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**
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION is also, and often above all,
A MATTER OF EUROPEAN CONCERN. The very fact that the
Common Market exists and that progress has been made
towards European integration means that many environmental
problems can only be solved at European level, as member
countries of the Community realize.

This is illustrated in ANNEX 1.

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The growing ascendancy of MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS
over the economic, social and political life of the
countries in which they operate, is raising important
issues, particularly in the areas of employment,
competition, tax evasion, disturbing capital movements,
and the independence of developing countries. Last
November the European Commission forwarded to the Council

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Further information is available from the Commission's press and information offices in the countries listed on the inside cover.

The information published in this bulletin covers the European Communities' activities in the fields of industrial development, protection of the environment and consumer welfare. It is therefore not limited to recording Commission decisions or opinions.

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of Ministers a communication on the problems raised by the growth of these enterprises (see IRT No 210). It proposed the implementation at European level of a number of measures aimed, not at hindering their development (since their economic and social advantages are recognized), but at guarding the Community against their harmful effects by drawing up an appropriate body of law. The industrial section of the Community's Economic and Social Committee has just pronounced in favour of the general principles of this communication, but has made some reservations. It will give its final opinion at its next plenary session.

ANNEX 2 contains a short summary of the report drawn up by the Economic and Social Committee's specialist section.

** We have asked various organizations in the Community responsible for consumer protection matters to supply us periodically with details of the latest developments on subjects of direct interest to CONSUMERS. It should be understood that these articles are the sole responsibility of their authors.

ANNEX 3 is an article sent to us by the National Consumer's Advisory Council of Ireland.

** Figures showing TRENDS IN UNEMPLOYMENT for the Nine countries of the European Community between 1961 and 1972 have just been published by the Statistical Office of the European Communities in a brochure entitled "Social Statistics, Population and Employment" (2/1973 - On sale at the Statistical Office of the European Communities, PO Box 1907, Centre Louvigny, Luxembourg I).

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The following table shows the numbers of unemployed (annual averages in units of 1 000) for the Nine countries of the Community:

	1961	1971	1972
Belgium	89	75	92
Denmark	0	27	23
France	203	456	509
Germany	181	185	245
Ireland	56	65	71
Italy	710	609	697
Luxembourg	0	0	0
Netherlands	36	69	115
United Kingdom	287	724	806

** Although THE EFFECTS OF EMISSIONS FROM ENGINES OF LARGE CAPACITY AIRCRAFT on health and the ecology have not been included as such in the Community's environmental protection programme, the European Commission is taking an interest in current studies in this field and has reserved the right to put forward appropriate proposals to the Council of Ministers of the Community, should the results of these studies require such action.

** About sixty persons, including representatives of government services and private organizations, research workers and social workers will be attending a seminar on "ACTION AGAINST POVERTY".

This seminar has been organized by the European Commission and will be held in Brussels from June 24 to 27. The results of the discussions will help the Commission, in accordance with the aims of the Social Action Programme (see I&S No 1/74), to implement in cooperation with the Member States specific measures to combat poverty by drawing up pilot schemes for the benefit of some of the poorer sections of the population (particularly elderly unemployable persons and their families, the socially maladjusted, or large families with exceptionally low incomes, etc.).

** As a result of the energy crisis agricultural production costs have risen considerably - by 20% in the glasshouse industry sector, 10% in the fishing sector, etc. The Commission has just forwarded a note to the Council of Ministers on the EFFECT OF THE ENERGY CRISIS ON SOME AGRICULTURAL SECTORS. Most Member States have made grants to agriculture to compensate for increases in production costs due to the energy crisis. The European Commission lays great stress on the risks involved, in such uncoordinated policies of outbidding, and creating new distortions between farmers in Member States. It believes that national aid should only be granted for a very limited period and that total aid should not amount to more than half the increase in the price of fuel and motor spirit. The Commission also proposes that all the work done at national level be systematically collated, so that current research into the effective use of energy in the agricultural sector can be coordinated and intensified if necessary. In conclusion, the Commission refers to the survey it has undertaken in respect

of oil companies, in order to ensure that they are adhering to Community rules of competition. Since part of the difference in the conditions obtaining in Member States as regards the energy market can be traced to differences in excise duties, the European Commission plans in the near future to put forward a proposal for harmonizing duties on the mineral oils used in agriculture.

** In a resolution which it has just adopted the European Parliament invites the Commission to propose measures for the DESULPHURIZATION OF ALL FUELS (or their residual gases) intended for use by producers or consumers. Parliament also hopes that the Commission will put forward proposals for directives limiting the authority of Member States to authorize the construction of new electric power stations and oil refineries, unless these comply with the standards for effective and adequate fuel desulphurization. The European Commission, it may be remembered, has already proposed that the Council of Ministers adopt a directive aimed at reducing the sulphur content of gas oil (see I&S No 7/74).

** In reply to a Written Question by a Member of the European Parliament the Commission states that apart from the need to allocate additional frequencies, there is no major technical obstacle to the simultaneous use of the PAL AND SECAM COLOUR TELEVISION SYSTEMS. Simultaneous use of the systems could, however, prove more costly in certain instances.

** The Commission has just proposed that the Council of Ministers adopt a directive permitting the harmonization of legislation in Member States on TARIFFS OF FEES PAID TO RECOGNIZED ORGANISATIONS FOR CHECKING THAT GAS METERS COMPLY WITH THE RELEVANT STANDARDS. In this directive the Commission proposes that, to begin with, a minimum tariff should be applied throughout the European Community. The aim would be to reduce distortions in competition between Member States.

** By the end of the year, and in accordance with the aims and timetable of the OFFICIAL ACTION PROGRAMME adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Community in December 1973, the European Commission expects to forward to the Council of Ministers a number of proposals on:

the employment of women;

a Community programme to benefit migrant workers;

pilot projects for the fight against poverty;

job security in industry and work planning.

** The very appreciable increase in oil prospecting and drilling activities on the seabed, which is needed to make up the depletion of known hydrocarbon and other raw material reserves, will also mean a considerable increase in pollution hazards, due to either accidents, or simply the operations themselves. The Commission hopes therefore, that, the Community will put forward, particularly within the framework of the Third

Conference on the Law of the Sea (see I&S No 13/74), a body of general principles which could later be incorporated into standard conventions, drawn up at both regional and world level, to combat POLLUTION OF THE SEAS RESULTING FROM THE EXPLOITATION AND UNDERWATER EXPLORATION OF THE SEABED. The Commission will present a draft proposal for a convention of this type to the Council as soon as possible. The Commission also feels that organizing regional conferences on such issues would help to rectify an important omission as regards the law of the sea, and prevent divergent multilateral agreements being drawn up, which would be prejudicial both to the environment and to European independence in terms of energy.

** The European Commission has just published a document on "Methods of PERSONAL PROTECTION IN THE STEEL INDUSTRY". This document is available from the Directorate-General for Social Affairs of the European Commission, Centre Louvigny, Avenue Monterey, Luxembourg.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION - A MATTER OF EUROPEAN CONCERN

Once again, as in previous years, millions of Europeans are preparing to spend their holidays on beaches in Southern Europe. Having arrived in this tourist paradise, it will not be long before the holiday-maker comes face to face with the pollution nuisance, which is particularly evident in the summer holiday period - traces of oil, empty bottles bobbing on the water, water not always as clean as the holiday brochures would lead one to suppose, etc. As a result, conversation between holiday-makers more and more frequently tends to centre on criticism (more or less outspoken) of the Government of the country in which they happen to be, or of the local council of the town where they have chosen to spend their holidays, and so on. This is unlikely to go beyond the purely local stage. Yet it would often be fairer to accuse the neighbouring country or countries, which have allowed waste from their cities and industries to reach stretches of coast frequented by tourists. "I blame it on the Common Market" is a comment that any holiday-maker might well make to his beach acquaintances.

This is a case where the facts must be faced. Pollution in general totally disregards frontiers. However strenuously any one country tries to protect its environment, most of the steps it takes can only be of limited value if its neighbours continue to pollute the atmosphere, the rivers or the coast. A stream into which a factory carelessly discharges its pollutant waste can carry this hundreds of miles down a river-system into other countries which, through the malpractice of a foreign factory,

become innocent victims of pollution. This is a phenomenon which recurs along the whole European coast-line, where ocean currents carry waste from one beach to another and from one country to another for hundreds of miles. Smoke and dust are also borne on the wind, over national frontiers.

The nine countries of the European Communities have decided to combine their efforts to improve their economy, together with the standard of living of their inhabitants, but also to protect their environment, in other words to improve the quality of life for all Europeans. For many reasons, therefore, environmental protection is a matter of European concern. To begin with, as we have shown, no single country can take effective anti-pollution measures, because pollution knows no frontiers.

Then again, since all economic activity produces pollution, the point is not to bring it to a halt, but to determine the harmful effects and the permissible levels beyond which we cannot go, if we are not to jeopardize human health and the natural environment. In order to determine these levels, which for the most part are still unknown quantities, lengthy and expensive research will have to be undertaken, and it is in the European laboratories' interests to conduct this jointly, in order to avoid duplication of effort and a waste of time which could be dangerous. Undertaken jointly, this work would make it possible for common standards to be established which could then be imposed on all European producers. And the adoption of such common standards is essential to the smooth functioning of the Common Market. To facilitate the free movement of goods between the nine countries of the Community, goods have to meet certain manufacturing criteria - a list of

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substances permitted in foodstuffs - the composition of washing powders - safety devices for motor vehicles, etc. Without such common standards production costs for goods would differ in each country, and competition between European manufacturers would be distorted, which runs counter to the smooth functioning of the Common Market.

For all these reasons environmental protection must be a matter of European concern. The European Community has adopted a programme of joint action for environmental protection covering the nine countries of the Community (see IRT No 185). The departments of the European Commission have already drawn up a number of specific proposals whose aim is to establish joint regulations for protecting the environment - the "polluter pays" principle (see I&S No 10/74), the quality of surface water (see I&S No 3/74), reduction of the sulphur content of gas oil (see I&S No 7/74), disposal of waste oils (see I&S No 12/74), etc. Further proposals are in course of preparation - the quality of bathing water, a waste disposal system, the siting of nuclear plants, etc. In view of the new energy situation, the European Commission has also asked the Council of Ministers of the Community to examine the need for environmental protection, whilst maintaining a sufficient level of energy production (see I&S Nos 14/74 and 18/74).

Protecting the European environment, improving it and finally creating a Europe where living is better is a long and exacting task, and there is no doubt that success will depend on the effort made by all Europeans.

MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY -
OPINION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

The growing ascendancy of multinational corporations over the economic, social and political life of the countries in which they operate is raising important issues, particularly in the areas of employment, competition, tax evasion, disturbing capital movements, and the independence of developing countries. Last November the European Commission forwarded to the Council of Ministers a communication on the problems raised by the growth of these enterprises (see IRT No 210). It proposed the implementation at European level of a number of measures aimed not at hindering their development (since their economic and social advantages are recognized), but at guarding the Community against their harmful effects by drawing up an appropriate body of law. The industrial section of the Community's Economic and Social Committee has just pronounced in favour of the general principles of this communication but has made some reservations. It will give its final opinion at its next plenary session. The industrial section of the ESC has already drawn up a report on the proposals put forward by the European Commission.

It expresses regret at the fact that too many European industrial firms have retained their national outlook and have been slow to adapt themselves both in size and location to the new European scale of operations. The ESC stresses that multinational companies can help both to improve living conditions throughout the world and to break down thought patterns based on national egoism. It admits however, that in the present context of disparities between States, as regards events in the economic and monetary fields, and

also economic, social and tax laws and regulations, the development of the multinationals raises a number of issues. What is lacking is a body of international regulations, and an international authority responsible for implementing them. The ESC therefore welcomes the efforts of the European Commission to help solve these problems, through its suggestions and proposals and, in principle, approves of the attempt to incorporate within a consistent, overall policy, the various measures currently being worked out.

Nevertheless the ESC notes that this attempt at unification is encountering a number of difficulties which are partly due to the complex nature of a phenomenon which has world-wide ramifications, and partly to the differing, and often contradictory opinions, as to what policy should be followed to promote economic development. The ESC believes that even the concept itself, of a multinational company, is a subject for discussion, since it has never been given clear definition.

Firms which originated in Europe and whose activities do not go beyond the territory of the Community, although this means the territory of several Member States, are only multinational insofar as economic, monetary and political union has not yet been realized. The ESC's special section believes that care should be taken to ensure that community regulations do not in practice favour European firms as against multinational firms whose registered office is outside the territory of Member States. To avoid any risk of discrimination the ESC considers that action taken by the Community should aim, not at multinational companies as such, but at the dubious or unjust practices of companies or persons that tend to bend the regulations or evade their tax obligations or, by

abusing their economic power, would sacrifice the general interest, whether of workers or consumers, to their own.

It is in this sense that the ESC approves of the measures proposed by the European Commission, while considering that, given the Commission's limited means of action these will not suffice to solve the problems raised, which in actual fact, are world wide. Any action which may be taken at Community level therefore is of relatively limited value. It is important therefore to cast the net wider, by negotiating with non-member countries, and by cooperating with appropriate international institutions such as the OECD and the Specialized Agencies of the UN.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CONSUMER PROTECTION IN IRELAND

We have asked various organizations in the Community responsible for consumer protection matters to supply us periodically with details of the latest developments on subjects of direct interest to consumers. It should be understood that these articles are the sole responsibility of their authors. The following article was sent to us by the National Consumer's Advisory Council of Ireland.

A new Food Bill has been introduced by the government. It will provide the government with the power to bring Irish food regulations into line with Codex Alimentarius and other regulations, particularly those of EEC.

Prices continue to cause very serious concern to consumers. Inflation continues at an annual rate of 14% and consumers have called on government for stricter controls to curb inflation. Public attention is also beginning to focus with greater intensity on the quality of products now being offered for sale in Ireland.

A recent meeting between the Irish Footwear Federation and representatives of the Consumers' Association of Ireland and the Irish Housewives' Association highlighted the many consumer problems which have lain dormant for a number of years in this area. Manufacturers and distributors have decided to correct the situation by proposing better training for assistants, distributing more booklets to advise consumers on how to buy shoes suited to the purpose and purse of the consumer, and involving consumers'

associations and their representatives to a greater extent in the trading techniques of this particular industry. Already, independent commentators have reported improvements in attitudes by staff to consumers.

The National Consumer Advisory Council continues its deliberations on the necessary improvements to the legal framework in order to afford the Irish consumer protection from unfair and deceptive trading practices. The Council hopes to be able to submit its conclusions to the Minister for Industry and Commerce in the very near future. Finances permitting, the Consumer Council will appoint a full-time executive. Both consumer and trading interests are convinced that such executive assistance is absolutely essential if the Council is to perform an effective function in protecting the Irish Consumer.

The Consumers' Association recently announced that it is conducting a full scale investigation into packaging practices in Ireland. Details of descriptions, usefulness for purpose and end use as well as re-cycling potential are the criteria being applied by the Association in its investigation.

In addition, the Minister for Industry and Commerce is arranging for two public enquiries into coal and meat prices. A further enquiry into fertilizer prices has also been promised by the Minister.