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HEALTH: EUROPE AGAINST CANCER TO START UP BEFORE YEAR IS OVER

The campaign, Europe Against Cancer, should be in operation before the year is out. Its programme will include European cancer weeks, improved training for doctors, a European research programme and the harmonization of all regulations and standards directly related to cancer, according to Jacques Delors, President of the European Commission. He was speaking at the end of the second meeting of European cancer specialists, held in Paris on February 19 and 20.

The campaign was launched last December by the Commission in answer to an appeal last June by the Milan summit of the European Community. It should become a reality in record time. The 12 cancer specialists invited by the Commission to Brussels on January 24 met again in Paris at the invitation of President Mitterrand.

The twelve, who include Prof Veronesi of Milan and Prof Tubiana of Paris, examined the reports prepared by various expert groups. They were able to draw up the guidelines for a European action programme, which will help the European Commission draft its own proposals to the EC Council of Ministers.

The specialists have put the emphasis on prevention. This implies a reduction and, if possible, an end to the use of tobacco, responsible for 15 to 30% of all cancers. Hence their proposals for campaigns aimed at persuading smokers to give up smoking and non-smokers, especially children, not to take it up.

The specialists also favour research into the health of "passive" smokers (those who absorb the cigarette smoke of others), the effects of other cancer producing substances and a search for such substances. They are also asking for 50 scholarships, to allow researchers to work in another EC country than their own.

The experts also want specialized information made available to not only the general public but also GPs and medical students. They also want the twelve to pool their experience of different methods of treatment and their cancer statistics. In addition, any medicines found effective in one country should be made available quickly in all others, according to the specialists. Finally, they want special importance to be given to cancers contracted at the place of work.

FOOD AID: COMMUNITY ALLOCATES 100,000 t FOR ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia is to get 100,000 tons of cereals under the European Community's food aid programme. A part of it will be distributed among famine victims, especially in the country's north-eastern region. But the food aid will also be used to "fund" Food for Work programmes, which will do more than ensure that famine victims are properly fed. These programmes will also make it possible to combat the effects of drought by using the more able-bodied to build dikes and even dams, prevent soil erosion and build rural roads.

The Community is providing food aid to Mali and Mauritania also, following a recent decision by the European Commission. Mali is to get 15,000 tons of cereals, all of which will be sold locally and the income used to help reorganize the country's grain markets. Mauritania will receive 12,000 tons of cereals as well as milk powder and butteroil (400 tons of each), part of which may be used in Food for Work programmes.

EMPLOYMENT: HOW THE WORKFORCE IS DISTRIBUTED BETWEEN AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY AND THE SERVICES

The pattern of employment in the 12-nation European Community is very similar to that in Japan but quite different from that in the United States. Some 9% of the Community workforce was in agriculture, according to statistics for 1983 published by the European Commission. This was the same proportion as in Japan, while the corresponding figure for the U.S. was 3.5%.

Industry accounted for roughly 35% of the workforce in both the European Community and Japan, as against 28% in the U.S. The services sector, which has outdistanced manufacturing, accounted for 56% of the workforce in both the EC and Japan. The corresponding figure for the U.S. was nearly 70%, however.

The only Community country with an employment pattern similar to that of the 12-nation Community was France, where 8% of the workforce was to be found in agriculture, 33% in industry and 59% in the services sector. Otherwise the employment pattern varied considerably from one member state to another.

Agriculture accounted for under 3% of the workforce in the U.K. and Belgium and as much as 28% in Greece and 24% in Portugal. Industry's share ranged from around 27% in Denmark, the Netherlands and Greece to a high of 41% in Germany. The services sector accounted for 41% of the total workforce in Portugal but the proportion was over 60% in Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and the U.K.

REGIONAL AID: A 3-IN-1 PROJECT GETS COMMUNITY FINANCE

A project for an industrial zone covering three European Community countries was presented to the European Commission recently by the governments of France, Belgium and Luxembourg. The European Regional Development Fund, which is backing the project financially, is treating it as the equivalent of three national projects.

The new zone, covering over 1,000 acres, is expected to create 8,000 new jobs in an area which has lost 26,000 in the last 10 years because of the crisis in the steel industry. The new industrial zone in fact lies in the steel triangle of Longwy-Aubange-Rodange. It is hoped that the disused steel mills will be replaced by new industries, thanks to better transport and telecommunications.

The project is one of the first to be funded under the new ERDF rules, which seek to encourage regional cooperation across national frontiers.

AGRICULTURE: ICHNEUMONS RATHER THAN PESTICIDES!

Pesticides are not the only way to control agricultural pests; they can be dealt with in ways which are not harmful either to health or the environment.

Pests can be destroyed by using their natural enemies. In Holland scientists were able to protect some 7,500 acres of maize from attack by moths by releasing a cloud of ichneumons (a variety of wasp). Elsewhere, biological pest control has been used to protect orange and olive groves and apple orchards.

The European Community has been helping scientists develop biological methods of crop protection since 1979. They involve the use not only of the pests' natural enemies but also of biological products which effect insect behaviour by attracting or repelling them or inhibiting their growth.

The work is being continued under the Community's research programme for 1984-89, the European Commission recently told a Belgian Euro-MP, Luc Beyer de Ryke.

ECONOMY: COMMUNITY ENDS THE YEAR ON A REASSURING NOTE

There was reassuring news of the European economy from the European Commission's experts. Industrial production was growing moderately and unemployment falling in the closing months of last year, according to their latest report on economic trends. Estimates based on data for the European Community's four largest member states pointed to continued growth in output in the third quarter of 1985, with gross domestic product up 3% in real terms on the previous quarter.

As the year ended industrial production in the 10-nation Community was some 3% above the previous year's level (as compared to just under 2% in the U.S. and Japan). Unemployment continued to fall in November, although the number of unemployed was still 1.6% above the November, 1984 level.

The rise in the consumer price index slowed down in the closing months of last year. The increase of 0.4% in November was much less than the average monthly rise in the first half of the year (0.6%). For the first time in the 1980s the 10-nation Community recorded a visible trade surplus last September of nearly 600 million ECU\*. As for the ECU, it continued to strengthen vis-a-vis the dollar; as the year ended the U.S. currency was 21% lower than in December, 1984. The ECU gained ground against the Japanese yen also in December, interrupting the yen's marked appreciation in 1983 and 1984.

\* 1 ECU = UKL 0.65 or IRL 0.71.

INVESTMENTS: SPENDING BY INDUSTRY TO RISE 10% THIS YEAR

Industry in the European Community plans to increase investment spending by 10% this year, according to the European Commission's latest business survey. Taking price rises into account, this would mean a real increase of 7%. These rates, although high, do not match those recorded last year, when investment spending rose by 15% in nominal and by 10% in real terms.

Investment in the mechanical and electrical industries is expected to increase by some 15% this year, thus matching the growth rate recorded in 1985. Investment in the food industry should grow by 2%, as compared to a 1% growth rate in 1985. Investment in the metallurgical industries, up 28% last year, is expected to fall by 7% this year.

This growth in industrial investment comes after a period of severe investment shortfall (1981-1983). It must therefore continue as buoyantly as in the period 1984-1986 if unemployment is to fall to any significant extent. So far the downward trend in industrial employment has only been halted, although there are signs of a slight increase in employment this year.

SOUTH AFRICA: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT SEEKS STRONGER CODE OF CONDUCT

Next year will mark the 10th anniversary of the European Community's Code of Conduct for European firms with subsidiaries or branches in South Africa. The Code was reinforced last November, following a meeting of the foreign ministers of the 10-nation Community and Spain and Portugal.

Its basic aim is to bring about a substantial improvement in the condition of black workers employed by these subsidiaries, and thus hasten the collapse of apartheid. The Code enshrines the principle of equal pay for equal work. It calls for black workers to be allowed to form trade negotiations. Firms are made responsible for the housing, transport and health of their workers, while their parent companies are asked to report annually on the steps taken by their subsidiaries to conform to the Code.

But the European Parliament remains sceptical of the Code's effectiveness. A report by the Euro-MP, Rika De Backer-Van Ocken, which was adopted by Parliament on February 20, noted that only 175,000 black workers (around 2% of the black labour force) are employed by foreign firms which apply the Community Code of Conduct. The Code had led, however, "to certain social improvements in certain firms and facilitated the work of independent trade unions."

The European Parliament wants the Code to be made legally binding (companies comply at present on a voluntary basis). It also wants the reports which parent companies are required to submit annually to be made public.

Responsibility for the Code rests at present with the Community's foreign ministers, acting in the framework of European Political Cooperation. Parliament has now voted that responsibility for its application and monitoring be transferred to the European Commission. The Commissioner responsible for the EC's external relations, Willy De Clercq, told the Europe-MPs the Commission was quite prepared to carry out these tasks, provided it was asked to do so by the Community's foreign ministers and given the necessary means.

De Clercq, who was a member of the Community's fact-finding mission that visited South Africa last August, also assured the Euro-MPs that they would hereafter receive all reports on the application of the Code, as would the Community's Economic and Social Committee. As the Community's elected representatives they had a right to give their views as to how the Code should be implemented.

ENERGY: SOVIET OIL AND GAS FUEL COMMUNITY INDUSTRY

Falling oil prices have focussed attention on the European Community's energy imports from the Middle East. But in the ensuing debate a major supplier has been overlooked. It is the Soviet Union, of course. One-third of the total oil import requirements of the 10-nation Community were met by the Soviet Union and other East European countries as recently as 1984. They also supplied 35% of the Community's total natural gas imports.

None of which is surprising, given that the Soviet Union is the world's largest producer of oil and natural gas. Another major East European energy exporter to the Community is Poland, which accounted for around 20% of total coal imports. Taken together, the flow of East European energy exports to the Community reached a record level of over 100 million tonnes of oil equivalent (toe) and represented about 11% of its total primary energy requirements in 1984.

The cost to the EC was over 20,000 million ECU\* and was an important factor in the Community's substantial trade deficit with the Soviet Union. Last year saw a sharp fall in Soviet oil exports to the Community - and a corresponding fall in the Soviet Union's overall trade surplus.

Even so, the East European contribution to the EC's energy needs remains far from negligible, according to the European Commission's Directorate-General for Energy. An article in the Commission's magazine, "Energy in Europe," notes that oil imports from the Soviet Union and Roumania should remain at significant levels. The amounts involved seem more likely to fall than to rise, however, partly because of the competition among oil exporting countries.

As regards imports of Soviet gas, they could rise to more than 30 million toe by the end of the 1980s, as the Community's import requirements increase and new gas contracts come into force. Imports from the Soviet Union, the sole East European supplier, amounted to 21 million toe in 1984.

The European Community is expected to increase its total coal imports in the coming years. Although imports of Polish coal have been rising, competition from other coal suppliers could act as a brake, in the Commission's view.

\* 1 ECU = UKL 0.65 or IRL 0.71.

CARS: HERE A TAX, THERE A TAX

Cars are taxed in so many different ways in the 12-nation European Community that it takes four pages simply to list them - as the European Commission discovered when replying to a question from a French Euro-MP, Mrs Danielle De March.

The VAT rate, for example, is 12% in Luxembourg, regardless of the model you have chosen. In Italy, however, it rises to 38% for very large cars. VAT is levied at relatively low rates in a number of countries. It is 14% in Germany, 15% in Britain and 19% in Holland. But you will have to pay another 10%, calculated on the price to the dealer, in Britain and in Holland a supplementary tax equal to 16% at least of the purchase price less VAT.

In Italy the VAT rate is 20% for petrol-driven cars with a cylinder capacity not exceeding 2000 cc. In Denmark it is 22%, 23% in Ireland and 25% in Belgium up to 3000 cc. In Portugal the VAT rate is 30% and in Spain 33%. The French rate is higher by a hair - 33.33%.

But if you buy a car in Denmark you must also pay a registration tax, which can be as much as twice the purchase price including VAT. In Ireland you will also have to pay an excise duty of 23% (calculated on the list price), rising to 26% for cars exceeding 16 HP.

Most member countries also levy a road tax, the amount of which is related to the car's horsepower. In Denmark, however, the tax is based on its weight, as it is in Holland, where petrol consumption is also taken into account. The U.K. levies tax at a flat rate of £ 100, whatever the car.

France introduced a special tax of about 1,350 ECU\* on cars exceeding 16 HP but it was removed following an intervention by the European Commission. As the tax was being levied only on imported cars it amounted to a discriminatory measure from the Community viewpoint. The Commission has also taken Italy to court over its method of levying VAT on cars with diesel engines.

\* 1 ECU = UKL 0.65 or IRL 0.71



CHILD ABUSE: THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT COMES TO THE CHILDRENS HELP

It is not only in the novels of Dickens and Zola - or in far-off lands - that children are ill-treated; it happens within the 12-nation European Community also. Child abuse is a sufficiently serious problem in fact to have led the European Parliament's Committee on Youth and Education to ask the Community's institutions to take steps to reduce the number of cases of ill-treatment even while attacking the problems at its roots.

A report prepared for Parliament by the German Euro-MP, Gabriele Peus, notes that in Germany there are between 1,500 to 2,000 successful prosecutions each year but that the number of cases of ill-treatment is anywhere from 3 to 100 times greater. In France the number of such cases has been put at 50,000 a year.

In 80 to 95% of the cases the children are subject to physical and sexual assault. Although the media often focus on kidnappings and acts of brutality by criminals and maniacs, some 70 to 80% of the victims suffer violence at the hands of members of their own family, according to experts.

The ill treatment is inflicted, on the whole, by persons from the least favoured sections of the population. They are often unemployed, solitary, in ill-health or alcoholic. Ill-treatment of children occurs among the more well-to-do also, but it tends to be psychological rather than physical.

As for the victims, many of them live with a stepfather or stepmother, are physically or mentally handicapped, or otherwise disturbed, or ill.

The Parliamentarians want more help for the families, to begin with. They also want to encourage people to give information about cases of ill-treatment, with protection for those giving it. The Parliamentarians would also like public opinion alerted to the problem. Other measures favoured by them include special courses for social workers and better coordination between the social services, doctors, teachers and the police.