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CONTENTS

	<u>Pages</u>
INTRODUCTION	1
I. <u>138th PLENARY SESSION</u>	4
A. Speech by Sir Christopher SOAMES	4
B. Opinions adopted	7
1. European Social Budget	7
2. Employment Policy	10
3. Institute for Economic Analysis and Research ..	13
4. Regional Policy	15
5. Sheepmeat	18
6. Tax Exemptions - Means of Transport	19
7. Tax Exemptions - Personal Goods	21
8. Free Zones - Warehousing	22
9. Measuring Systems - Liquids Other than Water .	23
10. Units of Measurement	25
II. <u>OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES</u>	27
1. Mr TINDEMANS at the Economic and Social Committee	27
2. Visit from Mr Henri MAYRAS to the ESC	27
3. Major Trade Union Delegation visits the ESC	28
4. Study Group on Articles of Precious Metals visits Florence	28
III. <u>NEW REQUESTS FOR OPINIONS</u>	29
IV. <u>PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME OF FUTURE WORK</u>	30
V. <u>NEWS OF MEMBERS</u>	32

INTRODUCTION

In a speech made on the eve of the meeting of the European Council, the Chairman of the Economic and Social Committee, Mr Henri CANONGE, gave a rundown of the present political situation in the Community. Extracts from his speech follow :

"The Community is not evolving satisfactorily. One might say that the passing of each week brings fresh disappointments.

The most obvious disappointment was the exit of the French franc from the "snake" only a few months after its internal parity had been boosted by it rejoining the European Monetary Agreement and by the conclusion of the Rambouillet and Kingston agreements.

Economic and monetary policy in the Community is falling into increasing disarray. I shall not dwell on the difficulties of every type that most of the Member States are experiencing at the present time.

A political phenomenon which is often met with in difficult times is showing itself. Instead of strengthening their links and aligning their policies, countries are trying, each on their own behalf, to find solutions by exporting not only products, but also unemployment and balance-of-payments deficits.

Faced with this picture, what stance can the Committee adopt and what can it do?

Our Committee has continued to play its full part as the sole Community body of an institutional character in the economic and social field. We have been unwavering in our efforts to remind people that the Community cannot hope to achieve the major objectives of the Treaty, which transcend the economic and social sphere at times, unless the public and the economic and social groups are informed, sounded out, associated and involved in our enterprise. It was for this purpose, was it not, that the Committee was written into the Treaties.

We have made positive progress, in the sense that we have succeeded in establishing increasingly constructive relations with the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament.

As far as the implementation of the Convention of Lomé is concerned, we are endeavouring, and I believe succeeding, in helping to bring about a better understanding between economic and social circles in the Community and their counterparts in the Associated Countries.

We have not been neglectful of making contacts with other international institutions, especially the International Labour Office, EFTA and the OECD." An exchange of views was held between the Prime Minister of Belgium, Mr TINDEMANS, and the enlarged Bureau of the Economic and Social Committee on the Committee's contribution. Mr TINDEMANS started by stating that Europe would not be born out of theorizing and abstractions, but as a result of the dynamism of all economic and social forces, which had to be involved in Community decision-making. He went on to stress that as the common policies developed, particularly in the economic and social sphere, the role of the ESC would increase. These policies could only be prepared in close liaison with those who were to be directly affected by them.

The right given to the ESC of delivering Opinions on its own initiative in every field covered by the Treaties, and in future perhaps, by the European Union, proved that the Heads of State and of Government attached great importance to the part played by the Committee and to giving the interests represented on it a greater say in the building of Europe.

Similarly, the dialogue that had been initiated between the European Parliament and the ESC ought to bring about better synchronization between the political and the technical approaches to integration issues.

Although in recent years there had been a tendency towards a proliferation of consultative bodies, this ought not to be allowed to diminish the role of the Economic and Social Committee. The Committee remained the pre-eminent forum for covering all economic and social interests and a place where those interests were generally represented.

138th PLENARY SESSION

The 138th Plenary Session of the Economic and Social Committee of the European Communities was held in Brussels on 31 March and 1 April 1976. The Chairman of the Committee, Mr Henri CANONGE, presided.

A. Speech by Sir Christopher SOAMES

Sir Christopher SOAMES, Vice-President of the Commission, addressed the Committee on the external policies of the Community. He recalled that external relations for individual states required time to develop, while the Community had practically parachuted in the world. This fact became all the more apparent after the accession of the three new Member States because in its first period the Community had mainly been engrossed with its internal development; also with enlargement had come the vast growth in the Community's share of the world trade. In fact, since that time, the Community has 40% of the world trade, half of it outside the Community, 30% of the world's capital resources and provides 40% of aid to developing countries. It has a vast population, a fund of industrial base and know-how; as a civilian power, it is the most notable in the world. It has, however, had only a short time to develop a pattern of external relations. It was faced at first with a great deal of alarm by other individual states who

realized that the Community's foreign relations would not be an extension of the foreign policies followed by its individual component states and they were correct in that assumption. Sir Christopher SOAMES then turned to the Community's relations with the industrial world which had shown that alarm to be unfounded.

Relations with the United States had settled down well. There was now close liaison in Washington between the embassies of the nine Member States and biannual exchanges of visits between representatives of the US Government and the Community.

Twice-yearly visits were also exchanged with Japan. There was a certain degree of worry on how to handle in the future the Community's trade deficit with Japan which was deteriorating. It should be dealt with, not by inhibiting Japanese exports, but by influencing the Japanese to help improve the situation by increasing their imports from the Community.

Canada and Mexico were taking up their European options by making agreements with us.

Coming to relations between the Community and the Communist world, Sir Christopher SOAMES said that for a long time the latter had refused to recognize the Community's existence. The situation had now changed. For instance, China had shown itself to be strongly in favour of a united Europe for its own reasons and the Commission hopes soon to be able to propose a trade agreement with that country.

As to the Comecon, talks were initiated by Mr FEDAYEV, its General Secretary, in mid 1973, requesting that contact with the Community be taken up and talks began in 1975 between officials of the Commission and Comecon. In February this year, Comecon proposed a draft agreement and these proposals are still being analyzed at senior official level. After analysis the Commission will be asked to formulate proposals. The problem in finalizing them arises from the fact that at the present stage it has not been made clear exactly where responsibilities for trade lie with the other side. It is a common mistake to assume that the Community and the Comecon are similar structures. We are prepared to make an umbrella agreement with Comecon, but it is up to them to specify the responsibility for carrying it out.

Turning to the developing world, Sir Christopher SOAMES referred to the Lomé Convention and the generalized preferences scheme. He said the developing world was rightly seeking a redistribution of income.

In all our nations, he said, we had seen that mass democracy had brought with it a natural desire for redistribution of income within our own countries. We had realized the necessity and the rightfulness of this development. Now, we were facing international mass democracy and an international redistribution of income and resources. This would undoubtedly mean a considerable adaptation for the rich countries in the Community. Everyone agreed that it should be done but sometimes trouble arose when concrete measures were suggested in the Council.

Sir Christopher SOAMES stressed that there was no need to be pessimistic about the transfer of resources because it had been the biggest motor for growth in the past. The internal shift of resources had been the main feature for the booms of the 50's and 60's. He saw no reason why, if handled properly, the international redistribution of resources should also fail to be a success. It should not be brought about by confrontation but handled in such a way as to create new markets of ten or a hundred million people for the Community. This task was not going to be an easy achievement but a great challenge. The Community should take it up in the North-South dialogue opening in Paris and in UNCTAD meetings. Confounding past expectations, it is the political habits and customs which the West, and particularly the Community, had produced - as well as its trade and living standards - which continue to be the pole of attraction for the developing world.

B. Opinions adopted

1. European Social Budget

Communication from the Commission to the Council on the European Social Budget

Gist of the Commission's Communication

On 26 November 1970, the Council decided that there should be a European Social Budget.

At the moment the Social Budget is looked upon primarily as a source of information. It does not lay down policy objectives to which the Member States are committed. It merely gives statistics and forecasts regarding Member States' expenditure and revenue in the field of social policy.

The Social Action Programme defines the objectives of the European Social Budget as follows :

"To acquire a comprehensive knowledge of the past and future development - short and medium term - of social expenditure and methods of financing in the member countries of the Community, as a means of providing an instrument for the progressive convergence of social protection in particular and social policy in general throughout the Community".

In accordance with the Council Decision of 9 November 1972, the Commission prepared, and is at present revising the first European Social Budget, covering the period 1970-1975.

The second Budget, which is still being prepared, will be limited to matters covered by the "social accounts" drawn up by the Statistical Office of the European Communities.

But the Commission intends at the same time to work on extending the scope of the standardized statistics to cover other social matters, such as adult vocational training and low-cost housing.

The second Social Budget will cover the periods 1976-1980 and 1970-1975. In theory, European Social Budgets will be drawn up every two years.

Gist of the Opinion

The Economic and Social Committee adopted unanimously its Opinion on this communication.

The Committee approves the general lines of the memorandum. It (a) urges the Commission to give priority to speeding up work on implementing the European Social Budget, and (b) states that the Commission should have adequate resources to this end.

The Committee makes a number of comments on the field of application of the Budget and on the objectives that are to be assigned to it now and in the future, in the light of the Community's economic and social policies and economic and social goals, and in liaison with medium-term economic planning.

The Committee feels that the data in the European Social Budget should make it a vital tool for analysis prior to decision-making. In particular, it should enable the role and importance of social expenditure (within the framework of the GNP) to be determined in the light of all the relevant information, and should make it possible to take account of the various economic, social, financial, demographic and other factors. The apportionment and increase of GNP must be more selective and take more account of new priorities and aspirations.

The Committee based its Opinion on material prepared by its Section for Social Questions under the chairmanship of Mr HOUTHUYS - Belgium - Workers. The Rapporteur was Mr van RENS - Netherlands - Workers.

2. Employment Policy

Community Work on the Coordination of Employment Policies.

The Economic and Social Committee unanimously adopted an Opinion on the Coordination of National Employment Policy Instruments within the Community. The Opinion, drawn up on the Committee's own initiative, stems from a visit made by Mr Henri CANONGE, Chairman of the Committee, to the German Federal Labour Institute in Nuremberg last November.

It was concluded that closer cooperation between national employment services would be very useful in a whole range of fields, including :

- the application of Community legislation on the freedom of movement for workers, particularly in the sphere of social security;
- the exchange of experience in creating new jobs;
- the regional aspects of employment policy;
- unemployment among young people and women;
- migrant workers;
- frontier workers.

It is interesting to note that at the beginning of February the Economic and Social Committee delivered an Opinion on the present employment situation in the Community. In this Opinion the Council of Ministers was called upon to take urgent measures to combat unemployment. This subject was also raised by British Foreign Secretary, Mr J. CALLAGHAN, at a Council meeting on 1 March 1976, and it was put forward as an item for discussion at the European Council meeting in Luxembourg.

The first point made by the Economic and Social Committee in its Opinion on the coordination of national employment policies is that employment policy instruments were largely established before structural unemployment began to assume such critical proportions throughout the EEC. To cope with the present situation, therefore, these instruments would have to be expanded considerably.

Present unemployment figures would have been even higher had it not been for various factors such as the withdrawal from the labour market of a large number of people temporarily or permanently discouraged by the crisis from looking for work, the return home of many migrant workers from non-member countries, and early retirement schemes in a number of Member States.

The most important shortcomings of previous employment policies were summarized as follows :

- Various national plans for stimulating economic recovery have been marked by disarray, rivalry and contradictions; they have all been based on excessively national - or even regional - considerations which in turn have been strongly influenced by domestic policy factors, without due regard for the Community dimension;

- Some countries have persisted for too long on considering the crisis as strictly "cyclical";
- Employment policy must recognize that one quarter, and in some Member States even one third, of the unemployed are under 25 years of age, and that this cannot simply be attributed to the traditional causes of unemployment amongst young people;
- The Economic and Social Committee took the view that common lines of approach should be followed in defining employment policy and fixing its objectives. Economic growth had to be strong enough to provide a firm foundation for employment policy. Without theorizing it seemed fair to say that employment in the Western economies would only get back to a satisfactory level if a high level of growth was restored. That was a basic fact.

Great attention should also be paid to the following questions :

- the attitude of the young to work;
- the exodus from certain manual jobs, and massive use of labour from non-member countries;
- the growth of the tertiary sector at the expense of the secondary.

All employment policies had of necessity to take account of the new world economic order which was emerging.

It was also necessary to envisage a new international division of labour, and gradual transfers of activities.

The Economic and Social Committee considered that cooperation between the national employment services should initially be concentrated on the following areas.

- greater exchange of information and experience concerning the organization, running and functions of national employment services;
- improvement of the comparability of the statistics and concepts used in individual Member States;
- the European Vacancy Clearance System (SEDOC) should be allowed to play its full role;
- finally, use should be made of the European Social Fund as a prime instrument of employment policy.

The Committee based its Opinion on material prepared by its Section for Social Questions under the chairmanship of Mr HOUTHUYS - Belgium - Workers. The Rapporteur was Mr LAVAL - France - Workers.

3. Institute for Economic Analysis and Research

Setting up a European Community Institute for Economic Analysis and Research

Gist of the Commission's Proposal

The Proposal seeks to establish an autonomous Community body with its own budget. This body is to carry out research and studies in the main spheres of interest of the EEC institutions.

An independent research institute is required because of the ever-increasing complexity of the problems surrounding economic integration and the need to ensure the consistency of Member States' national economic policies. The Commission is first and foremost responsible for day to day administration, and is not effectively in a position to carry out this type of task.

The Institute is to be responsible for investigating issues in connection with the economic integration of the Community from the viewpoint of their major economic and social implications (for instance, economic growth and its impact on integration). In this way, the Institute is to assist in the formulation of scientific data which may be used as a basis for EEC action in the field of economic policy.

Gist of the Opinion

The Economic and Social Committee adopted by a large majority with 2 votes against and 13 abstentions its Opinion on this proposal.

The Committee endorses and supports the Commission's Proposal to set up a European Community Research Institute, but would propose that the official title be "The European Community Institute for Economic and Social Research and Analysis". The Committee thus asks that the proposed Institute emphasize also the social aspects of the problems dealt with.

The three aspects of the Commission's Proposal which the Committee extracted for special consideration were; firstly, the relationship between the existing national research institutes and the proposed European Community Institute; secondly, the basic task of the Institute; and thirdly, the manner in which the Institute's Management Board will determine the Institute's work programme.

On the first point, the Committee sees the Community Institute's relationship with the national research institutes as being one of stimulator, co-ordinator and catalyst.

On the second point, the task of the Institute should be as described by the Commission in Articles 2 and 3 of the Proposal, but should go beyond this and draw conclusions and make suggestions regarding the consistency of the economic and social policies from the point of view of Community economic integration. Confining itself to working hypotheses, the Institute should work out the implications of the various political choices and priorities proposed, particularly with respect to the rate of expansion of Community resources and their distribution and use.

On the third point, the Committee does not seek a place on the Management Board as such; it seeks, rather, to ensure a stronger representation of the social and economic organizations on the Board and to give an Opinion itself annually on the composition of the Institute's work programme.

The Committee based its Opinion on material prepared by its Section for Economic and Financial Questions under the chairmanship of Mr CHARBO - Netherlands - Miscellaneous Activities. The Rapporteur was Mr DE RIDDER - Belgium - Miscellaneous Activities.

4. Regional Policy

The Economic and Social Committee adopted unanimously its Opinion on the :

Regional Development Problems of the Community during the Period 1975/1977 and the Establishment of a Common Regional Policy

The Committee welcomes the Council's decision to establish a Regional Development Fund and a Committee for Regional Policy and strongly supports the efforts to create a common regional policy.

The Committee is opposed to national quotas as a basis for distribution of Fund resources, although it recognizes that a certain flexibility is called for in the initial period. Aid from the Regional Fund should be allocated in accordance with common objective criteria, such as per capita income, migration level and level of unemployment. The criteria must ensure that aid is concentrated in the most needy regions of the Community.

The Committee strongly supports the Commission's efforts to enforce the principle that Community aid should be additional to the national regional development activities and should, therefore, not lead to any reduction of the national efforts in this field.

One of the main objectives of regional development is to maintain or generate economic growth in underdeveloped regions. The Committee, nevertheless, emphasizes that other considerations, such as social and environmental factors, are of equal importance and points to the necessity to tackle the problems of the congested urban areas.

As regards the various means available to regional policy, the Committee sets particular stress on the need to create and maintain basic infrastructure. Infrastructure as such is, however, insufficient to generate economic and social development and must be supplemented by other measures, such as structural reorganization in agriculture and establishment of small- or large-scale enterprises, service or tourist activities.

The Community's Regional Development Fund finances only projects involving the creation of more than ten new jobs. Bearing in mind the particularly high investment/job-creation ratio of small-scale projects, creating less than ten new jobs, the Committee strongly recommends that ways be found to group such projects together so that they may then be eligible for aid.

The Committee finds that improved planning and coordination of the various policies and activities which have a bearing on regional development is a sine qua non for the efficient implementation of regional development programmes. In this connection, the Committee welcomes the initiatives recently taken with regard to the Commission's own services.

The Opinion emphasizes the need for improved participation and influence of regional authorities and professional and social organizations in the planning and execution of regional development. The Committee draws attention to current political and social trends, which unambiguously underscore decentralization of functions and responsibilities in the field of regional development planning and implementation. The Committee invites the Community Institutions to examine the matter and makes several suggestions with a view to improving the present situation.

The Committee based its Opinion on material prepared by its Section for Regional Development under the chairmanship of Mr LAVAL - France - Workers. The Rapporteur was Mr MAHER - Ireland - Various Interests.

5. Sheepmeat

Proposal for a Regulation (EEC) of the Council on the Transitional Common Organization of the Market in Sheepmeat

Gist of the Commission's Proposal

The proposal sets out transitional arrangements paving the way for free movement of mutton and lamb within the Community. The transitional arrangements are to allow the Member States to make the changeover from national arrangements to the common system and will apply for the period 1 January 1976 to 31 December 1977. The latter date is also the expiry date of the transitional period for the accession of the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland to the EEC.

Gist of the Opinion

The Economic and Social Committee adopted by 49 votes in favour, 13 against and 11 abstentions its Opinion on this Proposal.

The Committee takes note of the Commission's aim to improve the structure of the sheepmeat sector, but expresses disappointment that the proposal submitted only concerns three Member States (The United Kingdom, Ireland and France). If implemented, it might lead to certain distortions of trade, which, in turn might be harmful to trade in sheepmeat in other Member States.

The Committee holds the view that it will be impossible to envisage transitional measures to align prices with a view to achieving a single market in sheepmeat, until the principles underpinning the future organization of the market have been defined. These principles are :

- Community preferences;
- a common frontier with regard to non-member countries;
- free movement of goods within the EEC;
- a common market management and price policy;
- the introduction of a policy of modernization of production structures.

The Committee also expresses concern that the proposal fails to consider the importance of the wool sector within the framework of the sheep industry.

The Committee based its Opinion on material prepared by its Section for Agriculture under the chairmanship of Mr EMO CAPODILISTA - Italy - Various Interests. The Rapporteur was Sir Gwilym WILLIAMS - United Kingdom - Various Interests.

6. Tax Exemptions - Means of Transport

Proposal for a Council Directive on Tax Exemptions within the Community for Certain Means of Transport Temporarily Imported

Gist of the Commission's proposal

The purpose of the proposal is to grant tax exemption for certain temporarily imported vehicles, provided that certain conditions are met. The exemption covers taxes payable when the vehicles concerned are purchased, and put on the road. It does not cover taxes attendant upon the actual use of the vehicles, e.g. taxes on fuel, repairs, parking and the use of toll roads.

Under the proposal, residents of one Member State will be able to temporarily import their vehicles into another Member States, if they go to that State for business or other purposes, without having to pay taxes. Private cars used for business purposes may be imported free of tax for a period of six months in any twelve months.

The proposal also includes a special tax exemption in respect of commercial literature and non-marketable samples carried in the temporarily imported vehicle.

Gist of the Opinion

The Economic and Social Committee adopted unanimously its Opinion on this proposal.

The Committee considers that the proposed new provisions mark a significant advance. But until tax systems (particularly VAT) have been aligned throughout the Community it will be impossible to resolve completely the problems arising when means of transportation cross internal Community frontiers.

In the meantime, partial solutions should be introduced - particularly for the rules on repairs and the purchase of new or second-hand vehicles.

The Economic and Social Committee based its Opinion on material prepared by its Section for Industry, Commerce, Crafts and Services under the chairmanship of Mr HEMMER - Luxembourg - Employers. The Rapporteur was Mr DE GRAVE - Belgium - Workers.

7. Tax Exemptions - Personal Goods

Proposal for a Council Directive on Tax Exemptions for Personal Property of Individuals Permanently Imported from another Member State

Gist of the proposal for a directive

The aim of the proposal is to grant exemption from all consumer taxes in the case of used personal property permanently imported by an individual from one Member State into another. The proposal lays down rules covering the import of personal property in cases where ownership or usufruct has been acquired by an individual by inheritance. Personal property moved from one Member State to another following a marriage is also covered by the Proposal.

The proposal sets out certain precautions to be taken in order to prevent individuals from using the provisions contained in the proposal to exploit the differences between the systems of taxation in the various Member States.

Gist of the Opinion

The Economic and Social Committee adopted unanimously its Opinion on this proposal.

The Committee considers that the provisions of the proposal for a directive are a major step towards alignment of taxation, and that this step will have a significant psychological effect on members of the general public.

The provisions are very generous. The Committee therefore trusts that the implementing provisions will be tightly worded so as not to leave loopholes which might lead to abuse of the scheme and cause Member States to withdraw support for the very principle of tax exemptions.

The Committee based its Opinion on material prepared by its Section for Industry, Commerce, Crafts and Services under the chairmanship of Mr HEMMER - Luxembourg - Employers. The Rapporteur was Mr DE GRAVE - Belgium - Workers.

8. Free Zones - Warehousing

Proposal for a Council Directive amending Directive No. 69/74/EEC on the Customs Warehousing Procedure, Directive No. 69/75/EEC on Free Zones and Directive No. 71/235/EEC on the Usual Forms of Handling which may be carried out in Customs Warehouses and in Free Zones

Gist of the Commission's proposal

Article 26 of the Council Directive on the Harmonization of Provisions laid down by Law, Regulation or Administrative Action in respect of Inward Processing, set up a Committee for Customs Processing Arrangements. The aim of the present proposal is to extend the terms of reference of this Committee to include customs warehousing, free zones and the usual forms of handling carried out in such zones and warehouses.

.../...

The Committee for Customs Processing Arrangements consists of representatives of the Member States with a Commission representative as Chairman. The Commission considers that this Committee will be able to show flexibility and to act quickly when differences of approach between the Member States may jeopardize the uniform implementation of the three Directives referred to in the title of the present Directive.

Gist of the Opinion

The Economic and Social Committee adopted unanimously its Opinion on this proposal and approved the proposal, which seeks to extend the terms of reference of the Committee for Customs Processing Arrangements.

The Committee is pleased to see that no additional committee is to be set up for this purpose. The terms of reference of the existing Committee for Customs Processing Arrangements are to be extended to include all processing operations that come under the customs system suspending import charges. This is what the Economic and Social Committee recommended in its Opinion on the free zones system and inward processing.

The Committee trusts that this policy will be continued, and that all customs procedures will gradually be brought within the ambit of a single committee (the final objective being the formulation of a European Customs Code).

The Committee based its Opinion on material prepared by its Section for Industry, Commerce, Crafts and Services under the chairmanship of Mr HEMMER - Luxembourg - Employers. The Rapporteur was Mr MARVIER - France - Various Interests.

9. Measuring systems - Liquids other than water

Proposal for a Council Directive on the Approximation of the Laws of the Member States relating to Measuring Systems for Liquids other than Water.

Gist of the Commission's proposal

The proposal's aim is to remove technical barriers to trade in measuring systems for liquids other than water. It lays down standards of accuracy and checks which have to be passed by such systems before they can receive an EEC approval mark. The systems are defined as "systems whereby any liquid product other than water may be measured as it passes through them", and are used for measuring a large number of products, such as hydrocarbons and food (wine, milk, and so on).

The "optional system of harmonization" has been adopted.

Gist of the Opinion

The Economic and Social Committee adopted unanimously its Opinion on this proposal.

As the Committee has already stated in other Opinions and, more specifically, in its Opinion on the Proposal for a Directive on the Approximation of the Laws of the Member States relating to Meters for Liquids other than Water, it is regrettable that no deadline has been stipulated for transition from "optional" to "total" harmonization. The Committee has always advocated "total" harmonization.

Once the Directive has been adopted and enters into force it will eliminate barriers to trade in the measuring systems concerned. But it will leave distortions of competition resulting from the fact that the Member States have different arrangements as regards responsibility for testing. The Committee considers that pattern approval and initial verification procedures should be aligned as soon as possible.

The Committee based its Opinion on material prepared by its Section for Industry, Commerce, Crafts and Services under the chairmanship of Mr HEMMER - Luxembourg - Employers. The Rapporteur was Mr MARVIER - France - Various Interests.

10. Units of Measurement

Proposal for a Council Directive amending the Council Directive of 18 October 1971 on the Approximation of the Laws of the Member States relating to Units of Measurement.

Gist of the Proposal

The Proposal simply updates Council Directive No. 71/354/EE of 18 October 1971. That Directive stipulated that the position regarding certain units of measurement which were listed in a separate chapter was to be reviewed before 31 December 1977.

In order to take account of Imperial units of measurement the Directive was amended and expanded when the UK, Ireland and Denmark joined the Community. A decision is to be reached on these units by 31 August 1976.

The units of measurement are divided into four chapters :

- Chapter A : Units of measurement whose use is definitively prescribed;
- Chapter B : Units, names and symbols which are to be phased out as soon as possible, and at the latest by 31 December 1977;

- Chapter C : Units, names and symbols which are to be phased out as soon as possible, and at the latest by 31 December 1979;
- Chapter D : Units, names and symbols which are to be phased out as soon as possible but whose position will be reviewed before 31 December 1979.

Gist of the Opinion

The Economic and Social Committee, adopted unanimously its Opinion on this proposal.

While recognizing that the obligations which the proposal will entail are a necessary step on the path towards alignment of the Member States' laws on units of measurement, the Committee considers that an appropriate information campaign is a "sine qua non" if the proposed units of measurement (which will entail radical changes in habits in some Member States) are to gain currency. This applies, in particular, to fairly complex units of measurement. At all events, the Committee would impress upon the Commission (a) the need for, (b) the value of, an information brochure for use, for example, in schools.

The Committee based its Opinion on material prepared by its Section for Industry, Commerce, Crafts and Services under the chairmanship of Mr HEMMER - Luxembourg - Employers. The Rapporteur was Mr CARSTENS - Denmark - Workers.

II. OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES

1. Mr TINDEMANS at the Economic and Social Committee

On 29 March 1976, Mr Leo TINDEMANS, Belgian Prime Minister and author of the European Union Report to the European Council addressed the enlarged Bureau of the EEC Economic and Social Committee.

In his address, Mr TINDEMANS, who was welcomed by the Committee's Chairman, Mr Henri CANONGE, stressed the economic and social aspects of his Report. Afterwards, several Committee members sought further details regarding, among other things, the objectives of European Union, the Report's social, regional and economic policy proposals, and the proposals to reform the Community Institutions.

At the end of this working meeting Mr CANONGE, Committee Chairman, expressed appreciation of the fact that, on the eve of the Luxembourg Summit on 1 and 2 April, Mr TINDEMANS had agreed to talk to the economic and social forces of the Community. Mr CANONGE stressed that the Committee was anxious that Community citizens and their representative organizations should, at all times, be actively involved in the Community decision-making process.

2. Visit from Mr Henri MAYRAS to the Economic and Social Committee

During the March Plenary Session the Committee heard a talk by Mr Henri MAYRAS, first Advocate-General at the Court of Justice of the European Communities. The main topic dealt with was the role, composition and functioning of the Court.

Mr MAYRAS then answered a number of questions put by Members of the Economic and Social Committee. They covered such subjects as migrant workers, the professions, the competition policy and the possibility of giving private parties access to the Court of Justice.

3. Major Trade-Union Delegation visits Economic and Social Committee

As part of a fact-finding visit to the European Institutions, the Federal (National) Executive of the Deutsche Angestellten Gewerkschaft (DAG), the German employees' trade union, was received by Mr Henri CANONGE on 10 March 1976.

Talks centered around the Community's economic prospects, and on drafts currently being worked on the Committee concerning such matters as the co-ordination of company law, including the question of worker representation on the supervisory boards of public limited companies.

4. Study Group on Articles of Precious Metals visits Florence

At the invitation of CONFEDORAFI, a group comprising Mr CHABROL, Mr DE GRAVE and Mr SAVINI visited Florence on 15 and 16 March in connection with preparing the Committee's work on the Proposal for a Council Directive concerning the Approximation of the Laws of the Member States on Articles of Precious Metals.

Several representatives of the economic groups concerned and a spokesman of the Italian Industry Ministry also took part in the visits made to various public institutions and firms which would be particularly affected by the proposed directive.

III. NEW REQUESTS FOR OPINIONS

1. The Council decided to request the Committee for an Opinion on a

Proposal for a Council Regulation on the Harmonization of Certain Social Legislation relating to Road Transport.

2. At the proposal of the Bureau, the Plenary Session decided to draw up an Opinion on :

Specific Action to be taken to Help Young and Elderly Workers and Women returning to Gainful Employment.

IV. PROGRAMME FOR FUTURE WORK OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

139th Plenary Session - May 1976

- Restructuring of inshore fishing industry
- Organizing of the potato market
- Changing the organization of the hop market
- Qualifications/Access to the profession
- Driving Licences
- Revision of the Social Regulation (Transport)
- Repayment of duties
- Public purchasing
- Sound level of cranes
- Vehicles' field of vision
- Check-weighing machines
- Sound level of motorcycles
- Farm tractors
- Marketing of fertilizers
- Company taxation
- Economic situation
- European Export Bank
- Dumping of waste at sea
- Sulphur content of fuel oil
- Development of the social situation

140th Plenary Session - June 1976

- Community R & D policy (Study)
- Nuclear safety (Study)
- Mayonnaise
- Insurance
- Articles in precious metals
- Stocks and shares

- Taxes on the consumption of tobacco
- Community relations with Portugal (Study)
- Health standards (sulphur)

141st Plenary Session - September 1976

- The CAP in the international context
- Railway fares
- Social legislation (barge industry)
- Reference tariffs (barge industry)
- Common rules (road transport)
- Supervision of the market
- Medium-term economic policy programme
- Development aid "fresco"
- Regional policy/unemployment and inflation

V. NEWS OF MEMBERS

Change in the Membership of the Committee's Bureau

The Plenary Session has elected Mr de FERRANTI to the Bureau, replacing Mr HENNIKER-HEATON, who has resigned.

**PUBLICATIONS OBTAINABLE FROM THE ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE**

- | | |
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| 3. The Economic and Social Committee (April 1975)
(A descriptive brochure) 16 p. | Free |
| 4. European Union (July 1975)
(Opinion) 33 p. | Free |
| 5. Progress Report on the Common Agricultural Policy
(February 1975) (Study) 52 p. | Free |
| 6. The Situation of Small and Medium-sized Undertakings in
the European Community (March 1975) (Study) 69 p. | Free |
| 7. Annual Report 1975
62 p. | Free |
| 8. Annual Report 1974
60 p. | Free |
| 9. Annual Report 1973
64 p. | Free |
| 10. Directory (November 1975)
32 p. (list of members) | Free |