



N° 10/1979 - X/400/79 - EN

trade union information

TRADE UNION BULLETIN

PUBLISHED BY THE SPOKESMAN'S GROUP AND DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR
INFORMATION: TRADE UNIONS AND OTHER PRIORITY MILIEUX

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1. MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE EUROPEAN METALWORKERS' FEDERATION, BRUSSELS, 13-14 NOVEMBER 1979

After the Executive Committee meeting in Brussels, on 13-14 November 1979, the EMF announced that its affiliated federations would be taking an active part in the European action week which the European Trade Union Confederation was organizing on 24-30 November 1979.

The EMF intended this as support for claims on reducing working hours, maintaining purchasing power, improving lower wages and protecting acquired social benefits.

All these would be the basis for the platform that the European metal unions would be defending in the next round of collective bargaining scheduled for late '79/early '80 in most of the countries of Europe.

The EMF Executive Committee was to ask the EEC Council of Ministers for Labour and Social Affairs (22 November) to invite the Commission to "rapidly draw up proposals to outline Community instruments in respect of :

- i the overall reduction in working time;
- ii the limitation of overtime and provision for compensatory time off;
- iii a considerable reduction in working time for continuous work, notably through the creation of a fifth shift".

At the same meeting, the Executive Committee decided to launch an information campaign for workers in Philips plants in Europe whose jobs and working conditions were particularly at risk. This would run from 21 to 25 January 1980.

The Committee also asked the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament to start discussing the principle and the features of the scrap-and-build scheme that the European Commission had put forward for the ship-building and ship-repairing industry without delay so that the Commission could submit any proposals for implementation of the scheme in 1980.

It also asked the Commission to make further proposals for industry and to lose no time in adopting Community social measures on :

- vocational training and retraining;
- optional early retirement with satisfactory income guarantees;
- the limitation of overtime and provision for compensatory time off.

2. 29th CONGRESS OF THE LO, THE DANISH UNION ORGANIZATION

The Landsorganisationen i Danmark (LO), the Danish union organization, held its 29th ordinary congress in Copenhagen on 8-12 October 1979. It was attended by 1100 delegates representing more than 1 200 000 members.

Since the previous congress in Aalborg in 1975, almost 260 000 more members have joined the LO.

Speech by chairman Thomas Nielsen

In his introductory speech, LO chairman Thomas Nielsen gave a thorough account of the 'seventies and the currently difficult economic situation.

As far as international issues were concerned, he said, "international cooperation between the unions is more important now than ever it was and the Scandinavian and European trade union structures are the right sort of framework for it. The essential problem our international organizations have to cope with is that they are not in a position to keep pace with rapidly evolving international trends and there is a danger of them losing ground if they are not strengthened.

I have said on many occasions and I continue to say today ", Nielsen stressed, "that Denmark's economic problems are rooted in the international situation. We have always worked for a change in international economic cooperation, but we have yet to achieve effective cooperation and solidarity in this field.

One of the most important jobs the unions have to do is to make an effort that is effective, properly balanced in the long term and geared to finding answers to our present problems".

Nielsen went on to plead for the negotiation of a major outline agreement, to last four years, between the legislative authorities, the workers and their employers. Specific conditions would have to be met and the convention would contain various extremely practical details.

After a broad discussion to which some 90 of the representatives contributed, a general resolution was adopted by an overwhelming majority. Thomas Nielsen and Knud Christensen were re-elected chairman and vice-chairman and it was decided that Kai Petersen would be replaced as treasurer by Max Harvøe on 1 January 1980.

International resolution

In taking part in international trade union cooperation, the Danish movement was anxious to show support for those who wanted to further the development of democracy and union rights for workers.

There should be a stronger campaign for human rights in several of the Latin American countries, including Chili, and in South Africa and other parts of Africa and Asia where there was always a pressing need for international trade union solidarity and assistance for oppressed workers.

The trade union movement should continue to develop its cooperation with DANIDA (the Danish aid for developing countries organization) and the ILO.

The congress authorized the Executive Committee to grant financial aid, over and above the amounts already committed, to train union militants in these countries.

If full employment was to be achieved, then cooperation had to go beyond national boundaries, so as to prevent some countries from pursuing chauvinistic economic policies to the detriment of others.

The Danish union movement wished to cooperate actively in implementing the sort of international regulations that would restrict the extent to which multinationals could move labour and goods across frontiers.

The campaign for full employment, the democratization of the economy and the establishment of a new international economic order were the common aims of the international trade union movement and so, increasingly, the drive to achieve them had to be made in common.

The international trade union organizations therefore had to be strengthened so that they could better accomplish this task.

"LO - det er mig"

This is the title of a new film about the LO. It was shown for the first time at the congress and will be used in LO trade union schools.

LO cultural fund

For the first time, cultural prizes totalling Dkr 70 000 were awarded at the congress.

The LO had its 80th anniversary on 3 January 1978 and this was marked by the establishment of a cultural fund to provide support for artists and cultural organizations whose activities were concerned with workers and the conditions in which they live and work and with human relations in general.

Interest from the fund, an LO prize along Nobel lines, will be distributed on 3 January every year.

3. THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE, BRUSSELS, NOVEMBER 1979

At its meeting of 7 November 1979, the Commission, acting on a proposal from Mr Burke, adopted the text of a memorandum on the role of the Community in the development of transport infrastructure. The Commission is convinced that wide-ranging action in this field is vital to the progress of the Community transport policy as laid down by the Treaty of Rome. Such action poses difficult and complex problems which are relatively new. The Commission has thought it appropriate to set out its views and to put forward a discussion document which is also intended to stimulate all the parties to debate the future of transport infrastructure. The Commission is proposing to organize a seminar towards the end of the first half of 1980 at which the conclusions from this debate could be drawn. The Commission attaches particular importance to the following points:

- International traffic between Member States has developed faster than national traffic; on some major links it is a significant factor in the formation of bottlenecks. The quality of service offered to this international traffic, moreover, is not satisfactory.
- The communications networks are becoming increasingly interdependent, making it inconceivable to consider any one Member State as an entity in which planning is carried out in isolation.
- The infrastructure gives rise to close interlocking between transport and other economic sectors where action programmes are being carried out at Community level. The question arises as to how and to what extent account should be taken of the aims of these other measures when making investment decisions.
- National public bodies are experiencing difficulties in financing transport infrastructures with the result that projects which are important from a Community point of view may be abandoned or held up.

On the basis of the above considerations, the Commission suggests that the broad lines of action should centre on the following points:

- the corpus of data needed to evaluate Community requirements should be expanded. This means continuing the studies of traffic forecasts for the main Community links and Community-wide studies of specific projects, with due consideration not

only of the objective of cost effectiveness but also of various economic and social development objectives;

- there should be improved coordination of projects and planning between Member States under the existing procedures established by the Council Decision of 20 February 1978.
In accordance with this Decision, a Committee of Transport Infrastructures was set up under Commission auspices; apart from its consultative rôle in respect of projects and information on national programmes, the Committee will examine any matters relating to the development of a Community communications network. The Commission would hope that the Committee's high standing and active collaboration would enable it to help the Commission to identify the essential investment measures;
- the financial instruments already available to the Community must be backed up by a system of financial support adapted to the specific characteristics of the action being taken in the field of transport infrastructure. This is the cornerstone of a Community-wide communications network. The Commission recalls that its proposal for a Regulation on the granting of financial support to projects of Community interest is still under consideration by the Council. Adoption of this proposal would facilitate the execution of certain types of project vital to the economic and social development of the Community which have not attracted the necessary priority at national level.

By way of example, the Commission would mention the major traffic links in the Community where there are quantitative or qualitative shortcomings regarding infrastructure and for which improvements projects do exist. Such projects merit priority consideration.

4. STATUTORY CONGRESS OF THE EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF BUILDING AND WOODWORKERS IN THE EEC, LUXEMBOURG, 21-23 NOVEMBER 1979

Economic and social difficulties have not passed the building and woodwork trades by and the considerable changes in the countries of the Community since the early seventies are posing nasty problems of adjustment. But they can no longer be handled in a strictly national framework and, increasingly, solutions have to be sought at international level.

This was one of the findings of the Federation at its third statutory meeting held in Luxembourg on 21, 22 and 23 November 1979 under the chairmanship of Mr Sperner (IG Bau-Steine-Erden).

The speeches

Mr R. Sperner, Federation vice-chairman, and Mr M. Castagnero (CGT, Luxembourg) welcomed participants to Luxembourg and announced the merger of its union organizations.

The general secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation, Mathias Hinterscheid, addressed the meeting on the ETUC's behalf, strongly criticizing the Commission for its omissions and for failing to ensure adequate contact with the European trade union organization.

Pierre Servoz spoke on behalf of the Commission's information directorate (trade union and other priority milieux division), pointing out that the congress was being held in the very place where the first of the Community institutions had been set up 30 years before. The important thing was not just to bring people together, but to help those who needed urgent solutions.

The unions were particularly hard on the European Community, Servoz said, and the expression "one big hospital for ailing industries" clearly showed how they felt. But it was true to say that there was still some way to go and, most important, that the governments had not given the Community all it needed to be really effective.

If this scepticism was to be combatted, the Community had to be able to anchor itself in the everyday lives of ordinary people. The employment crisis was Europe's chance to show what it could do...or to reveal its inability to deal with the real anguish of the daily lives of the workers.

They had to do more than wait, Servoz concluded. Europe was also the affair of the trade unions.

The trade union division of the Commission information directorate would continue to provide the European trade union organizations with whatever means and information would help the European ideal gain ground. But, first and foremost, it depended on the people actually concerned to help make the European workers' community a reality.

The resolutions

The resolutions adopted at the end of the conference place particular emphasis on measures to combat unemployment and provide more jobs, on vocational training, on the manoeuvring of labour agencies in the building trade, on fighting unemployment via a social policy of housing and public works and on trade union cooperation in Europe.

The time had come, the Federation felt, to organize and coordinate lobbying and campaigning so that they could cut working time, obtain a shorter working week and longer holidays, provide pensions at age 60, extend compulsory schooling, allow longer leave for vocational and adult training courses and introduce any other measures that proved necessary.

The conference also decided that priority in collective bargaining would go to employment and wages.

In doing this, the Federation was supporting the ETUC's policy of recent years, particularly the action programme it had adopted in Munich on 14-18 May 1979, the essential points of which were outlined in a Federation resolution.

They were:

- i planning for full employment;
- ii balanced economic growth and a return to financial and monetary stability;
- iii the centralization of multinational firms and groups;
- iv economic democracy;
- v the common agricultural policy in the European Community;
- vi better working conditions;
- vii equal rights and opportunities for women;
- viii migrant workers;
- ix better quality of life;
- x the means of implementing this programme at both national and European level.

Social policy - housing and the extension of public works

The congress noted that employment in the building sector was threatened by the prospect of inadequate demand in the near future. The policy of the authorities in the various Member States of the Community fell short here, whereas it ought to be encouraging the building of low-price housing to meet the needs of the less privileged sections of the population and to maintain employment in the building sector.

The Federation also felt that, in addition to this, a dynamic urban development/urbanization policy provided support for employment in the building trade and should therefore be promoted.

Similarly, a well-chosen, properly coordinated public works policy should achieve the twofold aim of maintaining and meeting the rightful needs of the population. It could involve such things as promoting extensions and improvements to infrastructure, carrying out works to benefit the public and **protecting** the environment.

The timber industry

The resolution on the future of the timber trade stressed that employment in the EEC's timber processing industry depended on there being an adequate supply of raw materials in the long term. The Federation therefore strongly urged the EEC Commission to ensure that the forests in the EEC were replanted as soon as possible and that it be made compulsory to plant two trees for every one felled.

The conference also noted that employment in the Community's furniture sector was being seriously compromised by the constant increase in imported furniture from countries outside the EEC at prices which, the resolution emphasized, would not even cover the cost of materials in the EEC. It therefore hoped that these imports could be stopped.

Lastly, the resolution suggested that the European Commission produce directives to protect the health of workers in the industry, in particular on the inhalation of dust, the treating and lacquering of wood, etc.

The building trade

Another resolution was devoted to better living and working conditions for workers in the building trade. Particular emphasis here was on guaranteeing jobs and wages for the workers as "the problems of unemployment are a serious threat to the standard of living of workers in the building trade and this has profound repercussions on both the life of the individuals concerned and on social life in general".

Another absolute priority was to promote safety on building sites, which was more urgent here than in other fields because of the high accident rate. The specific problems of migrant workers from abroad should be discussed by employers and workers, the resolution said. It ended by hoping that the Executive Committee of the Federation would join with the ETUC to seek a solution to these various problems and that it would liaise directly with the European employers' organizations in the building industry wherever possible.

Vocational training

Emphasis on the campaign to combat unemployment was on the special importance of vocational training. Harmonization of the aims and levels of vocational training in Europe was an essential target and achievement of it should ensure that the various categories of the population all got equal opportunities in this respect.

CEDEFOP, the European centre for the development of vocational training, in Berlin, has an important part to play in this field. It had been in existence for several years and, the Federation felt, was now a reliable, responsible body that was able to galvanize the development of vocational and adult training at European level. The resolution also said that, "in the vocational training sector, at the level of both the firm and the nation, CEDEFOP is one of the best platforms for discussion, debate, permanent exchanges of view, the search for an answer to problems of such things as vocational guidance, the switch from school to work, vocational training for women, migrant workers, retraining and so on.

Labour agencies

The last important aspect of the problems currently facing workers in the building and woodwork sectors was the manoeuvring of the labour agencies. There were now private temporary labour agencies

and sub-contractors in the sector and they tended not to respect the working conditions agreed on in collective bargaining by the employers and the workers in the building trade and made generally binding by the authorities.

These agencies offered working conditions that were not so good as those to which workers were legally entitled and they did not, for example, respect the employer's obligations as regards the payment of tax and social security contributions. And even when the activities of these agencies and sub-contractors were authorized on certain legal conditions, those conditions were not respected.

The Federation said that the fact of accepting private employment agencies in addition to the official ones made it impossible to run an efficient employment policy. So, the resolution adopted at the Luxembourg congress proposed, in particular, that there be an absolute ban on all forms of private labour agencies in the EEC.

Internal organization of the Federation

The Luxembourg meeting of 11 and 12 October also discussed what the Federation had done in recent years for its more than two million members in the timber and building industries of Europe.

But, faced with the necessity of broadening its scope and ceasing simply to provide information so as to be able to better coordinate and defend the common interests of the workers, the conference invited the Federation officers to see to what extent building and woodwork organizations outside the EEC wanted to see the Federation broaden its scope.

Running through the Federation's general resolution was its basic concern with the problem of reconciling free movement with the nationalistic (or even protectionist) character of activities in the building sector and particularly in public works.

The conference also said it hoped that the Federation's negotiating partners at the EEC would have the authority and the power to take decisions.

5. MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS FOR LABOUR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS, BRUSSELS, 22 NOVEMBER 1979

Mr G. Fitzgerald, Irish Minister for Labour, chaired the meeting at which the Council adopted a resolution on sandwich courses for young people. It read as follows:

"The Council of the European Communities,
Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community,
Having regard to the draft from the Commission,

Whereas the general prospects of employment for young people in the Member States are poor; whereas, furthermore, a significant proportion of the total unemployed are young persons without suitable vocational training;

Whereas more flexible forms of transition from school to working life should be encouraged while the development of vocational training offering young persons better opportunities for access to the labour market should be promoted;

Considering the declaration by the European Council on 12 and 13 March 1979, with regard to the section devoted to alternate vocational training, and the conclusions reached on the matter by the Council on 15 May 1979;

Whereas it is therefore necessary to adapt vocational training systems and whereas such adaptation can be especially encouraged by developing the linking of work and training, that is to say the insertion, during the period of transition to working life, of periods combining training and practical work experience;

Whereas the linking of work and training is especially appropriate in three kinds of situation:

- young persons undergoing apprenticeships or post-educational training courses;
- young job seekers eligible for special training measures designed to facilitate the integration of young people into the labour market;
- young persons in employment without suitable vocational training,

Takes note of the communication from the Commission

Considers that the linking of work and training should be developed in a manner appropriate to the particular situation of each Member States, with Community support, in accordance with the following guidelines:

Guidelines for the Member States

As regards the content and the concept of alternation

Member States will encourage the development of effective links between training and experience at the work-place. These links will involve establishing coordinated programmes and structures making for cooperation between the various persons responsible.

Such programmes should be established having regard to the need to offer a training base broad enough to meet the demands of technological developments and of foreseeable changes in occupations.

They should be planned in relation to the particular characteristics of the category of young persons aimed at.

A special effort should be made to broaden the range of occupations offering different linked work and training schemes, including apprenticeships.

A suitable minimum period should in principle be given over to training off the job.

As regards supervision and recognition of training

If appropriate, training programmes offered should be approved and evaluated by the authorities responsible for vocational training. The levels of competence achieved or the nature of the courses completed should facilitate access to further vocational or general training.

The responsible authorities should also endeavour to ensure that linked work and training courses are in line with full-time training courses, if possible by introducing the same diplomas for both, in order to facilitate transfers between different branches of training.

As regards remuneration and financial support

The Member States should consider that where remuneration or allowances are granted for the different systems of linked work or training, they should be established at appropriate levels, particularly in order to facilitate participation by young people in such training courses.

As regards working conditions

Member States should ensure that persons undergoing the different types of linked work and training course enjoy suitable social and work protection within the framework of existing legislation.

The Member States should establish whether training leave may constitute a useful means of encouraging in particular young employees without training to participate in linked work and training programmes.

Guidelines for the Community

In order to facilitate the implementation of this Resolution, the Council requests the Commission to:

- examine the conditions under which the European Social Fund might be associated in action by Member States, through pilot schemes of limited scope within the meaning of Article 7 of the Regulation governing the European Social Fund, to develop linked work and training during the period of entry into working life;
- monitor the application of this Resolution in the Member States with a view to promoting developments which are harmonized as far as possible;
- afford Member States all possible technical support to this end;
- promote the exchange of experience gained in this field;
- report to the Council in 1982 on how far this Resolution is being applied".

The texts will be formally adopted at one of the Council's forthcoming meetings when they have been finalized by the Permanent Representatives Committee.

The Council took note of the progress of proceedings on the proposals for Regulations amending Regulation (EEC) N° 1408/71 with a view to extending the Regulation to cover self-employed and non-employed persons moving within the Community". It proceeded to discuss the Commission statement on consultation on migration policies vis-à-vis third countries.

After a comprehensive discussion of the matter, the Council agreed on the following resolution on the reorganization of working time:

"The Council of the European Communities,
Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community,
Having regard to the draft Resolution submitted by the Commission,
Whereas demographic trends, the probability that economic growth will be moderate, the problems of adjustment resulting in particular from the rise in oil prices, the structural problems of the labour market

and the progressive introduction of new technologies will exacerbate employment problems in the 1980s;

Whereas the overall strategy aimed at increasing growth potential, competitiveness and innovation, improving the employment situation and responding to the emergence of new social needs in non-inflationary conditions must be continued and whereas measures to reorganize working time might be integrated in this overall strategy as ancillary measures in support of policies which might help to improve the employment situation;

Whereas the measures to reorganize working time must be conceived with a view to improving living and working conditions and whereas they must contribute to improved protection of work and encourage worker participation in social and economic progress;

Whereas the costs, if any, of these measures must be controlled;

Whereas adequate consideration must be given to the manner of covering these costs and whereas, in the context of negotiations between the social partners, regard should be had to the possibility of distributing the overall increase in productivity between reorganization of working time and wage increases;

Whereas this policy must be combined with measures aimed at encouraging worker mobility and training and at facilitating the investment or changes required, notably in undertakings, in order to encourage new recruitment or avoid redundancies;

Whereas measures of this kind call for participation by workers and their representatives;

Whereas these measures are a matter for collective agreements or for national legislation, but whereas their overall coherence, particularly as regards compatibility between the attitudes of the social partners, should be sought by all parties concerned also within the framework of dialogue and consultation at Community level;

In view of the Commission's oral report on the contacts made between and with the social partners on the reorganization of working time following the meetings of the Council on 15 May 1979 and of the Standing Committee on Employment on 22 May and 9 October 1979;

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic Policy Committee of 26 October 1979;

Stresses that any measures to reorganize working time should be assessed in the light of numerous factors and primarily of its effects on the production capacity of undertakings, productivity changes and wage com-

pensation, and that the possibilities of decentralization, differentiation for sectors and areas of activity and phased implementation should be taken into account in the search for the measures to be taken and that there should be scope for the review of the measures taken;

Requests the Commission to carry further the contacts it has made, which are essential for the implementation of the measures referred to in this Resolution.

In the light of the exchanges of views which have taken place in recent months and the preliminary work carried out by the Commission, the Council, on the basis of its conclusions of 15 May 1979, approves the following guidelines:

Fields of action

Training/work experience schemes

The Council has adopted a position in a separate Resolution.

Overtime

The Council considers that:

- i limits should be applied to the systematic use of overtime; these limits should take account of the necessary flexibility of the production process of the undertaking and of the situation on the labour market;
- ii given the different situations in the Member States of the Community, provision should be made for the gradual implementation of this principle, taking into account the problems which could arise in this context for low paid workers in some Member States;
- iii implementation should take place in accordance with the usual procedures in force in each Member State of the Community, while respecting the autonomy of the social partners;
- iv one appropriate method of achieving such limits would be, for example, to introduce the principle of compensatory time-off for systematic overtime without such a form of compensation covering necessarily all the hours of overtime worked;
- v supervision should be organized in accordance with the procedures in force in each Member State.

Flexible retirement

The Council points out that it considers it very important that the

Commission continue its work on flexible retirement.

The Council considers that flexible retirement - which should be voluntary - should be developed in liaison with other measures to facilitate a gradual withdrawal from working life at the end of the worker's career, such as part-time work and longer holidays for older workers.

Part-time work

The Council notes that part-time work is now a reality on the labour market, but considers that the conditions applying thereto should be clarified.

The Council believes that a Community approach should be based on the following principles:

- i part-time work must be voluntary and open to both men and women. It must not be imposed on persons who wish to work full time. Furthermore, particular care must be taken to ensure that part-time work is not limited to work by women or to work of low skill and responsibility;
- ii it would be desirable to examine the extent to which part-time work could be made more readily available to certain groups of workers, particularly parents with young children and older workers;
- iii part-time workers should in principle have the same social rights and obligations as full-time workers, bearing in mind the specific character of the work performed;
- iv part-time work should not be limited to half-time work, but could be based on a daily, weekly or monthly cycle adapted to the needs of different groups of workers and undertakings.

Temporary work

The Council notes that in the majority of Member States, temporary work has developed considerably over the last few years.

The Council considers that Community action to support action by Member States should be undertaken to ensure that temporary employment is controlled and that temporary employees receive social security protection.

Shift work

The Council considers that shift work should be viewed in the context of the aspects relating to working and health conditions.

The Council considers that the economic aspects of the problem must also be taken into consideration, particularly with regard to the competitiveness of undertakings.

Annual hours of work

The Council invites the Commission to examine, with the social partners, the conditions under which a Community approach on the subject of a reduction in annual working time could be established; this approach could, where appropriate, be taken into account in agreements at national, inter-trade or sectoral level.

The Council asks that in such action account should be taken of the need to improve working conditions and the importance of preventing dismissals and favouring new recruitment.

Likewise, the need to preserve conditions of competition should be taken into consideration, as should the effects on labour costs of reducing annual working time.

Account should also be taken in such action of the series of new measures that might be adopted on the reorganization of working time in the light of the guidelines advocated above.

Final provisions

In the light of the progress achieved in regard to the different aspects of working time referred to in this Resolution, the Council, recalling the conclusions reached by the European Council in Paris on 12 and 13 March 1979, asks the Commission to present:

- its conclusions on possibilities of developing a Community approach as regards limiting systematic overtime working and reducing actual annual hours of work in the Community;
- specific communications on flexible retirement, part-time work and temporary work.

In addition, the Council invites:

- the Commission to continue wide-ranging consultations on the subject of reorganization of working time with the social partners;
- the social partners to continue and strengthen their contacts at Community level, and to assist the efforts of the Council and the Commission and to continue their action, in the Member States, within the framework of their own responsibilities.

These consultations and contacts should lead to the formulation of a Community approach making for overall coherence and fostering a consensus at Community level".

6. THE ETUC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE GIVES ITS OPINION ON THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS ON THE REORGANIZATION OF WORKING TIME

The Executive Committee of the ETUC, convened in Brussels on 29 and 30 November 1979,

- having examined the resolution adopted by the Council of Ministers of Social Affairs on 22 November 1979,
- observes that despite the fact that the employment situation in Europe is worsening the solution of sharing out the work which is available more evenly was not selected as a priority measure but was disguised in a series of general considerations which will not be brought about in the short term,
- condemns the position of the Council of Ministers, which limits action at European level to a mere "approach" as against "outline Community instruments" which could give new impetus to harmonized progress in this field,
- is forced to conclude that once again, despite the official committee made by the same ministers at the meeting of the Standing Committee on Employment on 22 May 1979 to the effect that "concrete results were to be obtained by 1 December 1979", the arguments put forward by employers to protect their own interests have been given precedence over the justified claims of working people,
- warns political leaders of the dangers such attitudes will cause for all democratic societies,
- appeals to the trade union organizations and workers of Europe to continue to fight and to fight even harder to bring the real reduction of working time, which must create jobs for all those who are out of work at the present time, to maintain the jobs which exist, and to improve the living standards and working conditions of all working people.

7. THE RAILWAY WORKERS OF THE EEC LINK THE FINANCIAL SITUATION WITH THE SOCIAL OBLIGATIONS OF THE RAILWAYS

The European railwaymen's unions held a conference, chaired by Mr A. Tonneaux (Belgium), in Luxembourg on 31 October 1979, when it was decided to set up a section bureau for railway workers in the Committee of Transport Workers Unions in the EEC. This small body, especially for railway workers, would make proposals for railwaymen to take action and to intervene in both the Community's railways policy and its general transport policy. The proposals would be sent to the Committee of Transport Workers Unions and be used in dealings with the European Parliament and the Commission, with the aim of promoting a transport policy that really was in the general interest.

It was in fact a failure to defend the general interest that was behind the conference's criticism of the Commission proposals. The railwaymen noted that (and this was by no means a simple paradox) the Community was both forcing the railway companies to respect the need for financial equilibrium and losing sight of the fact that they were socially obliged to provide a service for the public. It was also asking them to take part in a vast energy-saving campaign.

It did not make sense to reduce basic transport policy to a problem of financial management, a number of the participants felt, and the intended financial equilibrium would very likely be a pretext for dismantling the public service the railways should be providing.

The conference reminded participants of the positions adopted at the Brussels meeting of 21 November 1978 when the railwaymen protested in no uncertain terms about the Commission's discriminatory methods as far as they were concerned. The trade union organizations in the Community had not been consulted, although the opinion of the national trade unions had been largely sought by the railway authorities.

This time, the discussion centred on Commission working documents N°s VII/C-4/35 and VII/C-4/303 on the method of extending the notion of the obligations of a public service.

The resolutions

After looking at these two documents, the conference rejected the Commission's arguments on financial equilibrium on the grounds that this was not an end in itself but a function of the general aims of a properly defined transport policy based on harmonization of the conditions of competition, in particular as regards covering the costs of infrastructure and social harmonization. Such a policy should not take precedence over all-important aims connected with the people's right to a public service, with energy, the environment, regional development and the drive for social justice.

However, as far as the section of the Commission document on the public utility angle was concerned, the conference felt it was "desirable to maintain and extend the notion of the obligation to provide a service, taking greater account of the railways' contribution to energy saving, environmental protection, the production of a more positive regional development policy and to essential aims of public and general interest. Any studies in this field should take account of both local and regional factors and could only therefore be carried out by the national authorities.

If the extension of the railways' drive to serve the general interest, as outlined above, further interfered with the commercial profitability of the services, the EEC would have to find the means of intervening financially.

These, then, were the main guidelines to emerge from the conference in Luxembourg on 31 October 1979. The chairman and the secretary were invited to make the necessary approaches to the members of the European Commission and to the Director-General for transport with a view to positive action being taken as soon as possible on the conference's opinions on the railways' duties as a public utility, financial equilibrium, Community financing for infrastructure, the promotion of combined systems of transport and the rapid creation of joint committees (in the European institutions) for all types of transport.

8. STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION ON THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL IN DUBLIN, 29-30 NOVEMBER 1979

The European Trade Union Confederation is bitterly disappointed at the fact that, at its session in Dublin on 29-30 November 1979, the European Council once again failed to discuss the real problems which workers in Europe have to face.

At a time when there is an even greater threat of massive unemployment for the working population than there was five years ago, the European Council stated notably that priority was to be given to the fight against inflation - although it did not define any effective means of achieving this goal - and said that it wanted to avoid higher inflation rates. The Council merely stated that growth would be moderate in 1980, but it did not propose any measures for increasing growth rate.

Turning to the Community budget, the European Council merely discussed revenue, although a solution to that problem would not in any way have improved the living standards and working conditions of working people.

As to unemployment, which is steadily increasing, the only conclusion which was arrived at was to ask the Commission and the Council to continue their consultations with the social partners.

All this clearly shows that the governments of Europe do not want or are unable to bring the situation under control. They obstinately refuse to meet the legitimate demands of the worker organizations and particularly those of the ETUC.

The ETUC therefore renews the appeal it made at the conclusion of the session of its Executive Committee in Brussels on 29-30 November to workers and their organizations to continue and to step up their action to have their justified demands satisfied.

These demands include the following items in particular :

- maintenance of worker spending power and increase of low wages;
- protection of acquired rights, particularly as regards social protection;
- investment planning which is geared to creating more jobs;
- implementation of coordinated economic policies which will lead to more growth;
- reduction of working hours;

- development of communal services and facilities.

The ETUC further urges the Council of Ministers of Finance to radically reconsider its position on the 1980 budget of the European Community and to make a substantial increase in the funds which are to be made available to the European Regional Development Fund and in general to support policies for fighting inflation.

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