

WEEKLY

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** In future nuclear power stations will supply an increasing proportion of the Community's thermal electricity (22% in 1975, 26% in 1985 and nearly 80% in 2000). This development of NUCLEAR ENERGY raises SAFETY PROBLEMS which are further amplified by the increased unit capacity of power stations and by the tendency to erect several units on the same site. The European Community is paying close attention to these problems.

Details of action undertaken by the Community in this field are annexed.

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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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** The Commission has just decided to initiate an enquiry into the ACTIVITIES OF THE IBM COMPANY IN EUROPE in order to ensure that its dominant position in the Community is not contrary to the Community's competition rules. The Commission has also PROHIBITED certain agreements between European firms which proved, upon examination, to contravene the Community's provisions on competition. The decisions are as follows:

The Commission has prohibited the Belgian Grouping of Wallpaper Manufacturers and has imposed fines on its four members. The four firms had agreed on very detailed control of the wallpaper market (sale prices and resale price maintenance, terms of sale, discounts, clearance sales, etc.). One effect of this agreement was a price increase which was to the disadvantage of Belgian consumers.

The Commission has banned a Dutch fruit-marketing agreement, particularly in respect of citrus fruit. The agreement enabled the leading Dutch fruit importers to impose restrictions as to supply sources on their competitors, which is contrary to the Community's principle of free competition.

The Commission has banned an agreement partitioning the Benelux egg liqueur (Advocaat) market. A Dutch and a Belgian company had divided the Benelux market for this product between them and each took advantage of its rights over the trade mark in its own area to prevent marketing of the liqueur produced in the other, which is contrary to the aims of the Community Treaty.

Finally, as a result of proceedings initiated by the Commission, there has been an improvement in the situation with regard to the after-sales service for "Constructa" appliances which will be to the advantage of consumers. From now on, irrespective of the country in which the appliances were purchased or the identity of the seller, Belgian and Luxembourg consumers will be able to benefit from Siemens after-sales service for their "Constructa" appliances.

** CONSUMER PRICES in the Community generally continued to rise very fast in May and a significant slowdown is hardly to be expected in the coming months. In any case, the movement of wholesale and producer prices is still distinctly upwards. Food prices, however, could become steadier as agricultural producer prices have been tending downwards for some time in several member countries. The LABOUR MARKET has stabilized in most member countries, the number of unemployed having changed only slightly. After accelerating towards the end of the winter the growth of INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION in several member countries slackened during the spring. This was mainly because of the difficulties confronting the motor industry as a result of the sharp rise in the price of petrol, and more generally because of reticence on the part of private consumers.

** Compared with 1970 (base = 100) the CONSUMER PRICE INDEX for 1973 was:

Belgium	117.7
Denmark	123
Germany (FR)	118.8

France	120.2
Luxembourg	116.7
Ireland	131.8
Italy	122.8
Netherlands	125.7
United Kingdom	127.9

** The CONSUMER PRICE INDEX FOR MEAT (1970 base = 100) in 1973 was:

Belgium	122.4
Denmark	136
Germany (FR)	121.8
France	131.2
Ireland	169.4
Italy	133.2
Luxembourg	120.1
Netherlands	129.3
United Kingdom	161

** The Council of Ministers of the Community has adopted a proposal by the European Commission for a directive relating to a common standard for the whole Community in respect of the STRENGTH OF MOTOR VEHICLE SEATS AND THEIR BRACKETS.

** The Commission has just informed the British Government that it has no objection to a draft law communicated by that Government in accordance with Community rules which provides for aid to British bakers with the aim of LOWERING THE PRICE OF FRESH BREAD FOR BRITISH CONSUMERS. After examining this

measure the Community feels that, given the current intra-Community bread trading situation, it would have no harmful effect on trade or competition between Member States.

** At the request of a Dutch Court, the European Court of Justice will be handing down a judgment on one of the clauses of the rules for the WORLD CYCLING CHAMPIONSHIPS to confirm whether this clause is in accordance with the Community regulations on free movement of workers and/or the freedom to supply services. The clause in question states that the "pacemaker" on a motorcycle who precedes the cyclist along the track must be of the same nationality as the latter.

** A conference on the subject "ENVIRONMENT, MUNICIPALITIES AND PROVINCES" is to be held in Rome from 28-30 November 1974. It is being organized by the Council of European Municipalities and the Union internationale des villes (international union of cities) and sponsored by the Commission of the European Communities and the Italian Government.

** The European Commission has agreed to sponsor the Henry Worthington European Technical Award Contest which will award prizes for the best unpublished papers on "IMPROVEMENTS IN FLUID MACHINES AND SYSTEMS FOR ENERGY CONVERSION". Additional information is available from the Secretariat of the Award (Via Pirelli 19 - 20124 Milan, Italy).

SAFETY IN THE COMMUNITY'S NUCLEAR POWER STATIONS

In future nuclear power stations will supply an increasing proportion of the Community's thermal electricity (22% in 1975, 26% in 1985 and nearly 80% in 2000). This development of nuclear energy raises safety problems which are further amplified by the increased unit capacity of power stations and by the tendency to erect several units on the same site.

There exist European "radiation protection standards" which lay down the permissible level of human exposure to radiation and establish rules to ensure that these levels are respected. The standards have been determined and are revised periodically by the Community. There is also a research programme which began in 1960 and involves the Member States of the Community (biology and health protection programme - see I&S No 29/74). The aim of the programme is to determine the effects and dangers of radiation and nuclear energy and to lay down what protection measures are indispensable.

In addition, the Community is actively involved in ensuring the safety of nuclear power stations themselves. In this connection the impact of their operation on the environment, and safety standards covering the risk of accidents and their possible consequences, are being studied. The following topics are particularly important in this connection:

- (i) techniques for retention of radioactivity in respect of gaseous and liquid effluent flows used in different types of reactors;

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- (ii) quantities of solid waste produced in power stations - treatment and storage methods applied by the latter;
- (iii) actual radioactive discharges during normal operation and the effects of waste dilution;
- (iv) danger of different types of accidents and potential consequences compared with the probability rate for accidents in other industrial activities;
- (v) technical safety systems installed to avoid accidents and their consequences.

These are some of the studies on safety in nuclear power stations already completed by the European Commission, which is particularly concerned with storage of radioactive waste - seemingly the major safety problem at present. Even if the present well-monitored temporary storage, which is done on site should not worry the public, the increased volume of accumulated dangerous industrial waste raises long-term problems and methods for final disposal must be found. Highly radioactive waste is the most difficult to handle but the quantities produced will probably not be large. Methods of compaction, solidification and disposal are already at an advanced stage of development and it is likely that their large-scale application during the coming decade will be possible. Medium activity wastes, however, may constitute a more complex problem, since large quantities of them are produced in nuclear power stations and this implies particularly the need for frequent transport to the central "graveyard" (storage depot) or to the place of final disposal.

It will therefore be necessary to find a solution to this problem within the next few decades, and the Commission has contributed towards financing studies to this end.

In addition, the Commission is undertaking various other activities with a view to approximating the criteria required in the different Community countries for the design, construction and operation of nuclear installations. Two groups of Community experts set up by the Commission have been asked, in collaboration with electricity producers, one to make an inventory of all research on safety in nuclear power stations already carried out in the Community and to organize concerted action between the different European countries on research, and the other to make a "compilation" and a comparison of the various criteria applied in the different countries for the construction of power stations, their safety installations, etc.

It should be noted that nuclear power stations are under constant, extremely strict surveillance (daily measurement of radiation inside the station for personnel and around it for the inhabitants of neighbouring areas). According to experts, the radiation dose of people living close to nuclear power stations is low compared with natural radiation from the earth and atmospheric sources:

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Annual radiation dose
(mrem/a = millirems per annum)

Natural radiation from the atmosphere (at sea level)	35 mrem/a
Natural radiation from the atmosphere (at 1 000 m)	70 mrem/a
Natural radiation from the earth	50 mrem/a
Natural radiation in special geographical areas (e.g. the Black Forest, because of the presence of uranium in the soil)	180 mrem/a
Radiation from a power station (at site boundary)	5 mrem/a (or 1 mrem/a depending on type of reactor)
Radiation from a power station (at a distance of 5 km)	1 mrem/a (or 0.1 mrem/a depending on type of reactor)

For those living close to a power station the radiation dose from a nuclear installation would therefore equal one tenth of the natural radiation dose.