

Week of April 27 to May 2

CONSUMERS : Competition on the whisky market

- Up until 1977, Distillers' Company Ltd (DCL) was by far the most important firm on the British whisky market. In fact, the range of its products included some 50 different brands of whisky as well as a number of makes of gin, vodka and, of course, Pimms.

But DCL was charging different prices to its customers depending on whether the products were destined for sale in the United Kingdom or the other countries of the European Community. The European Commission judged this practice to be in violation of provisions in the EEC's Treaty of Rome dealing with competition and ordered DCL to put an end to these policies, which was done on 21 December 1977.

Since then, DCL has decided to raise its prices on certain brands with the accord of the British Prices Commission. But the EEC Commission's action has had the effect of reducing the sales of DCL in the United Kingdom to the advantage of other smaller British companies.

The result is livelier competition on the British market for whisky. The European Commission has expressed satisfaction because it feels this new competition will benefit the consumer.

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Rue de la Loi 200 - 1049 Brussels um.
Tel. 736 60 00 - Telex 21877 COMEU B.

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Editor : Will. J. Reckman



Textiles : Increasing protection for Europe's textile industry

Europe's textile industry should be given protection against low cost imports from the developing countries for at least another five years, according to recent proposals for renewal of the Multifibres Arrangement made by the European Commission. The MFA which has regulated international trade in textiles since 1974 runs out at the end of this year.

The Commission's call for continued protection for the EC's textile and clothing sector is backed up by a series of figures indicating that these two areas still account for 9.6% of the Community's labour force employed in the manufacturing industry, 6.4% of value added and 6.9% of total turnover. Between 1973 and 1980 the Community industry underwent considerable structural adjustment : total employment in the two sectors dropped from 3,124,000 to 2,330,000; in 1980, the number of firms fell by 15%. Since the beginning of 1980, the job losses have been most marked in the least favoured regions of the Community. Production of textiles in the EEC is down by 3.6%, while consumption of textiles and clothing is also declining. Whereas consumption rose at an annual rate of 3 to 4% before 1973, it is now closer to 1%. This trend is likely to continue for some years.

The situation is compounded by increasing imports which have now outstripped Community exports; the total EEC trade deficit in the sector is currently estimated at 578,000 tonnes, valued at £ 1,625 million. Major inroads on the Community textiles market have been made by the industrialised countries whose exports to the EEC increased by 58.9% during the period 1977 to 1980 (compared with only 30% between 1973-1977). Exports of textiles from MFA signatories were cutback to a 22% share during the 1977-1980 period, compared with 75% between 1973 and 1977.

While conceding that the second MFA has been more effective than the first in decelerating the growth of imports, the Commission underlines that it has not yet enabled the Community to complete the restructuring and reconversion of its textile industry to which it is committed under GATT rules. This will need the formulation of a coherent policy aimed at preserving and developing the Community's internal textiles market, providing incentives for "innovative efforts" and strengthening Community coordination of national aids to restructuring. The Commission foresees increasing utilisation of the EEC's Regional and Social Funds as a back-up for the restructuring and reconversion which are inevitable.

On an external level, the Commission calls for the continuation of the EEC's existing bilateral export restraint agreements with the textile-

supplying developing countries.

The Commission also makes it clear that it would be impossible for the Community to agree to a generalised import growth of 6 1/2 % for Third World textile at a time when consumption is more or less stagnant. Some flexibility could, however, be shown towards the smaller suppliers and the new-comers on the textiles scene.

Differentiation is expected to be the key to the EEC's new approach to the MFA. While the smaller suppliers could be treated more favourably, the newly-industrialised states such as Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea are not to be given added advantages. The Commission adds, however, that a determined effort will be made to seek improved access for EEC textiles on the markets of the newly-industrialised nations.

HEALTH : World conference on asbestos

Asbestos plays an important role in a number of industrial activities because it is resistant to fire and is excellent for thermal and electrical insulation.

Unfortunately, it is also a toxic substance and the existence of minute asbestos fibres in the air which can be inhaled is a potential health risk for workers exposed to it.

Several months ago, the European Commission proposed a directive aimed at harmonising the existing rules in the EEC member countries on this subject. It has now become associated with the Governments of Canada and Québec to sponsor a world symposium to be held in Montreal on May 25 to 27, 1982, on the theme "Asbestos, Health and the Community".

This meeting of international experts will be focused on questions related to occupational and public health, the safety of products, protection of the environment and the development of legislation and regulations on asbestos. It is part of the industrial cooperation programmes between the Community and Canada which were launched in 1974.

FOOD : From lowly spud to major industry

When the conquistadores searched for the riches of El Dorado in the New World of the 16th century and returned with samples of the ordinary potato, little did they know that their discovery would eventually feed millions and develop into a major resource and industry.

While it may be rivalled by rice and maize as the staff of life in other parts of the world, in many European and other temperate countries the potato, together with bread, is a favourite staple item. Boiled, baked, fried or otherwise simply prepared, it has been the basic nutrient of the masses. But in the hands of a knowing housewife or chef it can be elevated to the status of a delicacy.

And processed in a number of ways ranging from techniques known 2000 years ago in the highlands of Peru to more modern convenience foods, the potato is a major raw material for an important industry. This significant industry is the subject of a recent survey published by the European Economic Community Commission under the title : "Potato Products : Production and Markets in the European Communities". While the content of this 214-page work is basically aimed at specialists in the arcane fields of dehydrated and other types of processed potatoes, some of its information is also of everyday interest. For instance, there is a glossary of the principal potato products groups in six European Community languages, showing clearly the linguistic barrier between Community countries favouring the English term "crisp" as opposed to the American "chip", even if the product is basically the same.

There is also a history of the travels and incorporation of the potato into the farmlands and diets of most European countries from its early introduction by the Spanish and English explorers. The tragic saga of the 19th century Irish potato famine is also recounted, as is the evolution of different tastes and methods of planting, which underwent a dramatic change in the 1940s. First, there was extensive interest during the war years for greater production and improved preservation techniques. Following the war, however, there has been a decline in the amount of potatoes grown in most European Community countries accompanied by an increase in the processing of new and more sophisticated types of potato products.

According to the report, the potato processing sector of the Community manufactured at least 2.9 million tonnes in recent years, the only sector of the potato industry still growing. The main classifications of

this industry are dehydrated products, snack products, fried non-snack products, non-fried frozen products, preserves and others, which include potato salad and various other items.

In the Community, the manufacture of potato products is concentrated largely in Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France, with Ireland, Italy, Denmark, Belgium and Luxembourg having only very small industries. In 1978, Germany used nearly 895,000 tonnes of potatoes for processing, followed closely by the United Kingdom with 890,000 tonnes, the Netherlands with 602,000 tonnes and France with 327,000.

Aside from such basic data, the objective of the study is to examine the problems of the industry and survey attitudes for the possibility of establishing a European Community joint policy and market in this field. For instance, it looks at the pros and cons of having uniform quality standards for potatoes throughout the Community and joint rules concerning additives. The problem of foreign competition, especially from North America and Eastern Europe, is also weighed with a recommendation that the matter should be pursued to determine whether there is unfair dumping on the EEC market. In addition, the study raises the question of the relationship of the industry with the potato production sector. There has been a discussion for several years about the organisation of a common potato market, which is not currently covered by a common Community policy as are most other agricultural products.

The study concludes that since there are some significant flows of potato products between Member States of the EEC, the concept of such a single Community market is realistic.

TRANSPORTATION : The Chunnel-is it really on the way ?

At the next meeting of the European Parliament, the assembly's Transportation Committee will submit to the 434 members of their approval a proposed resolution on the construction of a tunnel under the English Channel. According to the proposed text, the Parliament would express "its sincere support for the construction of a fixed liaison crossing the Channel" and ask the responsible national and Community authorities to spare no effort to resolve the political or other problems which are still unresolved in order to get the project underway and completed once and for all. For more than a century this project has reappeared on the front pages with such regularity that it has come to be regarded as some type of Loch Ness monster to be dragged out by journalists when they are short of something to write about. Hopefully this time, the member governments of the European Community will seriously consider the matter if the Parliament adopts such a strong position. This way, an old dream could become a reality.

SEDOC : New hope for job seekers

Prospective employers often fail to find the "perfect" secretary, carpenter, cook or interpreter simply because the job offer is publicised in only one EEC Member State. So, Belgian carpenters looking for employment never get to meet the French employer who is looking for exactly their kind of qualifications. The English hairdresser never finds out that her Dutch colleague has just gone in to business on her own and is looking for new personnel ...

One service set up by the European Commission in 1973 can help these job seekers find the perfect employer and vice versa. SEDOC - the EEC's manpower service - has given a real European dimension to the employment market.

The service works on the basis of a code enshrined in a 450-page volume which enumerates all the different professions and specialisations imaginable. Each profession has its own code established by the European Commission and now forwarded to the Member States' employment services. Such a code prevents misunderstandings concerning the interpretation of a job offer or demand made in a foreign language.

The five-figure code specifies the degree of qualification required by the job (or required by the worker), the employer's linguistic requirements (or the language spoken by the candidate), the exact operations and activities of the firm, as well as all information concerning lodgings, working conditions and social security.

The central employment services of every Member State currently include some representatives of SEDOC who, three times a month, exchange information on employment offers and demand on the basis of the code.

This allows the "Manpower Service" office in Dublin, for example, to receive, within three days, from the Danish "Arbejdsdirectoratet" and other Member States, a list of people currently looking for jobs in other countries of the EEC.

In constant touch with their colleagues in the employment sections in other EEC countries, SEDOC representatives are responsible for collecting the job-related information and distributing it in their own country.

Some 25,000 jobs were made available in the Community thanks to the system in 1980. At the same time, some 18,000 job seekers used the system.

Unfortunately, we are still a long way from a world where each unemployed person could find an ideal job. It is only in about 10% of the cases that job offers coincide with demand. This is believed to be due to inadequate publicity about the job vacancies. If the national employment services could increase their financial resources - and employ more people - the effectiveness of SEDOC would increase considerably. It is clear that the chances of finding the right job or the right employee are much greater if the SEDOC system is utilised. Information should be sent to : the National Manpower Service (Dept of Labour) SEDOC section, 50, Mespil Road, Dublin 4 for Ireland and Manpower Services Commission, SEDOC section, employment service division, Overseas Placing Unit, Pennine Centre, 20-22 Hawley Street, Sheffield S1 36A, in the United Kingdom.

The system is based on two key principles : the free movement of workers - a right guaranteed by the Treaty of Rome and that of "Community priority", under which available jobs must be offered first to EEC citizens before being offered to non-EEC nationals.

The number of unemployed in the EEC increased by almost 30% between February 1980 and February 1981 to reach 8.5 million. SEDOC is one new and original instrument for fighting the unemployment crisis and is expected to bring hope to job seekers everywhere in the EEC.

On the next page is an example of jobs being offered currently.

		<u>Knowledge of foreign languages required</u>	<u>Code</u>
<u>France</u> :	1 chemical engineer	French + English	0.25.10
	11 mechanical engineering technicians	English + French	0.35.10
	1 carpenter and joiner	French	9.54.20
	1 lifting truck driver	German or English or French	9.75.10
<u>Ireland</u> :	1 chemist	English	0.11.10
	4 systems analysts	English	0.83.10
	2 senior computer programmers	English	0.83.40
	4 electrical engineers	English	0.23.05
	2 industrial designers	English	1.62.40
<u>U.K.</u> :	1 banker mason		8.20.20
<u>Germany</u> :	2 civil engineers	German	0.22.10
	7 mechanical engineers	German	0.24.10
	15 design draughtsmen	German	0.32.15
	374 nurses		0.71.10
	2 translators (English/German)		1.95.30
	2 translators (English/French/German)		1.95.30
	9 secretaries shorthand typists	German	3.21.20
	55 sales assistants		4.51.26
	3 chefs de cuisine		5.31.20
	8 waiters (restaurant)		5.32.10
	3 hosiery mechanics		7.53.30
	5 warpers (machine)	German	7.54.10
	2 terry weavers		7.54.66
	3 circular machine knitters		7.55.30
	5 bleachers (textile)/operative dyers	7.56.15/	7.56.22
	20 leather goods makers/saddlers and harness makers	German	8.03.10
	3 cabinet makers		8.03.20
	10 foundry pattern makers (wood)		8.11.20
	79 turners (metal)		8.13.10
	20 milling machine setters-operators		8.33.20
	13 boring machine setters operators		8.33.30
	20 steelworkers (general) ship construction repair) / electric arc welders		8.33.50
	15 glass blowers		8.74.51
	20 casters(pottery)		8.72.20
	16 mason bricklayers(erection)		8.91.20
	40 carpenters		8.92.35
	30 shunters		9.51.20
	76 specialised labourers		9.84.
	60 miners		9.84.40
			9.90.10
			7.10