

# COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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REFORM OF THE ORGANISATION OF WORK

(Humanisation of Work)

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(Communication from the Commission to the Council)

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Commission, in submitting a social action programme (1) to the Council, included, in the chapter on living and working conditions, a proposal aimed at changing "those patterns of work organisation which tend to dehumanise the worker and create environmental working and living conditions which are no longer acceptable to ideas of social progress". Such action was seen as complementary to initiatives in the fields of worker participation and vocational training. While the main responsibility for action to improve the situation was regarded as resting with the Social Partners, it was "however necessary for the Community to take complementary measures to improve the patterns of work organisation, particularly in those jobs which are no longer acceptable to the vast majority of the population and for which migrant or casual labour must be recruited".

In its resolution of January 21 1974 concerning a social action programme, the Council set, among the list of objectives to be achieved during the period 1974-76, the establishment

"of an action programme for workers aimed at the humanisation of their living and working conditions, with particular reference to :

- improvement in safety and health conditions at work
- the gradual elimination of physical and psychological stress which exists in the place of work and on the job, especially through improving the environment and seeking ways of increasing job satisfaction
- a reform of the organisation of work, giving workers wider opportunities, especially those of having their own responsibilities and duties and of obtaining higher qualifications".

In addition, the action programme for the environment approved by the Council on 22 November 1973 (2) also envisages certain actions which will support the preceding.

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- (1) Social Action Programme (submitted by the Commission to the Council):  
COM (73) 1600 FINAL
- (2) J.O. C 112 of 20.12.1973 - section II - Ch. 4 of the second part.

The purpose of this communication is to inform the Council of action taken by the Commission following the Council's resolution, and of its proposals for future action.

## II. ACTION FOLLOWING THE COUNCIL'S RESOLUTION ON A SOCIAL ACTION PROGRAMME

Within the mandate of the Council's resolution, two proposals, relevant to the first two items mentioned in the resolution, have already been submitted to the Council;

- (1) Guidelines for a Community programme on Safety, Hygiene and Health Protection at work (1)
- (2) a 3rd Research Programme Ergonomics and Rehabilitation (2)

The present Communication concentrates on the third item in the resolution "reform of the organisation of work".

Within this broad concept are included all those changes in the design of the work process within the enterprise and in relations between workers or within the structure of management, calculated to improve working conditions by reducing such negative factors as isolation and boredom and making work more meaningful and satisfying.

Given the diversity of circumstances between the various industrial sectors and the necessity of taking full account of human as well as economic factors, the Commission's activity has, in this preparatory stage, been largely aimed at providing opportunities for the exchange of information and views and encouraging the emergence of specific approaches, likely to make a constructive contribution to the general objective of a progressive harmonisation in the improvement of working conditions.

The Commission has been encouraged by the intensification of discussion in most member states of the need for improvement in the quality of working life, which has even increased with the advent of the current economic crisis.

This discussion increasingly recognises a European dimension and the Commission therefore finds itself confronted with a widening network of national and international

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(1) Doc. COM (75) 138 final of 8 April 1975  
(2) Doc. SEC (74) 4617 of 22 November 1975

agencies, institutions and organisations involved in research, experiment, policy formulation and practical initiatives. The social partners, who have always been the principal agents in improving working conditions have become increasingly involved, with collective agreements, whether at national or enterprise level, breaking new ground in the field of humanisation. The compilation of the European Card Index of Collective Agreements, following an earlier decision of the Council, will provide a further and most important source of information in comparing and studying trends and developments as a basis for action.

Then again, the Commission will be able to draw inspiration from the experience of certain national administrations in co-ordination (e.g. ANACT (1) in France, the government research programme in Germany).

While it is too early to speak of a common understanding of the problems, this growing interest has shown the importance and necessity of the Commission's role as a catalyst, crystallizing ideas and assisting in the evolution of a common strategy. The Commission's main contribution has been the organisation of a series of seminars followed by a conference in November 1974, designed to bring together, at European level, governmental and non-governmental experts who have been involved with these problems. The background paper annexed to this communication reflects the discussions of the conference and subsequent exchanges of views with the social partners, organised at European level.

The social partners have been consulted on this paper and consider it a good basis for continuing dialogue and future joint action. They further agree that the European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions, with its quadripartite Administrative Board (2) will provide the right framework for medium term research in the field. They also urged the Commission to make an optimal use of the tools already at its disposal and to develop activity within the framework of existing work programmes, on safety, migrants, handicapped workers, etc.

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(1) Agence Nationale pour l'Amélioration des Conditions de Travail

(2) Council Regulation No. 1365/75 on the creation of a European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions.  
O.J. No. L 139/1 of 30 May 1975.

In addition, the Commission has continued the process of consultation and discussion on more specific aspects.

A detailed summary of actions now envisaged in the light of these consultations, whether on the part of the Foundation or the Commission, is set out in Parts V and VI of this communication.

### III. REFORM OF WORK ORGANISATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION PROCEDURES

Certain developments in the field of approximation of laws are of immediate relevance to the issue of reform of work organisation, particularly in those extreme situations, where radical reorganisation of work may be highly relevant to the maintenance of employment and even to the survival of a firm.

In such cases, institutionalised procedures of consultation and participation ought to be introduced to ensure that the interests of workers are taken into proper consideration at the right time.

Models for consultation of workers on specific problems concerning the employment position have already

- been adopted by the Council in the Directive on collective redundancies (1), which provides for mandatory consultations with workers to avoid redundancies, reduce the numbers affected or mitigate the consequences
- been proposed by the Commission
  - (a) draft directive on harmonisation of legislation and regulations on the retention of rights and advantages of employees in the case of mergers, takeovers or amalgamations of firms (2);
  - (b) proposal for a statute for European companies (3);
  - (c) proposal for a third directive on co-ordination of national company law, relating to mergers of limited companies (4).

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(1) Council Directive on the approximation of the law of the Member States relating to collective redundancies (75/129/EEC) O.J. No. L 48/29 of 22 February 1975.

(2) Proposal for a Directive submitted to the Council by the Commission on 21 June 1974 COM (74) 351 FINAL.

(3) Amended Proposal for a Council Regulation on the Statute for European Companies. Submitted by the Commission to the Council on 13 May 1975 COM (75) 150 Final. Bulletin E.C. Supplement 4/75.

(4) Second amended proposal for a third Directive on co-ordination on safeguards in connection with mergers between "sociétés anonymes": December 1975.

These proposals of the Commission would oblige the firms concerned to inform, among others, the representations of the employees of the social consequences entailed and, if the operation is considered prejudicial to their interests, to negotiate for the establishment of a social plan, detailing the measures to be taken on their behalf.

Similar provisions for consultation on a more general basis are suggested in the Green Paper on employee participation and company structure in the European Community.

In addition, employee participation in the supervisory bodies of large companies has been proposed in

- (a) the proposal for a statute for European companies (2)
- (b) the proposal for a fifth directive on co-ordination of national company law, relating to the structure of public companies (3).

The Green Paper was published with a view to stimulating a broad-ranging debate on the issues of employee participation and company structure so that the proposal for a fifth directive may be amended to take account of current realities and to express as broad a political consensus as possible.

These structures for consultation and participation will provide institutional conditions which will facilitate the formation and implementation of programmes for the reform of work organisation at both enterprise and plant level.

Moreover, the Commission is examining systems creating incentives for asset formation in Member States, which could well have an important bearing on the development of participation in decision-making within the enterprise.

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(1) Bull EC, Supplement 8/75

(2) Bull EC, Supplement 4/75

(3) Bull EC, Supplement 10/72

#### IV. GUIDELINES FOR FUTURE POLICY AND ACTION

In the light of experience summarised above and of the dialogue conducted between the services of the Commission and the social partners, it seems appropriate to draw up the following guidelines:

1. A new work ethic is emerging throughout the industrialised countries, founded on the constant efforts and practical achievements of the social partners - concern for the quality of life in the work place as a central part of the quality of life as a whole. It should be a basic objective of the Community to promote the redesign of jobs and organisational forms with a view to enabling all workers, rather than the privileged few, to do work which is meaningful rewarding and responsible.
2. The current economic situation has increased the urgency for change at the work place. Faced with the need to remain competitive, reduce waste and increase the conservation of energy and raw materials, both private companies and public services must turn increasingly to their employees to insure their active co-operation in the necessary process of adjustment and to enable the untapped potential for worker initiative to emerge. Although the social motivation must remain paramount, these economic advantages should not be underestimated.
3. There is no conflict between the requirements of humanisation and productivity. In fact, productivity has provided for an economic return on capital combined with improvements in the wellbeing of workers. An increase in productivity, far from being incompatible with improvements in working conditions, is likely to result from the introduction of humanised forms of work organisation and decentralisation of supervisory and management functions.
4. It can be expected that in the mixed economy of the Community all conceivable organisational changes are possible to the extent that they do not jeopardize the optimisation of the return on the combined factors of production, assessed on the basis of a value measure of productivity. The task is therefore to enlarge the concept of productivity so that it includes all identifiable economic and social costs and benefits.



5. Net increases in productivity will increasingly be possible only if new models of organisation are used which are capable of employing the potential reserves of creativity in the work force. Modifications designed merely to eliminate job monotony or to develop the occupational skills of each individual are of limited value, the full utilisation of these potential skills must be linked to changes in management structure and in decision making processes with the result that many of the planning and supervisory functions, for instance, are to be integrated with the practical operational activities.

6. The reform of work organisation is a continuing process, the full potential of which cannot be appreciated a priori, given that, essentially, it implies by definition a genuine participation of the employees and an increase in the value of their contribution to the smooth running of the enterprise.

7. Such participation implies a high degree of flexibility and some measure of democratisation of structures. While advisory bodies, representing workers, exist in practically all member states, their role in the decision - making process varies greatly from country to country.

8. Reform of work organisation, rightly understood, will not diminish the role which trade union action must play within the modern enterprise. It will, however, increase the chances of industrial peace based on communication of information, and, in consequence, mutual trust. Indeed, the exchange of information, ideas and experience, going beyond the narrow confines of a single enterprise, has a key role to play in the search for the different solutions which are possible.

9. An effective exchange of information should result in the incorporation of new knowledge into training courses. This applies to the education of managers and engineers, as well as to the training of trade union representatives and to the design of vocational training and educational leave courses. The introduction at all levels in the educational system of a new concept of work, as an aspect of personal growth, continuous learning and social responsibility, could help to break down the barriers between different skills, between the different levels in the management hierarchy and between work, education and leisure.

10. Humanised forms of work organisation should in themselves constitute a learning process. Firstly, they should enable workers to extend their skills and develop new responsibilities. Secondly, they should make it possible to develop autonomous groups within the enterprise on service concerned, promoting all the forms of democratisation. In this context, external research into work restructuring exercises is of limited value if it does not take into account the dynamic indirect effects of changes in work organisation.

11. One such indirect effect which is constantly observed though unquantifiable is the reluctance of employees to revert to traditional forms of work organisation even after having experienced exercises which were partial failures. This emphasizes the fact that reform of work organisation responds to a very real need, sufficient to encourage a continuing effort and to support new initiatives, rather than resigning oneself too quickly to failure in face of the difficulties inevitably encountered.

V. THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN FOUNDATION - WORKING PROGRAMME

Perhaps the most important element of the Communities' contribution to the humanisation of work will prove to be the creation of the European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions. This project should provide for the first time at Community level an independent, "think tank" capacity in this particular field. The Foundation will stimulate research and facilitate contact between the Institutions of the Community and organisations including trade union organisations active in this field.

The situation of man at work together with the problems of work organisation are specified in the Regulation (1) establishing the Foundation as areas of concern within which it is expected to identify priorities.

These aspects were emphasized in the discussion of the broad lines of the working programme of the Foundation at the first meeting of the Administrative Board to be held in Dublin on 6 and 7 May. For its part, the Commission, in its capacity of member of the quadripartite Administrative Board, considers that among the tasks of the Foundation in the field of work humanisation should include be

- the collection, cataloguing and classifying of information on activity in the field of work reorganisation. This could take the form of a data bank of case studies on problems and responses being implemented within individual firms or negotiated in collective agreements;
- the study of new social accounting methods, "social audit" systems, and other methods of evaluating the results of work restructuring;

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(1) Council Regulation No. 1365/75 on the creation of a European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions. O.J. No. L 139/1 of 30 May 1975.

In some cases, the workers and trade unions may well be mistrustful of any management initiatives in this field, particularly those resembling gimmicks solely to improve performance.

It is normal that trade unions prefer to concentrate on traditional areas of bargaining where they are better equipped to take positive initiatives or give priority to any outstanding grievances in the field of remuneration and security of employment.

Autonomous work groups and decentralised management patterns present a challenge to trade unions to adopt their own structures to the changed roles of management and workers in bargaining and to develop new patterns of information and training for their members.

The foremen, supervisory staff and middle management are often faced with a difficult process of adjustment given that sometimes their traditional functions can be undermined or they are not always prepared for changes in the structure of authority. Yet very often a failure to retrain and reintegrate these middle ranking employees can prejudice the success of any work restructuring exercises.

2. The initiatives of the social partners, acting collectively at national regional or sectoral level can have a profound influence on the improvement of the quality of working life. Institutionalised joint ventures require a common starting point, which, in the case of the Nordic countries, has been that of industrial democracy. In countries where the respective objectives of the social partners appear to be more deeply conflicting, it has been up to the individual employers federations or trade union organisations to stimulate thought and develop a positive though unilateral strategy. At Community level, the Commission has suggested the creation of a Trade Union Institute which could help to encourage the exchange of ideas and experience within a specifically trade union context.

Given a development of ideas and interest, the social partners will be able to adapt their traditional mechanisms and procedures for negotiation accordingly. Collective agreements, whether for whole industrial sectors or on an individual company basis are thus likely to become an important method for stipulating job redesign activities or new production techniques

- In recent years, many national governments have become interested in the new range of possibilities opened up by the perspective of humanisation. Various types of government involvement, even if only marginal or indirect, have lent valuable credence to the whole new approach.

The most obvious form of involvement has been for governments to develop their capacity for promoting research and the exchange of ideas. By means of new tripartite organs or research programmes and agencies, certain governments have attempted to encourage co-operation between the social partners and academic circles. This is particularly relevant when no other institutional form of co-operation has been initiated by the social partners themselves. The European Community has in the same context decided on the creation of a new quadrapartite body, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, which is destined to fulfil the same kind of role at Community level.

The legislative capacity of national governmental systems has had and will continue to have a profound influence on the industrial relations situations in the various countries. Nevertheless, the widely differing provisions for worker representation in the supervisory organs of undertakings, for the competences of works councils, for trade union representation, etc. cannot be considered as an area for isolated governmental initiative but rather a reflection of the requirements expressed by the social partners. Governments and social partners alike can, however, draw inspiration from some of the more recent legislation in countries where specific procedures and criteria have been developed for the utilisation of company profits, for promoting the design of new work processes to meet human requirements, for extending educational leave provisions, etc.

There is, however, much wider, though unexplored, scope for governments acting in their capacity of employers, where public authorities should aim to avoid recreating in the white collar public services the same problems of an extreme division of labour already encountered in industry.

BACKGROUND PAPER ON IMPROVEMENT OF THE QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE, FOLLOWING  
DISCUSSIONS WITH SOCIAL PARTNERS

- I. Background
- II. The concept of "humanisation of work" in context
- III. The wider implications
- IV. The agents of change.

I. Background

The improvement of living and working conditions is a central theme of the social action programme. A great number of current activities, recent decisions and existing and future proposals are designed to contribute to achieving this objective.

Community initiatives in the field of employment policy, vocational training, social security, labour law, company law, etc... are all directly relevant to this general theme. It is worth recalling in particular the actions being prepared on behalf of the more vulnerable categories of workers, the handicapped, women and migrant workers. The problems caused by migration towards industrialised centres, whether from within member states, within the Community or from third countries into the Community have been a particular cause for concern in this context. It is clear that migrant workers, who are disadvantaged from an educational and cultural point of view, are driven by economic necessity to undertake the least skilled, the most arduous and frequently the most dangerous jobs, for which no local labour can be recruited. At the same time, the organisation techniques of mass production have been instrumental in restricting the opportunities for cultural development and social inte-

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gration of migrants, who have settled in industrialised centres. A vigorous and enlightened approach to improving working conditions is thus an essential complement to other actions envisaged both in the programme for migrant workers, and in the memorandum on equality of treatment between men and women workers.

Other Community measures currently being prepared include those which focus less on direct policy initiatives and more on creating the necessary structures for research, dialogue, negotiation and agreement between the social partners, responsible for determining many aspects of working conditions. In this context should be seen the extension of the joint committees, the reactivation of the Standing Committee on Employment, the creation of a European Centre for the development of vocational training, and of a European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions. Many other areas of Community policy, particularly in the more recent fields such as environment and education, also have direct implications for the problems under discussion.

A more specific approach to the improvement of working conditions is envisaged in this paper, which takes as its central theme "improvement in the quality of working life" or, to use a less cumbersome expression "humanisation of work". "Humanisation", in this context, simply means the objective of "adjusting of the work situation to the worker", to be achieved by changes in the design of work processes and in relations between workers and in the structure of management, which aim at giving workers the opportunity to participate in the decisions which affect their work situation and to undertake more meaningful and satisfying jobs.

## II. The concept of "humanisation of work" in context

Attempts to introduce meaning, interest and work force control into the work situation do not in themselves imply many radical departures from the principles underlying the general trend towards an improvement in working conditions, which has been a constant element in the history of industrial



society. This approach represents a logical extension of one of the basic concepts at the origin of the work of the ILO, namely that labour is not a commodity. However, in the past, relatively little attention has been paid to the style, content and dimensions of individual work situations within an enterprise or service; thus, by extension, the overall planning and development of production systems, the organisation of work processes, together with the evolution of a corresponding system of authority surrounding the work itself have rarely been specifically examined in the context of improving working conditions.

Of course numerous other aspects of working conditions have preoccupied trade unions, enlightened employers and legislators alike since the beginning of the industrial revolution, although the improvements achieved have varied in form and content according to the different social economic and political conditions prevailing in each country or each industrial sector. It has been an area where management and employees have sometimes conflicting and sometimes convergent interests. Both conflictual and cooperative means are used to arrive at solutions. Hence the decision-making procedure, whether within the enterprise, between social partners at national or international level, or within the legislative body, has become quite as important as the substantive issues. Indeed, many industrial relations problems arise because of a mismatch between the two kinds of conflict and the two types of procedures used for handling conflicts. It must be emphasised however, that improving and supplementing cooperative procedures does not eliminate substantive conflict.

The continuing process of consultation, negotiation or legislation has tended to focus on a number of fairly distinct categories of problems each involving different types of decision making procedure. These include:

- 1 the area of remuneration and working time, including job pricing and rating, fringe benefits, shift systems, leave, etc. which have traditionally been issues for free collective bargaining at national, sectoral and plant level;
- 2 the area of social protection, in case of invalidity, unemployment, retirement, etc. which is generally speaking regulated by statutory schemes and procedures;

- 3 the physical working environment including safety and health protection, accident prevention, etc. where again legislation and statutory procedures have been the primary means by which standards have been raised;
- 4 the area of employment policy which in so far as it includes hiring and firing, equality of opportunity, the employment of specific categories of workers, etc. has been largely translated into the form of labour legislation in most Community countries;
- 5 aspects of personnel policy, including job allocation, training, promotion, and socio-cultural activities, once the prerogative of management, are now becoming increasingly the subject of consultation and co-operation normally on the basis of certain minimum statutory requirements;
- 6 the formal structure of decision making within the enterprise, including the machinery for workers' participation, whether by consultation, negotiation or representation in supervisory boards, etc. which is generally set out in the form of company law and labour law. Additional arrangements may be negotiated by the social partners at national level or at the level of the enterprise.

There has been considerable interplay between these issues and the many wider national policy issues, not only in the field of employment, education, vocational training and social security but also in competition, foreign trade and credit and investment policy, etc.

One of the major influences on the whole trend in working conditions since the industrial revolution has been technological : the introduction of mechanisation and automation and more recently the computer, extending the possibilities of mass production, and the consequent increased division of work and concentration of workers in large industrialised units.

For a variety of reasons, however, the possibilities opened up by technological developments have not, in themselves, normally been the object of consultation and negotiation, but have remained very largely an area of "managerial prerogative". Theories of scientific management contributed substantially to the trend towards the division of jobs into smaller and smaller elements, to a specialisation and systematic minimising of skills, to cut down training costs and to facilitate and concentrate control. This process has applied to manual workers and equally, though more recently, to many white collar workers.

The immediate material benefits brought about by the increasing mechanisation of work, usually accompanied by rapid economic expansion, seemed only on the surface to overcome the more obvious drawbacks for the individual workers concerned. The debate on working conditions concentrated on the negotiation of incentives to compensate for or disguise the effects of the division of work or on increasing therewards for higher productivity and efficiency: economic incentives, reduction in working hours, welfare facilities, and more recently, more sophisticated social incentives involving increasing provisions for worker participation, changes in personnel practices, better training and educational leave facilities, etc.

This trend has begun to change throughout Western Europe in the last few years. The changing nature of the work situation itself, which had hitherto remained largely unquestioned, is increasingly becoming the main object of the debate.

The emphasis on humanisation of work should be seen therefore as a movement away from the search for and the negotiation of compensatory incentives and a movement towards a direct reappraisal of work organisation and the corresponding hierarchical organisation of the enterprise or service.

To the extent that this movement involves a direct or indirect transformation and decentralisation of the power structure, this approach coincides with, and is often in fact identified with the movement towards more democratic decision-making, particularly at shop - floor level.

It should also be noted, however, that, in as far as work humanisation implies a job restructuring planned to provide the degree of worker satisfaction necessary in order to satisfy certain technological or economic requirements of the enterprise, it coincides with the constant search by management for methods to increase working efficiency and productivity.

### III. The wider implications

Since "humanisation" can be presented both in terms of more democratic decision-making procedures and in terms of increased working efficiency and productivity, attitudes and approaches vary greatly from country to country, depending on the traditional strategies adopted by the respective social partners towards industrial relations within the national context. Negative attitudes are likely to be encountered, where the interests of employers and workers are perceived as fundamentally irreconcilable. In some cases, however, while the basic notion of conflict is not denied, the very openness of the concept of "humanisation" is seen to present new opportunities for negotiation leading to positive improvement. In other cases, this approach is seen as an extension of productivity bargaining where the unions accept to identify with the objective of greater profitability for the enterprise on condition that major concessions are made on trade union influence over decision-making. In yet other cases, where large-scale changes in work organisation have been introduced successfully, there has been a very extensive mutual identification of interests concerning industrial democracy and productivity.

However, irrespective of the attitudes currently adopted, in all their diversity, by the social partners, the trend towards humanisation of work is being reinforced by a number of other factors:

- (a) the growth of material prosperity and social security since the war, which, in spite of current economic difficulties, has encouraged a shift of emphasis away from material needs and anxieties towards demands for a better quality of life, both at work and in leisure.

(b) higher educational levels and a changing educational system producing a more demanding younger generation frequently educated beyond the immediate requirements of the employment available, often showing their discontent indirectly, causing rising levels of absenteeism and labour turnover.

(c) the growing realisation that efforts to achieve equal opportunities in the educational field must be complemented by reforms and a reduction of inequalities in the world of work;

(d) the new demands for a greater sense of "social responsibility" on the part of private and public enterprise, to accommodate the interests not just of employees but also of the consumer and society at large and which imply greater disclosure of information and changes in the decision-making process;

(e) the pressure of international competition inducing management to investigate new methods of management to increase productivity and improve quality;

(f) increasing restrictions concerning the recruitment of migrant labour, together with the development of legal provisions to ensure equal treatment for women workers, are reducing the possibilities of employers to rely on what has been a vast reserve of sometimes rather unskilled labour.

(g) the pressures to improve the economic and technological viability of industrial development in less-favoured regions of the Community, which lend themselves particularly to the introduction of new patterns of work organisation and small production units based on group technology.

A whole range of other developments within the industrial relations context itself is likely to emphasize the importance of the debate on work organisation. The following issues are worth noting:

- developments in the field of industrial safety and hygiene indicate the need to give greater responsibility to individual workers in the identification of safety hazards, the evaluation of certain types of physical and psychological stress and also in the design and application of protective

- the reorganisation of work processes, whether or not influenced by the notion of humanisation, normally results in changes in job content, increases in responsibility or in productivity which in turn have repercussions on the wage structure. Inversely, the impact of material rewards for workers undertaking monotonous repetitive tasks is diminishing with the result that wage differentials are becoming less and less related to the types of skill being employed;
- the reform of work organisation, enabling workers to execute a wider variety of tasks and apply a greater sense of judgement, can be seen as an on-the-job form of training and thus a method of increasing the qualifications of workers so that they can prepare to move into higher paid jobs;
- faced with escalating costs and forced to make increasing long term reappraisals of alternative production systems, employers will be increasingly tempted to opt for heavy investment in automated systems which can in turn intensify the problems of repetitive routinised work if systems designed are not obliged to take human and social criteria into account.

A great variety of different concepts, methods and approaches have been developed in response to these newly felt challenges. However, most of the practical experimentation and initiative has been carried out only relatively recently and very unevenly across the different countries in Western Europe. Even where work reorganisation exercises have become established practice and been imitated in other plants or services, there is a general reluctance to indicate any precise criteria for future initiatives, given the extremely subjective, constantly evolving and unquantifiable nature of the factors involved, and the fact that most attempts to improve work organisation have been largely isolated and essentially pragmatic reactions to specific existing or foreseeable conditions. In the sense that the definition of human needs in the work situation must depend ultimately on the conscious expression of such needs by the workers concerned, it is a truism to say that no formulistic answer can ever be found.

Nevertheless, the influence of a common social environment on human needs is bound to be a determining factor and on this basis a number of principles have been developed in research done by such institutions as Tavistock Institute for Human Relations which have been used as guidelines in a number of successful work reorganisation projects. These emphasise the basic human needs for a variety of tasks, for a minimum length of work cycle, for some conceptual and control capacity, for social recognition, an identifiable function, and for opportunities of self improvement and occupational upgrading.

Numerous exercises and concepts have been devised, very largely on the basis of these indications, and applied particularly to modifying the system of assembly of mass production consumer durables in the electrical and mechanical engineering industries. Such concepts include "job enrichment" (increasing the amount of judgement required) "job enlargement" (increasing the number of operations to be performed without necessarily adding any intellectual challenge) and "job rotation" (moving from time to time to different tasks to introduce a varied routine).

The results may range all the way from the simplest forms of individual job upgrading, to more complex forms of upgrading at group level, on the basis of the concept of autonomous or semi-autonomous groups, which can provide opportunities for a fundamental reappraisal and considerable decentralisation of planning, management and supervisory functions.

The profusion and diversity of the exercises, that have been carried out, applying these concepts individually or in combination, whether consciously or unconsciously, and in each case reflecting the individual economic social and political environment, have increased the difficulties of defining acceptable criteria by which it should be possible to evaluate the new conditions required and their effects.

It is clear that the trend towards "humanisation" cannot be looked at in isolation. Coinciding as it does with the general movement towards industrial democracy, the problems involved should be seen in the context of the wider social, economic and political climate.

The particular conditions and composition of the labour force in one plant may well vary considerably from those in another plant within the same region, but it is particularly at national level where a multitude of different factors come into play and sharply distinguish the climate for progress between one country and another. These factors include not only the traditional structure and emphasis of industrial relations, the respective strategies of the social partners, the customary degree of state intervention, etc, but also a whole range of more general interacting elements such as the employment situation, access to alternative labour forces (migrant workers), the general standard of living and education and the quality of the socio-cultural infrastructure.

#### IV. The Agents of Change

1. Irrespective of the evolution of ideas among the leaders of both sides of industry, it is at plant level that these new aspirations and techniques are put to the test.

At plant level, the same overall objectives can be pursued by different methods, at different times, in different places, the essential fact being that change should be brought about by agreement of the social partners at individual plant level. It is at this level that there is most scope for developing new concepts of work organisation and putting them into practice. It is however at plant level that the obstacles to work humanisation are most clearly revealed, where both employees and management are unsure of the economic implications, whether on their wage packets or on productivity, and unsure of their new roles. Individual workers, particularly the least skilled or the elderly, are frequently anxious about their ability to respond to the new challenges offered them, and fear exclusion. Others may be unaccustomed to group working or may simply not wish to have their jobs "enriched".



- coordinated research into the particular problems and advantages of small and medium sized enterprises and industrial units, undertaking work reorganisation exercises;
- promotion of research particularly in the form of surveys designed to investigate the particular issues of working conditions which give rise to the greatest concern and in what order of priority. (These surveys could be carried out within far more specific frames of reference than the general programme of qualitative indicators presently being worked out in the framework of the Social Action Programme);
- analysis of the social status or stigma attached to various menial or unskilled occupations;
- analysis of the various fiscal incentives, investment policies, etc. which are designed to promote, facilitate or underwrite exercises in work humanisation or other projects to improve the working environment;
- the constant monitoring of those factors likely to impede or enhance the success of innovation on the part of management and employees at plant level.

## VI. FUTURE ACTION BY THE COMMISSION

Apart from the work of the Foundation, in contributing a scientific basis to the formulation of general guidelines and criteria for future policy, it is the task of the Commission to respond to immediate needs, to make use of opportunities already present and to prepare proposals for Community legislation.

The Commission therefore proposes to implement the following actions, step by step.

- (a) An ad hoc group will be set up, working in co-operation with the Advisory Committee on Health, Safety and Protection at Work, to assess the possibility of more stringent and binding standards for the working environment.
- (b) Parallel with this group on the working environment, an ad hoc group will be set up to examine the economic implications of changes in work organisation for the productivity of the enterprise and the Gross National Products of Member States.
- (c) The Commission will promote new and more democratic patterns of work organisation, linked with smaller production units or regional decentralisation, or of special relevance to the needs of specific problem groups, as pilot operations within the various aid policies conducted by the Commission, with a view to identifying criteria for future action.
- (d) The Commission will continue to foster greater consultation between workers and employers organisations at Community level by encouraging sectoral meetings to discuss relevant social problems, whether in the framework of the joint or mixed committees, or on the basis of joint meetings to discuss employment problems in specific sectors.
- (e) The Commission will continue to work for the adoption of its proposals which seek to ensure that throughout the Community employees are adequately consulted and may participate in the decision-making of companies for which they work.

(f) The Commission will examine the influence of developments at the work place on the educational needs of workers, developments presenting wider opportunities to hold responsibility and to extend their skills and qualifications.