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230th PLENARY SESSION

The 230th plenary session of the Economic and Social Committee of the European Communities was held in Brussels, on 30 and 31 October 1985. The Chairman, Mr Gerd Muhr, presided.

This session was attended by Mr Frans Andriessen, Vice-President of the Commission, for the debate on the common agricultural policy and by Mr Claude Cheysson, Commissioner for EC-Latin American relations and Mr Peter Sutherland, Commissioner for competition policy.

Opinions adopted

1. THE FUTURE OF THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY

(COM(85) 333 final)

Gist of the Commission document

The Commission presents a certain number of fundamental options for the perspectives of the common agricultural policy. The document is not intended to prejudice the final conclusions which the Commission will reach; the institutions and other economic and social interest groups in the Community have been invited to submit their own comments on the document.

The basic problem facing the Community today is how to maintain a sufficient agricultural workforce without wasting economic and financial resources. The Commission document outlines a number of options regarding agricultural production and market outlets, especially where cereals are concerned, as this is the sector most urgently in need of reform. It takes into consideration the effect of price policy on farmers' incomes, the structural and economic differences in the agricultural sectors of the various Member States and the challenge posed by the forthcoming enlargement of the Community to include Spain and Portugal.

The Commission suggests that the following issues be considered:
the role of agriculture in the protection of the environment;
the integration of agriculture in regional development;
direct income support measures in the context of a restrictive price policy.

Resumé of speech by Mr Andriessen

Mr Andriessen, Vice-President of the Commission, described the problems currently confronting the CAP and stressed the need for a change in approach.

He stated that the CAP's basic aims were to (a) maintain the market and (b) protect farm incomes, particularly on small family farms.

Referring to the surpluses in such products as butter, milk, wine, beef and veal and cereals, Mr Andriessen stressed that instruments must be found to prevent the accumulation of such stocks. The Commission's Green Paper proposed a set of measures to bring production under control: a restrictive and cautious pricing policy; application of the co-responsibility levy; emphasis on quality combined with lower production; exploration of new markets for surplus stocks. None the less, it was difficult to find an answer to this problem. The present gap between available funds and the amount the Commission considered necessary was 173 million ECU, in a total budget of 21 000 million ECU. This figure did not take account of a possible fall in the dollar and exchange rate variations, with their repercussions on farm produce prices on the world market. That would place an additional financial strain on the EAGGF. At all events, an increase in the budget would not provide a solution.

Mr Andriessen stressed that fundamental reforms were needed to control the production of products of which there was a surplus.

Gist of the Committee Opinion¹

The redeployment of budget funds, more satisfactory income distribution and an improved supply of products in which there is a shortage in the Community, are the main demands formulated by the Economic and Social Committee in its Opinion adopted by a large majority with 2 votes against and 3 abstentions.

¹ CES 930/85.

The Committee regrets the Commission Green Paper's failure to give details of the positive or negative effects of the recent CAP measures, or to provide estimates of the effects of its proposals.

The Committee, however, acknowledges the need for a new strategy which would take account of:

the need to ensure as far as possible that the agricultural policy reform is comprehensive, this being the only way to guarantee maximum fairness in the allocation of resources and the sacrifices which this involves;

the need to achieve the objective of eliminating regional imbalances; the need for measures which would provide new jobs as well as income support for surplus workers, giving particular attention to seasonal workers;

the need for economic rationalization;

EEC budgetary constraints;

the need to make better use of the potential offered by the Community's internal market;

the need to ensure that total EEC exports include a reasonable proportion of farm products;

the scale on which processed products are exported;

consumer demand for quality products;

balanced social and population structures in farming and rural areas;

preservation of family farms and farming jobs;

protection of the environment.

The Committee foresees, however, that the requisite policy of economic stringency and its inherent side effects will have serious social consequences.

The problem is one of finding ways of using EAGGF funds differently and more effectively.

The Committee therefore calls for:

the redeployment of budget funds to achieve soundly balanced production;

more satisfactory income distribution to help preserve the farming activities on which many parts of the Community so depend;

an improved supply of products in which the Community has a substantial deficit and which are imported from other industrial countries;



Marc Deville. Photo News.

At the plenary session, from left to right: Mr Louet, Secretary-General of the ESC, Mr Muhr, Chairman of the ESC, Mr Andriessen, Vice-President of the Commission, his Chef de Cabinet and Mr Noordwal and Mr Emo Capodilista, the two Vice-Chairmen of the ESC.

- effective action to contain and then to reduce the costs of factors of production;
- the strengthening of regional policy and the promotion of multisectoral development programmes;
- a campaign against the use of polluting agricultural techniques.

This Opinion was drawn up in the light of the paper produced by the Section for Agriculture, chaired by Mr Lauga (France — Various interests). The rapporteur was Mr Zinkin (United Kingdom — Employers).

2. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE COMMUNITY AND LATIN AMERICA

Guidelines for the strengthening of relations between the Community and Latin America (COM(84) 105 final)

Gist of the Commission Communication

The Commission's 'guidelines' are based on the view that, given the grave crisis that is threatening political stability in Latin America, the Community should strengthen its relations with that continent; the Community's commitment so far has been only modest both in institutional terms and as regards trade and development policy.

The countries in question have been disappointed by the Community, which they reproach for often being 'too critical' concerning respect of human rights and too lacking in generosity in other areas.

In view of the diverse national situations, the Commission advocates different approaches for the individual countries or groups of countries, and, since one can hardly expect measures in the areas of trade (saturated Community markets) and development aid (budget), it proposes that efforts be directed towards:

- transfers of resources to alleviate the most serious balance-of-payments situations;
- industrial cooperation, involving joint research projects, arrangements for the transfer of technology and training measures;
- energy cooperation, to enable Latin American countries to share the experience of the Community Member States with a view to the rational use of energy; this is to be achieved through action in the areas of training, information and transfer of know-how;
- vocational training, for which greater resources should be made available to enable a structured policy to be pursued.

Finally, the Commission would like cultural cooperation with Latin American countries to be developed.

Resumé of speech by Mr Cheysson

After having outlined the various agreements concluded between the EEC and the countries of Latin America, Mr Cheysson, Commissioner, drew attention to two new elements. The first concerned the accession of Spain and Portugal to the EEC. Mr Cheysson said that this would lead to stronger links between the Community and the countries of Latin America, particularly in the field of cultural exchanges. The second positive element, in the view of the Commissioner, was the restoration of democracy in a number of Latin American countries.

Turning to economic questions, Mr Cheysson said that in 1984 the EEC's trade balance with Latin America had been in deficit to the tune of 11 000 million ECU. Imports from Latin America were worth 24 000 million ECU and exports to Latin America 13 000 million ECU.

Mr Cheysson went on to say that Latin America's foreign debt stood at more than 360 000 million dollars. One of the possible solutions mentioned by Mr Cheysson was debt rescheduling. However, the Commissioner added that the policy of austerity which accompanied rescheduling was unbearable if it was not accompanied by other policies holding out prospects of growth. Latin America, continued the Commissioner, was also severely affected by other problems, particularly current interest rates, which were an effective means of discouraging investment. Current interest rates were holding back growth and helping to increase indebtedness.

Mr Cheysson went on to say that the indebtedness problem was a matter for the banks, but restructuring of the debt and a means of 'foreseeing' exchange-rate fluctuations were possibilities.

Mr Cheysson finally drew attention to the role of the US economic and fiscal policies and their effects on the economic and financial policies of the Latin American countries.

Gist of the Committee Opinion¹

'Any policy towards Latin America will have to take account of (a) the wide range of political, social and economic situations in the sub-continent, and (b) the diversity of development levels.' This observation was made by the Economic and Social Committee of the European

¹ CES 931/85.



Marc Deville. Photo News

Mr Cheysson, Member of the Commission, addressing the Committee during the plenary session. On his right, Mr Muhr, Chairman of the ESC, and Mr Louet, Secretary-General.

Communities in its Opinion adopted by a large majority with 8 votes against and 7 abstentions. The ESC favours an individual or regional rather than a global approach and calls in its Opinion for closer ties between Latin America and the Community.

Crippled by foreign debt, Latin America's development potential is held back, and even totally paralysed. Certain factors, such as the international recession and an over-valued dollar aggravate this state of affairs. In the hope of improving this situation and helping the poorest of these countries and the leaders of newly-fledged democracies that have inherited a heavy debt burden, the ESC appeals for more action, under the aegis of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, to reschedule debts. It also advocates a detailed country-by-country and case-by-case analysis of the origin of the debt (debtors, creditors and items financed). However, the ESC points out that the threat of unilateral suspension of debt-servicing could have disastrous effects on the debtor countries themselves.

The enlargement of the Community to embrace Portugal and Spain will, in the ESC's view, give fresh impetus to trade, economic and political relations and cooperation with the Latin American countries, besides providing a more elaborate institutional framework.

The long-term aim should be development cooperation rather than aid. This cooperation should focus on improving and stepping up investment — with a view to the creation of jobs — and on training as many people as possible. The Community should also join in setting up an international institutional framework for protection against non-commercial risks. Bilateral agreements should include clauses providing for the free movement of capital (including its repatriation).

In the context of industrial cooperation, the ESC feels that the first step should be to remove obstacles to joint ventures. For farm products, stabilization mechanisms could be set up on the basis of multilateral international trade agreements on prices and market shares, in order to improve export earnings and to increase production in deficit countries. As regards regional cooperation, the ESC would welcome the organization of farm production on a complementary basis to enable individual Latin American countries to use their own produce to offset food shortages in neighbouring countries.

In the social sphere the ESC stresses that all Community agreements with the Latin American countries should include clauses on minimum labour standards and in particular human rights. It calls for a firm Community stand *vis-à-vis* countries which violate human or trade union rights.

This Opinion was drawn up in the light of the paper produced by the Section for External Relations, chaired by Mr Zinkin (United Kingdom — Employers). The rapporteur was Mrs Bredima (Greece — Employers).

3. 14th REPORT ON COMPETITION POLICY

Gist of the Commission document

As is the custom, the annual Commission report on competition policy analyses the latest developments in this area, noting that it has had to face up to the economic problems besetting the Community. The Commission's aim in this situation has been to link competition policy with the other policies working towards economic recovery in the Community. To this end, the Commission has sought to make its competition policy more consistent, more universal, and more in touch with economic realities.

Greater consistency was sought both within competition policy itself and in its relation to other Community policies. The quest for internal consistency is reflected in the mobilization of different branches of competition policy to promote structural change. Two examples of this approach may be given. The first covers research, development and innovation. Here the Commission was involved simultaneously in preparing a block exemption regulation for agreements on joint research and development work and establishing a clear framework for government aid for research and development activities. Both actions seek to create a more favourable climate for projects that raise the technological level and innovative capacity of Community industry, without removing the stimulus of competition.

Consistency with policies aimed at creating a more integrated internal Community market was also a constant concern of the Commission. To this end, it has constantly fought against cartels which divide the Community market among participants. When adopting block exemption regulations, such as the recent ones relating to research and development and motor vehicle distribution agreements, the Commission has taken care that they cannot affect the unity of the market or the maintenance of competition.

A prominent feature of the past four years' work has been the effort to increase the credibility of competition policy by simplifying and speeding up the decision-making procedures. This was reflected in the adoption of an unprecedented number of block exemption regulations, in the introduction of a streamlined 'opposition' procedure in some of these regulations, and in the wider use of administrative 'comfort' letters. These procedural changes were accompanied by measures to

increase the safeguards for the rights of the defence. A Hearing Officer was appointed to supervise oral hearings, representatives of firms were given greater access to the Commission's files, and the rules for on-the-spot investigations were clarified. In the field of State aids, internal procedures were changed to speed up the processing of minor cases. Resources were concentrated on cases having the greatest potential impact on competition.

The drive to increase relevance to economic realities was also seen in the work on improving the transparency of competition policy. Notices and definitions were published on the criteria to be met in order to come within the terms of a block exemption. These increase legal certainty and serve as a guide to the kind of future conduct on cooperation or government aid that is compatible with the common market. In this way competition policy was able to play a greater preventive role, instead of being limited to the simple approval or prohibition of both restrictive practices and State aids.

Turning to measures which have proved unsuccessful, the report mentions the proposed merger control regulation, where the Commission's perseverance has still not brought any results, after 12 years and constant revisions. In air transport too, the lack of progress towards a liberalization of the market is a clear setback for competition policy, of which consumers are keenly aware.

In other cases, practical implementation difficulties continue to mar the effectiveness of Community action, for example in State aids.

The report stresses the need to advance competition policy in a number of directions simultaneously. The aim is still to promote the structural adjustment and increase the competitiveness of the Community economy, by maintaining the stimulus of competition. The means for reaching this end must be determined on the basis of a number of priorities:

- the Commission's policy on agreements and practices worthy of exemption under Article 85(3), especially where they promote economic or technical progress, must be made clearer, particularly by means of notices;

- decisions on State aids and in anti-trust cases must be systematically based on an economic analysis of competitive conditions on the relevant markets — within the Community and if necessary worldwide;

- competition policy must also be made more effective through closer cooperation with the Member States, whether through the application of Community anti-trust law by national courts or in the application of the State aid rules, Article 93(2);



Marc Deville. Photo News

Mr Sutherland, Member of the Commission, welcomed by Mr Muhr, ESC Chairman, when he arrived to attend the plenary session.

finally, competition policy must be developed in conjunction with other Community policies regarding the creation of a unified market, the approximation of laws (with particular reference to Article 101 of the Treaty) and the implementation of other fundamental principles of the Treaty.

Resumé of speech by Mr Sutherland

Mr Sutherland, Member of the Commission, said that both the Economic and Social Committee and the European Parliament have consistently emphasized the importance of creating an internal market and the accompanying harmonization measures. 'We obviously wholeheartedly support this sentiment; the fact is that competition can and does in many ways help to unify the market. In the State aids sector, there is also a clear link with market unification. Aids which support national production, those which artificially encourage exports to other Member States or any other interventions which can only be seen as a beggar thy neighbour attitude, are obviously incompatible with the notion of a common market, and the Commission uses its powers accordingly.'

Competition policy has also an important role to play in improving the competitiveness of European industry. The philosophy on which all our actions are based is that a healthy competitive structure permits the optimal allocation of resources, improves efficiency and stimulates the development of new products. Turning to relations with third countries, Mr Sutherland recalled that the Committee had underlined the need for an international approach to competition policy and the importance of free world trade. 'I can fully concur with this point of view and am convinced that protectionism is intrinsically bad,' he said. 'I can assure you that European competition policy does not evolve in a vacuum; international aspects are taken into account both in determining our own policies and in the context of the various international forums in which the Commission has a voice.' An important aspect of competition policy was its universality, in other words, the rules apply to all sectors of economic activity, not just manufacturing or distribution, but also the various services and the transport sector. The Commission will use the powers at its disposal, for example with respect to air transport, he concluded.

Gist of the Committee Opinion¹

In an Opinion, adopted unanimously with 11 abstentions, the Committee stresses the need to preserve machinery ensuring fair competition,

¹ CES 932/85.

which it sees as a *sine qua non* for implementation of industrial, trade, monetary, and even fiscal and social policies. A healthy competition system is also one of the terms to be invoked as a reciprocal clause in the Community's negotiations with non-member countries in accordance with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trades (GATT), endorsing the key principle that the maintenance of fair competition will help firms to become more competitive.

After considering (a) the Commission's efforts in the sphere of competition policy, (b) the success or failure of specific Commission initiatives, and (c) the Commission's failure to act on certain of its Opinions, the ESC turns to the matter of public aids at a time when all Member States are constantly under pressure to concede national aids.

The ESC accepts that the effectiveness of competition policy will be boosted if aids subsequently held to be unlawful, or detected after failure to supply notification, are refunded or recovered. Such refunds should be accompanied by a fine since the financial aid received by a beneficiary is a substantial cash advantage.

On the Commission's new approach, the ESC recommends that attention be given to framing terms conducive to free competition in the case of franchising, transfer of 'know-how', issuing of licences, copyright and technology transfer, as well as preferential relations between 'parent' firms and joint subsidiaries.

The same considerations prompt the ESC to recommend specific proposals for the book trade.

This Opinion was drawn up in the light of the paper produced by the Section for Industry, Commerce, Crafts and Services, chaired by Mr de Wit (Netherlands — Employers). The rapporteur was Mr Mourgues (France — Workers).

4. ENERGY OPTIONS (Information report)

Energy options: Environmental constraints and their implications for Community energy policy

Gist of the information report¹

The basic conditions for the economic and social life of our society are an adequate supply of energy and a satisfactory protection of the environment. To resolve the ecological problems resulting from energy

¹ CES 773/84 fin.

production and utilization, while at the same time ensuring a good supply to a fast-expanding world population, the Community must adopt a strategic approach right now founded on a common policy for energy and the environment. One of its basic aims: to introduce the horizontal integration of energy systems so as to get as near as possible to the ideal situation of zero emissions. This is the main recommendation in the report.

The Committee maintains that thanks to techniques currently available or soon to be introduced, and the size of world resources, it will be possible to provide energy for the 8 000 million people who it is estimated will be alive in the year 2030. The key question therefore is not supply as such, but the ecological cost of energy.

For some years now, various measures have been taken at Community level aimed at not only combating but also preventing scourges such as air pollution (particularly acid rain) or pollution of the sea by oil. The Committee considers that these steps are highly positive, especially the Community's third action programme on energy, the main aim of which is to incorporate the safeguarding of the environment into other policies.

However, the Committee urges that these measures be stepped up now in a big way, as the work involved is long and hard and the effects of it can only be felt in the long term.

The Committee thinks it is vital that from now on energy and environmental policies should be reconciled harmoniously with each other.

It proposes that present production, exploitation and utilization techniques be improved without delay, so that they are available 10 or 20 years from now. R & D must also be stimulated, so that one can identify the harmful effects that emissions caused by energy production and utilization have on the environment, understand how they work and assess their impact.

Many technical, legal and political possibilities are already available for trying to take account of the two interests at stake, but if fruitful results are to be obtained, the Committee strongly recommends that a much more general strategic objective be defined. What is needed is to fix priorities with the sole aim of approaching the ideal threshold of zero emissions when producing and using energy. The three guiding ideas of these new energy systems are:

Break down and purify fossil inputs such as coal, heavy oil or the residual oils which will increasingly be used in the future.

Move away from the present vertically-integrated energy systems towards horizontal integration; this will be made possible by breaking down fuel inputs and enabling fuels to be interchanged in the light of consumer demand.

Gear production to consumer needs, and particularly the production of liquid hydrocarbons such as methanol. It is felt that towards the year 2030 synthesized liquid hydrocarbons derived from solid fuels such as coal will be almost as important economically as oil is today.

The report was presented to the Economic and Social Committee by Mr von der Decken (Germany — Various interests). The Committee decided unanimously to forward the report to the Council and the Commission.

5. COMMUNITY SHARED-COST RESEARCH PROGRAMMES (Information report)

Background to the information report

Having been asked over the past year or so for a whole series of Opinions on the Commission's research action programmes, which it implements through the shared-cost research 'system', the Section for Energy and Nuclear Questions thought it was about time to look closely into the system itself in order to find out whether in its view this is the best way for the Community to implement its research strategy in terms of efficiency and value for money.

In drawing up this information report, the Section set out:

to inform members of the Committee of the views of contractors who carry out shared-cost research programmes jointly with the Commission;

to collate and analyse suggestions from these contractors on how value for effort and money could be improved and to put these forward with the support of the Section;

to assist members of the Committee to place shared-cost research work in its proper context in the research policy of the Community and to be better informed to assess further communications and proposals for research and development from the Commission;

to provide a sound base from which the Committee can, if requested by the Bureau, prepare further studies/reports or Opinions.

The Section's information report, even in its draft form, has already engendered considerable interest, not only in Commission circles (the

work has been done with the willing cooperation of the Commission, notably DGs III, VI, XII, XIII and XVII), but also from government quarters. Indeed, the Commission's own Memorandum 'Towards a European Technology Community' (COM(85) 350 final) of 25 June 1985 prepared for the Milan European Council Summit meeting made reference to the de Normann report, highlighting the report's suggestions for setting up in the Community a network of centres of excellence recognized and supported by the Community.

Gist of the Committee report¹

The ESC criticizes the lack of a Community research policy. It feels that in the absence of such a policy and of a consistent strategy, research programmes cannot be selected efficiently. The ESC calls for the creation of a Community research register and of a central collecting point for all research ideas. Contact between those involved would be made easier if each Member State were to set up a Research and Development Ministry.

The ESC feels that contact between universities, research institutes and industry is a prerequisite for true cooperation. It strongly stresses the interdependence of these areas and the need for coordination, which is crucial for optimum effectiveness. The research plan should be established in consensus with industry.

If the Community is to compete with North America and the Far East, the Member States will have to pool their research. The coordination of the activities of national centres of excellence, which will help to ensure that joint research is better organized, is a step in this direction. Ultimately these centres of excellence in the Member States could be approved for certain areas of work without autonomous developments at Member State level being impaired.

Joint R&D should be financed on a cost-sharing basis, with the Member States and the participating firms and institutions sharing the financial risks and benefits. One problem area highlighted by the ESC is the role played by workers with regard to decision-making in the field of new technology. The involvement of worker representatives in this process must be ensured.

The ESC also stresses the importance of clear-cut criteria for determining which work could be performed by the Community and which areas should be reserved for shared-cost contracts. According to the ESC, the Community comes off second best in competition with the

¹ CES 423/84 fin.

rest of the world largely because research projects in the last two decades have been badly planned.

Existing national centres of excellence should be developed and coordinated. The Commission should therefore establish a centre of excellence of its own to serve as a clearing house.

The report was prepared by the Section for Energy and Nuclear Questions and the plenary session decided unanimously to forward it to the Council and Commission. The rapporteur was Mr John A. de Normann (UK — Employers).

6. NEW ENERGY OBJECTIVES

(COM(85) 243 final)

Background

The Energy Council last agreed on Community energy objectives (for 1990) in 1980. It asked the Commission, then, to monitor progress towards these goals.

In 1984 the Commission reviewed Member States' energy policies. This review clearly indicated that there had been a considerable improvement in the Community's overall energy situation and that the 1990 objectives are now almost certain to be achieved.

In Commission document (85) 245 final, a new set of Community goals is proposed — this time for 1995. Annexed to it is a draft Council resolution on new Community policy goals and the convergence of Member States' policies.

The Council is being asked this time to adopt both quantitative goals (e.g. a further 25% improvement in energy efficiency — 1995 on 1983) and what are termed 'horizontal' goals (e.g. goals common to all sectors, concerning external relations, the internal energy market, energy security, energy pricing, environment, regional development and energy technology).

The quantitative or sectoral objectives proposed by the Commission for 1995, except for the last one, are that:

there be at least a 25% improvement in energy efficiency (1995 on 1983);

less than one-third of energy consumption should be met by oil imports;

the market share of natural gas be maintained and, if possible, increased;

the market share of solid fuels be maintained and, if possible, increased;

not more than 10% of electricity be generated from oil and gas;

approximately 40% of electricity be generated from nuclear power;

there be a tripling in new and renewable energy production by the end of the century.

The Committee gave its Opinion on the proposed '1990 objectives' on 21 November 1979 (OJ C 72, 24.3.1980) (rapporteur: Mr Margot).

Gist of the Committee Opinion¹

The European Community's energy objectives have been under discussion at the Economic and Social Committee. Which areas of power generation should be expanded and which areas should be cut back? How can Europe's dependence on imported oil be reduced? What importance should be attached to nuclear energy in the coming years? These are some of the most important questions that are being asked.

In the Committee's view, Europe's dependence on external factors calls for a sustained effort. 'Public opinion and policy-makers must be constantly reminded that there are still risks inherent in the present energy situations.'

There is a danger — according to the Committee — that the rather positive overall picture will lead to undue optimism, for which there is no factual basis at the moment. All the same, the Community has already achieved the targets set for 1990: total energy consumption fell by 6% between 1973 and 1983 despite the rise in GDP, oil's share of this total could be reduced to slightly less than 50% over the same period and oil imports were cut by half to 32% thanks to the use of natural gas, nuclear energy and solid fuels as replacements. Nuclear energy's share has increased fourfold in the last 10 years, thus keeping pace with the Community's objective of a 40% share for this sector. A further 10% of energy requirements is to be generated from solid fuels (i.e. coal).

In order that Member States' supplies are secure greater efforts should be made to develop and commercialize new and renewable energy sources. These sources displacement of conventional fuels is likely to be tripled by the end of the century.

¹ CES 929/85.

However, the Community's target of a 25% reduction in energy requirements over the next 10 years does not seem to the Committee to be realistic.

According to the Committee, Europe's dependence on oil imports poses two problems. Firstly, the bilateral relations between Member States which export oil or have other energy resources are not adequate. And secondly, in view of the likely decline in domestic production in, for instance, the natural gas sector, the Community may be forced to rely on supply contracts with non-Community countries. Trade within the Community in gas and electricity must be increased, and oil imports should be reduced to less than one-third of total requirements by switching over to natural gas.

Greater support must also be given to the use of indigenous solid fuels for electricity generation, though, consideration must be given in this connection to the economic possibilities, the social component (i.e. the employment situation) and the requisite environmental measures.

On the other hand, the ESC is critical of the coordination of energy and environmental objectives, which so far has left something to be desired.

In conclusion, the Committee stresses that a Community energy policy should not overlook the special problems facing Member States. However, Europe must provide more stimulus and guidance than in the past *vis-à-vis* energy-producing non-Community countries and Member States.

This Opinion was drawn up in the light of the paper produced by the Section for Energy and Nuclear Questions, chaired by Mr Romoli (Italy — Employers). The rapporteur was Mr Margot (Belgium — Various interests).

7. MARINE NAVIGATION AID SYSTEMS

Proposal for a Council decision amending Decision 82/887/EEC adopting a concerted action project for the European Economic Community in the field of shore-based marine navigation aid systems (COM(85) 354 final)

Gist of the Commission proposal

In its decision of 13 December 1982, the Council adopted a concerted action research project (known as 'COST 301') in the field of shore-based marine navigation aid systems. This project's aim is to improve the organization and planning of maritime traffic so as to minimize

the risks of vessels colliding, running aground or obstructing each other, and hence to boost maritime safety and prevent marine and coastal pollution. A further aim to the project is to study maximum advantage of users (sailors, shipowners, governments, administrations, port authorities, research and rescue services, etc.).

In addition to the Member States of the Community, four other countries (Finland, Sweden, Norway and Spain) are taking part in the COST research project under a cooperation agreement signed in 1983.

Council Decision 82/887/EEC provides for this COST concerted action to last three years, namely from 1 January 1983 to 31 December 1985, and estimates the total financing at 2.1 million ECU.

However, for reasons connected with (a) procedure and (b) participation and organization (e.g. greater participation than expected in all the various subprogrammes and the need to back certain programmes by tests and research so as to check results), the initial three-year period is now proving insufficient. Here the Commission points out that the operations already carried out have involved considerable investment and that it would be regrettable to curtail, or even cancel, their effects by halting work before its completion.

In this proposal the Commission is therefore requesting the Council to extend the concerted action by a further year, i.e. until 31 December 1986. Owing to the additional financial burden — merely to cover programme coordination — inherent in this extension, the Commission is also proposing that the Community contribution be increased from 2.1 million ECU to 2.3 million ECU.

Gist of the Committee Opinion¹

The Committee adopted its Opinion unanimously. It approves the Commission's proposal for extending the deadline for the completion of the COST 301 research programme and providing it with extra money with a view to improving maritime safety and preventing marine and coastal pollution.

This Opinion was drawn up in the light of the paper produced by the Section for Transport and Communications, chaired by Mr Delourme (Belgium — Workers). The rapporteur was Mr Bonety (France — Workers).

¹ CES 928/85.

8. HINTERLAND-SEAPORT TRANSPORT

Proposal for a Council directive amending the first Council Directive of 23 July 1962 on the establishment of common rules for certain types of carriage of goods by road between Member States (carriage to or from a Community seaport of goods imported or exported by sea)

Proposal for a Council Regulation (EEC) amending Regulation (EEC) No 3568/83 as regards the liberalizing of the rate-fixing system for carriage to or from a Community seaport of goods imported or exported by sea

Proposal for a Council Directive on the organization of the markets for the carriage to or from a Community seaport of goods imported or exported by sea

Gist of the Commission document

The Commission document starts from the premise that the conditions under which EEC seaports compete with each other vary from one port to another. The differences cover not only the characteristics peculiar to each port (geographical location, the range of services offered, and quality and price considerations) but also the situation with regard to inland transport between the port in question and industrial or commercial locations.

The Commission's proposal also addresses itself to the second source of distortions of competition, i.e. the system governing inland transport to or from Community seaports of goods imported or exported by sea. Differences exist in respect of both the formation of rates and access to the market. For example, a German road haulier taking on a load in Germany will have to charge his customer a compulsory tariff (RKT) which is higher and more systematically monitored than when the load is destined for a Benelux seaport. At the same time, the carriage of goods to and from certain seaports of the Community is exempted from all international quotas, whereas capacity for the carriage of goods to and from other seaports is limited.

The Commission wishes to change this situation (a) by removing quotas for the carriage in question, and (b) by ensuring that rate-fixing is on a free market basis (no compulsory system of tariffs). To achieve this, the Commission proposes three separate pieces of legislation:

a directive amending the first Council Directive and exempting certain types of carriage of goods by road between Member States from any quota system;

a regulation amending Council Regulation (EEC) No 3568/83 of 1 December 1983 on the fixing of rates for the carriage of goods by road between Member States;

a directive requiring Member States to amend their national legislation in order to exempt from any quota system and any compulsory tariff system inland freight transport (by rail, road or inland waterway) to or from seaports which is not covered by the two amendments to Community law indicated above.

Gist of the Committee Opinion¹

In its Opinion, adopted unanimously, the Committee takes the view that the Commission proposals could contribute to greater consistency and integration potential in the Community transport sector.

However, it has certain doubts as to whether, on the way to achieving a common transport market, all the necessary measures are really available to nip in the bud any possible negative effects of the proposals, (e.g. misinvestment, unwanted concentration, bad working conditions, lack of transport services in some regions). Its agreement in principle is therefore subject to some reservations.

This Opinion was drawn up in the light of the paper produced by the Section for Transport and Communications, chaired by Mr Delourme (Belgium — Workers). The rapporteur was Mr Binnenbruck (Germany — Employers).

9. COMBINED TRANSPORT/INLAND WATERWAY AND OWN-ACCOUNT TRANSPORT

Proposal for a Council directive amending Directive 75/130/EEC on the establishment of common rules for certain types of combined transport of goods between Member States (COM(85) 211 final)

Gist of the Commission document

Council Directive 75/130/EEC removed all quotas and authorizations with regard to combined road/rail transport of goods between Member States. Council Directive 82/603/EEC amended the above mentioned directive by extending its scope to include transport by inland waterway of containers of 20 feet or more. Directive 82/603/EEC called upon the

¹ CES 926/85.

Member States to remove all quotas and authorizations applied to initial and final road sections within a radius of 50 km as the crow flies from the inland waterway port of loading or unloading.

In view of the ongoing development of combined transport over the last few years the Commission now proposes a second extension of the field of application of Directive 75/130/EEC so as to permit improved utilization of the possibilities provided by the various techniques. The proposed extension covers the transport by specially adapted barges of lorries, semi-trailers (with or without tractors), trailers and swap bodies (detachable superstructure units) from one inland waterway port to another (ro-ro transport).

The Commission also proposes the extension of the liberalization zone around inland waterway ports for initial and final road sections from a radius of 50 km to 150 km. This extension is justified on the grounds that for optimum combined transport management authorizations and quotas in respect of initial and final road journeys must be removed throughout the whole economic catchment areas concerned.

The third aim of the Commission's proposals is to facilitate the road haulage sections of own-account combined transport operations. The Commission considers that the recipient or forwarding firms should be authorized to carry out the initial or final road haulage operation to bring the goods to or from the nearest appropriate loading/unloading point using vehicles belonging to them.

Finally, in another move designed to boost combined transport, the Commission proposes to authorize initial or final road haulage sections of combined transport operations on days and during periods during which long-distance road haulage is not normally permitted.

Gist of the Committee Opinion¹

The Committee unanimously adopted its Opinion on this subject.

As the issues dealt with in the Commission's proposals are separate, the ESC is issuing its views separately on each one.

The ESC welcomes the proposed extension of the application of the rules on combined transport by inland waterway to cover lorries, semi-trailers (with or without tractor), trailers and swap bodies.

The ESC considers that the proposed extension of the liberalization zone around inland waterway ports for initial and final road journeys

¹ CES 927/85.

to a radius of 150 km could seriously disrupt the development of the transport market from both an economic and social point of view. A less drastic change would be preferable, with the liberalization zone being set at a radius of 100 km for a new period of several years.

As regards the facilitation of final road-haulage operations in own-account combined transport, the ESC is of the opinion that however much the Commission may wish to see an extension of combined transport, such an extension must not be brought about by making fundamental changes to the definition of own-account transport at the expense of professional hauliers.

Finally, the ESC rejects the proposed exemption of initial and final road sections of combined transport operations from bars imposed on conventional road transport on certain days and at certain periods. In its view, the proposed exemption could, amongst other things, adversely affect the costs of combined transport operators. There might also be unforeseen social consequences.

This Opinion was drawn up in the light of the paper produced by the Section for Transport and Communications, chaired by Mr Delourme (Belgium — Workers). The rapporteur was Mr Querleux (France — Employers).

10. WASTE OILS

Proposal for a Council directive amending Directive 75/439/EEC on the disposal of waste oils (COM(84) 757 final)

Gist of the proposal for a directive

The Commission proposal seeks to amend certain provisions of Directive 75/439/EEC of 16 June 1975 on the disposal of waste oils.

Certain problems have arisen in connection with the application of this directive, the most important being:

- inadequate collection;
- uncontrolled burning of some waste oils;
- the increasing difficulties facing the regeneration industry in certain Member States.

The Commission plans to tackle these problems by means of a series of measures aimed in particular at:

- ensuring more efficient collection of waste oils and tightening up the checks in this area;

turning these oils to greater advantage through regeneration, which enables energy savings to be made;

prohibiting the burning of waste oils in certain installations that do not meet the technical and economic requirements laid down in the directive;

excluding from the scope of the directive waste synthetic oils, which are in future to be disposed of in accordance with the provisions of the directives on waste and PCBs/PCTs.

Gist of the Committee Opinion¹

The ESC adopted the Opinion unanimously with 2 abstentions. It supports the Commission's proposal in the hope that a revised directive on waste oil disposal can be implemented and applied more effectively in the Member States.

However, it is doubtful whether giving priority to regeneration over combustion is the answer, as experience has shown that, as matters stand at present, it cannot be completely ruled out that recycled oil may be polluted by poisonous substances.

This Opinion was drawn up in the light of the paper produced by the Section for Protection of the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Affairs, chaired by Mrs Heuser (Germany — Various interests). The rapporteur was Mr Löw (Germany — Employers).

11. HARMONIZATION OF TAXES ON ALCOHOL

Proposal for a Council directive laying down certain rules on indirect taxes which affect the consumption of alcoholic drinks

Proposal for a Council directive concerning the harmonization of excise duties on fortified wine and similar products (COM(85) 150 final and COM(85) 151 final)

Gist of the Commission documents

Laying down of certain rules on indirect taxes on alcoholic drinks

This proposal takes account of the fact that Council discussions on the Commission's proposal for a harmonized excise duty on wine have

¹ CES 933/85.

shown that it is premature to expect Council agreement in this field. It is therefore proposed to establish a minimum set of Community rules concerning the rates of VAT applicable to alcoholic beverages. The reason for doing so is that the harmonization of excise duties can achieve the goals of tax neutrality and equal conditions of competition only if it is accompanied by a corresponding harmonization of VAT. It is accordingly provided that, within each Member State, the same rate of VAT is to apply to the beverages falling into each of the following three major categories: wine and beer, intermediate beverages, spirits. These rules are matched by standstill measures whose aim is to promote a higher degree of harmonization later on.

Harmonization of excise duties on fortified wine and similar products

The proposal replaces the Commission's original proposal on harmonization of excise duties on alcohol, which covered not only spirits but also fortified wines (i.e. wines to which distilled alcohol has been added). The Commission and the Council have since come to the conclusion that it would be more appropriate to deal with fortified wine in a separate directive. This is the purpose of the new proposal which covers liqueur wines from grapes and also fortified fruit wines fulfilling certain conditions as regards the natural fermented alcohol content. Furthermore, it is proposed that the excise duty should be the same for all fortified products with the same alcoholic strength and that it should be not less than 20% nor more than 65% of the duty on a spirit with the same alcoholic strength.

Gist of the Committee Opinion¹

In its Opinion which was adopted by 51 votes for, 28 votes against and 3 abstentions, the Committee is happy that the questions arising from the future application of these directives to Spain and Portugal should be considered in advance by the Commission, in order to prevent dissatisfaction developing at an early stage in Spain, Portugal and the wine-producing countries which will feel an affinity of interests with the new Member States.

In the light of the already scheduled general harmonization of excise rates, the Section urges that, on approval of the two directives, the Council affirm the partial nature of the texts and reiterate its commitment to establishing a harmonized, equitable system for all alcoholic drinks as soon as possible in accordance with a detailed

¹ CES 935/85.

timetable of implementation and taking steps to reduce (where excessive) or at least hold down the excise levels on alcoholic drinks.

Standardization of the VAT rate applicable to the various alcoholic drinks appears both consistent and desirable.

This Opinion was drawn up in the light of the paper produced by the Section for Economic and Financial Questions, chaired by Mr Marvier (France — Employers). The rapporteur was Mr Ognibene (Italy — Various interests).

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Chairman's visit to Spain and Portugal

From 12 to 17 October 1985 Mr Muhr, Chairman, Mr Emo Capodilista and Mr Noordwal, Vice-Chairmen, and Mr Louet, Secretary-General, paid an official visit to Spain and Portugal.

The visit was the occasion for numerous contacts with members of the government and representatives of workers' and employees' organizations.

In Madrid the Committee delegation met Mr Marin, Secretary of State for Relations with the European Communities; Mr Solchag, Minister for Economic and Financial Affairs; Mr Almunia, Minister for Labour and Social Security; Mr Majo, Minister for Industry and Energy; Mr Camacho, Secretary-General of the Workers' Committees (CC); Mr Redondo, Secretary-General of the General Union of Workers (UGT); Mr Cuevas, Secretary-General of the Spanish Employers' Federation (CEOE); Mr Leunda, President of the Basque Workers' Solidarity Movement (ELA/STV); and representatives of Spanish agricultural organizations.

In Lisbon the delegation was received by the President of the Republic, Mr Eanes, and talks were held with Mr Mario Soares, Prime Minister; Mr Rui Machete, Deputy Prime Minister; Mr Ernani Lopez, Minister for Financial Affairs and Mr Amandio de Azevedo, Minister for Labour. The delegation also met representatives of the Portuguese industrialists (CIP), commerce (CCP), employers (AIP), workers (UGTP), and agricultural cooperatives (Confagri). A meeting took place at the Standing Council for Social Consultation so that the Committee delegation could hold talks with Council members. The ESC delegation also received a delegation from the General Confederation of Portuguese Workers (CGTP) led by Mr Judas.

Other activities

On 18 and 19 October 1985 the Chairman and Secretary-General took part in the annual meeting of the Chairmen and Secretaries-General of Economic and Social Councils, held in Porto (Portugal).

From 3 to 6 October, Mr Jenkins (ESC member) represented the Committee at the 'Brazil-Europe Dialogue: State/employers/workers relations', organized in Rio de Janeiro by the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Development. •

The study group on upland areas (Section for Regional Development) visited Paestum in the Salerno region of Italy from 14 to 19 October.

On 17 and 18 October, Mr Roseingrave (ESC member) attended the colloquium organized in Dublin by the European Foundation and devoted to the report on 'The interaction of workers and machinery — physical and psychological stress'.

At the Lloyd's International Civil Aviation Conference in The Hague on 24 and 25 October, Mr Kenna, ESC member, presented the brochure containing the Committee's Opinion and report, for which he was rapporteur, on the Memorandum No 2 — Progress towards the development of a Community air transport policy.

Mrs Strobel (ESC member) and Mr Louet, Secretary-General, represented the Committee at the Congress of the National Union of Family Associations held in Paris on 25 October.

Mr d'Elia, ESC member, represented the Committee at the Congress of the General Confederation of Management held in Paris.

As part of its work the study group on the importance of R & D for SMEs (Section for Energy and Nuclear Questions) visited Berlin on 25 October.

NEW REFERRALS

Since the last plenary session the Council has requested the Economic and Social Committee to deliver Opinions on the following subjects:

Proposal for a Council directive amending for the eighth time the Directive of 23 October 1962 on the approximation of the rules of the Member States concerning the colouring matters authorized for use in foodstuffs intended for human consumption (COM(85) 474 final)

Proposal for a Council regulation amending Regulation (EEC) No 3164/76 on the Community quota for the carriage of goods by road between Member States (COM(85) 519 final)

Proposal for a Council Regulation (EEC) on customs warehouses

and a

Proposal for a Council Regulation (EEC) on free zones and free warehouses (COM(85) 468 final)

The Commission has asked the Economic and Social Committee to deliver an Opinion on the following:

The 10th report of the Commission concerning the activity of the European Regional Development Fund in 1984 (COM(85) 516 final)

PROVISIONAL FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

November 1985 plenary session

Opinions upon consultation

Annual report on the economic situation 1985/86
Sea transport
Internal market
ECSC contributions from the general budget
Tax measures in the cultural sector
Social security regulation amendment
ESF tasks
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Mortgage credit
Abolition of postal charges
Sulphur content of liquid fuels
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Information report

Effects of CAP on farmworkers

Subsequent plenary sessions

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Residues in meat
Principles of good laboratory practice
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Sugar

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Dumping of waste at sea

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10th ERDF Report

Shipbuilding aids (additional Opinion)

Materials research

Facilitation of transported goods inspections

GATT/agricultural aspect (additional Opinion)

Own-initiative Opinions

National regional development aids

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Integrated operations

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White Paper on the internal market

Information reports

Small firms/research interface

Towards a European Technology Community

New technologies — social aspects

Health

Development of upland areas

Small firms in the tertiary sector

New technologies

PUBLICATIONS OBTAINABLE FROM THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

General documentation

The other European Assembly, June 1985 (CES 85-006)
European Union, a people's Europe and the Economic and Social Committee
(Committee Chairman Muhr's speeches to the *ad hoc* Committees for
Institutional Affairs and a People's Europe), 1985 (EX-43-85-35)

Opinions and studies

Consumer-producer dialogue (Opinion) (January 1985) (ESC 84-011)
Europe and the new technologies — Conference report (January 1985)
(ESC 84-016)
Irish border areas (Information report) (February 1984) (ESC 84-002)
Tourism (Opinion) (June 1984) (ESC 84-004)
The economic and social situation in the Community (2 opinions) (July 1983)
(ESC-83-013)
Youth employment (Opinion) (June 1983) (ESC-83-011)
Transport policy in the 1980s (Opinion) (March 1983) 99 pp. (ESC 83-003)
Guidelines for Mediterranean agriculture (4 opinions) (September 1982) 64 pp.
(ESC 82-010)
The economic and social situation of the Community (2 opinions) (July 1982)
57 pp. (ESC 82-008)
The promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises (Opinion) (June 1982)
70 pp. (ESC 82-007)
Agricultural aspects of Spain's entry into the EC (Opinion) (February 1982)
107 pp. (ESC 81-017)
The EEC's external relations — Stocktaking and consistency of action (Study)
(January 1982) 139 pp.
Genetic engineering (Colloquy) (October 1981) 120 pp. (ESC 81-014)
Economic pointers for 1982 (Opinion) (August 1981) 32 pp. (ESC 81-010)
Problems of the handicapped (Opinion) (September 1981) ± 46 pp. (ESC 81-013)
Present situation in the Community's building sector (Opinion) (September 1981)
± 24 pp. (ESC 81-011)
Community competition policy (Opinion) (ESC-81-008)
Development policy and working conditions (September 1980) (Opinion) 61 pp.
(ESC 80-012)
The organization and management of Community R&D (February 1980)
(Study) 168 pp. (ESC 80-001)
Agricultural structures policy (November 1979) (Opinion) 90 pp. (ESC 79-003)
Enlargement of the European Community Greece-Spain-Portugal (Septem-
ber 1979) (Study) 75 pp. (ESC 79-002)
The Community's relations with Spain (June 1979) (Study) 112 pp. (ESC 79-001)
Community shipping policy — flags of convenience (April 1979) (Opinion)
170 pp.
Youth unemployment — Education and training (November 1978) (5 opinions)
97 pp.
The stage reached in aligning labour legislation in the European Community
(June 1978) (Documentation) 60 pp.
Monetary disorder (June 1978) (Opinion) 98 pp.
Industrial change and employment (November 1977) (Opinion) 98 pp.
EEC's transport problems with East European countries (December 1977)
(Opinion) 164 pp.
Systems of education and vocational training (August 1976) (Study) 114 pp.

Obtainable from Gower Publishing Co. Ltd., 1 Westmead, Farnborough, Hants GU 147RU:

Community Advisory Committee for the Representation of Socio-Economic Interests (UKL 8.50)
European interest groups and their relationship to the Economic and Social Committee (UKL 25)

Obtainable from Editions Delta, 92-94 Square Plasky, 1040 Brussels:

Action by the European Community through its financial instruments (Brussels 1979) (BFR 425)
The economic and social interest groups of Greece (BFR 350)
The right of initiative of the ESC (BFR 400)

Obtainable from Kogan Page Ltd., 120 Pentonville Rd., London N1

Directory of European Agricultural Organizations (UKL 39)

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