

Week of 13 to 18 December

S U M M A R Y

p. 2 LABOUR: Three-day week?

Shorter working hours, longer holidays and early retirement could solve the problem of unemployment, according to a recent European Commission report.

p. 3 PROTECTIONISM: Government-inspired patriotism banned

Patriotism and business don't mix, as the Irish government has discovered to its cost at the European Court in Luxembourg.

p. 4 JAPAN: Open Sesame?

European businessmen wanting to break into the Japanese market will be attending a major EC-Japan symposium in Brussels in January.

p. 5 EDUCATION: Euro-eggheads

Steven Spielberg's E.T. shows that children are getting smarter all the time. We release shocking new education figures.

p. 6 INDUSTRY: Strikes

Strikes and lock-outs cost European industry 400 million working-days in the recession-struck Seventies. 35% of them were in Britain.

p. 7 PARLIAMENT: Illegitimate rights

The European Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee says that illegitimacy is still discriminated against in Europe.

p. 8 MOTORING: Drunk driving

Arrested driving home after an office party? We look at the limits and ask whether they are going to throw away the key.

This newsheet is published in six languages (English, French, German, Dutch, Italian and Spanish) by the Directorate-General for Information of the

Commission of the European Communities,
Rue de la Loi 200 - 1049 Brussels - Belgium.
Tel.: 2351111 - Telex: 21877 COMEU B

Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Community institutions.



LABOUR: Three-day week?

The reorganisation and reduction of working time is an idea which has received a lot of attention in Europe recently. It has become a priority objective of the European Community employment policy which the European Commission would like to see pursued and reinforced. 11,5 million people are unemployed in Europe and the situation is expected to get worse.

With this in mind, the European Commission has just adopted a "memorandum on the reduction and reorganisation of working time". Community Social Affairs Ministers asked the Commission to prepare the memorandum by the end of 1982. More recently, during the last European Council summit meeting in Copenhagen on December 3 and 4, the 10 heads of state and government declared that the reorganisation of working time warranted "urgent examination".

In the memorandum, the Commission says that a reorganisation of hours worked should become one of the principal instruments of the economic and social policies of the member states, and not just a means of improving living and working conditions, as in the past. "In the absence of substantial changes in the current structure of employment policy and in the organisation of working time", says the memorandum, "a growth rate of 3 to 3.5 percent would be required to prevent a new increase in unemployment, which seems totally unrealistic in the immediate future".

The Commission says that in the coming quarter it will pursue its contacts with representatives of industry and labour on the question of working hours. Discussions will be aimed at preparing the basis for an agreement between member states for joint action. The goal, according to the Commission, is a substantial reduction in the amount of time worked by each individual.

In the memorandum, the Commission also analyzes the changes in the amount of time worked in Community countries between 1970 and 1981. Italy leads the list with a reduction in time worked of 11.6 percent over the 11-year period. Just behind are Greece, with a reduction of 11.5 percent, and Belgium, with a cut of 11 percent. The Netherlands is next with a 7.2 percent reduction, Luxembourg with 7 percent, Denmark with 5.3 percent, and the United Kingdom and Ireland both with 4.3 percent. The Federal Republic of Germany had the smallest decline with 1.2 percent. The French government reduced the working week from 40 to 39 hours at the beginning of 1982.

PROTECTIONISM: Government-inspired patriotism banned

"Think English", "Buy Irish", and "Reconquest of the home market" are just some of the slogans floated recently in Europe illustrating the rise of neo-protectionist sentiment of an extremely insidious kind in the European Community.

Since it is legally impossible for the 10 member countries to reach into their arsenals of classical protectionist measures such as tariff barriers and other obstacles to trade against each other, from time to time, they employ a vast array of ingenious devices to bypass Community rules to protect some troubled industrial sector or another. Government campaigns to buy domestically-made products are just one of the means used.

But the European Commission, whose job it is to enforce the Community Treaties, is on its guard against infractions. Some 110 cases of possible violations are currently being considered. They involve complaints against alleged obstacles to the free movement of goods inside the Community, and could ultimately wind up being decided by the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg.

In a related move, the Court has just condemned the Irish Government for a publicity campaign launched in 1978 entitled "Buy Irish", and designed to promote the sale and purchase of Irish products inside the country. The campaign was organised by a body known as the Irish Goods Council. The Court judged that there had been a violation of Article 30 of the Rome Treaty concerning the free circulation of merchandise, because the "Buy Irish" campaign was directed and financed by an organ connected with the Government, contrary to official claims in Dublin.

The Irish Government's participation was the main argument raised by the European Commission, and later by the Court. Recently, a campaign recommending that consumers "Think English" when shopping was also organised in Great Britain. They were asked to devote at least £3 more each week to buy British, rather than foreign, products. In reply to a question in the European Parliament, the Commission said that the campaign had been launched by private business interests and therefore could not be considered as a violation of Community rules.

The upsurge of protectionism was one of the major concerns at the European Council summit meeting in Copenhagen on December 3 and 4. The 10 heads of State and Government told Foreign Ministers to take a decision before the end of 1983 on priority measures proposed by the European Commission to strengthen the internal Community market.

JAPAN: Open Sesame?

No self-respecting European businessman should forget that on 20 and 21 January, the second business symposium organised by the European Commission and the Japanese Government will be held in Brussels. Some 300 European and Japanese industrialists will explore the possibilities of industrial cooperation and collaboration in science and technology. Even if the encounter does not result in a magic formula which would make Japanese trade barriers disappear, the dialogue should allow Community businessmen to gain a better understanding of just how the Japanese market operates.

At the moment, Japanese demands for open markets seem to be rather one-sided. With a population of 117 million, Japan only imports as much as Switzerland, with its population of 6.4 million.

European exporters come up against massive tariff barriers and a series of regulations which block their access to the Japanese market. As a result, Europe's trade deficit with Japan reached a record \$8 billion for the first ten months of 1982.

Japanese exports are helped by its trade policy, but are concentrated in a relatively limited number of sectors, including cars, television sets, machine tools and, of course, video cassette recorders. In 1980, more than 13% of Japanese exports went to Europe, while Japan only imported 5,6% of Community exports. The difference in investment levels is also worth noting: in 1981, the European Community invested about \$600 million in Japan, while Japanese investments in Europe rocketed to \$4.5 billion.

The European Commission is working hard to try and correct the imbalance. A programme designed to encourage European exports to Japan was introduced in 1979; market studies, seminars and trade missions have become almost routine. The programme also includes training periods for European businessmen and executives in Japan. Trainees are given 12 months to learn the language and another 6 months of on-the-spot training in a Japanese firm. The symposium in January is the second of its kind. The first one was held in Tokyo in 1981. Mr. Etienne Davignon, Vice President of the European Commission and Mr. Yamanaka, Japanese Minister for External Trade, will examine the prospects for promoting EC-Japanese industrial cooperation. Also attending the meeting will be representatives of major European firms such as Grundig, Olivetti, Thomson and major Japanese firms such as Honda and Hitachi.

EDUCATION: Euro-eggheads

American film director Steven Spielberg would probably like us to think that his creation, E.T., the immensely popular, short, fat, super-intelligent Martian with the bulging cranium, is a taste of the future. And he may not be entirely wrong, if education figures just released by the EC are anything to go by.

Apparently, day by day, Europe is becoming better educated. More people are staying at school longer and going on to higher education. Even if you personally don't feel that your head is bursting with knowledge, that your brain is straining towards some kind of higher evolution and that you have a desire to build spaceships, the figures show that in a few years you probably will.

Look at eighteen-year olds. Ten years ago about 28 percent of boys and 23 percent of girls of that age were to be found lounging around Europe's classrooms and lecture theatres, passing notes to each other, bettering their minds in full-time education. Last year the figure had shot up to 36 percent, in other words 8 percent more boys and 13 percent more girls.

If you hadn't noticed the obvious change in the hulking hoodlum drinking beer in front of the TV in your living-room, examine the case of his female counterpart. Old ideas that she might have had ten years ago about leaving school at sixteen, getting married and starting a family are clearly disappearing down the tubes. Now there are actually more girls than there are boys staying on at school in the 16 to 18 age group.

But if you think that this is going to bring about any radical changes in the sexual status quo in the short term - think again. Oddly enough, in higher education boys are still in the majority, though only just. Apparently between 1971 and 1981 the number of 19-year old girls in full-time education in Europe increased from 16.5 percent to 21.8 percent, while the number of boys only increased from 22.3 percent to 22.8 percent.

So why exactly, you may ask, are students multiplying as a proportion of Europe's population? Could it be a genuine thirst for knowledge engendered by our society? Perhaps. But equally likely explanations could be women's emancipation and the simple fact that these days it is a lot tougher for kids to get jobs.

INDUSTRY: Strikes

Strikes and lock-outs cost European industry 400 million working days in the Seventies, at a time when it was struggling against the rise in the price of oil, growing international competition and world recession, according to figures just published by the European Community Statistical Office. More than half of the days lost were in the manufacturing sector, about a quarter in the services sector, about 10 percent in the primary sector and about 6 percent in construction, says the report, which was compiled by Sussex University's Institute of Manpower Studies.

In the then nine European Community countries, Italy and Britain's industrial relations problems far exceeded those of any other member state. Between them they accounted for more than three-quarters of all working days lost. Labour disputes in Italy alone lost over 190 million days and in Britain over 140 million.

By comparison, only about 34 million days were lost in France, 13 million in the Federal Republic of Germany, 8 1/2 million in Belgium, 5.8 million in the Republic of Ireland, 5.3 million in Denmark and less than 2 million in the Netherlands.

In the manufacturing sector extraordinary statistics emerge. Italy and Britain both lost over 90 million days, more than double the combined total of the remaining seven Community member states. Losses in the British car industry alone are more than ten times the total number of days lost for the entire Dutch economy over the period.

Peak years for industrial unrest varied from country to country. But 1979 was a particularly unproductive year, with Britain reaching a European record for the Seventies of nearly 29 1/2 million days lost, followed into second place by Italy, with 24 million. It was also a peak year for Ireland and the Netherlands, who lost about 1 1/2 million and 300,000 days, respectively. Although strained labour relations have had a serious economic impact in terms of lost production and lost orders, up to now they do not appear to have deterred investors. According to recent figures published by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Britain still attracts more direct foreign investment from the United States and Japan than any other European Community state.

PARLIAMENT: Illegitimate rights

The law often lags behind social evolution which sometimes explains some curious anachronisms and injustices. One such example is the fact that the law in the European Community has still not completely eliminated the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children.

The Legal Affairs Committee of the European Parliament has been looking into the case of illegitimate children in Europe and has drawn up an inventory of laws in different countries.

Currently, Italy, Luxembourg, Denmark, France and Portugal, which is a candidate for Community membership, grant virtually the same rights to legitimate and illegitimate children. Acknowledgement of an illegitimate child by one or both parents constitutes the basic element in determining parentage. Once recognised, the child born of unmarried parents acquires the same rights as a legitimate child.

On the other hand, in the Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, the law is generally unclear. The most disadvantaged illegitimate children are in Belgium, Ireland, Greece and Spain, where they have fewer rights than legitimate children.

Discrimination between married and unmarried mothers is more or less linked to the children. Significant differences exist concerning maternal parental rights, the use of names, citizenship and parental authority. For instance, in Ireland and Greece, where an unmarried mother has to share her authority with a guardian, she has fewer rights than married mothers.

Nevertheless, family law is undergoing major reforms. In 1975, the Council of Europe drafted a European Convention on the legal status of children born out of wedlock, with the aim of abolishing the existing distinctions and of harmonizing legislation in European countries. It includes provisions defining parental authority and rights of inheritance. Denmark and the United Kingdom have already signed and ratified it, while France, Italy, Luxembourg and Portugal have only signed it. Five other EC member states have yet to sign. The Legal Affairs Committee of the European Parliament has called for all Community member states to sign the Convention so that illegitimate children will no longer be the victims of unjust discrimination.

MOTORING: Drunk driving

Now that Christmas - and drinking - time is here again, European drivers should be interested in finding out about the risks they run if they decide to drive back from a particularly "happy" office party.

Winston Griffiths, a British Socialist member of the European Parliament, has just asked the European Commission to provide details of the maximum level of alcohol in the blood stream permitted in each EC member state and the different sorts of punishment meted out to drunk drivers. According to the Commission, alcohol tests are not as strict in every member state as they might be. The level of alcohol allowed is 0.8 grammes/1000 cm³ in the Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium, Denmark, France, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom. In the Netherlands it is 0.5 grammes/1000 cm³, but in Greece, Ireland and Italy there are no limits. In other words, ouzo, whiskey and chianti drinkers are better off consuming their favourite tipples in their own countries.

As far as punishments are concerned, they vary according to how drunk you are. Fines, prison sentences, and in some countries, suspension of the driving license are just some of the options.

In France, for example, the fine can vary between 500 to 3,000 FF and can be accompanied by the suspension of your driving license or a prison sentence of between 10 days and a year. In the Federal Republic of Germany, the fine is between 500 to 1,500 DM and the prison sentence between one to twelve months. In the United Kingdom, the fine can be up to 1000 pounds, your license can be suspended for up to a year and you can be sent to prison for six months. Cheers!

Eurofocus is taking off a week for Christmas. Our next number will be dated January 3 1983.

Happy Christmas and Best Wishes for the New Year!