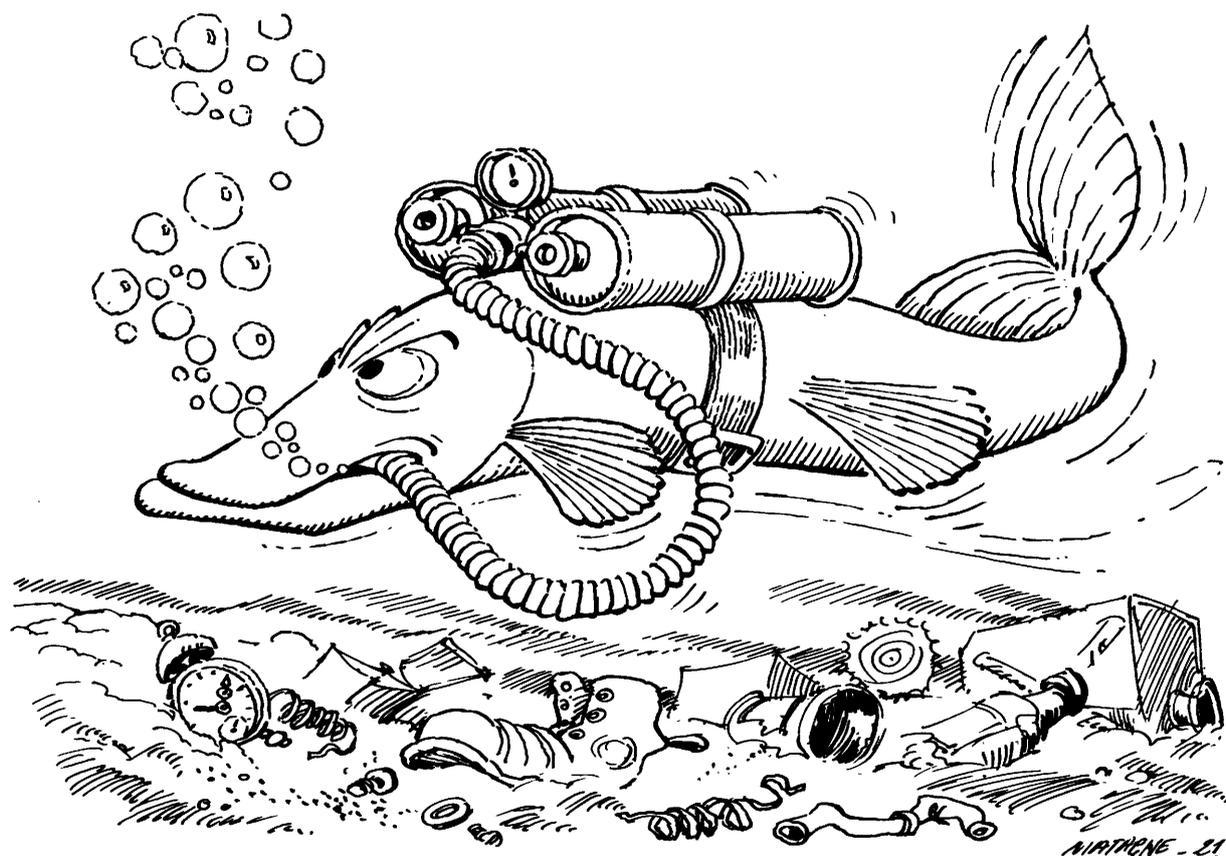


Brussels, 6 June 1978

No. 22/78



The Nine's Environment Ministers tackle some fishy business (see page 3).

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IN THIS ISSUE

- ++ Free trade Community (p. 3)
- ++ Environment Council : five hits, one near miss (p. 3)
- ++ Unemployment : no change (p. 3)
- ++ Progress in energy policy (p. 3)
- ++ Holiday sickness (p. 4)
- ++ European aerospace (p. 4)
- ++ Industry : no improvement (p. 4-5)
- ++ Heavy ham (p. 5)
- ++ Women in agriculture (p. 5-6)
- ++ Fluorescent light can save energy (p. 6)
- ++ Industrial illness (p. 6)
- ++ Italian member for BEUC (p. 6)

++ FREE TRADE COMMUNITY

Faced with economic recession and international trade problems, the Community has two choices: to withdraw into protectionism or keep its economy open to outsiders.

The Community has opted for a positively open trade policy and its reasoning is presented in Annex 1.

++ ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL : FIVE HITS, ONE NEAR MISS

Decisions were reached concerning oil slicks, lead content of petrol, fresh water pollution, aerosols and the control of chemicals at the latest meeting of the Nine's Environment Ministers, May 30th. Despite the urgency, no agreement was reached on a system to protect bird life.

The results of the Council are presented in Annex 2.

++ UNEMPLOYMENT : NO CHANGE

The proportion of the population out of work dropped slightly in April to 5.5% in March, in line with seasonal trends. In real terms, there was no change.

The sharpest decreases in unemployment were recorded in Denmark (-11.4%), Luxembourg (-10.3%), Germany (-9%) and the Netherlands (-6.3%). Though the number of young people out of work is decreasing, women are not faring so well. Seasonal improvements in job prospects hardly affect them. In France and Belgium, young women represent two-thirds of the unemployed under 25 years.

++ PROGRESS IN ENERGY POLICY

At the Brussels meeting of Community Energy Ministers last week, two proposals from the European Commission were adopted:

- the Community now has the go-ahead to give financial aid for energy savings demonstration projects.
- the Community can also begin giving financial support to projects developing alternative energy sources.
- Energy Ministers re-examined the Community's energy policy, in particular the nuclear aspects, and Community energy targets for 1985.
- Ministers also agreed on the details of setting up a joint enterprise to construct and exploit JET (Joint European Torus) - the machine which should lead research towards energy production through controlled thermo-nuclear fusion.

++ HOLIDAY SICKNESS

If you are a citizen of the European Community and covered by social security in your own country, any expenses incurred through falling ill whilst travelling in another Community country will be reimbursed by local illness insurance organisations. With holidays approaching, it is worth recalling that to benefit from this system you have to take with you an E III form (proving that you are covered) to ensure reimbursement.

Generally speaking, in the UK, Germany, Denmark, Ireland, Italy and Holland, medical care is given free of charge by doctors approved by insurance organisations; medicines are also free in Holland and Ireland; other countries require a (non-reimbursable) contribution.

In Belgium, France and Luxembourg, the individual must pay certain expenses directly and reclaim them from local health insurance organisations on the same basis as nationals.

If illness or accident prevents a person from working, daily payments as prescribed under an individual's home insurance system can be paid.

++ EUROPEAN AEROSPACE

The Community's civil aviation industry is a sector where growth should be encouraged and the current economic climate is particularly suited for implementing a European strategy. In particular:

- the European Airbus is recording success after success on the world market: 93 firm orders already placed and 63 options taken. Also the British, French and German governments are currently studying a construction programme for a family of aircraft based on the Airbus.
- air traffic is currently growing and this is encouraging airline companies to renew their fleets. The market is expanding.

The Commission is convinced that the moment has come for Europe to develop a family of civil aircraft, involving all European aircraft manufactures, to continue the success of the Airbus.

++ INDUSTRY : NO IMPROVEMENT

The industrial production index last March stood at 122.5 (1970 = 100) but when corrected for seasonal variations only rated 117.8 which is the same level as February. The underlying improvement was held back by production downturns in Germany and Holland. Production in France and Italy, by contrast, showed some improvement in the first quarter of 1978. There was no change in the

United Kingdom.

Greatest increases for the whole of 1977 were recorded in the oil and gas sector (+5.5%), automobile construction and printing. The most serious cutbacks (-6%) were in coke production, leather, man made fibres and mineral extraction (metals).

++ HEAVY HAM

A packet of ham with "contains phosphates" printed on the label does not necessarily mean it has any special nutritive value. On the contrary, the main property of this additive is to retain water in the ham and artificially increase its weight.

The European Commission is intending to standardise national legislation dealing with the use of phosphates and it is currently examining national legislations and requesting the views of organisations concerned (consumers, industry). When it has collected together all the relevant information and data it will consider possible action. No other proposals dealing with the composition of ham are currently being considered.

++ WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

In all Community countries, except Germany, male workers in agriculture outnumber women. The figures are as follows:

	<u>% of men</u>	<u>% of women</u>
Germany	49.4	50.6
France	67.8	32.2
Holland	92.8	7.2
Italy	72.4	27.6
Belgium	72.1	27.9
Luxembourg	67.6	32.4
United Kingdom	84.5	15.5
Ireland	90.9	9.1
Denmark	82.1	17.9
EUR 9	68.9	31.1

(these figures do not include part-time workers)

Two-thirds of women working in agriculture are simply helping the family. Women workers who are actually paid represent only 5% of the total agricultural work force. Dairies tend to employ more women than crop farms, and women mostly work on small farms (up to 30 hectares).

In most cases they are working part-time dealing with stock rearing, accounting, or harvesting.

Women who are not married to farmers should not be encouraged to work in agriculture, according to the Commission. Women should be given suitable vocational training and assistance to enable them to find jobs in other sectors.

++ FLUORESCENT LIGHT CAN SAVE ENERGY

4,760 megawatts of electricity could be saved in Europe by using fluorescent tubes instead of ordinary light bulbs. These calculations have been made by the European Commission in reply to Mr. John Osborn of the European Parliament who wanted to know if energy savings are possible through lighting.

But the Commission has stressed that these figures are purely theoretical. Users choose their lighting systems according to local market factors, costs and visual comfort. There are also other areas which merit attention for saving energy, and the Commission is currently looking at energy saving techniques with domestic appliances.

++ INDUSTRIAL ILLNESS

Questioned by Mr. Willem Albers of the European Parliament, the Commission has reported on measures it has taken to reduce industrial illness.

Back in 1962 the Commission sent Member States recommendations on industrial medicine and measures to combat industrial sicknesses, stressing in particular the need to organise medical services in companies to protect workers against local working conditions. These services should also be able to identify potential dangers at work.

The Commission has also requested Community partners to supply statistics on industrial illness and was requested by the Nine's Health Ministers (at their first meeting in December 1977) to examine different measures which could improve health education, particularly concerning diets and smoking - two important elements in preventing cardio - vascular illnesses.

++ ITALIAN MEMBER FOR BEUC

The European Bureau of Consumer Organisation (BEUC) has decided to accept the "Comitato difesa consumatori" as the representative organisation for Italy..

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FREE TRADE COMMUNITY

Faced with structural changes affecting international trade, the Community must implement a clear and coherent strategy as to its role in world trade. In addition to the efforts and proposals which it has made covering trade in raw materials, it must affirm or, rather, confirm unambiguously the general direction of the trade policy which it intends to pursue and on which its industrial strategy depends. If, by breaking with the past, it opted for an inward-looking policy and protection of its internal market - possibly accompanied by preferential agreements with certain areas or countries - it would then have to implement an entirely different kind of industrial policy. One that did not imply the continued acceptance of the international division of labour.

The temptation of protectionism

Increasing calls for protectionist measures are based on various arguments:

- the need to protect certain industries, either because of the contribution they make to total employment or because of the strategic importance attached to them;
- the disruption of markets due to the sudden influx of exports from newly industrialised countries, hence the need to control or slow down this process to permit appropriate adjustments;
- the "abnormal" competition from certain countries where wages are considered to be too low and social welfare levels inadequate, and from other countries (state-trading countries) where prices, particularly export prices, are not determined on the basis of cost;
- the disruption caused by erratic exchange rate movements.

These arguments generally betray a refusal to accept the consequences of a growing internationalisation of trade and, in particular, of the appearance of new competitors who had been thought to be too technologically backward to be able to compete on world markets for some time. Owing to the failure to adequately analyse the effects of policies pursued with regard to equipment exports and the shift abroad of certain types of production, it has not been possible to implement in time the kind of redeployment and restructuring policies in the European economies which logic demands.

Protectionism is therefore presented as a transitional solution, a necessary respite in which to absorb shock and to prepare structural change prior to a new upswing in world trade.

There is no shortage of means of being protectionist and they are relatively easy to apply. These means may be effective to some degree, and actually offer a short respite for a few industries. It nevertheless remains a fact that such an attitude would inevitably set off a protectionist spiral, leading eventually to a contraction of world trade which would be harmful to all. Moreover, it is not certain that the respite gained by such measure would in fact be used to carry out the necessary changes in structure. Furthermore, it is quite possible, given the logic of protectionism, that some member countries will not be content with the protection of the Community market, but will also be tempted to protect some of their industries against competition within the Community.

Although it may offer a few advantages of short duration, protectionism is therefore likely to threaten the cohesion of the Community and permanently deprive European economies of the advantages gained from the expansion of trade. It must therefore be firmly rejected in favour of the continued pursuit of an outward-looking trade policy.

Maintaining an outward-looking trade policy

Although not as immediately perceptible as its negative manifestations, the advantages of a greater international division of labour are, nonetheless, tangible and the Community derived considerable benefit from them during the period before the crisis:

- gains for consumers in Europe, who can choose from a wider range of products at lower real prices, thereby boosting their purchasing power and so enabling them to make other purchases;
- productivity gains for the economic system as a whole and an inducement to improve resource allocations;
- development of the export markets offered by the developing countries;
- slowdown in inflation brought about by the price effects of keener foreign competition and made possible by the efficiency gains produced by changes in the productive apparatus.

Because of these advantages, the structure of its external trade, the international responsibilities that fall to it as a result of its economic strength, its key role in international trade and its existing close links with many developing countries, the Community must press ahead with a resolutely outward-looking trade policy and avoid turning in upon itself as a result of escalating protectionism.

Consequently, safeguard measures that might be viewed as indispensable must be strictly limited in time and as

regards the number of products covered. More important still, such measures should not be adopted simply because serious trade disequilibria are seen to affect the individual product or sector in question but should take into account total trade with the country or area concerned.

Moreover, the transitional nature of protective measures must not only be underscored but also assured through the implementation of measures aimed at changing structures and redeploying the labour force as such measures alone will ultimately pave the way for the abolition of protective arrangements.

Seen from this angle, there is an evident need for better definition and clarification of the concept of "unfair" or "abnormal" competition invoked in cases of dumping or large transfers from government to industry that distort competition, or in connection with low-wage countries or countries with inadequate social welfare arrangements to which modern-technology enterprises might be switched to achieve levels of competitiveness deemed to be "unfair".

In connection with these matters, which are being studied and discussed in numerous forums, it can be stated quite pragmatically that:

- although the conditions in which international trade is transacted need to be monitored, improper trade practices are in many cases difficult to trace;
- the reference to transfers from government to industry should not be confined to the countries generally singled out, i.e. the Eastern bloc countries and certain developing countries;
- beyond a minimal agreement aimed at abolishing certain intolerable practices (such as child labour), the framing of international rules unifying working conditions and social welfare levels will be a very long-term exercise. Consequently, even if it is expedient to pay closer attention to these issues in international trade negotiations, there can be no question of making continued free trade conditional on the existence of such rules;
- the same is true of wages, the discrepancies in which between industrialised countries and Third World countries are highly unlikely to narrow significantly in the short term; discrimination against low-wage countries, that is against the poorest countries, is therefore hardly acceptable; in addition, trade restrictions prompted by such reasoning would contribute to destroying one of the mechanisms that may, in the long term, help to lessen these discrepancies.

The implications of such a choice

Apart from the benefits it brings, an increasing openness of the economies to external trade also imposes constraints and involves costs. The first of these constraints is the loss of independence and the acceptance of interdependence among a greater number of countries, with the dangers of cartel formation, breakdowns in supply or sudden upsurge in the prices of certain products which such interdependence may entail but which a "contractual" policy at international level may help to limit.

Openness also calls for a policy of labour redeployment and an active industrial policy that should have two essential features:

Organising information and forecasting

The need to improve the information and forecasting network accessible to economic agents and the public authorities is self-evident. The "sudden" or "unexpected" appearance of a number of countries on the world markets in several products could have been predicted on the basis of the investments made in these countries. With better dissemination of information and improved forecasting, the necessary adjustments could, in numerous instances, probably have been carried out in time.

Improving the economies' adaptability and promoting re-deployment

A recovery in growth and a macro-economic policy encouraging investment would already help to produce a major improvement in the European economies' adaptability. Similarly, closer observation of the trends in international demand and of the development of competition already constitutes in an open economy a strong inducement to redeploy activities spontaneously.

Nonetheless, more selective policies would have to be implemented by the public authorities in order to assist this redeployment:

policies to promote innovation aimed at boosting competitiveness through technology and at creating new products;

a more vigorous policy to promote sectors of advanced technology in which government contracts play an essential role (data-processing, telecommunications, nuclear power, transport technology, health or education);

more vigorous labour market policies which, by encouraging vocational training, redeployment and social reintegration of workers made redundant in declining sectors, would remove a major obstacle to the sectoral changes that are needed.

ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL : FIVE HITS, ONE NEAR MISS

Two directives adopted, three decisions of principle and serious discussion on the need to extend Community environment policy - a pleasing outcome to last week's Council meeting of the Nine's Environment Ministers.

The only point left undecided was a draft directive on bird protection which faltered through lack of agreement on one of the four measures proposed.

OIL POLLUTION

The Amoco Cadiz problem and oil slicks in general are still a considerable point of concern and the Commission's proposed action programme (see "Euroforum" No. 17/78) to control and reduce pollution by oil tankers was discussed and adopted by the Council.

The Commission now has the job of recording on computer all the means available to combat oil pollution; to draw up files on offending oil tankers; increase the effectiveness of anti-pollution teams; promote the development of non-polluting tankers; increase tug facilities for towing damaged ships; enforce the "polluter pays" principle at sea and develop a research programme on the chemical and mechanical means of dealing with oil pollution.

MARITIME SAFETY : THEORY AND PRACTICE

International action against oil pollution at sea has been ineffective, not so much because the measures decided on are inappropriate, but because there has been no concrete application of the international agreements drawn up. The first stage towards preventing further accidents like the Amoco-Cadiz should, in the Commission's view, be for the Nine to ratify the international conventions controlling the dumping of wastes at sea and stipulating safety regulations for navigation and for the crews of merchant shipping (see "Euroforum No. 17/78).

These ideas have been proposed by the European Commission in a directive which needs to be rapidly adopted by the Nine and they would help speed up ratification of these agreements by some of the tardy Community partners.

Protection for the Mediterranean and North Sea

The Council also gave a favourable opinion on two regional conventions proposed by the Commission:

- Community accession to the Bonn Agreement against North Sea pollution. The participation of the Community in this

agreement could strengthen the nine year old co-operation agreement (1969) which has had little impact so far;

- to agree with the protocol of the Barcelona Convention on Mediterranean pollution.

The Council also requested the Commission to report regularly on oil pollution levels on Europe's coasts, complete with charts of zones which need special protection.

LEAD CONTENT OF PETROL DOWN 10%

Lead is a "first category" pollutant and causes serious industrial illnesses (lead poisoning) among metal workers, type-setters, etc. who handle it. It can also be harmful to people living near factories which discharge lead into the atmosphere (as with the recent case of Belgium's Metallurgie Hoboken factory at Antwerp). City dwellers are also affected by the lead content in car exhaust emissions.

Lead is added to petrol to improve performance. It reduces pinking and enables engines to work at higher compression and performance levels. As the number of cars on the roads increases, so pollution from exhaust gas is increasing and reaching disturbing levels.

The Commission has already taken measures to reduce other forms of car pollution such as carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons (1970). The Environment Council has now adopted the Commission's proposal to reduce the lead content in petrol.

As of January 1st, 1981, 0.40 grammes per litre will be the permitted maximum. This amounts to a ten percent reduction of the current permitted maximum. Community countries can be more strict if they so wish as long as they don't go below the 0.15 gramme per litre limit which would cause trade problems in the Common Market. A special derogation has been agreed for Ireland to take into account its particular economic position, and the limit will be relaxed if Europe has further problems with its oil supply.

FRESH WATER POLLUTION

A directive on the protection and improvement of fresh water was adopted by the Nine. It aims to protect fish and the aquatic ecosystem, and at the same time, stop our water courses, lakes and ponds from becoming polluted. The directive lays down acceptable limits for a number of quality parameters: acidity, oxygen content, nitrate content, ammonia and oils discharged by certain industries, water temperature (which could be raised by cooling water from nuclear water stations.), etc.

Different according to species

These parameters vary according with the types of fish being considered. Europe's fresh water is inhabited by two families of fish: salmon and trout, etc. which prefer to live in fast-flowing, highly oxygenated waters; and the carp

family (carp, tench, roach, bleak), pike, perch and eels, which live happily in more stagnant waters.

Under the Community directive, fresh waters will be classified according to these two categories and the limit values set following the "guide values" in the directive. Based on these quality criteria, Community countries will draw up (at a later stage) programmes for reducing water pollution. Regular water sampling will ensure that the parameter limits are being respected.

AEROSOLS AND FLUOROCARBON DANGERS

Aerosol containers - hairsprays, deodorants, fly sprays, etc. - have become part of our everyday life. The fluorocarbon propellents used in aerosols are, it is suspected, destroying the ozone layer in the stratosphere. A meeting of United Nations experts in 1977 agreed that the ozone layer is in more danger from the effect of aerosols than from jet engines.

The reduction in the ozone layer can have main effects, according to studies undertaken: it can increase the levels of ultra-violet radiation hitting the earth (which could increase the risk of skin cancer) and increase the temperature of the earth, with serious ecological consequences.

No production increase

As yet there has been no definitive evaluation of the impact of fluorocarbons on man and the environment. But until this is possible, the Nine has agreed to the resolution put forward by the European Commission to:

- ensure that European industry does not increase its production capacity for chlorofluorocarbons;
- to encourage the aerosol industry and plastic foam manufacturers (who use fluorocarbons) to step up research into fluorocarbon substitutes;
- to encourage industry and users to eliminate all fluorocarbon leakages.

The European Commission has been charged to examine the economic and social impact which regulations on fluorocarbons and aerosols would have. Proposals would be based on results.

GREEN LIGHT FOR TOSCA TALKS

The USA has adopted the Toxic Substances Control Act which is designed to control the use of chemicals which present an unreasonable risk to man and the environment (see "Euroforum" 13/78).

In 1976 the European Commission sent the Council a draft directive (not yet adopted) on this subject. TOSCA also affects the Community commercially since it exports chemicals to the USA (559 million dollars worth in 1975). It is in the interest of both parties to agree on the precise application

of the US law: definition of test procedures for chemicals, criteria for approving test laboratories, etc.

The Council has given the go ahead for the Commission to begin talks with the US to work out these details.

BIRD PROTECTION

Another important ecological topic dealt with by the Council was bird protection. The present situation is somewhat alarming and out of four hundred bird species which are regularly found in the Community, close on sixty are threatened with extinction. Amongst these are a large number of predators - Mother Nature's ecological regulators. The Royal Eagle, for example, which can now only be seen in Corsica, or the Kingfisher which has fled out polluted waters. Other bird species such as the Ibis and the Egret can now only be seen in Africa.

Less birds, more insects

Even more serious than this is the fact that two thirds of the common species found within Europe are reproducing at abnormally low rates. Only the parasitic birds - those who live off society's wastes (sparrows, starlings, etc) are happily multiplying. Insect eating birds are being hit by pesticides and insecticides, as well as being hunted and having their habitats destroyed. Tits, for example, eat their own weight in insects every day. As their number decreases we are forced to use more chemicals against insects and rodents which, in turn, destroy the ecological balance even further. At the end of the day it is our own health which suffers through chemicals ending up in our food.

The problem can only be resolved at the national level. Most threatened species are migratory and measures taken by one country are likely to be ineffective if their neighbours do not follow suit.

Protecting birds and their habitats

In April 1977, the Commission proposed a directive for a general system covering all wild birds living on Community territory. The proposal was discussed once again by the Council last week. Once more there was agreement on three out of four points but the problem of the list of birds for commercial exploitation was not resolved. The agreed points were:

- to protect 70 threatened or vulnerable species together with their habitats.
- to ban all non-selective means for mass capturing and destruction of birds (nets, traps, explosives, decoys, etc.).
- a list of birds which can be hunted for profit continued

to pose problems. France wishes to restrict this number so that the "professionals" who shoot for commercial profit do not harm the interest of those who shoot for sport. France also wishes to permit the hunting of Skylarks and corn buntings but its Community partners refuse.

Sulphur dioxide : no compromises

Sulphur dioxide (SO₂) is also a first category pollutant which is emitted through burning heavy oils, gas oil, fuel oil etc. In 1976 the European Commission presented the Council with a proposal to reduce air pollution from SO₂ and "suspended particulate matter" (black smoke). This directive set pollution limits and obliged Member States to improve air quality in certain areas. At their recent meeting, Environment Ministers took up the issue again. No conclusion was reached and experts will continue to find a compromise position based on the views expressed.

EXTENDING THE COMMON ENVIRONMENT POLICY

The Council took heed of a request from the French delegation (based on a report presented last December) for more frequent, more political and less formal meetings of the Nine's Environment Ministers, given the growing importance of environmental protection. M. D'Ornano, France's Environment Minister, spoke in favour of a Community environment policy which would meet the needs of the people and take into account economic as well as economic preoccupations. The Nine have agreed to discuss the French proposal at its next meeting.

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