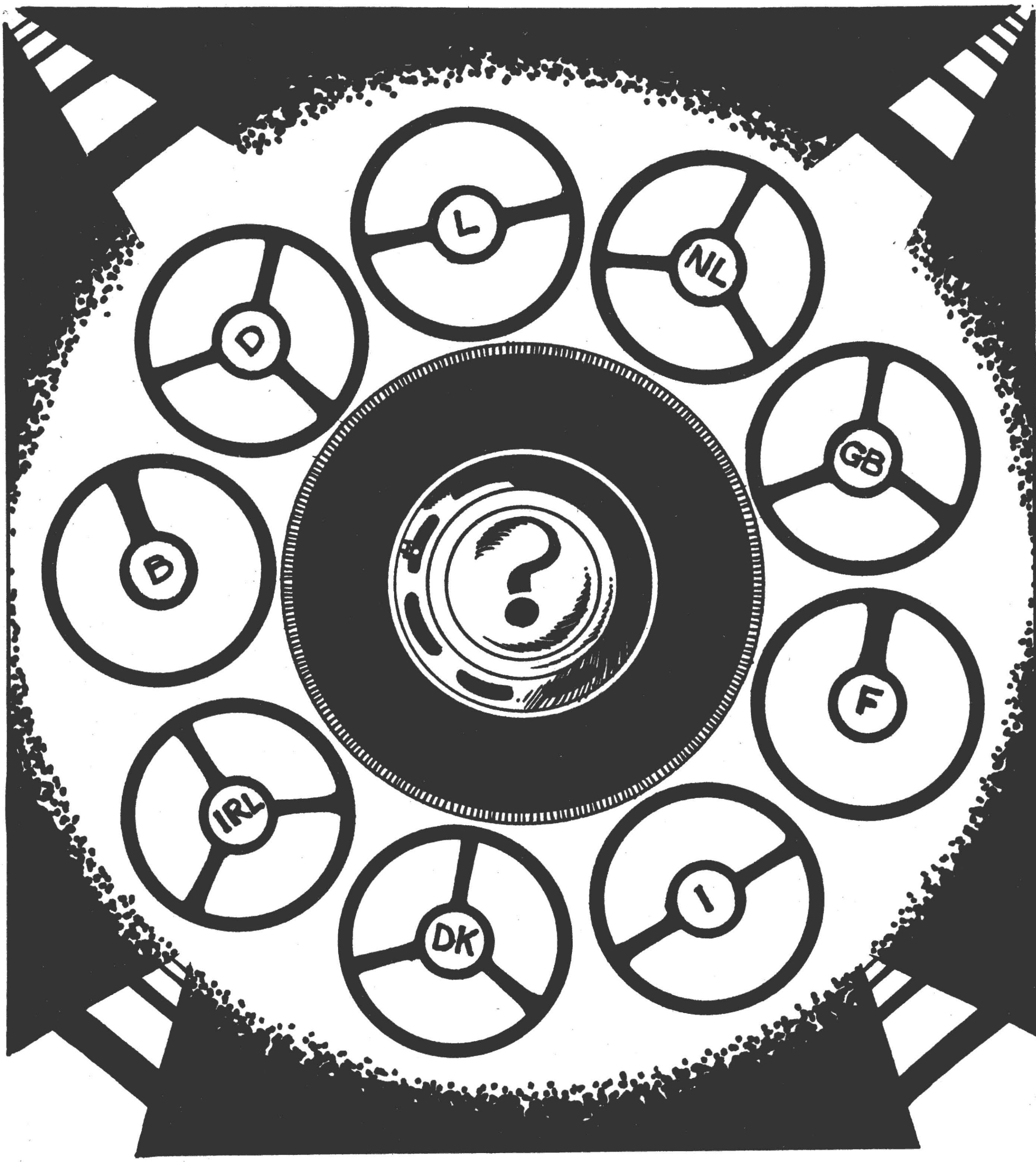
Euroforum



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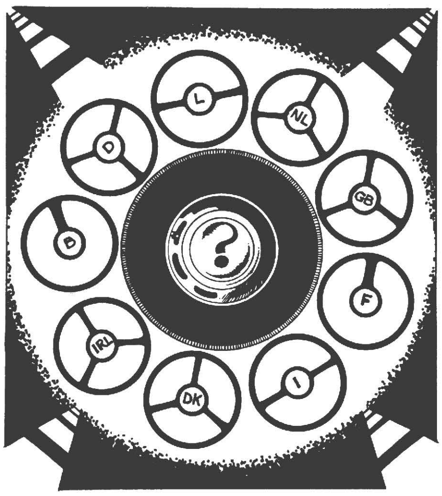


What future for the Community's car industry?

Diagnoses differ, but the fact remains: the patient is sick. And in Europe, as in the United States, the health of the motor industry tends to act as an all-too-accurate barometer for the state of the economy as a whole.

The symptoms of the current malaise in the European motor industry are depressingly familiar: increased production and labour costs coupled with declining sales and strong foreign competition. The results are familiar too — job losses and short-time working.

The European motor industry is the largest in the world with nearly 11.500 million vehicles produced last year, ahead of the US (11.400 million) and Japan (9.600 million). Around 8 million Europeans depend directly or indirectly on the industry for their living.

It therefore plays a key role in the European economy, and is a major consumer of products from other Community industries, notably steel (about 20% of Community steel production is currently hammered into motor vehicles), glass and rubber. In 1978, the last year for which comprehensive figures are available, the motor industry earned enough to pay off the equivalent 20% of the Community's oil bill.

All of which makes the industry's current plight the more worrying at a time when the total out of work in the Nine has topped the seven million mark for the first time ever.

But just how bad is the motor industry's condition, and what, if anything, can be done to cure it ?

Opinions differ on whether the motor industry is genuinely in a state of 'crisis'. The manufacturers feel, and the European Commission shares this view to a degree, that the industry is on a downturn, from which, with the right treatment, it will emerge to full health. The unions, on the other hand (remembering perhaps that even hiccups can be fatal), are less optimistic.

Certainly the industry has been hit harder than most by the recurrent energy crisis. Not only does it suffer in the general economic slowdown, but it is also hit by a backlash from fuel-conscious motorists.

Competition among motor manufacturers has been sharpened to a razor's edge, with European firms facing increasingly strong competition from Japan and the US.

The Japanese share of the European car market rose from 7.3 per cent at the end of 1979 to 9.6 percent by the middle of this year. With Japanese cars being without doubt very good value for money, appeals to Community consumers' patriotic instincts are not enough to persuade them to buy European.

Nor would protectionist barriers necessarily provide an answer in the long term, although some extension of controls may provide a vital breathing space for the industry in the short term.

European Commission officials recently met Japanese government representatives to discuss the whole problem of trade relations with Japan, and representatives of the European motor manufacturers are having discussions with Japanese industry leaders to focus particularly on the car market.

But not all the European industry's problems are in the home market.

European cars are losing ground on overseas market as well. Again, Japan is the No. 1 competitor.

Europe's motor industry is not a homogeneous block like its rivals in Japan and the US. It is fragmented, with a disproportionately large number of big manufacturers compared with the size of the market. They face widely differing economic conditions in each Member State and while some are healthy others definitely are not.

For an industry which depends on high productivity per plant just to break even, Europe's motor industry suffers from overcapacity and many plants are working well below their potential.

The obvious remedy to the competitive challenge in the long run is to meet it head on. But given the peculiar difficulties facing the industry in a time of recession, considerable changes will need to be made before this can be done.

Those changes must aim at four key objectives: economies of scale, greater energy savings, increased safety and environmental protection and improved marketing techniques.

Firstly the fragmented European industry must concentrate and rationalize. Five manufacturers (Peugeot-Citroën, Renault, Fiat, British Leyland and Volkswagen) each have a wide range of mass-produced vehicles. In addition there are several specialist car makers, BMW, Rolls Royce, Alfa Romeo and Daimler Benz. This calls for increased cooperation between manufacturers with (for example) an expansion of joint ventures and the rationalization of the components industry.

Secondly, productivity must increase. In 1978, European manufacturers produced an average of 12 cars per employee, whereas their Japanese competitors turned out 45 cars per worker. The Japanese enjoy the benefits of a highly integrated and techonologically-advanced production process, involving widespread use of robot automation.

Japan is also blessed with a real freedom from industrial disputes allowing the best use of available time and equipment.

The European industry could increase production by around 25 per cent by 1985 (to 15 cars per worker), but corresponding estimates for Japan vary from 16 per cent to as much as 100 per cent increase over the same period, accompanied by greater use of robots on the production line.

Europe will have to invest large sums of money to step up productivity and to rationalize, especially since the US manufacturers have responded to increased demand for smaller cars with a re-equipment programme worth tens of billions of pounds.

Thirdly Europe must meet the technological challenges of modern car making, particularly with the need for more safety, better noise and pollution prevention and additional energy-saving features.

Research and development programmes will have to be stepped up, and if possible joint reseach will have to be undertaken by European manufacturers to cut costs and avoid duplication.

Finally the European industry must develop a modern and suitably agressive trade strategy.
From all the evidence, the car has now replaced the dog as man's best friend. Between 1960 and 1976, the total population owning cars, four-wheeled friends, increased from 8.3 percent to 28.4 per cent.

All manufacturers be they European, Japanese or American are facing one common problem — saturation of the market. This, combined with the energy crisis, has already led to a shift in demand to smaller, more fuel-efficient vehicles, and from quantity to quality.

The focus is shifting to a new race: for the 'car of the future'. It would be wrong to underestimate the challenge of a (hopefully) restructured and revitalized European motor industry.

Shtaggering 'shtatishtics

Whether it is Scotch whisky, French cognac, Italian wine, Irish stout, German and Danish schnapps, or Benelux beer, Community countries are known the world over for their alcoholic drinks.

This is not just good for our reputation: it also helps the balance of payments.

Last year, for example, the Community's drink exports were worth around £2 500 million. This represented 2 per cent of total exports, not counting trade between the Nine themselves which has grown steadily since the reduction of tariff barriers under Community law and has given imbibers in the Nine a more tantalising choice.

The drinks industry also makes a useful contribution in helping to keep down our current dismal unemployment figures. It is estimated that close on 300 000 jobs depend on processing the grape and the grain.

THE ECONOMY

Slower growth but inflation being held in check

A gloomy picture of the Community's economy is painted in the European Commission's annual economic report. Only the battle to contain inflation offers a silver lining.

The main reason for the uninspired performance of the economy, and for the Commission's pessimistic predictions for the coming year, is the impact of imported oil prices which has hit the world economy in general.

The Community's oil bill has risen from 2.4 per cent of gross domestic product in 1978 to about 4 per cent this year. The figure would have been even higher but for the fact that GDP has increased, oil imports have been reduced and Community currencies have enjoyed favourable exchange rates against the US dollar in which oil is traded.

The effect of the oil crisis on the world economy is reflected in the slow growth of world trade on which the Community, as the world's largest trader, depends for much of its prosperity. World trade, which grew by 6.5 per cent last year, is expected to grow by no more than 2.5 per cent this year. The forecast for next year is a rise of some 2 per cent.

The growth in volume of the Community's gross domestic product this year is expected to slow down to 1.3 per cent and to come close to a halt at 0.6 per cent next year.

While unemployment is rising significantly and is expected to reach 6.8 per cent of the labour force next year, consumer prices are likely to slow down to 9.7 per cent next year after 12 per cent this year.

Some stimulation to increased economic activity should be given next year with budget deficits expected to rise from 3.5 per cent of GDP this year to 3.9 per cent. Inflation should be further contained by a predicted reduction in the money supply.

A further encouraging indicator is that the Community's current account balance of payments deficit, which is at the record level of 1.5 per cent of GDP, should decline to about 1.2 per cent next year.

According to the report, the Community is in better shape to absorb the present oil crisis than when oil prices first began to escalate in 1973.

Nevertheless, oil prices have had a considerable impact and, in order to help the Community economy to overcome the crisis, the Commission sees as a major priority a further reduction in oil imports, coupled with more efforts to fight inflation and more structural changes in the economy.

FINANCES

Community plans to extend borrowing

The Nine's Finance Ministers have given their broad support for the Community to raise several billion dollars on international capital markets and to lend this to Community countries facing balance of payments deficits due to the increases in the price of oil.

Final details of the scheme to extend the recycling of petrodollars still remain to be worked out by the European Commission and governments, but the fund is expected to have around £4 000 million at its disposal for five years.

A similar mechanism has been operating since 1975, but the only countries to have borrowed from the existing $3 000 million fund have been Ireland and Italy.

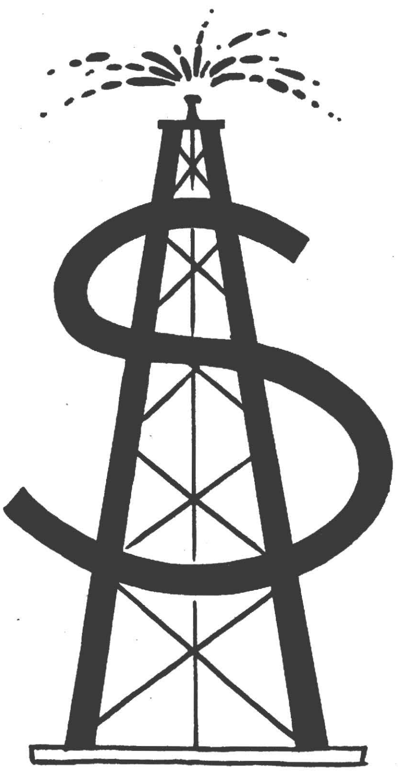
However, governments have now decided to make this recycling of petrodollars more flexible and less cumbersome, especially as in the past it could take a year for a loan application to be processed.

The Ministers also gave the go-ahead for a final £60 million to be raised by the Commission and then lent to support energy and infrastructure projects in the Community.

The money is part of the £600 million Ortoli facility—an idea launched by Economics Commissioner François-Xavier Ortoli to use the Community's 'triple A' credit rating to borrow from the international markets and lend to Community governments.

Previous loans have gone to the United Kingdom, Italy and Ireland to help improve telephone systems, road networks and encourage alternative sources of energy.

Now, for the first time, part of the £60 million is to be used for advance factories and industrial housing.



EMPLOYMENT

Number of jobless tops 7 million for first time

Unemployment in the European Community has topped 7 million for the first time, having increased by 1 million in the past four months.

Since the seasonally-corrected figure also passes the 7 million mark, the total accurately reflects a dramatic worsening of the labour market situation.

At the end of September, the number of 7.1 million unemployed represented 6.5 per cent of the work force. Compared with August unemployment has risen by 3 per cent.

Developments in most Member States reflected the overall Community pattern, although pronounced increases were recorded in France (10.5 per cent) and in Luxembourg (9.6 per cent), followed by Denmark (4.5 per cent). In the other Member States the increases ranged between 2 and 3 per cent. Only in Germany was there a drop in unemployment (just under 5 per cent).

As in the previous month, the number of unemployed men at the end of September showed a bigger rise than that of unemployed women (3.2 per cent as against 2.7 per cent) in the Community as a whole.

The deterioration of the labour market position, especially during the past four months, is particularly noticeable if compared with the previous year. For the Community as a whole, the number without jobs is 18.3 per cent above the level of September 1979.

In the individual Member States, the increases were: United Kingdom (46.2 per cent), Denmark (37.9), Ireland (27.8), the Netherlands (26.6), Belgium (12), Germany (11.6), France (6.7), Italy (6.2) and Luxembourg (5.6).

For retraining

The European Social Fund, which plays an important role in helping to finance the retraining of workers throughout the Community, has just made a second series of grants worth £354 million. This brings total grants from the Fund this year to almost £620 million.

Picking up the pieces

Wage earners in the nine Member States will soon be able to benefit from a special Community scheme designed to protect them if their employer goes bankrupt.

Three years from now, each of the Nine will have what are being called 'safeguard institutions' which will pay employees all outstanding debts owed to them by their former employer.

These will be paid up to a certain date, which it is left open to Member States to determine. Possible formulae are payment up to the time the insolvency occurs, when the redundancy notice is received or when the contract actually expires.

Detailed terms will apply to the safeguard institutions, since their capital will have to be independent from the employers' investment capital, although employers will have to contribute to the financing of the institutions.

Several categories of workers, however, will not be covered by the new scheme. In Greece and the United Kingdom, fishermen who receive a percentage share of the catch are exempt, while in the Netherlands domestic employees working less than three days for the same person will not be able to benefit.

Mixed reaction to proposal on workers' rights

Proposals by the European Commission which would give workers in large companies, particularly multinationals, more information and broader consultation rights (see last issue of *Euroforum*) have been welcomed by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).

However, UNICE, the body which represents organized industry at Community level, is not so happy.

The ETUC said that politically the Commission's proposal was a step in the right direction, even if it fell short of what the trade union movement has been demanding.

UNICE emphasized that it was not opposed to consulting workers' representatives and giving them adequate information about a company's plans, but it felt that the solution the Commission has come up with raises a large number of problems.

The proposal must now be approved by the Council of Ministers before it can become Community law.

Long-term jobless give new twist to dole queue

Since the oil crisis and other shocks to the economies of industrialized countries we have come to live with a high level of unemployment. At present, more than seven million people are out of work in the Community.

But in the past few years, a new phenomenon, what has been dubbed the 'hard-core' unemployed, in other words people who have been out of a job for six months or more, has emerged.

The problem of long-term unemployment is a serious one in most of the nine Member States, although it is difficult to make strict comparisons because of the variety of national social systems and statistical methods.

In a recent reply to a European Parliament question from an Irish member, Sile de Valera of the European Progressive Democrats, the European Commission said that the 'hard-core' unemployed person's chances of finding a job deteriorate the longer he or she is out of work. The Commission is studying this phenomenon in close collaboration with national employment agencies.

It is a common pattern in all Member States for which figures are available—Ms de Valera's own country, Ireland, is the exception—that older workers are more likely to be among the long-term unemployed. Among the over-50s, men and women are equally affected; however, under 25, women suffer more than men.

The most recent figures, for October 1979, show that the situation was worst in Belgium, where 61 per cent of those out of work had been without a job for more than six months. The figure for both Italy and Luxembourg was 52 per cent, for the UK and the Netherlands 41 per cent, for Germany 40 per cent, for France 38 per cent and for Denmark 17 per cent.

THE LAW

Call for Community cooperation to combat terrorism

European Community governments have been strongly urged by the European Parliament to take quick and effective measures to curb the recent wave of terrorist attacks in Europe.

At their latest session in Strasbourg, MEPs from all parties adopted a resolution calling on the Member States to coordinate closely their campaign against terrorism, following the bomb outrages in Antwerp, Bologna, Munich and Paris.

The resolution also pressed the Nine to devote particular attention to the danger of a resurgence of fascism, racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism.

During the emergency debate on the resolution, the Conservative MEP for London East, Mr Alan Tyrrell hit out at the 'subhuman wreckers' behind the attacks, and called for closer international police and judicial cooperation to ensure the certainty of detection, capture and punishment of terrorists.

'It makes no difference if they are from the extreme left or the extreme right—both are equally evil', Mr Tyrrell said.

He lamented the lack of progress towards a European Judicial Area, with firm extradition agreements.

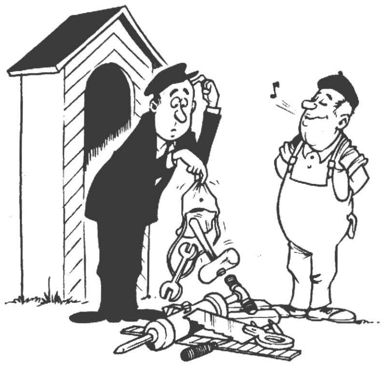
Fellow London Tory Mr John Marshall issued a more controversial call for the reintroduction of the death penalty for convicted terrorists.

'Those willing to kill others for their beliefs ought not to be surprised if others believe they also should die', he said.

But Mr Marshall spoke for all members of the European Parliament when he challenged the nine member governments to ensure that there is no safe haven anywhere in Europe for terrorists.

Après le déluge

Flood victims in France are to receive aid totalling £300 00 from the European Commission.



Hidden obstacles defy completion of common market

One of the most fundamental aims of the European Community is to allow free movement of goods and people across the Nine's internal borders, abolishing as much of the customs-post red tape as possible.

But despite it being now over ten years since the customs union was introduced, how much easier is it for traders and the general public to move about in the Community? The answer, according to German Christian Democrat Karl von Wogau in a recent European parliamentary report, is: not a lot.

He claims that although customs duties have largely been abolished immumerable fiscal provisions and transport controls have sprung up in their place. This, Mr von Wogau claims, prevents European citizens from identifying with the Community and reinforces scepticism.

How, for example, does a craftsman living on one side of the Rhine (in Germany) but doing a job on the other (in France) feel when he has to take with him a list of his tools so that, on his return home, customs officials can check that he has not sold any during the day?

French Socialist MEP Jacques Delors added during the debate a tale of a Belgian international cycling champion who, driving home after winning a major title, was forced to pay VAT on the bicycle he was alleged to be 'smuggling' over the border.

Mr von Wogau urged the Commission to draw up common rules on the temporary importation of goods, which affects journalists, sportsmen, artists and musicians as well as craftsmen and repairmen, who have to carry with them a certain amount of equipment for their work.

He also called on the Commission to draw up an action plan for the systematic dismantling of the various causes of delay at internal Community frontier posts by April 1981.

To do this it will be necessary to tranfer elsewhere various tasks currently carried out at customs posts, such as VAT collection, and ensure mutual recognition of Member States veterinary and health controls.

In the longer term, Mr von Wogau suggests that Member States should be encouraged to standardize VAT rates and other tax levels (80 per cent of border transactions can be put down to differing VAT levels between Member States, he claims).

But the report also suggests shorter-term measures designed specifically to ease the lot of the ordinary Community citizen at the customs post. For example, he proposes that more or less systematic identity checks should be done away with, and that limits on the quantities of wine, tea and coffee brought into a country by travellers should be abolished.

Alongside the customs union report, Mr von Wogau presented the European Parliament with a second report, on the removal of technical barriers to trade.

'Technical barriers' include national quality and safety standards which can often be as big an obstacle to trade as the old customs duties which the Community abolished long ago.

Here again Mr von Wogau suggests that Member States have simply replaced customs duties with other protectionist barriers to support their domestic industries.

Unnecessary technical barriers act as an obstacle to free competition and prevent European citizens from enjoying the full advantages of the common market, he remarked.

The report calls on the European Commission to make better use of optional harmonization when proposing directives bringing different national standards into line. Optional harmonization would be aimed at firms intending to sell on a European scale. Small and medium-sized businesses manufacturing for a regional or national market only, should not necessarily have to ensure that their product conformed to European standards—national standards would be perfectly adequate.

Some form of cost-benefit analysis should be carried out aimed at growth sectors, Mr von Wogau suggests, to see whether harmonization would be worthwhile.

The report urges the nine governments to speed their progress towards eliminating technical barriers and to ensure that they are applying Community law correctly in their own countries.

It calls on the Commission to make better use of its Treaty powers to remove unjustified technical barriers without recourse to directives, which inevitably take time to pass through the Community's legislative process.

Here the Commission could turn more often to European Court of Justice case-law, the report suggests, particularly the recent 'Cassis of Dijon' case in which the Court ruled that any product legally manufactured and sold in a Member State must in principle be admitted to the market of any other Member State.

Replying to the debate for the Commission, Industrial Affairs Commissioner Viscount Etienne Davignon agreed on the crucial significance of the 'Cassis of Dijon' case.

But he felt that, before putting forward new demands, the Parliament would do better to work out a clear and realistic work programme with the Council. Without this 'organized confusion' would be the only result.

Commissioner Davignon urged MEPs te keep their constituents well informed on the question of free movement for there were very few organizations which helped people to know and to stand up for their rights.

Cautious approach urged to air-fare cuts

Attempts to change the present structure of air fares in Europe should be made with caution, the European Parliament has warned.

In a wide-ranging debate during the Parliament's October plenary session, the majority of members supported the European Commission's ideas for improvements to the present system, but rejected any suggestion that these should go as far as American-style deregulation.

French Socialist Roger-Gérard Schwartzenberg, echoing the view of the Parliament's Economic and Monetary Committee, called for a more flexible fare structure.

This could be based, be suggested, on special fares paid in advance, off-season rates, no-frill services, European round-trip tickets and the general application of standby rates.

Air transport should not be the luxury of the few, he said. However, he stressed that a balance had to be found which would allow air fares to fall yet, at the same time, avoid destructive competition, which could affect the standard of the services on offer.

An even more cautious approach was adopted by the Parliament's Transport Committee. It acknowledged that fares in Europe are 'often criticized' and conceded that it agreed 'to a certain extent with this view', but added that only a minority of passengers pay the full price.

Improvements to air transport could be made in other ways, in its view. These could be based on principles such as better services for passengers, reasonable operating conditions for efficient and viable airlines, improved air-traffic control, energy conservation and the reduction of environmental nuisance caused by air traffic.

Many members were worried at the effect that deregulation—a 'free skies' policy—had had in the United States. Several companies had gone to the wall and regional services in particular had suffered, they said.

But others, especially the British Conservatives, argued for a far more radical approach, as well as greater competition on the main trunk routes now controlled by bilateral agreements between the governments.

Their spokesman, James Moorhouse, wanted to know why the French government had been able to veto a £20 Channel-hopper flight and Germany had prevented a small night cargo flight running to Düsseldorf.

> Sir Freddie Laker, head of the British airline Laker Airways, who pioneerd cut-price flights on the trans-Atlantic route, is reported to have decided for an appeal to the European Court of Justice over the refusal of the British government to support his bid to introduce a similar service on European routes.

Replying to these comments, Transport Commissioner Richard Burke, whose Green Paper on air transport had provoked the debate in the Parliament, stressed that the Commission favoured an 'evolutionary rather than revolutionary' approach.

He still considered that the ideas contained in the Commission paper provided the best basis for introducing changes in the sector, steering, as they did, a middle course between the defenders of the *status quo* and the advocates of American deregulation.

Giving outlying regions better air services

The European Commission is proposing to cut through administrative red tape and stimulate regional development by making it easier for airlines to operate inter-regional services.

It has asked the nine governments to allow airlines to obtain traffic rights on routes which they consider they could work profitably more easily than under existing arrangements. At the same time, they would establish criteria for the fares that would be charged.

In cases where an application had been unfairly refused, the Commission is proposing an arbitration procedure to resolve conflicts. There would also be direct ways for passengers to give their comments on the operation of the system.

The special arrangements would not apply between large national airports, many of which are already congested, but only to regional centres like Edinburgh, Cardiff, Cork and Shannon.

A further requirement is that the journeys must be at least of 200 kilometres, except where natural obstacles like sea or mountains, would give air a special advantage, in terms of time saved, over other forms of transport.

The aircraft used would also have a capacity of not more than 130 seats.

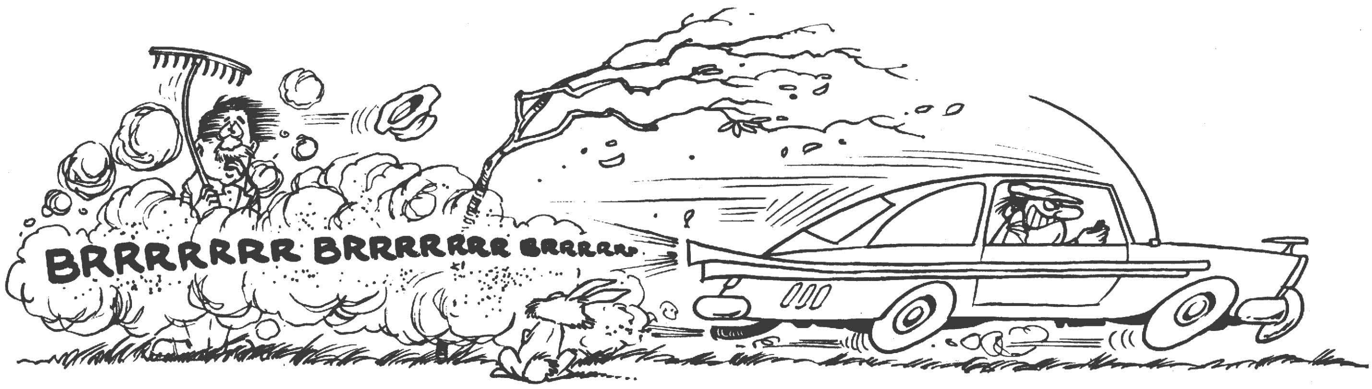
To ensure that the airlines intend to give a comprehensive service, and are not out to cream off the most lucrative traffic, they would have to give a guarantee to operate the service for at least a year, or two seasons if it is a seasonal venture.

The advantages of direct flights between regional centres in the Community, without having to fly via national capitals are several in the Commission's view.

It argues that in addition to the energy saving that would ensue, the new flights would also promote growth in the regions, since in many cases a major consideration in business decisions on where to establish a new industrial plant is the availability and easy accessibility of air services.

Discrimination

The European Trade Union Confederation, which represents trade unions at Community level, feels workers in the public sector enjoy fewer rights of representation than workers in the private sector. The ETUC has drawn up a list of minimum rights which it wants to see implemented in all nine Member States.



The ecological car: the priorities and the progress

What is the ideal car for the 1980s to ensure maximum protection of the environment? This is a question to which the European Commission was asked to devote some thought at the last meeting of the nine Environment Ministers in December.

In the course of a recent reply to a written question from an Irish member of the European Parliament, Sean Flanagan of the European Progressive Democrats, the Commission outlined four features which it believes are essential to the future generation of cars.

First and foremost, the levels of pollution and of noise emission shoud be in line with the capabilities of the best available technology. In addition, cars should consume less energy; there should be a more rational use of materials to allow increased recycling and, finally, more attention should be given to safety.

To some extent, Community legislation has already made a certain amount of progress towards achieving these objectives.

Community regulations on air pollution were adopted in 1970 and have been strengthened several times since then, most recently in October of last year. The Commission is working closely with the Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva examining the scope for tightening regulations which may result in further amendments of existing Community legislation.

The Community has also been doing useful work to make cars quieter. Measures fixing the maximum amount of noise that vehicles are allowed to make have been in operation in all nine Member States since last April. Although Community rules on maximum permissible noise levels are among some of the most stringent in the world they may soon be tightened even further.

In the field of energy saving, the Commission has decided to provide the Member States with a standard method of measuring the fuel consumption of cars so that compliance with the motor industry's voluntary undertaking to reduce consumption by 10-15 per cent between now and 1985 can be monitored accurately.

With regard to the improvement of vehicle safety, a vast array of Community measures exist covering the broad range of car components and these are updated to keep pace with technical developments.

While progress has been made, the Commission believes that greater efforts are needed if the car of the 1980s is to meet the more demanding criteria of the decade.

However, the Commission is aware that, in meeting more exacting standards, account must be taken of how any proposed new regulations would affect the competitive position of the Community's motor industry.

This means that the energy and economic impact of proposed solutions would have to be weighed very carefully.

The Commission will shortly publish the results of a study on research and development options concerning future problems of the European car industry.

Meanwhile, a number of research projects aimed at producing the car of the future are being carried out with the help of Community funds.

One study is being conducted by Porsche on the possibilities of reducing fuel consumption through thermodynamic improvements to the internal combustion engine. A second study on energy conservation is being carried out testing different types of advanced engine design.

In addition, three European research institutes are cooperating in the research and development of new materials for use in the manufacture of advanced batteries which could make electric cars a more practical proposition.

Parliament supports proposal to ban whale imports

Captain Ahab's relentless search may have threatened Moby Dick's life, but the wholesale slaughter of whales that has taken place over the centuries threatens to wipe out the various species altogether (See Focus, page 15).

In a bid to end this trail of destruction, the European Parliament, virtually unanimously, has supported the European Commission's call for tight controls on the import of whale products into the Community and a total ban on commercial whaling in European waters.

The chief advocate of such an approach, Dutch Socialist Hemmo Muntingh told MEPs that whereas there used to be some 200 000 blue whales, there were now only a few thousand. The same is true for the hump-backed whale.

Looking ahead to the enlargement of the Community, Mr Muntingh pointed out that Portugal was not even a member of the International Whaling Conference, while Spain, although a member, did not, he claimed, respect its agreed catch quotas.

The only dissenting voice raised was that of Danish Socialist Finn Lynge, who represents Greenland.

He complained that the traditional whaling nations, having virtually wiped out whales in Greenland's waters, were now trying to deprive his people of their whales by administrative measures.

He pointed out that Greenlanders had always hunted whales, but that this had never threatened stocks and that there was no alternative industry in Greenland.

But Consumer Commissioner Richard Burke denied there was any attempt to deprive people of their livelihood. He told the MEPs that, while the Commission has suggested a ban on the hunting of endangered species, this would not include hunting by coastal populations traditionally involved in such activities.
This would allow the Greenland Eskimos to continue to meet their own nutritional needs, subject to any conservation measures that might be needed to prevent the complete extinction of the species concerned.

The ban on imports, which the Commission would like to see operate from January 1 1982, would cover all main whale products and leather treated with whale oil.

A 10-minute sound tape on this subject for broadcasters can be obtained from the Directorate-General for Information (TV-Radio-Audio-Visual Dept.), Commission of the European Communities, Rue de la Loi, 200, 1049 Brussels.

HEALTH

Community action called for to make toys safer

A substance used in the manufacture of children's toys, particularly balloons, could be a health hazard and may soon be banned throughout the Community.

It has been claimed that the substance, benzene, which is a derivative of coal tar, attacks the nervous system if inhaled and that it could cause cancer, especially leukaemia.

The United Kingdom has prohibited the use of benzene in the manufacture of toys since the beginning of last year and it was this action which prompted the European Commission to examine the problem at Community level.

It has now proposed that the Council of Ministers approve the banning of benzene, to protect the health of consumers in all nine Member States.

IN BRIEF

Coastal erosion

Representatives of the Community's peripheral coastal regions who believe their areas are in danger of losing out to the more prosperous central regions, have adopted a European Charter. Among other things it calls for the economic development of coastal regions, the protection of their unique characteristics, the control of tourism and the development of cross-border co-operation. It also calls on the Community institutions to take more responsibility for the coastal regions.

Positive response

Forty-three per cent of Danes would vote against withdrawal from the Community if a referendum were held tomorrow. Of 1 126 people interviewed by an independent research unit, 35 per cent said they would favour withdrawal. A further 22 per cent did not know how they would vote.

Aid to recovery

Victims of Typhoon Allen in the Caribbean island of Grenada are to receive aid of £90 000 from the Community. The Community has already sent food aid worth almost £100 000 to the islanders.

Streamlining the ACP

Administrative reorganization is the top priority of Thomas Okelo Odongo who has taken over as Secretary-General of the ACP, the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries grouped together in the Lomé Convention with the Community.

Spoils of war

A number of European Parliamentarians have called on the European Commission to draw up a proposal which would ban the sale of war toys throughout the Community. Some countries, notably Sweden, have already taken such action.

CONSUMERS

Vested interests and political inertia come under fire

The effective lobbying carried out by big business and other producers' groups and the lack of political will on the part of governments have combined to prevent the Community from developing an effective consumer policy.

These allegations were made in the European Parliament at its last session by Irish MEP John O'Connell, a member of the Socialist Group, when he introduced his report assessing the progress that had been made in this sector over the last five years.

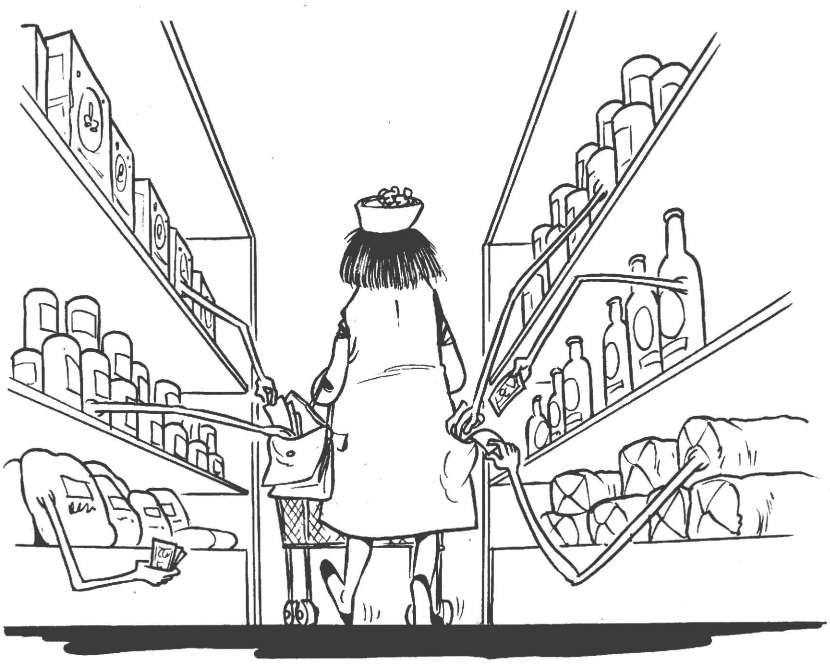
He complained that the first consumer action programme, launched in 1975, had yielded few results, while the second, adopted by the European Commission last year, failed to contain any concrete proposals.

In particular, Mr O'Connell called for Community action clamping down on smoking, alcohol and the use of drugs and stricter rules for the advertising of pharmaceutical products. He also supported demands for better information on prices.

A further way of strengthening the Community's consumer programme in the view of many MEPs, would be to increase the staff and resources available to the Commission in this area.

Replying to the points raised in the parliamentary debate, Consumer Affairs Commissioner Richard Burke said that his aim since he arrived in Brussels four years ago had been to actively promote, rather than merely defend, consumer interests, and that one way of achieving this had been to encourage greater dialogue with producers.

Mr Burke stated that the Commission had no plans to bring forward draft legislation limiting tobacco and alcohol consumption, but he suggested that an information campaign pointing out their dangers might be the best solution.



TRADE

Stabilizing the world market in commodities

The European Commission has proposed to the Council of Ministers that the Community as such should become a signatory, alongside the nine Member States, to the international agreement reached last June which established a common fund for commodities.

The fund, which was negotiated in the framework of UNCTAD, is expected to play an important role in stabilizing world commodity markets which would be of benefit both to consumers—mainly the industrialized countries—and the producers in the developing countries.

The fund is made up of two accounts. The first, which has a capital of $470 million, will be used to help finance arrangements for stocking commodities run by international commodity organizations. The second, which will initially receive $280 million, will be used to help finance measures other than stocking such as research and development, productivity improvements and marketing diversification.

In addition to western industrialized countries, the eastern bloc, the People's Republic of China and the OPEC states have agreed to contribute to the fund, which had been under negotiation since 1976.

The agreement is now open for signature and it will come into force when at least 90 States have ratified it.

AGRICULTURE

Battle against surpluses is paying off

The Community's efforts to cut farm surpluses, particularly in the dairy sector, have been having considerable success and the so-called 'mountains' of milk products in public stock have been reduced to 'foothills', according to the European Commission.

By a variety of means of disposal which benefit the consumer, such as cut-price butter for old folks, subsidized school milk and cheap butter in the shops at Christmas, surplus produce being held in public stock has been gradually disappearing.

For example, the public stock of butter, which was bought into intervention when it failed to reach a fixed price on the market, has been reduced from its peak of about 347 000 tonnes at the end of June 1979 to its present level of about 202 000 tonnes, which represents only about 43 days supply. The cost of butter storage this year is running well below the budgeted figure.

In addition, the stock of skimmed milk powder, a large amount of which is given away in food aid to poor Third World countries, has been reduced from its peak of about 1.4 million tonnes in August 1976 to about 242 000 tonnes.

Economies urged to avoid CAP crisis next year

Thanks to a prudent management policy, agricultural spending in the Community has been kept down and the usual supplementary budget will not be necessary this year, Agriculture Commissioner Finn Olav Gundelach told an informal meeting of the nine Agriculture Ministers in Luxembourg recently.

However, he warned that the situation next year is likely to pose problems which good management alone will be unable to overcome. Measures of economy will have to be approved by the Council of Ministers if spending is not to overtake available resources.

Mr. Gundelach said that such economies were all the more necessary in view of the fact that the Commission's proposals for next year's budget do not allow for higher prices for the 1981/82 agricultural marketing year. A number of Member States are pressing for higher prices to offset increased production costs.

The Commission is currently preparing a new strategy which will outline possible reforms in the principle on which the common agricultural policy is based.

A feature of this strategy will be measures to cut down on surplus production through the extension of the principle of co-responsibility, which is already applied in the milk and sugar sectors. This means that farmers would have to share responsibility for over-production through the payment of a levy on excess production.

In addition, there could be changes in the system of intervention whereby the Community buys in produce in different sectors which falls below fixed price levels. An example of this is the Commission's recent proposition to suspend intervention for beef during the summer months.

IN BRIEF

Unpalatable

A British member of the European Parliament, Richard Caborn (Socialist) has called for Community legislation to ban the force-feeding of geese to produce paté de foie gras. Pending legislation, he wants the European Commission to allow individual Member States to control trade in these delicacies. Mr Caborn would also like a report drawn up detailing the methods used to produce paté both within the Community and in countries which export to the Community.

Slow states

Only five Community countries—Denmark, Germany, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom—have ratified two international conventions to prevent sea pollution which were signed as long ago as 1972. The first, for the prevention of pollution by dumping from ships and aircraft, has also been ratified by Belgium, while Ireland, Luxembourg and Italy have ratified neither this convention nor a second one on the dumping of wastes.

Less spendthrift

Community citizens are still not saving the way they used to, but at least they are beginning to show signs of more thrift. Savings-bank deposits in the nine Member States fell by £3 million in July, but at least the drop was encouraging compared to the previous month ,when deposits fell by £193 million. The figure is discouraging, however, when set beside the performance in July of last year when deposits increased by £86 million.

THIRD WORLD

Tourism offers a growing source of revenue

Safaris in the big-game parks; sun, sand and sea away from it all; exotic landscapes and lifestyles, crafts and cooking—the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific have all the makings of a tourist paradise. Last year, 5.3 million tourists went to Africa, 8 million to the Caribbean and 13.8 million to East Asia and the Pacific.

But the day when the Third World will be the playground of the Western industrialized world is still some way off—with distances being so great, at the moment tourists visiting developing countries need to be either wealthy or adventurous or both.

To some extent it's likely to stay that way—having seen the social and environmental damage resulting from mass tourism in certain places, developing countries appreciate the dangers of over-dependence on tourism and the importance of careful planning and control.

In the 92 islands of the Seychelles, for instance—which has few natural resources and must depend on tourism for survival—the number of visitors has risen twenty-fold in the past eight years: from 4 000 in 1971 to 80 000 in 1979. For a country with a population of only 62 000 this influx is frightening and the government is concerned to find ways of protecting the inhabitants and the natural beauty of the islands without scaring the visitors away.

On the other hand, it's clear that some tourism is feasible for almost all developing countries, and many are looking to it as an important source of economic development and diversification. Tourism accounts for between 1% and 75% of the gross national product in many Third World countries: in several states it is the largest industry, the major exporter and the leading source of employment and foreign exchange.

Nevertheless, many countries lack the transport, accommodation and other facilities necessary to develop tourism, either internationally or within their own regions.

The costs of importing construction materials, food, technology, expertise, and training are all high, and people point to the dangers of dependence on industrialized countries to supply and control them. Indigenous businessmen need to be encouraged to invest in tourism and foreigners must be attracted to train local workers as part of the world-wide campaign for the transfer of technology.

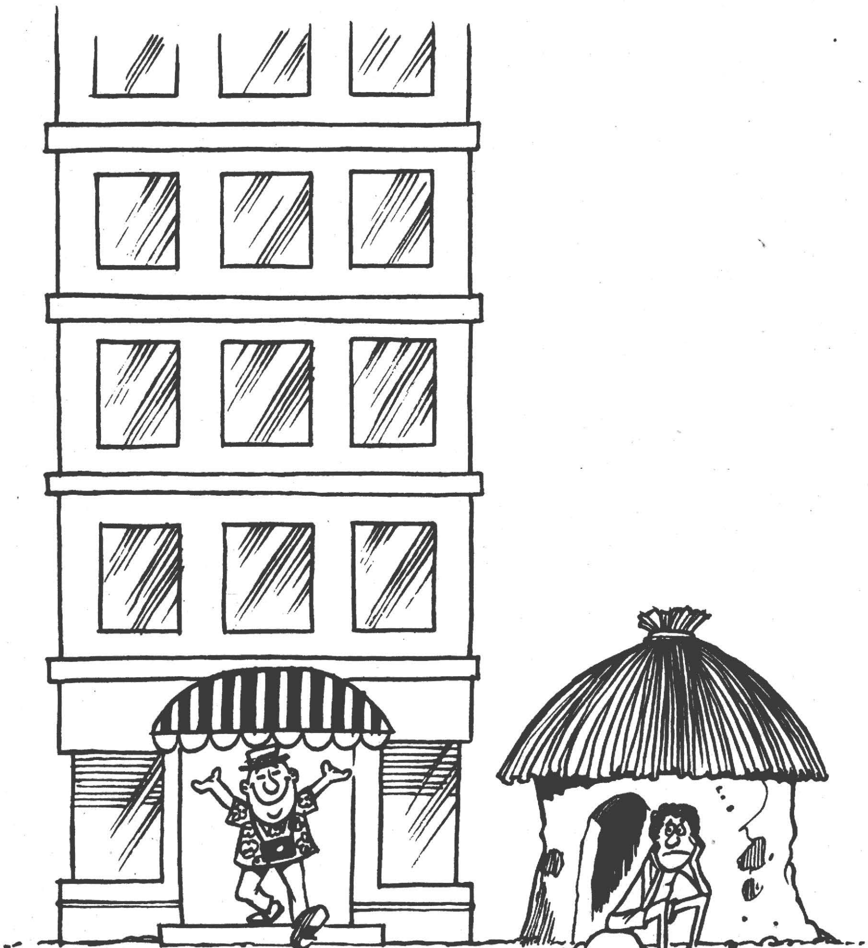
Would-be resorts also need to choose the tourism that suits them best and to bear in mind that the developing countries with the most flourishing tourist trade are often those with the most open political and economic structures.

The Community aid programmes in the field of tourism aim to provide financial and technical assistance in line with the priorities established by the developing countries themselves. The Community provides assistance through the European Investment Bank in the form of investments in tourism infrastructure—by the end of 1979, the European Investment Bank had granted 18.15 million u.a. (around £10.9 million) worth of loans for this purpose to 10 members of the ACP group, the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries which are partners with the Community in the Lomé Convention.

In Senegal, Gabon, Cameroon, the Ivory Coast, Malawi and Niger, the governments put top priority on building (or, in one case, extending and renovating) international-class hotel catering for businessmen and tourists, and were directly involved in the financing.

EIB risk-capital helped to build the only international-class hotel in Brazzaville (Congo) and two smaller hotels with transport and tour facilities in Mali—part of a bold experiment aimed at promoting tours in a country which extends well into the Sahara and the Sahel, and where there are very few openings for industry. The rate and reimbursement term of the loans varies according to how profitable the schemes turn out to be.

Two feasibility studies were financed under the second Lomé Convention: to Kenya—whose wildlife, game reserves and photographic safaris attract half-a-million tourists a year—for studies on developing hotels along the coast; and to a leisure-folklore park in Jamaica, where European tourism grew by 47% last year and is a source of Caribbean hopes to cover the seasonal fall-off in the summer.



The Community also provides financial and technical assistance for governmments and regional institutions in ACP countries in areas like tourism planning and organization, marketing and promotion, training and research.

Some of the projects implemented under the fourth European Development Fund (EDF) included a tourism potential study in Guyana, tourism planning and promotion in Barbados, the development of national tourism plans in Botswana and Zambia, and a major study of European tourism demand for the Caribbean region. The largest sum, £300 000 (500 000 u.a.) went to tourism planning, promotion and marketing in the Netherlands Antilles. There has also been general assistance for literature, seminars, exhibitions, and so on.

The provisions of Lomé II on training offer wide scope for aid and cooperation in the tourist sector. Training programmes in tourism are financed under the EDF: under the third and fourth European Development Funds, some 400 students from the tourist sectors of 25 ACP countries were given training grants.

Studies mostly take place in the developing countries, but there are advanced courses in Europe too. Community programmes have also helped to finance a number of catering schools and regional training centres.

Technical assistance and training schemes are also provided for in the cooperation agreements with the Maghreb and the Mashreq Arab states in the Mediterranean basin. Egypt and Tunisia have a particularly flourishing tourist trade.

With more than 1 000 million potential tourists in Europe, America, the Middle East, Africa, Southern Asia and the Pacific, and no sign of the economic crisis breaking the holiday habit, well-managed tourism can do much to improve international understanding and peace, and bring a degree of prosperity—though it should never be regarded as the panacea for all the economic problems of developing countries.

THE NEWS AT A GLANCE

Anti-semitism

Simone Veil, President of the European Parliament, has condemned the recent attack on a Paris synagogue. Mrs Veil, who is Jewish and who survived a concentration camp, took part in a mass demonstration in Paris which followed the attack.

Commissioners named

The United Kingdom has renominated Christopher Tugendhat, currently responsible for the Budget, for a second four-year term as a member of the European Commission. The second name put forward is Ivor Richards formerly the UK's representative at the United Nations. The President-designate of the new Commission, which takes office in January, is Luxembourg's Foreign Minister Gaston Thorn.

Marking their disapproval

The action of the German Democratic Republic in raising the German mark exchange requirement for travellers from the Federal Republic has been condemned by a group of European Parliamentarians. Visitors crossing from the Federal Republic must now exchange 25 DM instead of 13.50 DM per day at an unfavourable one-for-one rate. The parliamentarians are urging Community governments to protest vigorously.

Where to meet?

At the request of five groups—the Socialists, European People's Party, European Democrats, Liberals and European Progressive Democrats—the European Parliament will this month debate where it should have its permanent seat. At present the plenary sessions are divided between Strasbourg and Luxembourg and committee meetings are held in Brussels.

What business thinks

The Community's business climate indicator, which measures the expectations of chief executives of major companies, shows signs of moderating, except in the United Kingdom. Between August and September, the indicator showed a decline of only 2.1 per cent for eight Member States, but in the UK it plunged by 7 per cent.

No. 61

The Community's Foreign Ministers have welcomed the application of Vanuatu, formerly the New Hebrides which is now independent, for membership of the Lomé Convention, the trade and aid pact the Community has signed with developing countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. Vanuatu would thus become the 61st member. Procedures for newly-independent Zimbabwe to become the 60th member have now been completed.

For the regions

The first projects from the 'non-quota' section of the Regional Fund have been approved by the Council of Minisetrs. The section was set up to provide money outside the national quotas applied to each Member State to help particularly needy areas. A total of £32 million has been earmarked for five countries —Belgium, France, Ireland, the United Kingdom and Italy. This money will go to Mediterranean districts which may be affected by enlargement of the Community, to regions hit by the crisis in the steel industry, to areas affected by the run-down in shipbuilding, to Irish border regions and to Italy for exploitation of energy resources, including solar energy and the use of windmills.

Keeping the chair

Former Belgian Prime Minister Leo Tindemans has been re-elected chairman of the European People's Party for a further two years. The group brings together Christian Democratic parties from the different Community Member States.

Talks with Comecon

A fresh round of trade talks between officials representing the Community and Comecon, the Soviet bloc trading group, took place on October 15-16 in Geneva. The Community has indicated its willingness to hold another meeting in January and is now awaiting Comecon's response.

Renewing the dialogue

Community and Arab League representatives will be meeting in Luxembourg on November 12-13 for the first time in over a year as part of the Euro-Arab Dialogue. The meeting will be at the level of officials and will help pave the way for a ministerial meeting planned for early next year.

For earthquake victims

An initial £600 000 has been sent by the European Community to aid victims of the recent earthquake in Algeria. The Commission is keeping in close touch with the authorities there so that further aid requirements can be assessed.

Room for economies?

The European Commission is carrying out a study into the civil aviation industry to see if energy economies are possible.

FOCUS

Whales: a disappearing species

The blue whale is the biggest animal in the world. Out of an original population of 200,000 only a few thousand are left. The reason? People hunt whales for their oil, their meat, their bones and skin, and products derived from various organs.

The blue whale being the biggest, it gives the biggest yield and so is particularly sought after. But the same is true for many species of whale, even the smaller ones—some have become extinct in certain areas, and others are, or will be, endangered unless international trade is made subject to strict rules.

The sad thing is that though whaling has a long history and there was a time when we depended on whales for everything from candles to corsets, nowadays there are substitutes for all whale products. Yet they continue to be hunted—hunting methods are notoriously barbarous and not covered by legislation. Those whales which escape the harpoon are increasingly threatened by marine pollution and now by the exploitation of their food supply—shrimp-like plankton called krill—for human consumption.

Certain measures have been taken to protect whales, but without much success. The International Whaling Commission (IWC) has 26 member countries, 12 of them still involved in whaling, 4 of them members of the Community. Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and Ireland are not members, nor are some of the most important whaling nations like Russia and Japan. Neither is the Community as such and the European Commission believes the Convention which set up the IWC should be amended to permit it to join.

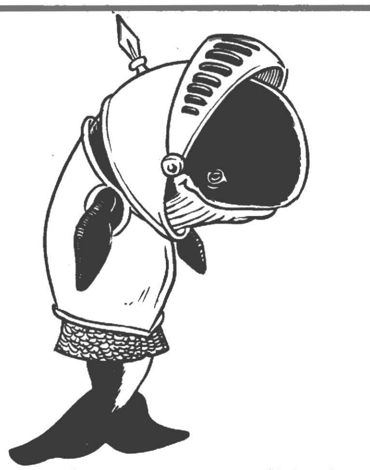
The IWC provides a climate in which negotiations can take place between whalers and conservationists, but protective measures have almost always, in the Commission's opinion, been inadequate or introduced too late when the stocks of endangered species had already fallen to very low levels.

Since July 1980, five species, including the blue whale, have been under IWC protection and may no longer be hunted, but there is no way of effectively enforcing the measures, and stateless 'pirate' ships operate without any reference to them.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora aims to regulate international trade in endangered species. The Council of Ministers has recently authorized the Commission to negotiate Community accession to this Convention, provided that Member States are able to make national legislation more stringent than the requirements of the Convention—at the moment for the Netherlands to join, for example, would be a retrograde step.

Negotiations are at present taking place for a Convention on Antarctic Marine Living Resources: 5 Community Member States ares involved in this, and the Council has authorized the Commission to take part in the negotiations.

There are various other measures the Community could take. Hunting activities take place around Greenland and in Italian waters, where dolphins are found. A broad range of whale products is imported into the Community and processed there—in 1978 provisional statistics show the



Community was responsible for 62% of known imports of whale oil. The Community is also responsible for considerable marine pollution.

A complete international ban on whaling is not possible at the moment because a number of whaling countries are not bound by any conventions. However, Community fishing zones could be closed to all forms of commercial whaling—ships and crews could possibly assist with research instead. There could be a complete halt to imports of whale products as the Commission has proposed. The use of substitutes could be encouraged and firms which are at present dependent on whale products could be helped to convert. The Commission's Second Environmental Action Programme provides a framework for measures the Community could take to combat marine pollution.

The question of protecting whales is not just a commercial and economic one. It is primarily a matter of nature conservation, Whales play an important role in marine life, and their extinction would damage the eco-system and its ability to renew itself.

In the marine environment, baleen whales play a similar role to that of cattle and other grass-eating animals on grasslands—without them, the grasslands would be taken over by rougher forms of vegetation and finally forest. Man's survival is dependent on the proper functioning of the eco-system.

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