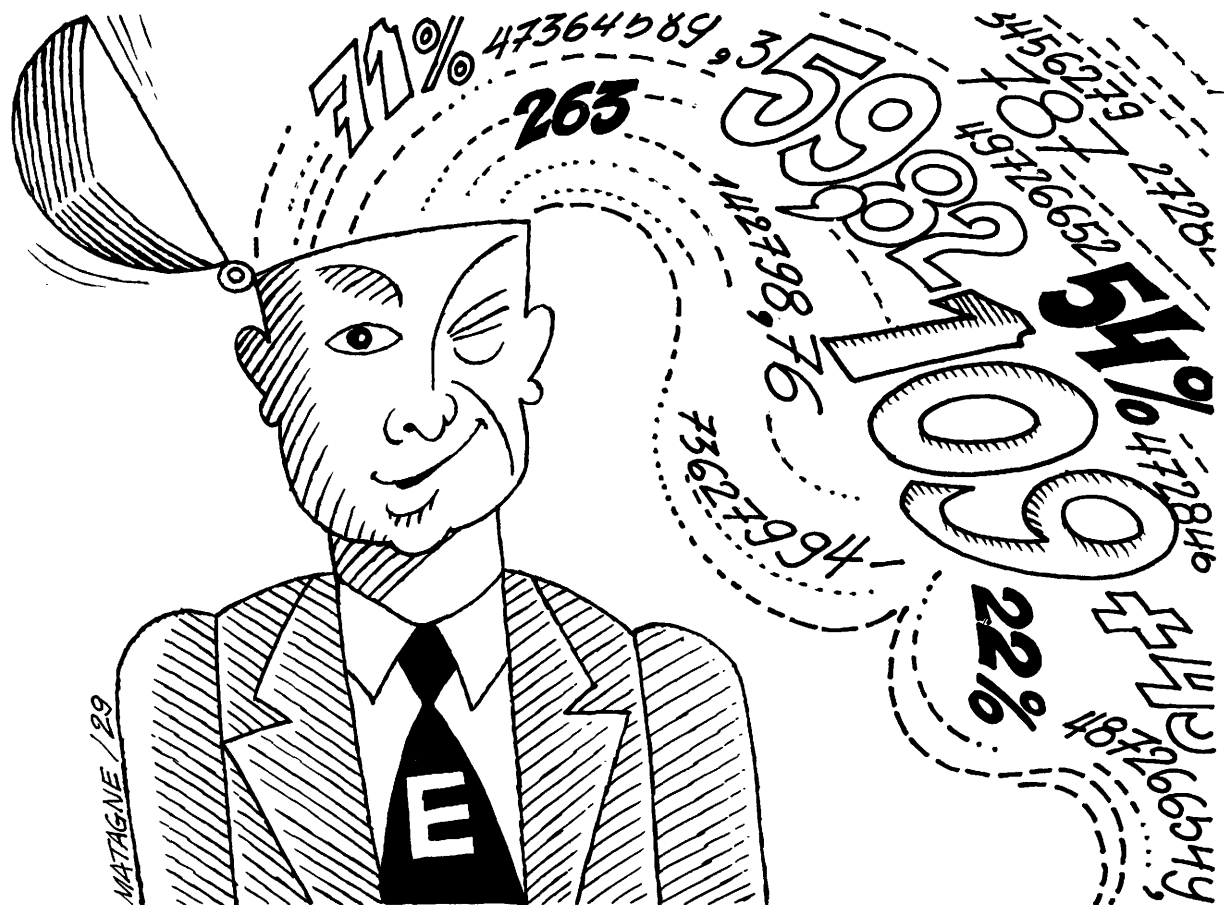


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europa day by day

Brussels, 7 September 1976

No 31/76



Euro-Barometer No 5 published by the European Commission gives evidence of some disillusionment among Europeans: more than half of those interviewed (53%) still think "the Common Market is a good thing", but this represents a drop of 10 points since the autumn 1975 survey.

X/509/76-E

This bulletin is published by the

Commission of the European Communities
Directorate General of Information
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1049 - Brussels - Tel. 735 00 40

Further information is available from the Commission's press and information offices in the countries listed on the back page.

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**** EURO-BAROMETER: EUROPEANS MIDWAY BETWEEN HOPE AND DISILLUSIONMENT**

Euro-Barometer No 5 published by the European Commission gives evidence of some disillusionment among Europeans: more than half of those interviewed (53%) still think "the Common Market is a good thing", but this represents a drop of 10 points since the autumn 1975 survey.

In ANNEX 1, Euroforum gives the main results of the fifth six-monthly survey carried out for the Commission in the nine Community countries, and involving some 9 000 interviews with people aged 15 and over.

**** CONSUMER CREDIT**

What with paying by instalments, personal loans and credit cards - consumer credit is playing a greater and greater part in the economic life of European Community countries. At the end of 1973, for example, there were 987 561 credit cards in circulation in Belgium alone. In other words, one in ten Belgians (including babes in arms) held a credit card.

In ANNEX 2, Euroforum explains what the European Commission proposes to do to restore some order to an area badly or inadequately regulated, from which the consumer is not always the one to gain.

**** EMPLOYMENT BETWEEN GROWTH AND INFLATION**

"Beware of underemployment" warn four independent experts consulted by the European Commission.

In ANNEX 3, Euroforum summarizes the main points of the report drawn up by Mr Lutz, Mr Mériaux, Mr Mukherjee and Mr Rehn.

**** SEVESO: COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY AT WORK**

Following the accident in Seveso, the Commission of the European Communities made available to the Italian authorities the expertise of its staff and the installations which could help to overcome the contamination of the region by toxic products.

As soon as it was contacted by the Italian authorities, the Commission's Environment and Consumer Protection Service sent a representative to Rome to ascertain requirements and to implement and coordinate the aid which the Commission could supply.

The Ispra establishment of the Joint Research Centre, which has specialized equipment and expert resources in the environment sector, took immediate action. It alerted the network of consultants in the "ECDIN" data bank (Environmental Chemicals Data Information Network), set up under the Community's environment programme, to obtain information on TCDD (toxicity, teratogenic effects, metabolism, decontamination method). As the information was received, it was passed on to the Ministry of Public Health in Rome.

Ispra also lent mobile equipment which can pinpoint local meteorological conditions, especially air turbulence and the inversion layers. This information, which is useful for determining the extent of the pollution, is indispensable for the choice of measures to prevent any spread of the chemical when decontamination measures are carried out, and for the supervision of such operations. This ultrasonic radar equipment (SODAR), connected to a mobile meteorological tower, is the only unit of this type in Europe.

Finally, Ispra has made available to the Italian authorities all the other technical resources in its research centre, which is near the Seveso region (approximately 60 km away).

In addition, the Health Protection Directorate in the Commission has been in contact with the Italian authorities to help them receive assistance from experts on toxicology and specialized laboratories.

The Commission will not fail, in due course, to ascertain the medium-term implications of this accident for some of its policies.

**** THE ECONOMY: CONSUMERS ARE CONFIDENT**

The survey, covering 25 000 Community households, carried out in May, confirms the regained confidence already noticed last January. In Germany, many more consumers than in January thought the country's general economic situation had improved since a year previously. In France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Great Britain the pessimism shown in January had disappeared. In Denmark, Ireland and Italy, however, a greater number of consumers felt that the economic situation was worse than it had been a year before.

With regard to the general economic situation over the next 12 months, an improvement is forecast in all member countries, apart from Denmark. Consumers' generally more favourable attitudes towards their countries' economic futures were largely influenced by their views on employment trends. In all member countries, fears of worsening unemployment had abated.

As regards future trends in prices, the feeling in countries where rates of inflation have been highest (Ireland, Italy and the United Kingdom) was that the situation was not likely to get any worse. In the other countries however, consumers were less optimistic about a possible further reduction in inflation.

Consumers' views on their financial situation over the coming 12 months - an important indication as to how income will be allocated between consumption and saving - are a little more optimistic, except for the Netherlands where people are slightly more sceptical.

In most member countries, the number of households taking the view that this is a good time to make major purchases has increased a little. At the same time, in all the member countries except Denmark, the propensity to save is tending to decline.

**** KEEPING A WATCH ON PLANT PROTECTION PRODUCTS**

In France alone, more than 6 000 products are officially authorized for use in farming. The figure itself is enough to explain why the European Commission has prepared a proposal for a directive on the marketing and free movement within the Community of products used to protect crops against disease, insects and weeds.

The Commission proposal provides for optional "EEC-acceptance", to operate alongside existing national arrangements for approving plant protection products. This acceptance will be granted by a Member State to products complying with certain standards in the matter of safety and effectiveness. Anyone wanting to market plant protection products in the Community will therefore be able to apply either for separate registration under the national legislation of each country, or for EEC-acceptance only. Once EEC-acceptance has been granted for a product, Member States - as from 31 December of the year following its acceptance - will no longer be able to refuse, prohibit or restrict its marketing. Every year the European Commission will publish a list of plant protection products which may be freely marketed as EEC-accepted.

Another proposal for a directive, transmitted by the Commission to the Council, seeks to align the national arrangements concerning prohibitions or restrictions on plant protection products, whose use may involve risks for man and the environment. As a first step, this proposal covers plant protection products containing certain active mercury or organo-chlorine substances, whose use in farming is now generally considered undesirable and is already banned in many Community countries. DDT is on this list of prohibited substances.

**** KEEPING FISH HAPPY**

To keep fish happy in Europe's rivers and ponds, sixteen quality objectives - covering such things as temperature, oxygen content, suspended solids and hydrocarbons - have been defined by the Commission of the European Communities in a proposal to the Council for a directive on quality requirements for waters capable of supporting freshwater fish. There are both ecological and economic arguments in favour of the directive, which is a major feature of the European Community's action programme for the environment.

Taking account of the varying susceptibility of fish to toxic substances, the directive distinguishes between salmonid and cyprinid waters. The former are capable of supporting salmon, trout, grayling and coregonidae, while the latter harbour the cyprinidae, or other species which share the same habitat, such as pike, perch and eels.

When the directive has been adopted, the Community countries will have two years to bring their national legislation into line. It is hoped that in five years time fish in the Community will no longer have any reason to complain about Europeans.

**** WAYS OF USING WASTE**

In East Gelderland in the Netherlands the possibility is now being considered of using dried sludge from purification plants, mixed with clay, as a raw material for the manufacture of bricks.

The European Commission is following this and similar projects in other Community countries with keen interest in connection with its policy of combating and managing waste. One of the aims of this policy is to promote the re-use of waste as a secondary raw material.

The European Commission is now deciding whether to organize an exchange of information and experience on the re-use of sludge from purification plants in the Community. Such a discussion would enable the European Commission to present proposals on this subject to the Council of Ministers after consulting the Waste Management Committee, which it recently set up.

**** THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

In reply to a Written Question by Mr McDonald, a Member of the European Parliament, the European Commission recently stated that it was still giving thought to the question of conducting information campaigns in preparation for direct election of the European Parliament by universal suffrage. Following the recent decision by the European Council, it is now in a position to work out a detailed programme. The Commission has made provision in the preliminary draft budget for 1977 for a new entry relating to possible projects in connection with direct elections to the European Parliament.

**** A CLEAN EUROPE IN A CLEAN WORLD**

Eleven European organizations, all with the common aim of protecting the environment and all members of "Clean World International", have just founded an "EEC Group of Clean World International". In a letter - on recycled paper - to Mr Scarascia Mugnozza, the Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for environment matters, the new organization has asked that it be recognized by the Commission.

The organizations making up the "EEC Group of Clean World International" are: Inter-Environnement (Belgium), Keep Britain Tidy Group (Britain), Friluftsradet (Denmark), Aktion Saubere Landschaft (Germany), Fondation "Sauvons l'avenir" (France), Progrès et environnement (France), Irish Tourist Board (Ireland), Keep Ireland Beautiful Movement (Ireland), Ministero dell Agricoltura e delle Foreste (Italy), Conseil supérieur de la

Conservation de la Nature (Luxembourg) and Stichting Verpakking en Milieu (Netherlands).

The Keep Britain Tidy Group, Bostel House, 37 West Street, Brighton BN1 2RE, Britain, is acting as secretariat for the "EEC Group of Clean World International".

**** EAGGF: CONTROLLING ABUSES**

The European Commission has learned of a number of irregularities committed against the EAGGF (European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund). Most of these were discovered when national civil services inspected the firms' conventional books and papers - accounts, correspondence and so forth. The Commission has found that more irregularities are uncovered and more sums recovered for the EAGGF in Member States which have an inspection system of this kind, than in those which have not.

So the European Commission has just proposed to the Council that Member States should be obliged to carry out regular inspections of the commercial books and documents of firms receiving or owing sums under the EAGGF.

The Commission proposal requires Member States to carry out such inspections on their own responsibility, and on a scale and at a frequency to be decided by them according to circumstances. After a transitional period of three years, to enable States to set up the necessary instruments gradually, inspections will have to be carried out at least once every two years on firms which receive or pay sums over 100 000 u.a. a year (1 u.a. = approx. US \$1.1) under the EAGGF financing system.

**** THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF MIGRANT WORKERS**

A few months ago, foreign residents in some Belgian communes elected representatives to the Conseils consultatifs des étrangers (consultative council of non-Belgian residents). The European Commission for its part is interested in any scheme which will encourage all migrant workers to become involved in local affairs. It is therefore holding the necessary consultations on the question of setting up local consultative councils for migrant workers in all the Member States of the Community. It will then look into the possibility of drafting a Community text on this subject, in line with the provisions of the Treaties establishing the Communities.

**** THE CHICKENS THAT CAME IN FROM THE COLD**

To provide European consumers with all the required hygienic safeguards, the Commission of the European Communities set up a group of experts to examine the water-immersion and air-chilling processes used in freezing poultry. The experts' main conclusion is that the bacterial load of poultry carcasses is generally greater after evisceration operations, than at the preceding stage of plucking, while passing the carcasses under a shower before placing them in a chilling unit raises the standard of hygiene.

From the results, it does not appear that the process of chilling poultry carcasses by immersion in water has an unfavourable effect on their standard of hygiene as compared with the air-chilling process, provided it is correctly used. On the contrary, this process has a washing effect which reduces the contamination of carcass surfaces, thus improving their standard of hygiene. An acceptable standard of hygiene can be obtained in the finished product by air-chilling as well as by immersion in water, provided the hygienic conditions applied during the stages preceding chilling are adequate. For this reason, the system of spray-cleaning carcasses before chilling should be generally applied.

In the light of this report, the Commission has proposed to the Council a directive supplementing existing legislation in the field. The proposal submitted for Council approval sets out the measures which should be taken to ensure that the chilling by immersion system incorporates all the necessary safeguards. It states that "the correct functioning of the chilling plant must be checked by a standardized microbiological control of the carcasses".

EURO-BAROMETER: EUROPEANS MIDWAY BETWEEN HOPE AND DISILLUSIONMENT

Euro-Barometer No 5 published by the European Commission gives evidence of some disillusionment among Europeans: more than half of those interviewed (53%) still think the "Common Market is a good thing", but this represents a drop of 10 points since the autumn 1975 survey.

Yet there is still a lot of support for European initiatives: four out of ten people (40%) think that the movement towards European unification should be "speeded up", as against 33% who would like to "continue as at present" and 11% who would prefer a "slow down".

An average of six out of ten people (57%) agree with the plan to form a European Union, but the proportion varies from 70% in Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands to 34% in the United Kingdom and 24% in Denmark.

On the topical question of direct elections to the European Parliament, six out of ten (62%) are in favour: here Italy, the Netherlands and Luxembourg head the list, with more than 70%. Even in the United Kingdom and in Denmark, 40% of those interviewed, and nearly half of those who actually replied, favour elections to the European Parliament.

Such are the main results of the fifth Euro-Barometer, the six-monthly survey carried out for the European Commission in the nine Community countries, and involving about 9 000 interviews with people aged 15 and over. One important new feature is interesting to note: the results are presented so as to allow the answers from the "general public" to be compared with those from "opinion leaders", the people who discuss politics frequently and tend to influence the opinions of others.

"Opinion leaders" (about 15% of the public) are particularly important, for they influence others more than others influence them, and their influence is not something happening now and then, but constant and predictable.

Below we give the most significant figures from Euro-Barometer No 5, including the figures for such "opinion leaders".

Areas of interest and matters of chief concern to the public

The two most important problems were held to be unemployment and rising prices; unemployment was usually looked on as even more important than rising prices, since 50% of the public thought that their government should give priority to fighting unemployment, and 42% that it should accord priority to the fight against rising prices.

There were two other important areas of interest, both of which concern aspects of "the quality of life": protecting nature against pollution and protecting the public against fraudulent selling and misleading advertising.

Information on European problems

At the present stage of European unification, public interest in European problems, though not very great, is steady: in 1976, as in 1973, rather fewer than two out of ten people said they "almost always" took an interest in press and television information on the European Community, while five out of ten took an interest "from time to time", and three out of ten "never".

Opinion leaders are obviously much more interested than others: more than three out of ten replied "almost always", and more than half "from time to time".

Interest seems greatest in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Denmark; and least in Italy and Belgium.

In the Community as a whole, in 1976 as in 1973, the European public considered information about the European Community useful, but complicated, interesting and too rare. The proportion of people considering the news to be "mainly bad" has gone up since 1973 (34% in 1976 and 26% in 1973); this is probably because the poll was carried out a few weeks after what the popular press called the "failure" of the European Council, at the beginning of April.

Attitudes to the European Community (Common Market)

Though a significant proportion of people still consider the Common Market to be "a good thing" (53% on average), this proportion has for the first time gone down considerably (63% in October-November 1975). Probably this drop in popularity expresses a certain disillusionment, passing no doubt, on the part of the public. The trend is general: Ireland (-17 points, from 67 to 50%), Germany (-13 points, from 61 to 48%), Italy (-12 points, from 75 to 63%). Opinion leaders are affected as much as the general public.

Attitudes to European Union

Attitudes to European Union are fairly stable, probably because here it is a question of beliefs, and therefore there is less likelihood of being influenced by events or the news media.

40% of those interviewed would like to see swifter action towards European unification (Italy: 58%, Luxembourg: 55%, United Kingdom: 23%, Denmark: 13%). Over the Community as a whole, 55% of opinion leaders would like to see a faster pace, a drop of 7 points since October-November 1975; perhaps this is a danger signal.

Approval for European Union is greatest in Italy and Luxembourg (71%), the Netherlands (68%) and Germany (65%); in the United Kingdom, only 34% are in favour, and in Denmark only 24%. An average of 68% of opinion leaders approve, and 57% of the public as a whole.

The Tindemans Report gave four objectives for European Union; in the Community public opinion considers the most important of these to be the protection of fundamental rights, followed by economic and monetary policy, regional and social policy and, finally, foreign policy.

Attitudes to the election of the European Parliament

Though the governments had still not come to an agreement at the time of the survey, 62% of those interviewed (and 75% of those who actually replied) were in favour of elections. Virtually no change has taken place since the last survey.

72% of opinion leaders on average, (and 77% of those actually replying) are in favour of the elections.

Breaking down the figures by countries, we find over 70% in favour in Italy, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. In all the other countries, except the United Kingdom and Denmark (40%), over 50% of people interviewed are favourable.

This trend in European public opinion, as regards a precise, easily understood plan, which implies participation by everybody in the long run, demonstrates clearly the potential support available to European institutions and national governments, whatever the mood of the moment, the clash of interests or the ideological differences.

CONSUMER CREDIT

What with instalment buying, personal loans and credit cards - consumer credit is playing a greater and greater part in the economic life of European Community countries. At the end of 1973 for example, there were 987 561 credit cards in circulation in Belgium alone. In other words, one in ten Belgians (including babes in arms) held a credit card. The European Commission proposes to restore some order to an area badly or inadequately regulated, from which the consumer is not always the one to gain.

In many areas consumers need information they can understand about the different kinds of credit available. The sources open to them are not always the most suitable that could have been chosen. So the European Commission's ultimate aim is to improve consumer protection and go on promoting the free movement of goods and services, by harmonizing the laws on consumer credit as far as possible.

The cost of credit

The reason why consumers often misunderstand the law is that many types of credit are not subject to regulation at all. Certain practices connected with such types of credit have the same explanation.

It frequently happens that a consumer fails to realize just what the credit offered him is going to cost. The interest on a loan can be described for example as 2% per month. On the face of it this would seem fairly cheap. The uninformed consumer overlooks the fact that some additional charges are not included in this figure; administrative expenses, a fee for opening the file, and a whole series of other commitments, including the cost of insuring the goods bought on credit while the loan is being paid back, or the maintenance costs for the period.

The rate of 2% per month may in the end gross up to as much as 27% interest per annum, while the final credit cost may amount to twice or three times the rate stated.

Rapid credit expansion

The types of credit offered to the consumer at present and the total amount of money involved are growing at unprecedented speed. The number of credit cards circulating in Belgium at the end of 1973 has already been mentioned. In the UK, over a million and a half pounds in credit was advanced for the first eight months of 1974.

The table below compares the growth of consumer credit in France over the years 1971, 1972 and 1973:

	1971	1972	1973	Variation 1973/72
<u>Amount advanced</u> (in FF 000 000 000):				
Motor cars:				
new	3 317	3 420	3 723	+ 8.9
second hand	1 613	1 568	1 802	+14.9
Two-wheeled vehicles	87	121	153	+26.4
Household appliances	752	657	881	+ 3.7
Radio and television sets	465	549	619	+12.8
Furniture	1 081	1 112	1 305	+17.4
Miscellaneous household articles	241	305	329	+ 7.9
Other goods	507	735	885	+20.4
Total	8 063	8 467	9 497	
Loans (FF 000 000 000)	3.83	9.13	9.52	

The introduction of piecemeal legislation in the different Community countries has changed the situation (making it more confusing for the consumer) and produced a relative fall in the volume of regulated forms of credit as compared with those not covered by law. For example, the volume of instalment sales (a regulated category) in Belgium fell from Bfrs 13 340 million to 12 000 million in the course of the second quarter of 1973, while the level of personal loans (less regulated) rose by 100%, from Bfrs 7 600 million to 15 000 million in the same period.

Overhauling the law

It is generally agreed that the time has come for a complete overhaul (indeed a modernization) of the law in this sector, and that the opportunity to harmonize should be seized. There is also substantial agreement that the new regulations proposed by the European Commission should cover the entire breadth of the subject. In particular, it would be unsatisfactory to harmonize the law relating only to certain types of consumer credit (instalment credit sales, leasing agreements with option to purchase, credit cards, or instalment repayment loans), if only because of the phenomenon of transfer from regulated to unregulated forms of credit, already mentioned.

What does the European Commission propose?

The Commission's draft proposals have a twofold purpose; to improve consumer protection and free the movement of goods and services further. Useful progress has been made towards the first of these aims; it has been agreed that consumers should be informed, among other things, of the real amount of charges attached to credit, and that maximum and minimum amounts and periods be fixed, to which the provisions in question are to apply.

The bringing together of the rules on consumer credit could play an important role in opening up the market to the freer movement of goods and services. Clearly, lack of knowledge on the part of consumers as to credit conditions in other Community countries discourages people from buying goods on credit in a country not their own. Other factors are involved of course; exchange control, variations in exchange rates, and so on. The liberation of the Community market will not be complete until agreement has been reached in all these connected fields.

Nevertheless, the proposals on consumer credit are an important step forward. The greater availability of credit will stimulate production which, together with the opening up of the market, will give the consumer more effective access to a wider range of goods and services.

EMPLOYMENT HALFWAY BETWEEN GROWTH AND INFLATION

"Beware of underemployment" warn four independent experts consulted by the European Commission. These, Mr Lutz, Mr Mériaux, Mr Mukherjee and Mr Rehn, were called together, by the Commission, at the beginning of 1975, to identify the main job trends and prospects over the medium term.

As with any report of this kind, the analyses and proposals presented by the experts do not commit the Commission, but form an interesting basis for discussion. Here are the main points.

Two outstanding facts

Two outstanding facts dominate medium-term job prospects. First, based on the last fifteen or twenty years experience, it appears to be established that any overall policy of growth, however needful it may be, to maintain jobs, cannot by itself ensure full employment. Again, even the possibility of achieving such growth would seem by no means guaranteed in conditions as favourable as those during the last two decades.

During the period of prosperity which Europe has just experienced, disputes would arise over work, or working conditions. Disputes such as these may well be the product of prosperity, and lessen with the advent of more difficult times. But it would be extremely risky to base any economic and social policy on a gamble of that kind. It would encourage the temptation to resort to restrictive action (protectionism, rejection of change, increased labour market rigidity). It would also accentuate misunderstanding between those responsible for economic policy, and the general public: a continuously high rate of unemployment, especially among the young, against a background of heightened competition, runs the serious risk of aggravating previous disputes by switching them on to a more vital target. Any society, not in a position to offer jobs to people who are looking for them, should not feel surprised one day to hear the very role of work, as a social asset, called in question.

One of the most alarming tendencies here lies in the frequent confusion made between the risks of prolonged underemployment and the promise of a post-industrial society geared to leisure and high productivity. To equate these is to forget two essential points: the first - Europe's dependent supply position, particularly since the energy crisis, and the second - the difficulty, in a period of low growth, of carrying out the redistribution and reorganization needed to prepare for the post-industrial era.

The group of experts concentrated for these reasons on seeking ways of avoiding prolonged underemployment. It was forced to conclude that the line so far followed has been towards placing the promotion of consumer values, rather than the overall development of human resources, before the search for individual satisfaction.

How to counteract trends towards underemployment

The experts found that creating jobs can prove a weapon against inflation. As it is, we seem to be heading for an equilibrium situation of underemployment. Firms are tending to reduce the numbers they take on even when recovery is under way. So growth does not always mean more jobs.

The four experts consulted by the European Commission therefore advocate two approaches:

- (i) to develop incentives for greater use of labour;
- (ii) to study in the longer term what types of economic development are capable of creating jobs which are "profitable" from a social point of view.

The first would involve:

- . a revision of the taxes on labour, and capital aids, taking account of their effect in promoting or penalizing use of these factors;

- the introduction of direct job subsidies (in the secondary and tertiary sectors) to both firms and local authorities;
- the development of back-up techniques to stimulate employment through public assistance to local job creation, especially for specific social purposes, and involving little capital expenditure (e.g., environmental improvements in town or country, help for the elderly, etc.).

As for the second (job potential), it looks very much as if, in the case of the more advanced countries in the Community, new jobs should be created mainly in the service sector. What stands in the way of this is not the nature or acuteness of the underlying needs, but the way in which they are financed (constraints deriving from the need to balance the budget and the limits to the burden of taxation).

The group considers it important that this problem be studied in detail at Community level, in view of its significance for the balance of employment in the longer term.

A little-known phenomenon

The group of experts conclude their study by emphasizing that knowledge of the dynamics of job creation and elimination is very limited. For example, matters relating to capital productivity and capital intensiveness are unfamiliar in Europe. Attitudes to the job and especially to changes of job are governed by a complex set of factors which include housing conditions, social security schemes, and so on. It is essential that those in charge of employment and public expenditure consult jointly on the cost and respective benefits of job protection and job promotion measures, and on how best to allocate public support between these. Finally, very little is known about the trends and changes that have occurred regarding job content and qualifications. A lot of work has still to be done to provide the information needed by those responsible for economic and financial policy.