

Official Spokesman
of the Commission

Brussels 4
Telephone 35.00.40

Embargo: 11:00 hrs
17 May 1965

Brussels, 13 May 1965
IP (65) 94

PRESS RELEASE

Summary of the address by M. Lambert Schaus, Member of the EEC Commission, at the European Transport Colloquium of the Trade Union Committee of Transport Workers in the Community (ITF) on 17 May in Bonn

On 17 May 1965, M. Lambert Schaus, a member of the EEC Commission, gave a talk in Bonn on the occasion of the European Transport Colloquium of the Trade Union Committee of Transport Workers in the Community (a member committee of ITF). His subject was "The outlook for common transport policy as seen by the Commission". He was preceded by the Federal Minister for Transport, Dr. Hans-Christoph Seeborn, who spoke on "Problems of the common transport policy from the angle of the Council of Ministers and from the national angle".

M. Schaus first paid tribute to the co-operation of the trade unions in European integration and particularly the integration of transport. "It is now almost universally recognized that the trade unions cannot and should not confine themselves merely to championing wage and social policy desiderata. As speakers for the workers they are called upon to make a far-reaching contribution to mastering our economic and social problems".

The speaker said that the present state of European unification policy was paradoxical, with progress and consolidation on the one hand and difficulties on the other. First, we heard that the Community had reached the point of no return; then we were once again told that it was in a crisis which could jeopardize its very existence. Throughout the whole field of external relationships, defence and cultural affairs, as in other matters, the Six must achieve common action. But economic and social policy were already being dealt with in the setting of a political union, i.e. the European Communities, which today were the nucleus of political integration. "We must go forward in these sectors even if we have to wait for other aspects of policy to be pooled". The strengthening of the budgetary powers of the European Parliament proposed by the Commission could be a decisive and necessary step on the way to a Community governed by parliamentary democracy. The sharing of interests was such that a policy of give and take among the Member States could bear good fruit. Every country in the Community needed the common market. After bitter experiences all the peoples of Europe wished to master the tasks of this century. They had no patience with any attempt to restore outdated ideas from the past.

M. Schaus pictured the common transport policy against this general background of political and economic integration. In working out this policy the Commission had endeavoured to avoid chasing after doctrinaire fantasies, but at the same time had endeavoured to avoid a completely pragmatic approach divorced from any overall

concept. The point was to create a common transport market with undistorted conditions of competition and to protect the common market for goods from disturbances in the transport field. In his remarks concerning the application of existing Community law the speaker pointed particularly to the removal of discrimination in freight rates and of unjustified support tariffs. He greatly regretted that consultations on the Commission's 1963/64 transport policy proposals had been so roundabout and protracted. Anybody who already saw a danger in the demand for the participation of Ministers of Economics or Foreign Affairs in the shaping of transport policy should not forget that in future imbalance between more or less fully integrated markets for goods and non-integrated transport markets could grow steadily worse. At all costs we had to avoid agricultural or industrial policy being made one day at the expense of the transport sector. Moreover, for the establishment of a common market based on division of labour, a balance of interests between the Member States for the various economic sectors was needed. Thus, there were countries whose balance of payments was particularly dependent on the export of transport services.

M. Schaus regarded as a step in the right direction the acceptance of the Commission's proposals on the harmonization of the conditions of competition in rail, road and inland waterway traffic and the Community quota for international goods transport. However, he regretted that the decision on the Community quota continued to be linked with the Commission's still pending price policy proposals. For the harmonization of road haulage of goods and access to the trade of haulier the crucial point now was to apply energetically and to further develop the regulations agreed. In particular the compulsory time-limits must be observed by all Community institutions.

Finally, M. Schaus discussed in detail difficulties in price policy for rail, road and inland waterway transport. The Commission's starting point had been that its proposal to introduce a minimum and maximum price system (rate bracket) for these types of transport was economically reasonable and politically acceptable. The European Parliament, business circles and also the trade unions had confirmed it in this opinion. All the Governments concerned had made it known that they regarded the rate bracket system as a satisfactory solution for key sectors of the transport economy. But in the end agreement had been frustrated by the attitude of the Netherlands Government on the question of Rhine shipping. Today the Commission still stood by the economic arguments on which it had based its proposals. "Politically, however, we are in an impasse. Our proposal has no chance of being unanimously accepted in the Council. Even a qualified majority decision, which in principle is permissible under the Treaty after 1 January 1966, is hardly likely to be reached on this point".

.../...

In view of this situation the speaker had laid before the Council possible alternative solutions for Rhine shipping. These lay in the direction of firms' own tariff schedules, as far as possible officially approved, which would be published and supervised. The great problem was the equivalence of rate brackets and firms' tariffs. In this connection he was convinced that an alternative solution should be sought not only for Rhine shipping but for all inland waterway traffic. The waterway network was so closely interwoven that any difference of treatment in the matter of prices was unthinkable.

However, the competitive position of the different industries and seaports and also of the other types of transport brought up the question of whether and how far the right to make special agreements outside the upper and lower limits would have to be conceded to railways and road hauliers over and above the possibilities provided for in the Commission's rate bracket proposal. The question might even arise whether these two types of transport should not be made to some extent subject to the price policy rules which initially needed to be envisaged for inland waterways only.

The Commission expected that the Governments of the Member States, at the next meeting of the Council, would also put forward in practical terms, their ideas on transport price policy. It was not mere optimism which sustained hopes for agreement. "The European Economic Community has no choice but to succeed - even when the issue is freight rates for internal waterways".

In conclusion, M. Schaus said that those who wrestled with the technical matters of transport policy were also directly contributing to the process of European integration. Looking at European unification policy in general, he said: "Certainly we will often be afflicted by serious doubts. But perhaps the next generation will say of us that the future had already begun in May 1965. Only this was not fully realized at the time".

- - - - -