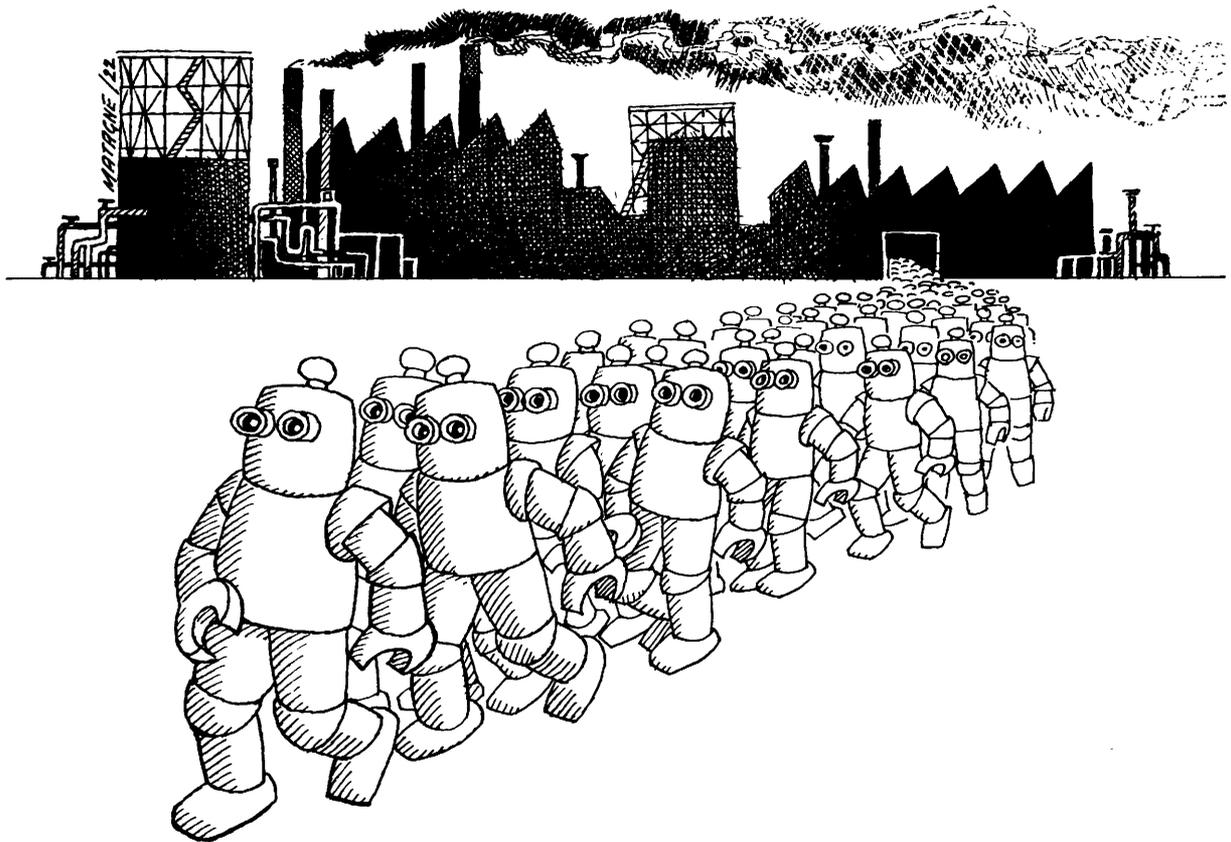


Brussels, June 13 1978

No. 23/78



An alternative to assembly line robots and unsocial hours? The Dublin Foundation is hunting for one (see page 3).

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++ EUROPEAN FOUNDATION FOR A BETTER LIFE

"Social death" is how sociologists regard night work but despite this, the practice is on the increase. Throughout Europe however, demands are increasing for more social and more human working conditions but this goes against the grain of industrial logic which is fighting off an economic crisis.

To identify the human and social costs which this logic entails, to research ways of reducing the social restrictions of work, to examine new ways of improving work and leisure time, the European Community set up a "European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions". Rather than be yet another research institute, this Foundation sees its role as a forum where the Community's problems can be fruitfully discussed.

The programme and modus operandi of the Foundation is presented in Annex 1.

++ PRICE SEESAW

In five Community countries price rises accelerated in April and the increase was greater than for the whole of the first quarter - 1978.

	<u>April 1978</u>	<u>First quarter - 1978</u>
France:	1.1%	0.7%
Luxembourg:	0.6%	0.3%
U.K.:	1.5%	0.6%
Netherlands:	0.8%	0.3%
Italy:	1.1%	1.0%

In Germany, Belgium and Denmark however, price rises were lower than first quarter figures.

Germany	:	0.3%	against	0.5%
Belgium	:	0.1%	against	0.4%
Denmark	:	0.4%	against	0.5%

For the whole Community, the April rise in the price index (in relation to April 1977) was lower than the comparative figure for March 1978.

++ MOBILITY TO BEAT UNEMPLOYMENT

Faced with 6 million Europeans out of work, what can the Community do to improve labour mobility asks Jean Durieux of the European Parliament. The European Commission has replied mentioning that the job information exchange system SEDOC will be coming into operation at the end of the year and this should help resolve the imbalance between vacancies and people out of work.

There still remains one serious problem which the Commission is currently examining and that relates to expenses incurred by workers in actually moving from one Community country to another. In the majority of cases, the worker has to bear these costs himself. By contrast, a worker who moves within the Community should be able to maintain all his social security rights by virtue of the regulations adopted by the Council. Other Council regulations permit a worker to look for jobs in other Community countries whilst maintaining social security rights in the country where he was last employed.

++ PLASTIC PACKAGING RISKS

In the old days, shoppers could feel and smell the goods they were buying. Today this is no longer the case and in our modern supermarkets, fruit and vegetables are so enveloped in plastic and we are unable to touch or smell them. Since the last war, plastic materials has become the main packaging medium for food and even for kitchen utensils.

Though plastic packaging lends itself well for keeping fresh, for handling and transportation it does present some potential hazards. In the long run it can introduce dangerous substances into the food it protects. Research has shown that several of the substances used in the production of plastic are carcinogenic and can migrate into food.

Certain Community countries (Belgium, France, Italy and the Netherlands) have adopted new legislation to limit the risk of food contamination from plastic and others have introduced some less restrictive measures. These differences between national legislations in the Nine are effectively a barrier to trade in processed foodstuffs (which amounts to 11 million dollars) and foods preserved in plastic represent a large share of this. Exporters and packaging manufacturers no longer know which norms to follow - the same bottle of peanut oil could be accepted in Germany but banned in Holland.

For these reasons - consumer protection and free movement of goods - the European Commission has just proposed to the Council a directive regulating the production of plastics which are to come into contact with foodstuffs. This directive will restrict to a maximum of 60 mg per kilo or liter of foodstuff, those substances likely to migrate.

At this low level of concentration, most of the substances being used in plastic production are not toxic, according to scientific studies that have been undertaken. This 60 mg limit also ensures the foods will be kept pure, even from substances which are not harmful to health.

To improve the effectiveness of this directive, the Commission has proposed a system to verify these limits by simulating (by way of solvents) long periods of contact between plastic and food.

The Advisory Committee on Foodstuffs, composed of representatives from industry, consumer groups, the farming sector, trade unions and commerce, has unanimously approved the contents of the directive.

Before the directive can be introduced into national legislation, it requires the approval of the Council of Ministers. It should be remembered that the Council has already adopted (1976) a directive setting down the general principles relating to materials and objects which come into contact with food, as well as a directive on vinyl chloride monomer (V.C.M.) residues in 1978.

++ WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS

Stricken by a fear of burst tyres you may be inclined to take more than one spare tyre with you on holiday. A tyre, however, which is not fixed to the car and transported by an individual, is considered by customs officers as part of personal baggage and as long as it is not worth more than 125 units of account (1 u.a. = ± 1.2 dollars) is not subject to tax. Tyres which are fixed to the car however run the risk of being double taxed: once by the importing country and once by the exporting country. Customs officers in the Nine obstinately refuse to consider a tyre fixed to a wheel as personal baggage. The moral of the story: keep a box of tools handy.

++ LABELLING HOLD UP

More than two years ago in March 1976 the European Commission presented the Council of Ministers with a directive on the presentation, labelling and advertising of foodstuffs to be offered to consumers (see "Euroforum" No. 14/76), and Hans Edgar Jahn of the European Parliament has asked the Council why the directive has not yet been adopted.

The Council has replied that the delay is not due to lack of interest in the directive and the Council states that it is fully aware that the regulation is in the interest of consumers (better information) and producers (free movement of goods). But the complexity of the differences between national legislations on the subject, has slowed its progress down. There is also some difficulty in obtaining unanimous agreement from the Nine on a number of specific points.

++ RADIATION PROTECTION

Five hundred researchers were involved in the Community's research programme in 1977 on the biological and ecological consequences of activities in the nuclear sector.

The programme has resulted in 123 research contracts dealing with 240 projects on the radioactive contamination of the environment, the chromosome and hereditary effects of ionising radiation, evaluation of the risks of irradiation, etc.

The 1977 annual report on the radioprotection programme (EUR 5972) can be ordered from the Office for Official Publications, P.O. Box 1003, Luxembourg - price - £19.20.

++ POLLUTION AND JOBS

In the midst of an economic crisis and with rising unemployment, calls have been heard from many quarters to restrict environmental protection expenditure. Some even fear that environmental measures threaten the existence of certain economic sectors and could even cause drastic losses of jobs. Mr. Willi Müller of the European Parliament has requested the Commission to examine the accuracy of the studies undertaken in Germany and the USA, which indicate that environmental improvement measures can, by contrast, create large numbers of jobs.

As regards Germany, the Commission has cited two studies: one by the Battelle Institute and the other by Professors Meissner and Hödl (c.f. "Euroforum" No. 11/78). According to the former 150,000 jobs were dependent on environmental protection expenditure and according to the latter, environmental policy directly created 370,000 jobs each year in Germany (including jobs involving the operation of maintenance and operation of anti-pollution equipment), in addition to investments .

On the other hand, in the USA the campaign on air and water pollution and the processing of solid wastes was worth 225,562 full-time administrative jobs during 1973-74. A document drawn up by the US Government concluded that anti-pollution expenditure had a positive effect on employment. Hypothetical jobs losses resulting from environmental policy were not regarded as very important.

The Commission itself has requested a study on the implementation of job creating environmental improvement projects. The conclusions of the study are positive and the report should be available to members of the Parliament during the coming month.

++ THREE YEARS OF SOCIAL FUND

Each year the European Social Fund receives requests for assistance from Member States. The requests which have been successful amounted to:
(in million units of account, 1 u.a. = 1.2 dollars)

	1973	1974	1975
Belgium :	7.19	6.55	8.00
Denmark :	5.05	11.96	8.93
Germany :	19.94	27.92	41.73
France :	32.19	49.95	73.84
Ireland :	9.79	16.88	22.56
Italy :	43.70	72.32	95.54
Luxembourg :	0.04	0.01	0.04
Netherlands :	6.75	6.71	10.93
U.K. :	57.38	62.27	110.23
Total	183.06	254.57	371.80

++ STEEL MERGER GO-AHEAD

The European Commission has just given the go-ahead for the steel group ARBED to acquire all the shares in the Saar-based company Neunkircher Eisenwerk AG and to acquire 25.09% shareholding in Métallurgique et Minière de Rodange - Athus (MIRA) and to assume control of MIRA's management.

Crude steel production of the ARBED group will increase from 9 to 10.5 million tonnes (7.9% of Community production and it will rank fifth among Community manufacturers.

The group will be very strongly placed for certain product categories but will face a number of competing manufacturers in the Community with comparable or larger market shares and there is little risk of a dominant position. Also, the same products are imported from outside the Community at highly competitive prices.

++ ENERGY INVESTMENTS

The largest share of public and private investment in energy in 1976 was devoted to nuclear energy in Germany, France and Belgium. In the U.K., oil was top of the league. The only significant expenditure on energy savings measures was found in France.

These are the findings of the European Commission who have just drawn up a report on energy investment in the Community in 1976. The results are as follows:
(in million European units of account - 1 EUA = ± 1.2 dollars).

	D	F	I	NL	B	UK	IRL	DK
Solid fuel	410	54	2		8	450	6	
Oil	244	84	126			2865	20	75
Gas			59	240			4	
Nuclear electricity (including fuel cycle)	1500	1315	50		239	300		
Nonnuclear electricity		223	55			70		
Energy savings		700						
Total	2154	2376	292	240	247	3685	30	75

++ PULP STOCKS RISE

In 1975 production and consumption of paper in the European Community dropped sharply by 20%. Since then, the paper industry has recovered slightly though it has not yet reached even 1973 levels. The result has been a considerable increase in stocks of raw materials and pulp.

The European Commission is closely following events in this sector.

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EUROPEAN FOUNDATION FOR A BETTER LIFE

One and a half million night workers in Britain, two million in France and three million in Germany all attest to the inconveniences of these unsocial working hours. Doctors and psychologists have identified numerous related problems: depression, ulcers, colitis, irritability, insomnia and worse. With workers perpetually isolated from wives, children and other workers, sociologists refer to night work as "social death". Despite this, shift work and night work is still with us and is, if anything, increasing. Efforts at improving working conditions during the economic crisis have been shelved, according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on account of the lack of capital and the number of unemployed.

The problems of shift work are, however, one of the main areas of concern for the "European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions", which will be approaching the problem in three ways:

- examining the technological and economic basis of shift work.
- studying the effect of shift work on health and family life, particularly by assembling and classifying all relevant documentation on the subject.
- initiating concrete pilot schemes in selected industries e.g. testing new rotation schemes which could improve working conditions, and by undertaking cost-comparisons of current systems in relation to more social systems.

Dublin Foundation

Night work is just one of the types of problem to be tackled by the European Foundation - also known as the Dublin Foundation, since it is based near the Irish capital. Setting up such a Foundation was decided by the Council of Ministers on May 26, 1975, following a proposal from the Commission and favourable reactions from the Parliament and Economic and Social Committee. It was the result of joint consultations between both sides of industry, national governments and Community institutions, all faced by the increasingly complex problems of living and working conditions.

The Foundation has four basically original characteristics:

- it is European and has to take into account Community policies; it has to supply scientific information and technical data which could help the Community in implementing its work and environmental objectives.
- it is "quadripartite" i.e. its administrative board includes representatives from the European Commission, national governments, industry and trade unions. It also includes a committee of national experts.

- it is interdisciplinary i.e. it is dealing with all the interrelated problems of life at work and leisure activities, which are all too often examined separately.
- it aims to stimulate research and encourage innovative projects rather than add to academic research.

Qualitative factors

The creation of the Foundation should help cope with a phenomenon which is becoming increasingly evident in Europe: the demand for a better quality of life and a more human working environment. There have been strikes in France against assembly work, law suits brought by Italian trade unions against a colourant factory (known as the "cancer factory"), protests by the inhabitants of Gelsenkirchen (Germany) against a polluting factory in the Ruhr industrial area, disruption by Belgian workers at the F.N. factory in protest against assembly line arrangements which were turning them into "robots", not to mention action groups in towns trying to make their surroundings more habitable, transport less destructive and green spaces more usable. Numerous environmental protection associations refuse to accept further deterioration of the environment as "the inevitable march of progress". Many groups have been formed to make the right to leisure and culture universal and this is just to mention a few.

Faced with such concern for the qualitative aspects of life, research has been stepped up into living and working conditions. It is evident that the old hierarchical pyramid structures are no longer well suited either in industry or in society. Calculations have proved that even though anti-pollution measures are expensive, pollution itself and the heavy wastage it involves, is even more expensive. Employers are now becoming more aware that social factors are not divorced from economic ones.

Some progress has been made dealing with laws on working conditions and we have seen union agreements which go beyond wages and a number of experimental innovations in industry (e.g. redesigning assembly lines in automobile factories).

Expensive industrial logic

These first steps are somewhat limited however and, lacking effective control, they are not always correctly applied. Ways of overcoming such implementation difficulties need to be examined. These innovations in work arrangements are not, unfortunately, widely known and consequently not fully exploited. The results of these projects need to be evaluated and the useful information disseminated.

These new ideas however run against the grain of industrial logic, which has encouraged night work and introduced automation which effectively has replaced arduous jobs by mindless jobs. The dictates of competition and the quest for profit in the midst of an economic crisis do not favour these

qualitative aspects of work. The basic irrationality of this industrial logic has to be clearly demonstrated (waste of human resources and costs involved in accidents, pollution, energy wastage, etc.)

Foundation's task

The Dublin Foundation has assigned itself four principal tasks:

- Encouraging the exchange of information and ideas between Community states

By way of seminars, periodicals, specialised dossiers and the creation of appropriate distribution networks, the Foundation will spread information about what is happening in other Community countries in the fields of law, contract policy, social innovation and research into living and working conditions.

- Promote research into neglected areas

The Foundation will attempt to improve knowledge on the most serious problems faced by workers and examine those problems which are becoming more acute: particularly the alienating effects of new technologies (electronics, data processing, automation) and the alternatives to these. It will examine all the aspects of the restrictions imposed on the individual at work and play - a subject which is usually divided into sections due to administrative divisions. It will examine ways in which improving living conditions can create new jobs or jobs which meet workers' aspirations.

- Undertake studies to provide the basis for new policies

Free competition - the basis of the Common Market - also implies standardising national policies dealing with living and working conditions. By undertaking a large number of comparative studies, the Foundation proposes to identify any convergent trends likely to emerge as policies, and identify any obstacles.

- Encourage co-operation and launch studies and trans-national operations

The Foundation aims to stimulate new types of research in organisations with different approaches: trade unions, industry, universities and national authorities. It will introduce study projects involving close collaboration between research institutes in several European countries. It will encourage co-operation between groups of European cities or industries to combine their efforts and exchange experiences in the field of improving living and working conditions.

Foundation's programme

The administrative board has adopted a four-year programme. During the first stage, priority will be accorded to working

conditions and the direct effects on living conditions:

- shift work (studies in collaboration with the European Commission).
- physical and mental restrictions as work (noise, heat, pollution, work systems, etc.) examined in liaison with the Community's health and safety at work programmes.
- the implications and methods of fixing wages based on productivity (piece work, productivity, bonuses, etc.).
- organisation of work (job design, job enrichment, job enlargement) and its relationship to working conditions.
- the economic and social repercussions of working conditions.
- the impact of technological change on working conditions and the environment (concentrating on certain industries e.g. those where shift work is most common).

Out of these topics, four have been given priority in the first two years of the programme's operation (1977 - 1978):

- shift work in industry and the service sector: the trends, the basis of the trends and the consequences on workers' health and everyday life, different job rotation systems.
- new types of work organisation: to determine to what extent they reduce the restrictions on workers, motivate workers, and permit increased participations by workers and their representatives in the running and decision-making process of the company.
- safety and health protection. In particular national legislation on the subject, the degree of application and inspection provisions.
- data processing: the extension of its use and its impact on workers (employment, hierarchy, job satisfaction, etc.).

Working methods

For each of these topics, the Foundation will follow the same working method composed of four stages:

- Collecting information
 - . encouraging national institutes to undertake specific studies on problems identified by the Foundation and drawn from national programmes.
 - . collecting documentation on the topics dealt within the four-year programme, with the co-operation of universities, national Ministries, industrial and trade union research centres, etc.
- Utilising information
 - . by organising seminars where both sides of industry can evaluate the results of work by national institutes.

- . by undertaking comparative studies of national research projects.
- . synthesising reports and studies to provide the basis for drawing up common policies.
- . producing specialised dossiers based on the research conducted or coordinated by the Foundation (e.g. on pilot schemes).
- . by establishing bibliographies and classified documentation lists.
- . by compiling lists of national or international institutes working in the same fields as the Foundation.

- Disseminating information

The information activities of the Foundation will be directed at three segments of the public:

- . those directly involved with living and working conditions.
- . the individuals and institutions already dealing with these problems who could benefit from the information produced by the Foundation.
- . the general public, to make them more aware of the problems of living and working conditions.

With this in mind, the Foundation is already setting up a documentation centre and setting up a network of correspondants to distribute information on its research, its reports, its information dossiers and its other publications.

It will also organise courses, conferences, working groups, involving specialists -

designing, launching and pursuing joint projects, which implies selecting these fields. Projects can be undertaken, interesting those persons who might be involved in such projects, defining a methodology enabling the operations to be evaluated.

Limited ambition

The 1978 budget for these studies and pilot projects amounts to 767,000 units of account (1 u.a. = ± 1.2 dollars). Given these limited means, the Dublin Foundation will concentrate initially on research with concrete applications, and on practical innovations rather than general studies. It will, of course, try and avoid duplication of work by drawing up inventories of work undertaken by other organisations - 1977 was partly spent contacting other research institutes likely to co-operate. The Dublin Foundation, strictly speaking, is not a research institute, but regards itself more as a forum to discuss the most pressing problems regarding living and working conditions faced by the European Community.

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