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I

EUROPE - AN ANNIVERSARY, A LANDMARK

The 130th plenary session of the Committee took place almost exactly 25 years after the historic Declaration of Robert SCHUMAN in May 1950. The Committee's Chairman, Mr H. CANONGE, commemorated this event in a speech at the session. A ceremony to mark the 25th anniversary had been held in Paris on 9 May, in the presence of the Presidents of the two countries which began the work of setting up the first Community, the European Coal and Steel Community.

After mentioning that the Committee had taken part in this ceremony, the Chairman went on to state some of the principles which had informed the SCHUMAN Declaration and which still retained their validity.

"The Declaration", he said, "affirmed that only an organized vigorous Europe could help to preserve peace for civilization, and that the European edifice would not be constructed overnight or at one go, but by a series of concrete achievements building a solid basis of fact. The bringing-together of the nations of Europe meant ending the old enmity between France and Germany. Having stated these precise political objectives, the Declaration then put forward the concrete proposals which were later incorporated in the Treaty of Paris establishing the European Coal and Steel Community, the first pillar in the building of Europe".

The Declaration emphasized that the pooling of coal and steel resources would take place in a new spirit of openness and friendship towards the other countries of the world, and the production of the member countries would be offered without distinction or exclusion to the whole world, to raise living standards and promote the work of peace.

Another statement made in the Declaration - and one which is as topical today as it was then - was that with its increased resources Europe would be able to devote itself to one of its main tasks, the development of Africa.

I have quoted these few passages from the Declaration, Mr CANONGE went on, "because in my opinion there is a lesson to be learnt from them : the first Community, the Coal and Steel Community, was established by putting into effect clear and simple ideas of how to achieve particular objectives. The Treaty of Paris set out the principles as well as the main commitments of the contracting parties".

Today Europe cannot progress by turning in on itself; it must open up to the world. The Lomé Convention is a good example of such an opening-up, and with it the Community has broken new ground in international cooperation. This spirit of openness - not harming the internal integration of the Community, but on the contrary justifying its being made even closer - must also pervade our approach to this new phase in our development.

I am convinced that ordinary people in the Community will understand these aspirations, provided that they are assured that in implementing the objectives involved, their own everyday problems will be considered, and appropriate solutions found.

II

130th PLENARY SESSION

The Economic and Social Committee, held its 130th plenary session in Brussels on 28 and 29 May 1975. The session was presided over by the Committee's Chairman, Mr H. CANONGE.

1. Speech by Mr SCARASCIA-MUGNOZZA on implementation of the consumer protection programme

The highlight of the proceedings was the speech made by Mr SCARASCIA MUGNOZZA, Vice-President of the Commission, on the implementation of the action programme for the protection of consumers.

Mr SCARASCIA MUGNOZZA said that the programme stemmed from the decision by the Paris Summit Conference to give a more human face to the Community. A number of decisions had admittedly already been taken in this field of consumer protection, but there had been no master plan.

The programme had been drawn up on the basis of certain guiding principles, such as health protection, the safeguarding of economic interests, compensation for any damage, the informing of consumers and the representation of their organizations. It was only a first step and improvements were to be made in the light of experience.

One of the main difficulties was to define what was meant by a "consumer". With this in mind, the Commission had tried to arrange close cooperation with consumers' associations.

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Inter alia, a Consumer's Advisory Committee had been set up by the Commission, with the job of liaising between consumers and the Commission and providing certain guidelines for the Commission.

In conclusion, Mr SCARASCIA-MUGNOZZA stressed that the Consumer Action Programme was an important political factor, insofar as it marked the beginning of concrete action at Community level to protect consumers.

2. Adoption of Opinions

a) Restructuring of the Economies

Rapporteur : Mr FRIEDRICHS - Germany - Workers

The Committee has adopted its Opinion by 77 votes to 12, with 16 abstentions.

In November last, Mr HAFERKAMP, Vice-President of the Commission, invited the Committee to consider the structural changes which will have to be made to Member States' economies in view of the new domestic and international problems which are plaguing the entire world. The Committee has drawn up the present document as a contribution to the Community's fourth medium-term Economic Policy Programme. It has referred frequently to the Report (No. II/562/74), drawn up by the Economic Policy Committee of the Commission.

The principal question that this detailed Opinion asks is how far-reaching a restructuring is called for. Is it really necessary to call into question the fundamental economic objectives of our society? Are the high unemployment figures, the under-utilization of production capacity, the high rate of inflation and, most important, the exceptionally large balance-of-payments deficits

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irreversible without a far-reaching structuring? The Committee found it virtually impossible to answer these questions objectively, since they involve fundamental political decisions. The Committee confines itself, therefore, to giving its views on the necessary adjustments to industrial and economic structures, in the more narrow meaning of the term, and examining some of the social implications arising from the structural adjustments it proposes.

The Committee is definitely in favour of a restructured system which combines the price mechanism with selective investment promotion geared to the requirements of the new situation.

The Committee firstly weighs up the seriousness of the problem the Community is faced with. The new situation has not come about by any means only because of the changes in the situation as regards the energy and raw materials supplies at international level. It has also been brought about by radical changes at the domestic level. In this context the Committee points to the increase in structural unemployment and stresses that inflation, too, must to some extent be regarded as a structural factor. Another important element in the Committee's view is the justified questioning of the conventional evaluation of economic growth, insofar as this is based largely on quantitative criteria.

Having taken full measure of the problem, the Committee then asks what should be the objectives of a medium-term restructuring programme. It states that the Member States' economies must continue to grow, that the Community should aim for the further liberalization of world trade, and that there must be an extension of social security for workers.

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The Community's big chance lies where its specific strengths are : in the fields of research and development, manufacture of capital goods, supply of technical know-how. The Committee consequently thinks that it is on these fields that the main emphasis must be placed in the measures to achieve medium-term improvements in the Community's foreign trade structure. Above all, it is vital to step up the development of technical know-how; this could be the Community's specific contribution to an international division of labour benefiting all concerned.

The Committee then looks at the measures which are available and appropriate to bring about this restructuring of the economies. It lays most emphasis on the boosting of capital expenditure, the conservation of raw materials and energy, the boosting of the export sectors and the development of substitute materials and forms of energy under economic conditions. It goes without saying that a higher rate of capital accumulation will be necessary in order to finance the investments.

On the delicate question of how this increased capital accumulation is to be effected the Committee believes that the transfer from consumption to investment can be achieved without necessarily bringing about a decline in private consumption and, thus, the general standard of living. The Committee is therefore relying on boosted productivity and further economic growth. The raising of the necessary funds should come from the encouragement of private saving and adjustments to company taxation but above all from income tax and direct taxation.

The Committee sees income tax as a valuable instrument, insofar as it can additionally serve to maintain an equitable distribution of wealth.

On a more general level, the Committee decries "go it alone" policies. It urges the development of an input/output matrix for the entire Community. It proposes the working out of an inventory of aims and priorities, this inventory to cover such things as rates of growth, inflation, unemployment, the growth of private and public consumption and private and public investment. It should also state the priorities for an adequate social policy.

The Committee concludes by recognizing that the convergence of Member States' economic policies must be looked at on a fairly long-term time scale. Due regard must be given to national peculiarities. It re-affirms that neither zero-growth nor dirigism are worthwhile ends. It calls upon all circles in the Community and in the world to work together, as it believes that the problems associated with restructuring cannot be solved if the States, interests and groups involved engage in confrontation.

b) Degree of convergence of economic policies

Rapporteur : Mr O'CEALLAIGH - Ireland - Employers

This additional Opinion has been drafted several weeks after the Committee's earlier Opinion, Doc. CES 226/75; dated 26 February 1975 on "The Economic Situation of the Community, and the Short-Term Economic Policy to be pursued". In the meantime, the Commission has issued three documents, which not only deal with the adaptation of the guidelines for short-term economic policies for 1975, but refer to the policies pursued by Member States in 1974, and the degree to which there was convergence of policies, and the extent to which there was compliance by Member States with Community objectives.

.../...

- Communication of the Commission to the Council concerning the adjustment of the Economic Policy Guidelines for 1975;
- Summary account of the Economic Policies pursued in 1974;
- Report on the application of the Council Decision of 18 February 1974 on the attainment of a high degree of convergence of the economic policies of the Member States of the European Economic Community and the conformity of the policies pursued with the objectives set.

The Commission documents have been drafted in compliance with the Council Resolution of 18 February 1974 on the attainment of a high degree of convergence of economic policies of the Member States of the EEC (Articles 2 and 12).

In summary, the Commission states that discrepancies in the economic situation and in economic policy among Member States have never been as pronounced as at present. Even though many of the convergence procedures have been followed (e.g. monthly meeting of Council to discuss economic and monetary matters), the actual economic policies themselves of Member States failed by a long chalk to converge effectively one with the other, or indeed to comply with Community objectives and guidelines.

The Committee has adopted its Additional Opinion by 58 votes in favour, 13 against and 8 abstentions on the

Degree of convergence of Member States' short-term economic policies, and the extent to which Member States' economic policies comply with Community objectives.

The Additional Opinion does not attempt to repeat the assertions it made in its February 1975 Opinion on the short-term economic situation of the Community. The latest data from the Commission merely serves to underline the fears then expressed by the Committee.

Instead the Committee devotes the first part of its Opinion to a frank appraisal of how far, precisely, Member States have succeeded in their declared aim of achieving a degree of convergence of their economic policies. The Committee believes that the setting of joint Community objectives, as part of a harmonized monetary and economic scheme, is unrealistic if the possibility of achieving this harmonization does not exist for a variety of reasons.

In the latter part of the Opinion the Committee considers the fundamental problems in bringing about the convergence of Member States' economic policies.

The Committee, in its Opinion, first takes a brief look at the Commission's proposed modifications to the economic policy guidelines for 1975. This is a selection of those it considers as being the most urgent, rather than an evaluation of the policies proposed. The Committee then goes on to note, with considerable disquiet, the lack of harmonization in decision-making, and the lack of implementing the Community economic policy guidelines in specific areas. A brief handclap is given for those instances where a degree of consultation and convergence has been realized.

Coming to the more fundamental problem of convergence of economic policies, the Committee states that the Community should be more realistic - and therefore more modest - in the objectives it sets itself regarding a convergence system. Briefly, the system should aim at the liberalization and expansion of trade; the system must take into account the realities of the political situation in individual Member States where Governments are attempting to pursue reasonable policies, but at the same time are answerable to their respective electorates; the system requires a continuing consultation and cooperation between Member States, at Community level, in all stages of policy-making.

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c) Social Action Programme

Rapporteur : Mr LAVAL - France - Workers

The Committee adopted its Opinion by 70 votes to 7, with 14 abstentions on the

Updating of the Social Action Programme.

On 29 November 1973, the Committee delivered an Opinion on the draft Social Action Programme. Since that date and since the Council Resolution of 21 January 1974 on the Social Action Programme, the economic and social situation in most Member States has seriously deteriorated, and is marked by very high levels of inflation and unemployment and by larger balance-of-payments deficits. It is against this background that the Committee has examined the progress made by the Social Action Programme and proposed certain urgent measures for its updating.

Despite its satisfaction with the Community's achievements in the social field (measures adopted by the Council on 10 June and 17 December 1974 and current proposals put forward by the Commission), the Committee regrets that there has been no significant development in the position of social policy within the general framework of Community policies.

On the more specific subject of employment policy, the Committee points to the urgent need, in the light of the current situation, to define and implement a Community policy for full and better employment. Consideration should be given in this context to the guidelines which will be laid down for the "restructuring of the economies" and the definition of a growth pattern which is tailored to the new situation and the social requirements of our day and age.

The Committee also makes a number of specific comments, which mainly concern the following points :

- the protection and improvement of purchasing power;
- income guarantees for workers undergoing retraining or looking for a job;
- financial measures in aid of workers on short-time;
- the expansion of the role of the Social Fund in the fight against unemployment;
- the adoption of specific measures to assist certain categories of the population;
- coordination between social and regional policies;
- cooperation between national employment services;
- the adaptation of education and of basic and advanced training;
- labour market analyses, forecasts and research.

Finally, the Committee also favours the convening of a European economic and social conference and joint sectoral meetings between labour and management.

d) Credit Institutions

Rapporteur : Mr DE BRUYN - Belgium - Various Interests

The proposal, based on Article 57 of the Treaty, takes integration in the field of banking a step further, following adoption of a first directive on removal of restrictions in pursuance of Articles 52 and 59 of the Treaty on 28 January 1973. A similar policy of integration is being pursued in the allied field of insurance. In the view of the Commission, coordination of the banking regulations existing in the various Member States, leading up to effective liberalization of banking throughout the Community, should be carried out in stages. A free market in banking would complement free movement of capital in a future economic and monetary union.

The cornerstone of the proposal is the setting up of a contact committee comprising representatives of the national banking supervisory authorities.

The second key integration measure proposed concerns the coordination of criteria for licensing branches of banks based in another Member State. It is also proposed that Member States should recognize the legal forms of establishment permitted in the Member State of origin and permit the branch to use the name or description it uses in the country of origin.

The Committee has adopted, by a unanimous vote, its Opinion on the

Proposal for a Council Directive on the coordination of laws, regulations and administrative provisions governing the commencement and carrying on of the business of credit institutions.

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It is pointed out in the Opinion that the lack of harmonization of Member States' legislation, whose main purpose in each country is to provide security for depositors and to protect savings, is liable to create serious disparities, indeed even certain dangers.

In view of the difficulties involved, the Commission has decided to proceed with harmonization in stages. But, the Committee regrets that the proposal submitted for the first stage of the operation is not more substantial and that the Commission, as is stated in the explanatory memorandum, has abandoned the idea of coordinating all major aspects of banking legislation in a single directive.

The Committee approves the proposal, subject to a number of changes, but urges the Commission to press resolutely ahead and quickly follow this proposal up with proposals for the other directives.

The contact Committee should be comprised of top-level officials of the supervisory authorities in the Member States and the consultative Committee referred to in the last recital of the preamble to the proposal comprising representatives of the professional circles concerned, should be set up at an early date.

The latter would play a consultative role in both the preparation of decisions and the framing of their implementing procedures.

e) Poverty

Rapporteur : Mr CARROLL - Ireland - Workers

The Proposal for a Council Decision (EEC) concerning a programme of pilot schemes and studies to combat poverty sets out the types of schemes and studies to be promoted and the procedures to be followed "to implement specific measures to combat poverty by drawing up pilot schemes". Pilot schemes are action research projects and are intended as the major components of the programme; schemes should serve populations in or vulnerable to poverty and should be pioneering ventures capable of informing future policy. A basic condition for Community support is that the schemes should provide for the participation of the individuals or groups served. A 50 per cent limit for the usual financial participation of the Community is set, although the Commission may support "exceptional cases" at higher rates. The Commission has the right to collect, use and disseminate this experience and can run its own evaluation systems. Any private organization or local authority is eligible to be considered for Community aid and the Commission may promote its own initiative with final approval from the national governments concerned. The Proposal includes a provision for the establishment of an Advisory Group and provides for a report on the Commission's activities to be submitted to the Council and the European Parliament.

The Committee welcomes and approves this Proposal included in the Opinion which it had unanimously adopted. The Committee wishes to stress that it had delivered its comprehensive Opinion on 24 April 1975 on the referral of 23 January 1975 by the Council of the European Communities of the Programme. This first Opinion

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urged that steps be taken as regards the appropriate legal form in which the Commission's proposal should be presented to the Council and was in accord with the essential points contained therein. The Committee welcomes the fact that the Commission has now resubmitted its proposals in the form of a Council decision in accordance with the Committee's views. The Committee welcomes the requirement for the Commission to submit to the Council, and to the European Parliament before the end of 1976, a report on its activities concerning pilot schemes and studies promoted, carried out, or assisted under the Decision. Furthermore, the Committee notes the requirement for the Commission to submit to the Council and the European Parliament proposals for future initiatives after 1976. The Committee urges that it, too, will receive in the future the Commission's Report and initiative-proposals.

f) Energy Research and Development Programmes

Rapporteur : Mr SCHLITT - Germany - Various Interests

In its Communication, "Energy for Europe : Research and Development", the Commission, as part of its long-term energy strategy, identified seven strategic areas in which research work should be pursued. On the basis of two criteria, namely the lead time needed to obtain significant results and their potential quantitative impact, the Commission has selected five areas. These are incorporated in a programme designed to supplement current projects and to run for a four-year period from 1 January 1975 at a total cost of 54.96 m u.a.

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The programme covers the following five areas :

1. Energy conservation;
2. Production and utilization of hydrogen;
3. Solar energy;
4. Geothermal energy;
5. Systems analysis.

By a unanimous vote less one abstention, the Economic and Social Committee approved its Opinion on the

Programme of research and development actions in the field of energy.

The Committee welcomes the Commission's proposed programme. It considers that the funds earmarked are initially adequate and that they are appropriated to the individual projects in line with its request already made on 30 January 1975 in its Opinion on the Commission's earlier Communication entitled "Energy for Europe : Research and Development" that the bulk of funds should be deployed to those research and development projects which promise an early and maximum reduction of dependence on oil.

It is felt that all R & D work in the Community should continue to be clearly centred on nuclear energy, fossil fuels and energy conservation with particular emphasis being placed on the latter. As regards the other fields which are more of a pioneering nature (solar energy, geothermal energy, production and use of

hydrogen) it is felt that the solar energy and hydrogen projects are of particular importance, the adequacy of whose funding should be examined when the projects come up for review.

The Committee also underlines the need for cooperation with third countries to avoid duplication of R & D work as well as the need to protect the R & D effort on alternative energy sources from the possibility of expenditure cutbacks in the event of a fall in the price of oil.

g) Radioactive wastes

Rapporteur : Mr SCHLITT - Germany - Various Interests

The Commission sets out a programme aimed at the joint development and finalization of a system of management of radioactive waste produced by the nuclear industry which will provide man and his environment with the best protection possible.

The programme, which is seen as a first stage of a longer-term effort, is to cover a five-year period. It is designed to promote work which will be carried out on contract with the objective of solving the following technological problems posed by the processing, storage and disposal of radioactive waste :

1. Medium-activity solid waste : study on immobilization with plastic resins;
2. High-activity solid waste : decontamination and conditioning of irradiated fuel element claddings;

.../...

3. High-activity solid waste : immobilization of fission products calces in a metallic matrix;
4. Plutonium contaminated solid waste : incineration process;
5. Testing and evaluation of the properties of various potential materials for immobilizing high-activity waste in a solid form;
6. Storage of solidified radioactive solid-waste in engineered structures;
7. Disposal of radioactive waste in geological formations;
8. Storage of gaseous wastes;
9. Separation and recycling of long-lived wastes (actinides).

In addition, it is intended to study the guiding principles for the management of radioactive waste and the associated financial, legal and administrative problems.

The programme, which will be closely coordinated with the work of the Joint Research Centre, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the OECD, will require 4 staff and a total budget of 19 million u.a. for the five-year period.

By a large majority with 4 votes against and 1 abstention, the Committee approved its Opinion on the

Programme on radioactive waste management and storage.

The Committee warmly welcomes the programme, believing that it can make a potentially crucial contribution towards the development of nuclear energy in the Community.

While existing methods of treating and storing radioactive waste are sufficient for the time being, it believes that satisfactory solutions must be found in the form of advanced techniques so that the Community will be able to cope with the sharply increasing volume of waste produced as more and more nuclear plants come into operation.

Noting the existence of suitable geological salt formations in the Community offering safe prospects for very long-term radioactive waste disposal, the Committee does not see technical objections to a further expansion of nuclear energy production.

Nevertheless, a major effort will have to be made to perfect and scale-up a number of suitable methods which are currently undergoing trials in order to arrive at a system of radioactive waste disposal capable of meeting extremely stringent safety requirements.

The Opinion goes on to comment in some detail on the individual points of the proposed programme.

Given the present widely varying state of knowledge in the different Member States, it calls for the speedy introduction of uniform Community criteria and directives covering the technological and safety aspects of radioactive waste.

The need for solutions which are not only technically adequate but also economic, is stressed. For this reason, it is felt that the Commission's programme should not concentrate solely on "high level waste" but should also extend to the problem of dealing with the "medium activity wastes" which are produced in large quantities. High priority should also be given to the Study of transport problems and "intermediate storage" techniques.

Finally, on a number of points in the Community programme, the Committee stresses the need for more adequate funding and the need to avoid overlap with national work in the Member States.

h) Nuclear safety

Rapporteur : Mr SCHLITT - Germany - Various Interests

The target contained in the Community's energy policy objectives approved by the Council for an installed nuclear capacity of 160 GWe and, if possible, 200 GWe by 1985 implies rapid nuclear development over the next ten years. While stringent safety precautions have been developed in the sector to date, vigorous and long-term action must be taken to ensure that this nuclear objective is achieved under economically viable conditions without in any way sacrificing safety.

The Commission also believes that nuclear safety provisions (covering nuclear plant, radiation, thermal pollution, transport of radioactive material, management and storage of radioactive waste and decommissioning of installations) must be developed on a uniform basis within the Community.

.../...

The Commission believes it can best fulfil this aim by concentrating, firstly, on harmonization of safety techniques and standardization of equipment by encouraging Member States to reciprocally exchange information on their licensing laws and administrative procedures and to gradually harmonize standards and, secondly, on the coordination of applied research programmes, primarily, by ensuring an improved flow of information on programmes and their results and by getting the Member States to align their own efforts internally, as well as externally, with work being done in third countries.

By 39 votes to 4 with 3 abstentions, the Economic and Social Committee approved its Opinion on the

Communication from the Commission to the Council on Technological Problems of Nuclear Safety.

In its Opinion, the Committee welcomes the proposed programme, believing that measures to ensure an equal level of nuclear safety for the public throughout the Community are urgently necessary.

Standard safety provisions are needed to cover the significant number of nuclear plants planned for frontier regions and whose safety affects other Member States. They are also required to avoid undesirable effects on the siting of such plants.

The Committee notes with concern the growing fears among members of the public that insufficient attention is being given to safety aspects of nuclear development. It believes the absence of common safety provisions can only serve to increase public misgivings and thus to slow down the further development of nuclear energy in the Community.

While the Committee is fully aware of the problems of harmonizing the large number of different existing laws and provisions, it feels the Commission must make a positive endeavour to reconcile both existing and new provisions not only by formulating recommendations of a general nature but also by laying the groundwork for Directives and Regulations setting minimum standards for all nuclear plants.

The Committee believes that the Commission's work could be speeded up, firstly, if the Member States were to arrive at an early standardization of nuclear equipment itself and, secondly, if there were a Community coordinated research and development programme to ensure convergence of new ideas on safety which are currently evolving at a rapid rate.

i) Priority projects in data processing

Rapporteur : Mr de FERRANTI - United Kingdom - Employers

The proposals for priority projects in the data processing sector are a sequel to the Communication of the Commission to the Council concerning a Community policy on data processing, on which the Committee recently delivered an Opinion.

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The first project is concerned with the setting-up of a data bank for the matching of organs and blood and is in response to the wish expressed by a group of Community hospitals which are already engaged in active collaboration. The aim is to use data-processing techniques to help in determining the compatibility of available organs for patients for whom a transplant is vital.

The second project is a study on the automatic processing of data relating to imports and exports and to the management of the agricultural market organizations and their financial control.

The third project concerns systems for the retrieval of legal documents and access to Community law.

The fourth project relates to a highly technical field affecting the safety of passengers and aeronautical equipment of the future, i.e. air traffic control.

Finally, the fifth project is of a different type and concerns computer-assisted design techniques which, if sufficiently developed, might well find a broad spectrum of industrial applications. There are two key sectors in particular - the design of electronic logic circuits and the management of integrated design systems in the building sector - where the need for an assessment of the available techniques and the ascertainment of worthwhile developments is felt throughout the Community.

The Committee adopted unanimously less 4 abstentions its Opinion on the

Communication from the Commission to the Council concerning initial proposals for priority projects in data processing.

.../...

The Committee welcomes the initial proposals for priority projects in data processing.

In its Opinion on data-processing policy, the Committee proposed that legal measures within the Community framework should be taken to establish a freer market in Europe than currently exists in the United States. This freer market would give the European industry an important opportunity to establish a market base comparable with that of its American competitors.

The outcome of the priority projects will also contribute to building the market in Europe, which is the soundest way of encouraging a European industry.

As regards the preparation of subsequent proposals, the Committee welcomes the study in the field of norms and standards, which would lead to directives in accordance with Article 100.

As for the financial implications, the Committee would like to express its concern that the costs given for the three-year period may be under-estimated and urges that adequate steps be taken in order to ensure that the studies are of high quality.

j) PCB's

Rapporteur : Mr JASCHICK - Germany - Various Interests

The Commission is proposing that the collection, re-generation and/or destruction of PCB's be regulated at Community level. This proposal falls within the framework of the Community programme of action on the environment and has been submitted following the initiative taken by a Member State notifying the Commission, in accordance with the information agreement of 5 March 1973, of a preliminary draft Opinion on the conditions under which PCB's may be used.

PCB's present a particular hazard to public health and the environment because they are non-biodegradable and accumulate in human organisms.

The directive will make it illegal to discharge or dump PCB's in the environment and the Member States will also be obliged to designate bodies with special responsibility for the collection and disposal of PCB's in a non-pollutant manner.

The Committee unanimously adopted its Opinion on the

Proposal for a Council Directive on the collection, regeneration and/or destruction of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

The Committee approves of the aims of the proposed Directive and stresses that the serious threats which PCBs pose for the environment make it very desirable indeed to implement as quickly as possible the mandatory provisions covering their disposal. But it wonders whether it is advisable to limit the scope of the present proposal by confining it to very general provisions, thereby leaving it to the Member States to spell out the details at national level. The Committee believes that the proposal should reflect a more Community approach, and specify more clearly how its objectives are to be achieved.

From a general point of view, the Committee would also stress the advisability of promoting the use, as far as possible, of substitutes for PCBs, particularly in the manufacture of products which have proved very difficult to collect and may therefore escape the proposed provisions.

Finally, the Committee considers that the provisions of the present proposed Directive should be integrated into a later Directive concerning the elimination of various other particularly dangerous waste materials. This would ensure that holders of such dangerous wastes do not lose sight of the relevant provisions because they are inundated by a wave of specific solutions for other related problems.

k) Sources of information on the environment

Rapporteur : Mr EBOLI - Italy - Various Interests

The Commission proposes that a permanent inventory be prepared of the sources of information available throughout the Community in the environmental field. This is to be done under the Community's environmental action programme.

This inventory will constitute an important European contribution to the International Referral System to be set up under the United Nations' Environment Programme.

Preparatory work done by the Commission has revealed the existence of about 1,000 services possessing information relating to the environment, 3,000 individual services and specialists and more than 15,000 research projects.

The purpose of the inventory would be to prepare lists of documentation sources, of current and scheduled research projects and of specialist services and individual experts.

The Committee unanimously adopted its Opinion on the

Proposal for a Council Decision establishing a common procedure for the preparation and constant updating of a European inventory of sources of information on the environment.

The Committee applauds the initiative taken by the Commission, for achievement of the proposal's objectives is vital if progress is to be made towards implementing practical programmes for safeguarding the environment.

In this connection, the Committee asks whether it would not be worth putting stress on environmental problems at the workplace. In general, as experience has shown, these problems have certain pollution aspects which affect the external environment. Emphasis of this point would serve the dual purpose of enabling a large proportion of external pollution to be eliminated more easily at source, and providing data on probable trends in this type of pollution.

Finally, the Committee thinks that the inventory, which will be drawn up by the Commission on the basis of information received from Member States, should be published as soon as possible in order to ensure that the information disseminated is of practical benefit.

1) Safety belts

Rapporteur : Mr MASPRONE - Italy - Employers
Co-Rapporteur Mr DE GRAVE - Belgium - Workers

The Directive has been proposed pursuant to the General Programme of 28 May 1969 for the removal of technical barriers

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to trade in industrial products, and must be finalized by the Council before 1 January 1976, as provided for in the Community Action Programme for industrial policy of 21 January 1973.

The Directive will make it compulsory for vehicle seats to be fitted with safety belts. Front seats will have to be fitted with three-point belts. The belts fitted to the side front seats will also have to be equipped with retractors and their design must be such that the belt can be put on, and the buckle fastened and unfastened, with one hand.

The rear seats will have to be fitted with lap belts at least.

At present, no Member State has made it compulsory for all seats to be fitted with safety belts and so the proposed Directive is a new step forward. It is also in line with the measures taken by the Commission to lower the risk of physical injury in accidents. It links up, with the proposed directives concerning safety-belt anchorages, head restraints and the compulsory use of laminated windscreens.

The Committee unanimously adopted its Opinion on the

Proposal for a Council Directive on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to safety belts and restraint systems of motor vehicles.

The Committee agrees that it should be compulsory for all seats to be fitted with safety belts. It welcomes in particular the stipulation that the side front seats must be fitted with three-point safety belts and that rear seats must be fitted with lap belts. The Committee feels that it would be sufficient to prescribe two point lap belts for centre front seats. Finally, the Committee calls for the compulsory fitting of safety belts with automatic emergency locking retractors.

The Committee deplores the fact that the Commission has only laid down rules for belts designed for adults. It urges the Commission to submit proposals on restraints systems for children.

Dealing with the technical specifications in the annexes to the Directive the Committee insists that the standards laid down should not require major re-design and re-tooling. The Committee therefore suggests that the Commission should re-examine these specifications in consultation with users and manufacturers.

m) Medical equipment .

Rapporteur : Sir John PEEL - United Kingdom - Various
Interests

The proposed directives are provided for in the General Programme of 28 May 1969 for the removal of technical barriers to trade.

Furthermore, when the Council adopted the Directive of 19 February 1973 relating to electrical equipment for use within certain voltage limits, it was agreed that radiological and electromedical equipment would be the subject of subsequent directives.

.../...

The first proposal, concerning electromedical equipment, is applicable to a proportion of electrical equipment used in medicine. Examples : infra-red equipment, ultra-sonic dentistry equipment and audiometers.

Those classes of equipment which do not fall within the scope of the first proposal (see Annex I) will be the subject of later directives.

The second proposal, concerning medical X-ray equipment, which is a more dangerous type of equipment than that covered by the first proposal, contains a type-approval procedure for use by authorized bodies in the Member States.

Both proposals have adopted the solution known as "optional harmonization".

The Committee unanimously adopted its Opinion on the

Proposal for a Council Directive on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to

- electro-medical equipment;
- medical X-ray equipment operating at 10 to 400 kV.

While generally favouring total harmonization by the removal of technical barriers to trade, the Committee approves the solution of optional harmonization. It notes, however, that a lot of electro-medical equipment is excluded from the Directive, although it is of greater practical importance than that which is included. As the very term "electro-medical equipment" is particularly vague, the Committee would prefer the Directive to specify clearly what type of equipment it covers.

As regards X-ray equipment, the Committee would like to know when further Directives may be forthcoming to cover equipment outside the range of 10 - 400 kV.

The Committee further notes that the Directive does not cover either the place of use or the qualifications and training of the people permitted to use the equipment.

It is not yet mandatory in all the Member States for X-ray technicians and maintenance engineers, for example, to possess standard qualifications and to have had specified training before being allowed to handle what is manifestly dangerous apparatus. The Committee hopes that the Commission will bear this aspect of the problem in mind in relation to the right of establishment and mutual recognition of qualifications and training.

n) Constructional plant and equipment

Rapporteur : Mr MARVIER - France - Various interests

The proposals are based directly on the supplement to the General Programme of 28 May 1969 for the removal of technical barriers to trade in industrial products.

In its Resolution of 17 December 1973 concerning the Community's industrial policy, the Council called for an outline Directive defining the common procedure to be followed in the constructional plant and equipment sector and asked that a proposal for a first special Directive on permissible sound levels be forwarded to it before 1 January 1975.

The outline Directive applies to all machinery, appliances, equipment and installations used to perform work on public or private building sites. Agriculture and forestry tractors and building cranes are excluded as they are covered, or will be covered, by other proposals.

As has been the case for other sectors, the proposal provides for an EEC type approval and the setting-up of a Committee on Adaptation to Technical Progress. The special directives which will follow the outline Directive will be of two kinds : some will deal with a particular item of constructional equipment and others with a particular aspect of all equipment.

The main aim of the proposal concerning the measurement of the sound level of constructional plant and equipment is to lay down a single procedure for measuring the sound level of equipment. The method proposed is based on the work of the ISO.

The proposal concerning the sound level for pneumatic concrete-breakers and jackhammers lays down the permissible sound level in decibels in relation to weight.

The Committee adopted by a unanimous vote its Opinion on the

Proposals for Council Directives on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to

- constructional plant and equipment;
- the measurement of the sound level of constructional plant and equipment;
- the permissible sound level for pneumatic concrete-breakers and jackhammers.

As regards the outline Directive, the Committee notes a certain lack of balance between the definitions of the EEC type-approval and verification procedures, which are clear, and the characteristics of these procedures; it therefore proposes that the text of the proposal should be better balanced, that a new Article 6 relating to the characteristics of the EEC verification procedure should be drawn up and that the existing Article 6 should be amended so as to clearly indicate that the certificate of conformity relates to either an EEC type approval or an EEC verification.

As for the Directives relating to the measurement of the sound level of constructional plant and equipment and the permissible sound level for pneumatic concrete-breakers and jackhammers, the Committee wonders whether it is advisable to oblige Member States which are unable to carry out an EEC type approval to call on the services of other Member States so that equipment can circulate freely within the Community.

The Committee would also draw attention to the fact that the permissible sound level proposed by the Commission for constructional plant refers to the use of one single machine. However, it thinks that the Commission should also look into the question of the simultaneous use of several machines in view of the environmental problems which this may pose.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

1. Commemoration of the SCHUMAN Declaration

The Chairman, Mr H. CANONGE, represented the Committee at the ceremony in Paris on 9 May 1975 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Robert SCHUMAN Declaration. The ceremony at the Quai d'Orsay was attended by the Presidents of the European Parliament and the Commission, as well as by the Heads of State of most EEC countries.

Mr H. CANONGE also attended the solemn meeting of the European Parliament in commemoration of the Declaration on 14 May 1975 in Strasbourg. He was accompanied on both occasions by the Secretary-General, Mr D. DELFINI.

2. European Parliament

The Chairman, Mr H. CANONGE, and the Secretary-General Mr D. DELFINI, met the President and Secretary-General of the European Parliament in Brussels on 29 May. The purpose of the meeting was to finalize the arrangements for the two bodies to send each other speakers and to exchange documents.

3. International Confederation for Small-Scale Credit

The Chairman, Mr H. CANONGE, attended the European morning at the Congress of the International Confederation for Small-Scale Credit, which was held in the Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels on 21 May 1975.

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4. UNICE Committee for Agriculture and Food Industries

The Chairman, Mr H. CANONGE, represented the Committee at the Meeting of the UNICE Committee for Agriculture and Food Industries, which was held in Brussels on 22 May 1975.

5. German Federation of Trade Unions (DGB)

The Chairman of the Committee, Mr H. CANONGE, accompanied by Mr R. LOUET, Director-General, attended the opening of the Annual Congress of the German Federation of Trade Unions in Hamburg on 25 May 1975. The Commission of the European Communities was represented by its President, Mr ORTOLI. At the opening session, chaired by Mr VETTER, the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr SCHEEL, made a speech on co-management.

6. Meeting of the Section for Transport and Communications in Dublin

The Committee's Section for Transport and Communications met in Dublin on 21 May 1975 under the chairmanship of Mr HOFFMANN. Most of the meeting was devoted to discussion of the Section's Study on Telecommunications.

In its Study the Section states that telecommunications are, and will become even more in the future, a catalyst and a stimulus of economic and social change. The Community cannot remain inactive in such a key sector, and the Section recommends that a comprehensive plan be drawn up for a Community telecommunications policy.

The fact that the Community has now taken a step towards a regional policy in setting up the Regional Fund makes the subject matter of the Study even more urgent. The Study, for which Mr Tomas ROSEINGRAVE was Rapporteur, could give useful suggestions on the Fund's financing of infrastructures in the Community's regions.

NEW CONSULTATIONS

During April and May the Council asked the Committee for an Opinion (optional) on the

1. Proposal for a Regulation (EEC) of the Council amending Regulations (EEC) Nos. 1408/71 and 574/72 and relating to the standardization of the system of paying family benefits to workers, the members of whose families reside in a Member State other than the country of employment.
2. Proposal for a Council Decision on intervention by the Social Fund to encourage structural adjustment measures.
3. Proposal for a Regulation (EEC) of the Council laying down measures for the rationalization of horticultural production under glass.
4. Proposal for a Regulation of the Council on the action to be taken to bring into force the European Agreement concerning the Work of Crews of Vehicles engaged in International Road Transport (AETR).
5. Proposal for a Council Directive (EEC) on biological standards for lead and on screening of the population for lead; and a
Proposal for a Council Directive (EEC) on air quality standards for lead.

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME OF FUTURE WORK

131st plenary session - June 1975

- New strategy
- Telecommunications (Study)
- Simplification programme (Customs)
- Roll-over protection structures (Tractors)
- Head restraints
- Type approval of motor-cycles
- Gas appliances
- Social situation
- Equal treatment of male and female workers
- Social Action Programme
- Bathing water
- Ceramic articles
- Pesticides
- European Union
- Structural adjustment measures (European Social Fund)

132nd plenary session - July 1975

- Stocktaking of the CAP
- Mediterranean agricultural products (Study)

133rd plenary session - September 1975

- Migrant workers
- Common Transport Policy
- Situation of women
- Family allowances

134th plenary session - October 1975

- Fresco (developing countries)
- Regional Policy (Study)
- Safety, hygiene and health protection

NEWS OF MEMBERS

1. Resignation

Mr John F. CARROLL, Vice-Chairman of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, has resigned his seat on the Committee and the office of its Vice-Chairman. He has been a member since 1 January 1973.

2. Appointment

At its 341st meeting, on 20 May 1975, the Council appointed Mr Eduardo BAGLIANO as a member of the Committee, to replace Mr Giorgio GARINO who had resigned.

Mr BAGLIANO is in charge of FIAT's legal and regulations department and has been working for the company for 25 years. He deals mainly with legal, economic and tax questions, and has particular experience of international regulations and industrial distribution and cooperation contracts.

He is a member of Committees of the International Chamber of Commerce and chairs working parties at the General Federation of Italian Industry. He is also Vice-Chairman of the Rome Institute for the European Economy.

3. Mrs EVANS, who is a member of the Committee's Bureau, has been appointed to the British Consumer Council.
