

WEEKLY

# industry and society

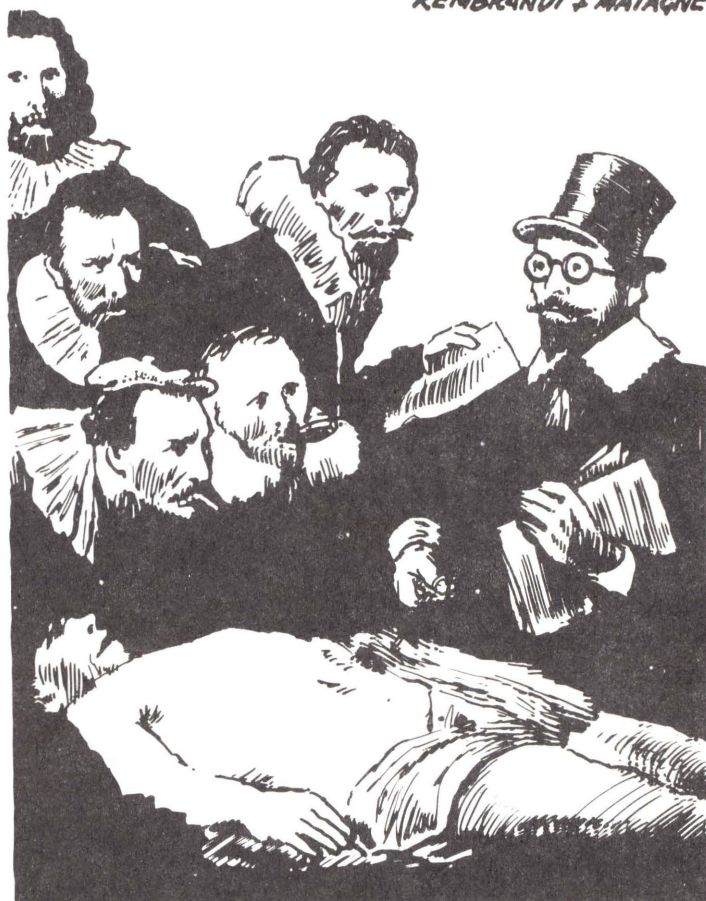
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\*\* As it turned out the recent TRIPARTITE CONFERENCE was a four-sided, not a three-sided, affair. For the first time ever Finance Ministers of the Nine joined Employment Ministers in discussions with the employers' representatives and trade union leaders.

ANNEX 1 gives a summary of what was said at the Conference.

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\*\* Reporters specializing in CONSUMER INFORMATION BY RADIO met in Brussels recently at the invitation of the European Commission's information service.

ANNEX 2 takes a look at the various programmes broadcast for consumers.

\*\* Two years ago the European Parliament was asked to give its opinion on the European Commission's proposal for limiting the LEAD CONTENT IN PETROL. It has now come up with a counter proposal that the lead content of one litre of petrol be reduced to 0.40 grams by 1 January 1977.

ANNEX 3 outlines the Commission's proposal and Parliament's alternative suggestion.

\*\* THE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX stood as follows at the end of September 1975:

Belgium	152.3
Denmark	159.4
France	155.1
Germany	135.9
Italy	173.9
Luxembourg	144.0
Netherlands	155.1
United Kingdom	192.2

In Ireland the index is calculated every three months and the last available figures are for August when the index stood at 187.1.

The percentage change between September 1974 and September 1975 in the various countries is shown below in descending order:

- + 26.6% in the United Kingdom
- + 18.9% (August) in Ireland
- + 13.0% in Italy
- + 10.9% in Luxembourg
- + 10.8% in Belgium
- + 10.7% in France
- + 10.2% in the Netherlands
- + 8.7% in Denmark
- + 6.1% in Germany

\*\* The European Medium-Range WEATHER FORECASTING Centre has just begun operations in Bracknell, near London. The Centre, born of scientific and technical cooperation between the Community and other European countries, will provide advanced training for research workers, work out mathematical models for medium-range weather forecasts (four to ten days), compile the information needed to produce these forecasts and relay them to the meteorological services of the twelve countries represented. The Centre, which has a computer that can handle 50 million simple operations a second, is a model of international scientific and technical cooperation.

\*\* The European Commission has proposed that WHOLE MILK should contain a minimum of 3.5% fat. This harmonization should make trade in drinking milk easier within the Community and improve supplies to deficit areas like Italy. The Commission's proposal makes a distinction between two types of whole milk. "Standardized" whole milk has a fat content of at least 3.5% and is therefore closer to existing national requirements; "non-standardized" whole milk is milk which is allowed to retain its full natural fat content and therefore corresponds to consumer preferences in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Production and consumption figures for milk (whole milk, skimmed milk, cream, etc.) in the Community in 1973 are given below:

	Production (million metric tons)	Consumption (in kilos per head per year)
United Kingdom	8.1	145
Ireland	0.6	212
Germany	5.6	90
Belgium	0.9	96
Denmark	0.6	123
France	4.6	88
Italy	4.1	75
Luxembourg	0.04	103
Netherlands	1.9	141

\*\* Organizations and associations working to protect the ENVIRONMENT, defend the CONSUMER and the like are tending more and more to use audio-visual material, notably SLIDES, to spark off discussion at their meetings. The information service of the European Commission is willing to help by providing audio-visual display sequences on Community activities in their particular field. Anyone interested should contact the Directorate-General for Information, Editor of "Industry and Society", Commission of the European Communities, Rue de la Loi 200, 1049 Brussels, Belgium.

\*\* The next meeting of the CONSUMERS' CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE is to be held in Brussels on 15 December 1975 and the Committee's Bureau met in Brussels recently to prepare the way for it. It resumed examination of the agricultural dossier and discussed action to be taken on various Commission proposals, notably the proposal on product liability.

\*\* A scientific seminar on problems associated with the growing use of consumer goods containing RADIOACTIVE SUBSTANCES was recently organized by the European Commission in Luxembourg. Experts on radiation protection, health and nuclear law attending the seminar felt that existing Community standards were effective and provided adequate protection. The extent of the health and radiation protection problems posed by the increasing use of irradiated products means that national authorities and the public must be kept fully informed. Surveys and studies must be organized and developed to determine the exact

quantity and nature of the radionuclides absorbed. Research must cover manufacture, marketing, storage, dumping and importation. It has been stressed again and again that the effects of radioactive substances in consumer goods on human health are similar to, if not worse than, irradiation from radioactive waste and nuclear power stations.

- \*\* Methods of MEASURING LIQUIDS other than water differ widely in the Community which is why the European Commission recently proposed that the laws of Member States in this field be harmonized. The text which has been sent to the Council specifies levels of accuracy and describes the tests to be carried out on these measuring systems which play an important economic role in the Community. They may be fitted to road tankers or pipelines, or they may be fixtures like petrol pumps. They are used to measure everything from light fuel oil, heating oil and petrol to commodities like milk and wine which are collected and delivered by tanker.
  
- \*\* The EUROPEAN PATENT CONVENTION is to be signed on 15 December 1975 at the end of the final conference which opened in Luxembourg on 17 November. The Convention will bring in a single patent law to ensure that European Patents will be subject to the same rules in all Member States. The Luxembourg Conference is being attended by representatives of the nine Member States and of the Commission. The World Intellectual Property Organization, the Council of Europe, the Secretariat-General of the European Free Trade Association, the International Patent Institute and fourteen private international organizations have been invited to attend as observers to ensure that the European Patent is recognized throughout the world.
  
- \*\* A Community directive on FOOD LABELLING is being drafted by the European Commission. It should be forwarded to the Community's Council of Ministers sometime in 1976 when the Consumers' Consultative Committee has given its opinion.
  
- \*\* The first meeting of the Administrative Board of the EUROPEAN FOUNDATION FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS (see IRT No 214) should be held in Dublin in December. One of its first tasks will be to draw up a short list for the posts of Director and Assistant Director of the Foundation, the final choice of candidates resting with the European Commission. All applications for the posts received before that date will be put to the meeting by the Commission's representatives on the Board.
  
- \*\* Europe's gourmets will welcome moves now afoot to guarantee a standard quality of MAYONNAISE and other emulsified sauces. The European Commission recently sent a draft directive to the Council of Ministers on the composition and standard ingredients of the commoner sauces in Member States - mayonnaise, aioli, bearnaise, tartare, mustard sauce, and so on. One of the advantages of the proposal is that the Commission has chosen the optional solution, in other words, the range of sauces available to Community consumers is to be widened without interfering with national favourites.

\*\* The latest figures for registered UNEMPLOYMENT in the Member States are given below:

	Month	1974	1975	Variations 1974/75
Belgium	October	116 346 <sub>3</sub> (4.5%) <sup>3</sup>	208 876 <sub>3</sub> (7.9%) <sup>3</sup>	+ 92 530 (+ 79.5%)
Denmark	September	57 400 <sub>2</sub> (2.8%) <sup>2</sup>	116 800 <sub>2</sub> (5.7%) <sup>2</sup>	+ 59 400 (+ 103.5%)
Germany	October	672 312 <sub>2</sub> (3.0%) <sup>2</sup>	1 061 128 <sub>2</sub> (4.6%) <sup>2</sup>	+ 388 816 (+ 57.8%)
France	September	534 300 <sub>2</sub> (3.2%) <sup>2</sup>	945 800 <sub>2</sub> (5.6%) <sup>2</sup>	+ 411 500 (+ 77.0%)
Ireland	October	69 524 <sub>1</sub> (6.2%) <sup>1</sup>	101 116 <sub>1</sub> (9.0%) <sup>1</sup>	+ 31 592 (+ 45.4%)
Italy	August	937 700 <sub>1</sub> (4.8%) <sup>1</sup>	1 055 200 <sub>1</sub> (5.4%) <sup>1</sup>	+ 117 500 (+ 12.5%)
Luxembourg	September	79 <sub>2</sub> (0.1%) <sup>2</sup>	292 <sub>2</sub> (0.2%) <sup>2</sup>	+ 213
Netherlands	October	139 619 <sub>2</sub> (3.4%) <sup>2</sup>	201 498 <sub>2</sub> (4.9%) <sup>2</sup>	+ 61 879 (+ 44.3%)
Great Britain	} UK October	612 535 <sub>2</sub> (2.7%) <sup>2</sup>	1 114 211 <sub>2</sub> (4.9%) <sup>2</sup>	+ 501 676 (+ 81.9%)
Northern Ireland				
	October	30 880 <sub>2</sub> (5.9%) <sup>2</sup>	51 186 <sub>2</sub> (9.8%) <sup>2</sup>	+ 20 306 (+ 65.8%)

<sup>1</sup>% calculated on the basis of labour force.  
<sup>2</sup>% calculated on the basis of total number of wage-earners.  
<sup>3</sup>% calculated on the basis of persons registered for unemployment insurance.

\*\* The COUNCIL OF EUROPEAN MUNICIPALITIES has launched an appeal to Governments and national parliaments of the nine Member States urging the immediate adoption, in application of Article 138 of the Treaty of Rome, of legislation on direct elections to the European Parliament. The Council of European Municipalities notes that seven of the nine Governments are already in agreement and is convinced that the British and Danish Governments will prove their attachment to the European Community by taking steps to implement this fundamental principle of the Treaty of Rome.

A FOUR-SIDED TRIPARTITE CONFERENCE

Five million unemployed, a 20% drop in exports, and a 12% cutback in industrial production: the gloomy picture painted by Mr Mario Toros, Italy's Employment Minister, is of the most serious economic crisis the European Community has ever had to face. It is this situation which led to the organization, for the first time in the Community's history, of a Tripartite Conference which was attended by Finance Ministers, Employment Ministers, thirty employers' representatives and another thirty trade union leaders, in Brussels on 18 November. Mr Ortoli, President of the Commission, and Mr Haferkamp and Mr Hillery, Vice-Presidents, were also there.

Mr Haferkamp reminded the Conference of the Commission's views (see I&S No 38/75) and the need for solidarity in the face of crisis. He urged those present to be frank in their assessment of the situation and to put forward their ideas for remedying it.

Mr Heinz Vetter, representing 37 million members of the 30 trade union organizations forming the European Trade Union Confederation immediately took the floor to propose measures to ensure coordination of policies to reflate the economy, safeguard employment, protect incomes and guard against a similar crisis. The ETUC's chief concern was unemployment: this could only be reduced by the adoption of a planned and coordinated expansionary policy which placed the emphasis on the public sector. The protection of workers' incomes and purchasing power called for a tax policy which made allowance for the lower-income groups and a strict European price monitoring system. To beat the multinationals, Mr Vetter urged the adoption of Community rules defining the rights and obligations of these companies and the right of workers to representation within these companies.

Mr Pierre Huvelin, Chairman of the Union of the Industries of the European Community - the "bosses' boss" as it were - then urged that wage increases should not be allowed to eat away profits. Without profits firms would be unable to invest and long-term growth depended on investment. Employers would prefer a thorough overhaul of the economy to stop-gap measures like price controls, protectionism or shorter working hours. They wanted greater flexibility on the labour market, an investment policy, tax reliefs and reduced social costs. They would also like to see a better allocation of public money; less should be spent on administration and more on productive investment.

Mr Len Murray, for the British trade unions, began by urging that multinational companies be made to comply with the economic policies of the countries in which they were established, then went on to outline the advantages of selective, short-term protectionist measures. There was a marked lack of support for his arguments: Ministers, employers and trade unionists alike were almost unanimous in rejecting protectionism. Mr Davies, representing the British Treasury, warned the Conference however that his Government could well be forced to resort to protectionism if vital industries were threatened by dumping or by severe competition.

Contributions to the discussion revealed that combating inflation and safeguarding jobs were regarded as the main priorities. The choice of solutions proved more difficult however. The trade unions would not hear of a wage freeze; the employers would not hear of a price freeze. The trade unions pinned their hopes on public expenditure; the employers viewed this with some caution. Differences of opinion between the multinationals and the trade unions provoked a fiery exchange between Mr Murray and Mr Agnelli. But this is all part of the game - a tripartite conference is not a Sunday school outing.

After nine hours of debate, Mr Colombo, Italy's Treasury Minister, stressed in his summing-up that the real value of the Conference lay in the readiness of all concerned to take part in a constructive dialogue. There was unanimous agreement that the aim must be to promote economic recovery without provoking further inflation. There was general agreement too on the need for an active employment policy geared to the industrial reorganization already under way and the particular problems of sections of the population badly hit by the recession (young people, women, the handicapped and migrant workers).

Mr Colombo invited the Commission to carry its analysis of the economic and social situation in the Community a stage further in the light of the opinions expressed at the Conference. This should be done in cooperation with both sides of industry. Discussions could take place at a number of levels within the Community - the Economic Policy Committee, the Standing Committee on Employment (which would be holding its next meeting on 4 December) and the various joint committees which had been set up a year ago at the request of the trade unions. Of these, only the Joint Committee on Textiles has already met at Community level. The trade unions asked that joint committees be set up for the car industry, the aircraft industry, the glass-making industry and the building industry.

Mr Colombo could see no objection to the trade unions' suggestion that a further Tripartite Conference be held in a few months' time. It seems that trade union leaders are well aware of the potential value of direct discussions with the Finance Ministers of the nine Member States in the development of a social policy for the Community.

The STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT was set up in December 1970 to ensure continuous dialogue, cooperation and consultation between the Community's Council of Ministers (or representatives of the Nine Member Governments), the European Commission and both sides of industry, so as to facilitate coordination of national employment policies by bringing them into line with Community objectives. Each of the groups involved can propose subjects for discussion within the Committee's terms of reference. Employers and workers each have eighteen representatives on the Committee. The Committee is chaired and convened by the representative of the Member State in the chair at the Council.



A CONSUMER FOREWARNED IS A CONSUMER FOREARMED

Radio is devoting more and more time to consumer information programmes. Producers from various radio stations met recently at the invitation of the information service of the European Commission to explain how consumer problems are treated by the different national radio networks. No producers from the Netherlands or Luxembourg were able to attend the meeting.

Germany

Bavarian Radio (Bayern I) broadcasts the following consumer programmes: "Das Musik Journal" (News and Music) which is beamed eight times a day Monday to Friday (between 5.30 and 8.00) and five times on Saturday (between 7.05 and 7.45) for two to three minutes, 80% of the time being devoted to consumer problems; "Markt und Meinung" (Market and Opinion) broadcast Monday to Friday from 13.20 to 13.25 which is an information bulletin, 50% of the material being of interest to consumers; "Auf Mark und Pfenning" (Pennies and Pounds) which gives advice on savings every Saturday from 10.30 to 10.35; and "Das Notizbuch" (Notebook) a magazine programme broadcast daily between 10.00 and 11.00 which answers direct questions from listeners once a month. Bavarian Radio also broadcasts a regular survey of prices in various Bavarian towns with the assistance of the Munich Consumers' Association and "Informationen für die Ältere Generationen" (Information for Senior Citizens) broadcast every weekday afternoon between 13.00 and 16.30 giving practical advice for pensioners.

Berlin Radio (RIAS) broadcasts a twice-monthly 45-minute programme, answering listeners' letters and phone-in questions in alternate programmes.

Norddeutsches Rundfunk broadcasts short 3- to 5-minute information bulletins specially prepared for consumers by its economic staff in its morning magazine programme which comes on the air at 7.00. "Kurier am Morgen" (Morning Mail) is on from Monday to Friday and on Saturday there is "Mit NDR 2 ins Wochenende" (Weekend with NDR 2). Every Friday NDR 2 broadcasts "Einkaufstips zum Wochenende" (Shopping tips for the weekend) from 9.35 to 9.40 with consumer advice on good buys. An economic programme, "Kontakte", broadcast on NDR 1 from 17.05 to 17.30 sometimes has items of interest to consumers, with reports on current affairs (congresses, meetings, legislation ...) and on consumer problems (food quality, pros and cons of recommended prices ...).

Belgium

BRT (the Dutch-language station) broadcasts short 2- to 3-minute information bulletins on subjects of interest to consumers in a daily programme on the air from 8.15 to 11.00. More general surveys are broadcast on Thursday afternoons.

RTB (the French-language station) broadcasts a 5-minute bulletin on topics of interest to consumers every morning at 7.45. The Liège studio goes on the air every morning from 9.00 to 11.00 to give advice which is largely of interest to housewives. The Brussels studio takes 15 minutes several times a week from 19.30 onwards to discuss specialist subjects (law, gardening, housing, health ...) in answer to listeners' letters.

#### Denmark

The Danish Radio has replaced its daily 2-minute broadcast by a twice-monthly 24-minute programme entitled "F for Forbrug" (C for Consumer) on Wednesdays at 15.00. It is planning a phone-in programme which will deal with questions of interest to consumers.

#### France

Since January 1974 France-Inter - now Radio-France - has been broadcasting a daily 4-minute bulletin at 6.50 on subjects of interest to consumers (water quality, food quality, rents and rental charges, misleading advertising, price display and price fixing, abuse of colouring agents, information on drugs ...). A weekly 60-minute phone-in programme answers questions from female listeners. On Saturdays a 2-hour programme "Questions pour un samedi" (Questions for Saturday) answers listeners questions and gives special reports. It is often devoted to consumer topics.

#### Italy

RAI broadcasts a 20-minute programme on Tuesdays and Thursdays called "Before you buy" devoted to topical consumer problems (colza oil, for example) and product testing. However, since brand names cannot be mentioned over the air, information is not as detailed as it might be. The programme also discusses leisure problems.

#### Ireland

A one-hour programme for housewives is broadcast every morning at 10.00. This programme acts as an "ombudsman" and receives 1 000-2 000 letters a week.

#### United Kingdom

The BBC has been broadcasting consumer programmes for 35 years. Nowadays they are broadcast by two of the four national stations and by all 20 regional stations.

Radio 2 broadcasts a 2 1/2-hour "music-and-chat" programme Monday to Friday from 11.30-14.00, about 30 minutes being devoted to consumer information. Listeners' questions are answered in simple terms by specialists, members of Parliament are interviewed about new legislation, and experts explain how these laws will affect the man-in-the-street.

Radio 4 broadcasts a lunchtime programme (25 minutes daily from Monday to Friday and 40 minutes on Sunday) which examines these problems in greater detail. It explains what official recourse is open to the consumer, but also possible pitfalls like, for example, difficulties in prosecuting someone who is insolvent. Journalists talk round the subject, explain where new legislation is needed and draw attention to points which would not be covered.

The programme also includes a national weekly survey on household purchases carried out by a research team with the aid of a computer to show price trends for food and other consumer goods. Thus it is possible over a period of months to show, for instance, how the price of copper is affecting the price of refrigerators and cookers. Each Monday the programme looks at the labour market, training courses, grants to encourage geographical mobility or vocational retraining, and so forth, in collaboration with the appropriate national authorities. Brand names are given over the air and comparative tests are carried out.

Radio 4 also has an "exposure" programme which goes on the air every Friday from 10.05 to 10.30 on various scandals and how consumers have been swindled. The names of private firms and of public authorities which consumers have found wanting are given.

The BBC also broadcasts phone-in programmes in which specialists answer listeners' questions.

LEAD CONTENT IN PETROL: A STRATEGIC WITHDRAWAL?

Two years ago the European Parliament was asked to give its opinion on a draft Community directive limiting the lead content in petrol. It was now suggested that the lead content per litre of petrol be reduced to 0.40 grams by 1 January 1977.

Under the Commission proposal (see I&S No 38/74) lead content would be limited to 0.40 g/l for all grades of petrol from 1 January 1976 (Stage 1), and to 0.15 g/l for regular and 0.40 g/l for premium from 1 January 1978 (Stage 2).

In addition to delaying Stage 1 by one year, Parliament proposes that Stage 2 be abandoned as it feels that a further directive would be needed to introduce a stricter limit. Lastly, it suggests a system which would leave Member States free to impose stricter limits than those provided for in the Community directive.

What Parliament has tried to do in fact is suggest compromises which will be acceptable all round. Its proposal is more generous than the Commission's and provides for one limit only - 0.40 g/l. Experiments carried out in Germany show that this limit would not interfere with vehicle performance, nor would it involve additional costs to the consumer or manufacturer. However, Parliament feels that this limit should not be introduced before 1 January 1977.

Parliament also feels that it is too early to think about Stage 2 which the Commission planned to introduce on 1 January 1978. It asks the Commission to put forward another proposal between now and 1 January 1979 "in the light of experience and scientific progress".

Parliament also asks the Commission to submit proposals for a global solution to the problem of lead content in petrol by 1 January 1981 at the latest.

In proposing these amendments, Parliament is not only trying to make the proposal acceptable to those who find it rather harsh, but also to Germany which plans to reduce the lead content in petrol to 0.15 g/l on 1 January 1976. Under Parliament's proposal Member States could impose stricter limits than those provided for in the Community directive where traffic density or climatic conditions make the public particularly vulnerable. This must not however be allowed to affect market conditions. It should be recalled in this connection that the Commission recently received a complaint from a number of oil companies maintaining that the German Government had violated Article 30 of the Treaty of Rome which prohibits "quantitative restrictions on imports and all measures having equivalent effect" between Member States. The companies feel that Germany's "anti-lead" law could have such a serious effect on market conditions that it would be in direct opposition to common market principles.

Lead is by no means the only pollutant in petrol. Parliament therefore asks the Commission to continue its work and submit an early proposal for a directive to limit the nitrogen compound emitted in exhaust gases. Parliament also asks the Commission to report in due

course on the effect the directive is having on the development of a system for reducing emissions other than lead in exhaust gases, on the development of techniques to produce less pollutant petrol and on the concentration of different pollutants in the atmosphere in towns.

Lastly Parliament feels that the Commission should study the use of improved filter systems to see whether these could help to eliminate lead in exhaust gases.