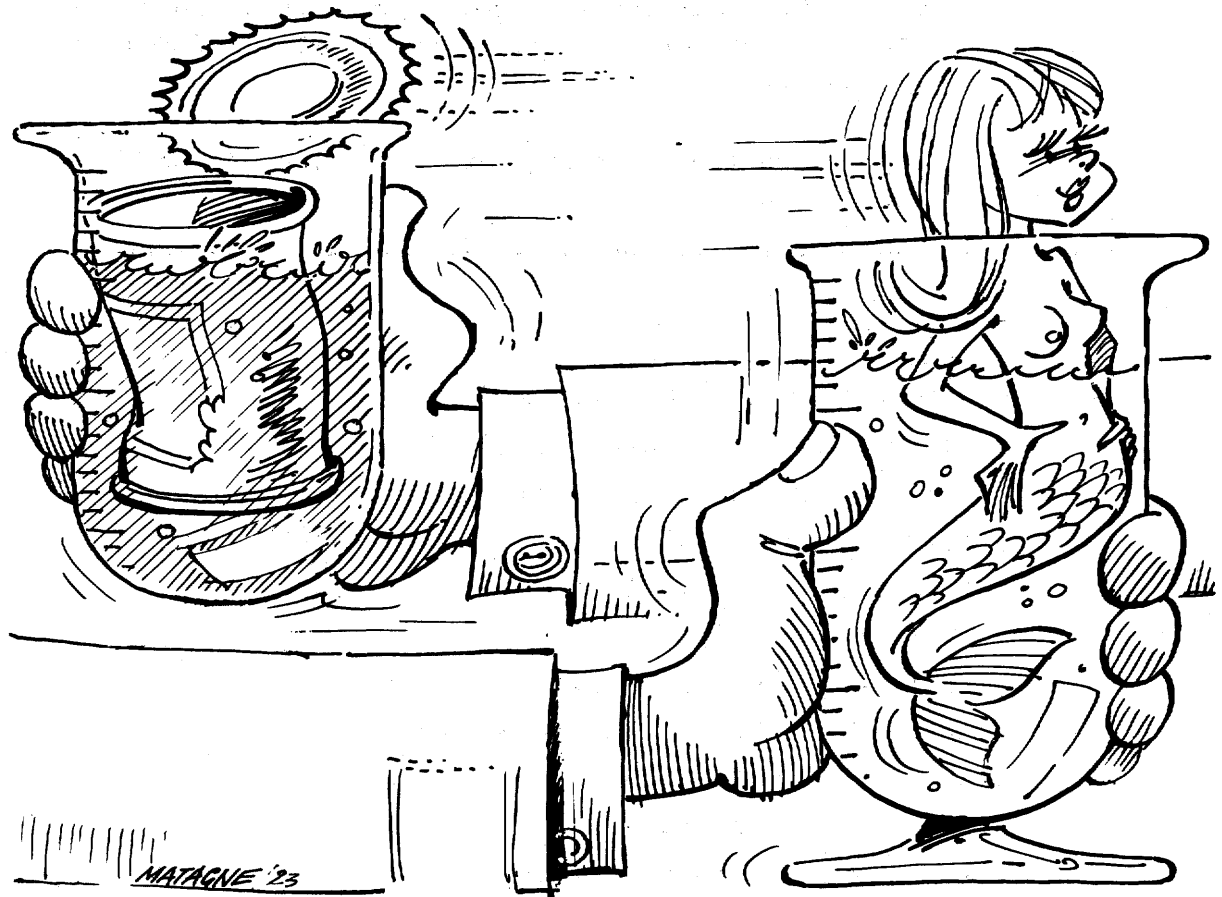


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Some people have the strangest things in their water.
Over one hundred Community monitoring stations will be
exchanging details of what they have in theirs. (see p.3)

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++ ENVIRONMENT AT THE COUNCIL

The latest meeting of the Community's environment ministers: some say it was a semi-success, some say a semi-failure?

In Annex I Euroforum outlines the issues and the problems.

++ AT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The economic situation, unemployment and direct elections were the three topics which dominated the last session of the European Parliament.

Euroforum presents some of the main issues dealt with in Annex 2.

++ ENERGY OUTLOOK FOR 1977

In 1976 the gross national products (GNP) of Community countries increased 4.5% on average, but the economic improvement was accompanied by a 4.7% increase in energy consumption in comparison to 1975.

Compared with the year before, oil consumption increased 5.5%, solid fuel consumption increased 5.0%, and 7.5% more gas was used. Production of electricity increased by 8%.

On this basis, what can be expected in 1977? An increase of gross domestic product (GNP) of 3.5% could lead to an increase in energy consumption of the same order. Variations in domestic consumption of the principal types of energy are as follows: oil +1%, gas +10% (assuming availability). Electricity production could increase 6.5%. To achieve this, domestic production of crude oil should be at least 44 million tonnes, which should enable - with all factors taken into consideration - a 5% reduction in imported crude oil.

The Nine's energy ministers who just met in Luxembourg, recognised the importance of having an updated overall picture of the energy situation. To this end the ministers agreed that every energy 'session' should be accompanied by a general debate on the energy situation at the world and Community level .

The debate on nuclear problems concentrated on the supply and demand problems of uranium, the reprocessing of nuclear fuel and the management of nuclear waste, including its environmental implications and the problems of safety and supervision.

The problems of the Community's refinery industry, energy investment, rational use of energy and the Community's coal situation will be dealt with at a subsequent 'energy' Council meeting.

++ COFFEE BOYCOTT?

The European Bureau of Consumer Unions (BEUC) is actively trying to encourage European consumers to drink less coffee so that reduced demand will bring coffee prices down.

According to details from the International Coffee Organisation the trend in world coffee prices is as follows, (in hundred cents per pound coffee).

| | Jan. 1975 | Jan. 1976 | Jan. 1977 | Mar. 1977 | May '77 |
|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Arabicas | 56 | 93 | 297 | 369 | 335 |
| Robustas | 54 | 79 | 216 | 309 | 269 |

This spectacular increase is the result of an imbalance in supply and demand. Frost in Brazil in July 1975 followed by various atmospheric and political circumstances (Uganda and Angola) have significantly reduced coffee supplies. This has been of great concern to coffee blenders, retailers, and housewives alike, who have sought to stock-pile coffee supplies, thereby accentuating the problem.

The stocks of the exporting countries have now been severely depleted.

What is to happen in the months to come? We need both favourable weather and favourable political situations to obtain the most from this years harvest. If not, more price rises can be expected.

++ REGIONAL FUND IN 1976

Projects which benefitted from aid from the European Regional Development Fund in 1976, created or maintained almost 55,000 jobs (as against 60,000 in 1975) according to the European Commission's latest figures. Most were in the industry and services sector. Fighting unemployment is one of the Regional Fund's priorities.

Since 1974 increases in unemployment have been most marked in the developed regions. However, it is the weaker and less developed regions which have the highest unemployment levels.

In Belgium for instance, 1976 saw a sharp rise in unemployment, particularly in Hainut and Limburg and to a slightly lesser extent Liege. In Denmark unemployment was highest in Jylland particularly Nordjylland which had double the level of Copenhagen.

In Germany unemployment decreased slightly in most regions but increased in Bremen, in Oberfalz (Bavaria) and in the Saar region. It was relatively large in certain other parts of Bavaria and in parts of Lower Saxony. In France, Lorraine experienced the sharpest increase in the number of jobless. Unemployment in all regions in Italy increased

but the levels were particularly high in Sicily, Calabria, Basilicata, and Campania.

In the Netherlands it was Limbourg that bore the brunt of the countries unemployment. The increase in unemployment was general everywhere in the UK, though particularly marked in Northern Ireland. A slight reduction in those out of work was recorded in Eire but the national average still remained high in comparison to the Community's average. In Luxembourg, unemployment remained at a low level.

++ NUCLEAR PROTESTS

Given the powers the European Commission has under the Euratom Treaty, how far is the Commission going to allow the increase in violence to go before it organises a serious large-scale debate on the question of nuclear power stations, the European Commission has been asked by Mr Dondelinger of the European Parliament.

The Commission has replied that it intends to continue its programme of general information on energy needs and supplies (particularly on nuclear energy) and health, safety and environmental protection problems related to this.

The Commission is currently examining how to bring more transparency and clarity, in the eyes of the public, to the contradictory sentiments and interests which are fueling the nuclear debate, and how to present in a clear and objective way the energy choices which will fashion the Community's future.

As regards informing the general public about the various aspects of nuclear development the Commission points out the important role to be played by national authorities.

++ SACCHARINE IN THE DOCK

In the USA and Canada, saccharine is under fire. The American Food and Drug Administration announced at the beginning of March, that it intended to ban the use of saccharine in foods and drinks since tests on rats have shown that this artificial sweetener can cause malignant tumours in the bladder.

The Commission has consequently requested the Community's scientific committee for human foodstuffs to give its opinion on the toxicological acceptability of saccharine in foodstuffs. On the basis of this opinion, the Commission will decide what measures need to be taken. Member States have already been studying more recent reports concerning saccharine and the Commission has been participating in their work.

++ EUROPEAN TRADE UNION INSTITUTE

A Trade Union Institute is to be set up in Brussels in the coming months on the initiative of the ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation). The European Commission may make a financial contribution to this institution.

The work of the institute will be to promote trade union activity in Europe. It will be able to inform and advise trade union bodies on various aspects of trade union policy from a European standpoint, on the means of promoting these policies and types of action to undertake.

++ BUMPER DIRECTIVE?

What height should car bumpers be off the ground (particularly rear bumpers) to make them most effective? In March 1970 the European Commission laid down the maximum height for fixing bumpers, but work is continuing in the Commission to see if this maximum height can possibly be reduced.

At an automobile symposium organised by the European Commission in 1975 (see Industry and Society No. 44/77) the discussion on bumper heights concluded with the view that too little was known about the dynamics of collisions to be able to prescribe the optimal bumper height. Major research is under way at the international level to consider the overall consequences of car collision and impact. The Commission is following this work closely and at the appropriate moment will draft a proposal on the subject.

++ CONGESTED REGIONS

The Community's most important regions risk being suffocated by their own success. The level of economic and urban concentration in some areas are placing a heavy burden on the quality of social life in these areas. The European Commission is currently working on a comparative study with the German government concerning deconcentration policy in Community countries. As soon as the results are available (end of the year hopefully) the study will be examined by the Community's Regional Policy Committee.

In consultation with the Regional Policy Committee the European Commission may draw up suitable proposals to assist the Community's regional policy.

++ MEAT AND VEG. PRODUCTION

In 1976, inflation affected the prices of the Community's principal meat and vegetable products in a similar way. Price rises were as follows:-

Change in price index 1975-1976 for principal
meat and vegetable products

| | | | |
|-------------------|---------|----------------|---------|
| Cereals | + 20.3% | Butchers' meat | + 12.2% |
| Seed plants | + 82.3% | of which beef | + 12.2% |
| of which potatoes | +151.7% | (excl. veal) | |
| Vegetables | + 22.1% | Veal | + 7.4% |
| Fruit | + 2.3% | Pork | + 12.7% |
| Wine | + 19.3% | Lamb | + 21.1% |
| Corn | + 47.4% | Poultry | + 9.9% |
| Flowers, plants | + 14.2% | Milk | + 11.9% |
| | | Eggs | + 23.2% |

++ THE COMMUNITY'S PORTS

Some thirty of the Community's large ports were represented in Brussels at the third plenary meeting of the European port authorities. Since the enlargement of the Community, ports have become a vital link between the old and new members of the Community. In addition, the increasing importance of the Community's external trade - with both industrialised and developing countries - makes the ports an even more essential element in the Community's economy.

Mr Richard Burke, European Commissioner responsible for transport, reaffirmed the Commission's resolve to maintain close links with the port authorities, in order to identify the areas where Community action could be most useful.

It was agreed at the meeting that a working group (which has already produced a report on the situation in the Community's principal sea ports) will examine to what extent differences in national legislations, management and finance methods, are likely to cause serious distortions in competition. On the basis of their report, the working group will draw up a list of matters for priority action.

++ ECOTECHNICS

Eco Press of Geneva have just published a technological index for environmental protection. Under the title "Ecotechnics", the principal areas of concern: water, air, solid waste, noise and vibrations etc., are dealt with, and all the companies who work in the various fields are listed. In addition a long chapter is devoted to research centres and information services in the industrialised world.

Eco Press, Florissant 64, 1216 Geneva - Switzerland.

ENVIRONMENT AT THE COUNCIL

Some say that the latest meeting of the Community's environment ministers was a semi-success, and others say it was a semi-failure. Though the debate on certain of the issues only managed to lessen the gulf between some of the parties and left the problems unresolved, there were in fact a certain number of decisions taken.

In Luxembourg on Tuesday 14th June at 10 am the Nine's environment ministers took their places round the table. The meeting promised to be important, but difficult. Important as regards the subjects to be dealt with, and difficult on account of the divergences between the views of the different countries represented.

Monitoring surface water

The Commission had proposed that a procedure for exchanging information between all the Community's stations for extracting or measuring surface waters be introduced.

By exchanging and assembling such information it would be much easier to assess the level of pollution in streams and rivers throughout the Community, to assess the trend by time and by area of such pollution, and also to assess the results of water-pollution regulations introduced at the national and Community level.

This proposal was accepted by the Community's Council of Ministers. In a few months' time some one hundred monitoring stations will transmit to each other information concerning 18 chosen quality parameters and will also communicate these results to the European Commission who will draw up an annual report on the state of the Community's surface waters.

Helsinki Convention.

The 22nd March 1974 saw the conclusion of the Helsinki Convention by Denmark, Finland, West Germany, East Germany; Sweden and the USSR. This convention covers a variety of fields (such as pollution from landbased sources), which are also covered by the Community's competences. The Commission had recommended that the Community become a contractual party to this Convention and that the European Commission be authorised to begin the appropriate negotiations. The Nine's environment ministers agreed to this in principle at the June 14th meeting. In a few weeks time the Commission will be able to begin preparing for this diplomatic 'first'. Until now there has never been an international convention signed by both the Eastern bloc countries, members of the European Community, and the Community as such.

Toxic Waste

Fifteen tonnes of toxic and dangerous wastes are dumped in the Community every year. Most of this is dumped without the authority and supervision of public bodies. To counter such practices the European Commission drafted a directive for the Council to ensure that such wastes are disposed of under supervision.

To see the end of cyanide being hidden in rusty drums and arsenic ending up in underground water sources, the Commission has proposed a system of authorisation, with an appropriate marking system which will enable the producer, the subsequent owner (including the transporter) to be identified without mistake. It will also identify the person or company responsible for disposing of the waste. The Commission also proposed measures to encourage the recycling and processing of toxic and dangerous waste.

At the Council there was a consensus on the essentials of these proposals. One problem remained to be resolved: how to adapt the directive to technical progress. Which authority or body should decide on modifications to the directive? New proposals on these specific points will be drawn up as soon as possible, so that the proposal can be formally adopted at the next Council session.

Red Sludge

The waste produced by the titanium dioxide is commonly known as red sludge, and there is lots of it. The European Community has 17 factories which themselves produce 40% of the world output of TiO_2 . But, as with paper pulp production the anti-pollution cost is high, and can be as much as 25% of the final production costs.

The Commission proposed back in July 1975 that a system to deal with red sludge be set up based on three elements: prior authorisation for dumping; regular ecological supervision of the water where the waste is dumped; a progressive reduction of the amount disposed of.

Control over dumping and ecological supervision met with basic agreement at the Council, but the proposal to progressively reduce the amounts of waste dumped, which has implications for the delicate balance between pollution control and fair competition, did not find agreement.

New factories do not have the same problems as the older ones, and factories located by fast moving sea waters do not have the same problems as those located on the banks of inland seas. The subject will have to be discussed again at the next session.

Paper Pulp Industry

A large consumer of water is the paper pulp industry. The bisulphate paper producing process can produce almost two ton of pollutants for every ton of paper produced, and the waste is normally discharged into rivers. Dealing with such pollution is expensive and can amount to as much as 10% of total production costs.

To resolve this problem the European Commission proposed that uniform emission standards be set. For factories which dispose of their waste in the sea, certain temporary derogations have been catered for.

The main stumbling block for the environment ministers was whether the standards should apply to the quantities of waste disposed of by a factory, or to the quality of the receiving water (and thence leaving it up to the national authorities to supervise this). The Commission for its part was prepared to accept a transitory period given the potential impact of such measures on the economy and competition.

The problem will be in front of the ministers next time they meet.

Pure, pure water

Water that is to be extracted for human consumption should satisfy not less than 68 quality parameters ranging from the calcium content to the quantity of parasitic organisms present. The European Commission did not wish to overlook any potential risks to the health of European consumers. The Commission proposed to fix not only the water quality standards but also the procedure for checking water quality.

Though the Council recognised the importance to public health of these parameters, no agreement was reached on the directive. The maximum permissible values of sodium, chlorides and conductivity were the subject of long discussion. An equitable solution will be sought out at the next session of the Council.

Oil Slicks

To be able to deal more effectively with oil slicks, the European Commission had proposed that a 'data bank' be set up to assimilate the resources available to deal with them, and that a research programme be implemented to develop the technology for collecting and dispersing oil slicks. The Commission also recommended that the effects of oil fauna and flora be studied.

Commissioner responsible for environment, Lorenzo Natali, presented the Commission's proposals to the Council. They will be studied by the Council's experts and brought up again at the next environment Council.

Though sometimes disguised by technical matters, the discussions in the Council are essentially about fundamental questions of policy and this is handicapping, and will continue to handicap, the development of a Community environment policy.

The basic point of divergence is whether it is necessary to measure and limit the quantity of waste discharged by a factory or whether one should measure and limit the degree of pollution present in the environment where the wastes are discharged.

In the case of titanium dioxide, for instance, certain countries surrounded by fast flowing water only envisage limiting waste discharges according to the amount the aquatic environment can support. The less geographically favoured countries are not prepared to accept this solution. Even less so since they are forced to invest considerably in anti-pollution equipment so that their receiving environment is not poisoned.

The problem still remains: how to protect the environment and protect the rules of fair competition.

AT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT.

The economic situation, unemployment and direct elections were the three topics which dominated the last session of the European Parliament, as they will probably dominate the work of the parliamentarians in the months to come.

Votes for All

The European Parliament has insisted to all governments that every citizen in Community countries who is eligible to vote, can exercise his rights in the direct elections to the European Parliament. Mr Patijn, rapporteur of the Parliament's Political Affairs Committee, made special mention of the difficult situation of voters living abroad, when voting rights vary so much from country to country. In Ireland, for example, the proposed electoral law enables all citizens from the age of 18 years to participate in the election of the European assembly whether or not they are Irish nationals or come from other Community countries, as long as they have been regularly registered in a ward. Ireland is thereby taking all measures necessary so that electors vote without giving them the opportunity to vote twice.

Mr. Tomlinson, acting president of the Community's Council of Ministers, warned the Parliament that the too numerous and too detailed requirements concerning the voting procedures could risk delaying the date set for the elections.

The British government, for its part, does not intend to give voting rights to British citizens resident abroad.

Tripartite Conference.

Does the meeting in London at the end of the month between employers, workers and the Community stand any chance of success? The European Parliament did not hide their disappointment at the results of the previous Tripartite Conferences. The one in 1976 had no spectacular results: the unemployment problem remained untouched, and the rate of inflation only decreased slightly.

Should such a conference become a regular event? Some of speakers, such as Mr. Santer, saw this conference as a way of implementing a Community employment policy in the not too distant future. Others were more sceptical. The meeting should certainly be given a more concrete status but it is necessary to stick to reality and not dreams.

Double Taxation

The expansion of companies into more than one Community country sometimes results in them being double taxed. The Commission has proposed setting up a new arbitration procedure to remove this double imposition.

Firms affected will be able to appeal first to the tax authorities in the two countries concerned and then to a commission composed of independent members as well as representatives of the tax authorities. During discussion of this subject in the Parliament, certain parliamentarians argued in favour of also developing a strategy to counter the illegal transfer of profits to minimise taxation liability which is partly why the national taxation authorities are so vigilant and occasionally cause companies to be taxed twice.

Solar Energy.

With Europe's climate, should the Community be seriously thinking about developing solar energy? Mr Luigi Noë, rapporteur of the Energy and Research Committee is convinced it should. The sun is everywhere and does not need to be imported at great expense. Also there is no risk, as with coal and oil, of it running out.

Without a doubt, solar energy will only have a limited role to play in comparison to other available forms of energy. But at least we know that the course of the sun's rays cannot be influenced by political events....

Mr Noë pointed out that in the present state of development, hot water for domestic use could be produced by using solar collectors, and at competitive prices.

The Parliament unanimously adopted Mr. Noë's resolution and recommended, among other things, to maintain close coordination between Community action and the national research work being undertaken in this field.

During the debate, Mr. Brunner, European Commissioner responsible for energy and research, stated that Community funds available for solar energy research had tripled in the latest Joint Research Programme and now stood at 14.5 million units of account (1.u.a. = 1.12 US dollars approx.)

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