

Euroforum



Christmas: a festival without frontiers. See page 3.

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Euroforum

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LIFESTYLE



Christmas: a festival without frontiers

With the shop windows full of coloured balls and tinsel, and the streets hung with fairy lights, there's no mistaking it—Christmas is here again.

For some people it is still primarily a religious event—the celebration of Jesus's birth; for others, it's a good excuse to get together with family and friends, exchange presents and eat, drink and be merry.

Though many of us regret the increasing commercialisation of Christmas, most of us look forward to the mid-winter holiday and joining in the traditional festivities.

As befits a festival that is part, sacred, part secular, Christmas traditions vary from country to country, and the European Community is no exception.

In the United Kingdom and Ireland, for example, children may write letters to Father Christmas and hang up their stockings on Christmas Eve, but the celebrations don't really begin until Christmas Day. But for children in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany and some parts of France, the action begins on 6 December when Saint Nicholas arrives to reward those who have been good enough during the year. In Italy Santa Lucia performs a similar function and in the Netherlands even the grown-ups exchange presents, and the Feast of St. Nicholas is in some ways a bigger occasion than Christmas itself.

There are differences, too, in where the high-point of the Christmas cele-

brations comes. In the Benelux countries, Germany and Denmark, it's the evening of December 24 that is the important time—the 'reveillon'. It's then that people exchange gifts and eat their Christmas meal. Christmas dinner in France, Italy, the United Kingdom and Ireland doesn't take place till midday on Christmas Day. Presents will have been given in the morning, or at the earliest, after the midnight service.

The midnight service is one religious tradition that is still celebrated in all Community countries. Even if they never set foot in a church at any other time of year, many people, especially Catholics, will make it a point of honour to attend. Young people are beginning to lose the habit though, especially in Italy, and other nationalities, like the Danes, tend to prefer going to a service earlier in the evening or, like the Irish, Mass on Christmas Day itself.

Another tradition that is popular everywhere is the Christmas tree. Whether it's a family in Dublin or the Hague, in Edinburgh or Marseilles, the chances are that they will have a decorated tree in their living room. (That in itself must account for a fair acreage of felled trees!).

The Christmas crib, on the other hand, is losing its popularity in many countries, like the UK for example. It's unknown in Denmark. In Germany, though, you will find a crib even in non-Catholic households. Most houses will be decorated in other ways as well, no matter what the country. Holly and mistletoe are still favourites, and so are candles, evergreen garlands and paper streamers.

Christmas is still a season of hearty eating and drinking, there's no doubt about that.

The French and the Belgians head the gourmand league with no expense spared on champagne, oysters, lobster, foie gras and other delicacies. Elsewhere the traditional fare of roast turkey with stuffing, chestnuts and cranberry sauce is still popular, but it's losing ground—in Germany to roast goose with red cabbage, in Denmark to a duck, in the Netherlands to game and in Italy to a dish of roast and boiled meat.

Local traditions still linger on, and every country, if not every region, has

its own yuletide specialities. In Provence they have their thirteen desserts, in Italy 'panettone', a sweet bread with crystallized fruits. In Denmark, there's the traditional dish of roast pork with sweet potatoes and prune sauce followed by almond rice. In Germany it's carp. Britain has its plum pudding with brandy butter and Ireland its whiskey fruit cake. Traditional cakes abound, in fact—in Luxembourg it's 'stollen', in the Netherlands 'kerstkrans', in Germany it's the 'knusperhäuschen'—the gingerbread house of the Hansel and Gretel story.

In Belgium it is traditional to eat a 'cougrou' for breakfast on Christmas day—a special long bread decorated with a sugar figure of the baby Jesus. In some parts of Italy, people eat only eel on Christmas Eve, so as not to spoil their appetites for the feasting the following day, when lasagne, cannelloni, and tagliatelli will take pride of place.

If people like to eat well and spend money at Christmas, the main reason is probably that they see it as the big family occasion of the year. In Italy and the United Kingdom even distant relatives will join the family group, and between 30 000 and 40 000 people return to Ireland each year, specially for the festivities. Christmas Eve will be spent in the pubs, Christmas Day with the family and St. Stephens Day (Boxing Day) at the races, football match, or on the golf-course.

And no matter which Community country you are in, it's the children who are the centre of attraction. Whether it's decorating the tree, acting in a Nativity play or carol singing, they have their part to play. In some countries they may recite a piece of poetry, and in Italy it's the custom for children to write a letter to their father promising to be good in the coming year—though this tradition, like many others, is beginning to die out.

The commercialism of Christmas, the weakening of family life and the trend towards taking winter sports vacations over the holiday season may all in their own ways be undermining the traditional celebrations. Nevertheless, Christmas does remain a symbol of peace, joy and love. In a world where words like these don't often get used, that's something in itself.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A welcome

Sir,

Congratulations on starting your 'Letters to the Editor' page in Euroforum 16/79; but regrets that this is to be only an occasional series.

There is much I would like to say to other readers, but I must keep my letter short. So, firstly, a forum is a meeting place for the exchange of ideas: a regular expanded letters feature could be the most valuable part of Euroforum, where readers can talk back to those who speak for the Community institutions. I am of the opinion that we are the community for whom the Community exists. Please help us to be Europeans Together.

Secondly... but that's enough—till Euroforum allows more space for dialogue.

Jean Straker,
European Together,
Ashurstwood Abbey,
Sussex, RH19, 3SD, UK.

Farmers' incomes

Sir,

With reference to your article in Euroforum 14/79, I wonder how you can conclude that farmers in the Community are not doing badly simply because the doubling or tripling of their assets considerably increases their wealth.

Are you really so naive to suppose that farmers are helped by the inflationary spiral property values? What it really means is that it makes it even more difficult for young farmers to take over a farming enterprise or that, to do so, they have to incur enormous debts.

L. Markvoort,
Annaplaats 10,
2713 AL Zoetermeer,
Netherlands.

Esperanto

Sir,

I was agreeably surprised to read your first letters column in Euroforum 16/79. It is an excellent idea to give your readers a voice.

I was also pleased to note that, in this new section, you were not afraid to introduce some letters dealing with Esperanto, a language which enables each European citizen to speak with any other fellow-citizen without interpretation or loss of effectiveness, while still preserving his or her own language and culture.

P. Vanoenacker,
rue des Coteaux 284,
1030 Brussels.

Sinjoro,
Estas domago ke Pro. Pirlot kay Sro.
Masson ne skribus iliajn leterojn en
Esperanto. Estus helpinto ilian
aferon, se estus skribinta tiel.

L.W. Packer,
Coppertops,
Goodrich,
Ross-on-Wye,
HR9 6JE.

Cultural role

Sir,

Congratulations on your new 'Letters to the Editor' series.

I would like to use it to put forward the need to rebut in your magazine the all-too-prevalent idea that the European Community is only interested in economics. It is also greatly interested in culture, and the two are interrelated because:

- (a) the European artist needs a patron (i.e. European-wide financial backing);
- (b) the Community needs European-wide artistic and cultural support.

Reginald Palmer,
Riehenring 73,
4058 Basle,
Switzerland.

A question of language

Sir,

My attention has been drawn to an article which appeared in Euroforum of July 13, 1979, on overcoming language barriers.

The decisions taken by the European Parliament to overcome the problems posed by the 'European Linguistic Babel' seem to us to be inconsistent. We believe that, firstly at the European level and, if possible thereafter at the world level, a single neutral language is needed, whether we like it or not.

Such a language of the future should be one that can be computerised—which means that each world would have one meaning, and only one—to respond to the demands created by increasing computerised communication between inhabitants of our globe.

Yves Colombot,
Vice-President,
L'Alliance Linguistique,
254 rue de Vaugirard,
75015 Paris.

IN BRIEF

Secure supplies

The European Commission is to study the possibility of setting up an oil exchange.

Green light for talks

The Council of Ministers has approved a Community mandate for the negotiation of an economic and trade cooperation agreement between the Community and the ASEAN group—Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines.

More protection

The European Commission is working on two pieces of draft legislation to protect women on the pill. One covers the clinical testing of oral contraceptives to ascertain their danger and efficacy; the other is designed to ensure that a woman has adequate information before she buys a brand of oral contraceptive.

ENERGY

Fill 'er up, or should it be the same again?

Alcohol has for long fuelled the human machine, but more constructive industrial uses are now being developed. Spiralling petrol prices have stimulated research into the use of alcohol as a substitute for petrol in motor cars both in the European Community and in developing countries.

The idea has been around a long time. During the Second World War, when there was a general fuel shortage in Europe, alcohol was widely used instead of petrol. But with the arrival on the market of cheap and abundant supplies of Middle East oil in the 1950's alcohol became too expensive to be used as a fuel.

Motor vehicles can run on petrol containing up to 20% ethanol (industrial alcohol) without any changes having to be made to the engine.

Ethanol can be produced from a wide variety of farm crops, such as maize, sugar cane and beet, turnips, fruit and straw. Special enzymes are used to convert the plant matter through fermentation in alcohol.

Several Community member states are carrying out research to see whether such processes are commercially viable.

The Danish Distilleries Association and the Danish Sugar Refineries Association are experimenting with sugar molasses (sugar cane residue), potatoes and cereals. The Danes are already producing 9 million litres of alcohol annually from 13 million litres of molasses.

The Americans are producing far greater quantities of industrial alcohol from maize. Mouldy wet cereals unfit for animal feedstuffs are an excellent raw material for making alcohol. Moreover, the by-product can be processed into feedcake.

At the moment it appears unlikely that any member state will be able to use this 'green petrol' on a commercial scale. The cost of producing a given quantity of alcohol from sugar beet—the most suitable raw material—is currently over three times more expensive than the value of a corresponding quantity of petrol. Too

much energy is used to produce the sugar beet and then convert it into alcohol.

However, studies are continuing especially in France, and if oil prices continue to rise then green petrol could become economically viable. It could also provide a constructive outlet for the mountains of surplus sugar beet in the Community.

One major attraction of green petrol is that it does not pollute the atmosphere. Unlike oil it does not contain poisonous lead compounds which are belched out in car exhaust fumes. Pedestrians may once again be able to breathe freely in city streets.

However the man efforts to produce green petrol on a commercial scale have been made in developing countries. Lacking the financial strength or alternative energy sources with which to absorb the oil price boom, they have made a virtue out of necessity by exploiting their natural assets.

Brazil is one country which has been leading the way. Devoid of national oil reserves, it is heavily dependent on imported oil. In 1977 oil accounted for 40% of its import bill and swallowed up all its export earnings.

To cut its oil bill, Brazil decided to exploit its rich natural assets: a huge, largely fertile land area and a favourable climate. In 1975 it introduced a National Alcohol Programme to produce ethanol from its vast sugar cane plantations. The aim is to

reduce the oil import bill by 20% or \$650 million by 1980.

At present Brazil produces about 1 600 million litres of ethanol per year. But, with 1980 petrol consumption estimated at 17 000 million litres, it will have to raise ethanol production to 3 400 million litres (given a 20% mix). If this target is achieved oil imports will be cut by 50 million barrels.

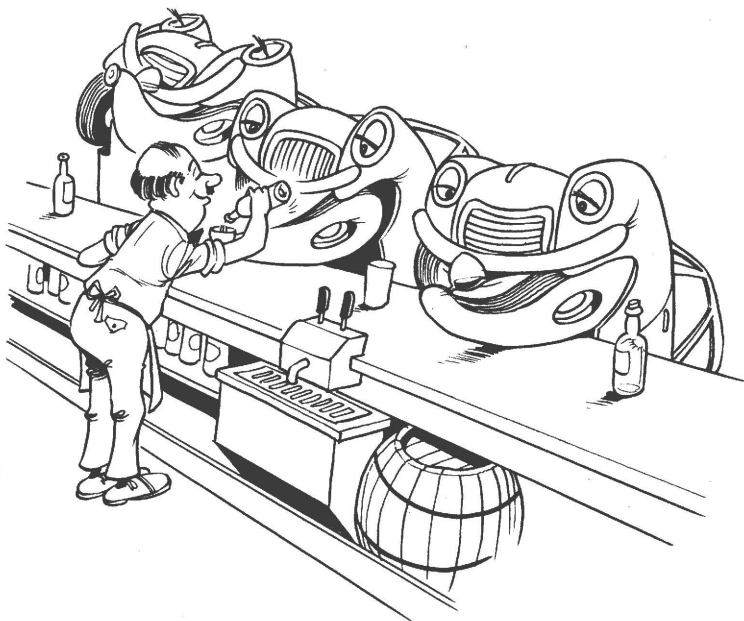
It is estimated that over \$1 000 million will have to be invested in expanding sugar cane plantations by 1.2 million hectares and in building new distilleries.

A huge task but the rewards are also considerable:

- Between 1977-86 foreign exchange savings of \$3 000million-\$5 000 million
- 135 000 new jobs
- development of poorer rural regions.

Although the Brazilian programme is by far the most ambitious, other developing countries are exploring the possibilities offered by green petrol. Among them are four desperately poor, landlocked African countries—Mali, Upper Volta, Niger and Chad.

These countries could benefit from European Community aid under the Lomé Convention. Funds and technical assistance could be provided in expanding sugar cane plantations, building distilleries and supplying know-how to produce the green petrol.



THE MEMBER STATES

Special Community aid urged for Northern Ireland

The European Commission is being urged to prepare a review on the economic outlook of Northern Ireland and to assess the policies and resources needed to bring the region up to the Community average in living standards and employment.

The initiative is coming from three members of the European Parliament's Socialist group: John Hume (of the Northern Ireland SDLP); Richard Balfe (British Labour Party) and Eileen Desmond (Irish Labour Party).

They have tabled a resolution, pointing out 'the special difficulties of Northern Ireland at the present time', which should be discussed at the Parliament's next plenary session this month.

The resolution refers to the grave economic and social problems of the region, where unemployment averages over 12% and reaches 25% in some areas.

'The search for peace in Northern provision of jobs and decent living standards', they say.

In its present form, the resolution may also be supported by the two Northern Irish Unionist Euro MPs, Rev Ian Paisley and John Taylor.

The call for financial assistance from the Community's Regional Fund to help the area has already been to some extent heeded by the Commission.

Since the Fund was established in 1975, 177 investment projects in Northern Ireland have received grants totalling £60 million. In addition the Fund has financed 50% of the cost of a cross-border communications study for the Londonderry and Donegal area.

The Social Fund has also made its contribution, with £50 million for 158 projects between 1973 and 1978. In addition the Guidance section of the Community's Farm Fund has contri-

buted £13.5 million for the improvement of farms and the Guarantee section has supported farm prices.

Finally, the Community's major lending institution, the European Investment Bank has granted loans worth £70 million to help build a thermal power station, to extend the telecommunications system and to improve roads.

AGRICULTURE

New initiative by the Commission in bid to reduce surpluses

The European Commission has proposed putting a stop to the open-ended price support which the bulk of the Community's 8 million farmers enjoy under the Common Agricultural policy.

This unlimited commitment in certain sectors has resulted in massive over-production, particularly in dairying, resulting in massive surpluses which must be stored expensively or disposed of cheaply.

The Commission's proposals must now be approved by the Council of Ministers, which has been reluctant in the past to interfere with CAP rules. They cover milk, sugar, beef, fruit and vegetables, and cereals.

The main proposal is in the dairy sector, which eats up almost half of the Community's total budget. The Commission would like to add a further 3% to the 1.5% 'coresponsibility' levy which the industry will be paying next year on surplus production.

Agriculture Commissioner Finn Olav Gundelach estimates that the total package could save the Community taxpayer more than £600 million a year. However, he warned that the proposals, while radical, would not be enough to put an end to surpluses.

He said: 'The only way to deal with the problem is to cut support prices, but not a single member state, not one, would support that'.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Russian chess player seeks EP help to unite his family

Viktor Korchnoi, the chess grand master is seeking the help of members of the European Parliament in his family's bid to secure exit visas from the Soviet Union to go to Israel.

Mr Korchnoi, who was narrowly beaten by Anatoly Karpov for the world title last year, defected from the Soviet Union in 1976 for what he insists were professional not political reasons. Since then the authorities have refused his family's numerous applications to leave the country.

Matters came to a head in mid-November when his son Igor was arrested for going into hiding to avoid his military service. He did this, said Mr Korchnoi, because he claimed that once he had served in the army he would be unable to leave the country for several years on the grounds that he possessed 'military secrets'.

Mr Korchnoi's plea has already been taken up by the North Manchester Human Rights Group and they have enlisted the support of their Euro MP, Mrs Barbara Castle, who is confident of the backing of the whole Socialist group in the European Parliament.

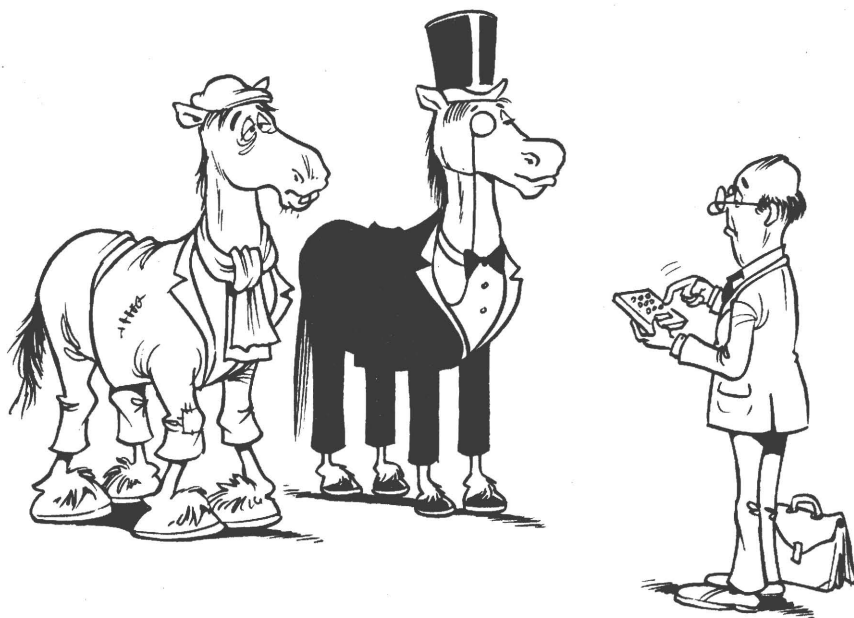
Mr Korchnoi stated he considered that a letter from Mme Simone Veil, the President of the Parliament, or from the leader of the Socialist group, 'could have an influence on Mr Brezhnev to show some sign of humanitarian action'.

More space

Spurred on by Lady Elles, a British Conservative member of the European Parliament, the Commission is to find out what special parking facilities for the handicapped exist in the nine Member States. The results of its inquiries may lead to Community action in this field, perhaps to coincide with the United Nations Year of the Handicapped in 1981.

Moving briefs

Since Community legislation opened up borders for lawyers a year ago more than 13 000 of them have applied for identity cards issued by the Community Bars and Law Societies.



British bloodstock industry doesn't like the odds

Horse-trading, which has always been somewhat synonomous with shady dealing, has reared its head at Community level.

It lies at the heart of a recent British complaint to the European Commission on the implementation in France and Ireland of a Community law on value added tax in relation to the sale and training of racehorses.

Staunch British punters feel that current French and Irish practices threaten to replace the 'brain drain' of the Sixties by the 'blood drain' of the Eighties, with pure British bloodlines being syphoned off to France and Ireland.

At the root of the threat lie differing applications of the Community's VAT rules caused by differing interpretations of what a racehorse is, and what you call what you do with it.

The French taxman, perhaps with a classic Gallic shrug, appears to regard the Mill Reefs and Nijinskys of this world as about as valuable (at least in VAT terms) as the average carthorse since he levies VAT on the carcass value of the poor animal, whether or not it has expired in transit.

Carcass value, as anyone who studies form will tell you, is usually somewhat below a racehorse's market value, especially if it has a habit of winning races. VAT in the UK is payable at 15% of a horse's market value. Although tipsters feel that this discrepancy is unlikely to make a great deal of difference to the standard of racing in the UK, it does increase the chances of British pride having to swallow the clearly unacceptable sight of British bred racehorses flashing past the hal-lowed winning posts of the land in French colours.

Furthermore the unfortunate offspring of the exiled British bloodlines would be brought up and owned by Frenchmen who are already well to the fore in the bloodstock and horse-racing stakes.

The Irish, who are also among the world's best breeders of racehorses and who have, naturally, a healthy respect for the sensibilities of a thoroughbred, avoid the tendency to think of all horses as potential carcasses, but exempt racehorse trainers from VAT on the grounds that training is an agricultural activity. (Farming is subject to very liberal tax treatment in Ireland).

Faced with her racing prestige in jeopardy, the UK appealed to the European Commission to take appropriate action. The Commission was quickly out of the starting gate with

the speedy dispatch of an informal letter to both the French and Irish governments, asking for their side of the story. A reply is keenly awaited by all, not least by British Conservatives in the European Parliament, who have rallied to the raised flag under an aggrieved Robert Jackson, whose Upper Thames constituency includes the classic Newbury race-course.

But, despite British insistence that neither France nor Ireland is playing the game true to the spirit of Community rules, it may take a stewards' inquiry at the Court of Justice to decide the question.

POLITICAL AFFAIRS

Community protest at embassy invasion

The takeover of the US Embassy in Teheran was strongly condemned by the European Parliament at its November session. The parliamentarians urged the Iranian authorities to end the occupation and they also condemned the encouragement of black-mail and violence.

Members stated that the action went against the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations, which Iran ratified in 1965, and that the holding of hostages was openly contrary to elementary humanitarian principles.

Earlier, the Irish chargé d'affaires in Teheran delivered a protest to the Iranian Foreign Ministry on behalf of the nine member states of the Community.

In Brussels, the European Commission revealed that the Community's oil imports from Iran have been reduced this year to 7% of its total imports, compared with 18% last year.

Nuclear shortfall

The Community is likely to fall far short of the target it set itself in 1974 for the construction of nuclear power stations. It is expected to have a capacity of only 70-80 GWe, compared with a target of 160 GWe. This is partly as a result of a drop in demand and partly as a result of public opposition to nuclear power.

THE BUDGET

A constant effort to strike a proper balance

Hardly a day goes by but we read about the United Kingdom's arguments with its Community partners over its contribution to the Community's Budget.

The subject was one of the most delicate items due to be discussed at the European Council 'summit' being held in Dublin as we went to press.

The Budget for 1980 is currently going through its annual scrutiny in the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. In this article, Rory Watson describes what is involved.

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The first thing that should be said is that in some ways the term 'Community Budget' is a bit of a misnomer. Like national budgets it consists of receipts and expenditure, but it is difficult for the Community to exercise effective control over either element.

The Community's income is raised in three ways. All the money from, firstly, customs duties on goods entering Europe from third countries and, secondly, agricultural levies go into the Community rather than national coffers.

The third element is a little more flexible. Up to 1% of the receipts of value added tax, minus a small amount to pay for the collection costs, also

goes to help pay for Community policies. At the moment about 0.8% goes to Brussels.

But, as costs rise so the size of the Community Budget has to rise too. Since the Community cannot determine exactly how much money will be raised from the levies and duties—these depend on the volume of trade—it can only meet rising costs by raising the level of VAT it takes.

Present estimates are that the 1% ceiling will be reached sometime in 1981. Then the Community will either have to find new sources of revenue, possibly by raising the amount of VAT it can levy to 1.5% or by receiving part of the taxes on other items like cigarettes and alcohol; otherwise, it will have to trim its expenditure in certain areas.

This brings us to the second element: spending. Over 70% of Community expenditure goes on running the common agricultural policy.

It is this imbalance which is worrying many people in Europe, since it leaves very little money over to pay for regional and social policies, currently making up 6% of the total Budget, which are necessary to promote economic growth in the Community and iron out regional differences, or to help the developing world (7%).

Criticism has been made in particular of the funds needed to buy up excess dairy products, such as milk and butter and to reprocess fruit, and the Com-

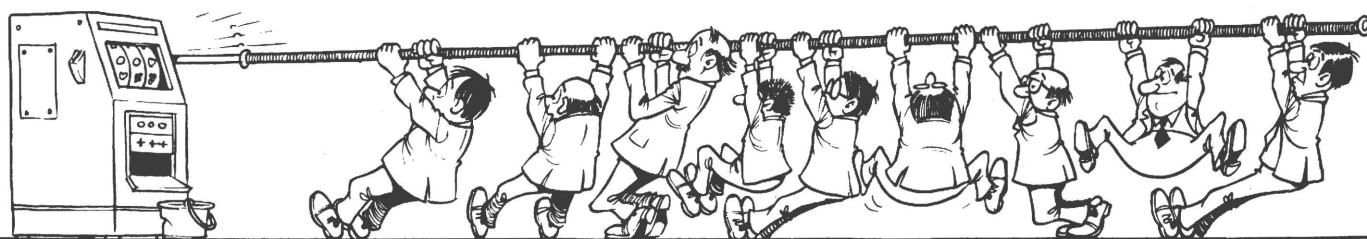
mission is working on ways to reduce these.

In the past the Budget has been little more than an accounting exercise for the CAP, rather than a real control on spending. Although the Commission might try to budget for expenditure over the following twelve months at the start of the year, inevitably it has had to look for more money later on, through what is known as a supplementary budget. This has been for two reasons.

Firstly, it is very difficult to try and predict prices and the size of the following year's harvest 12 months in advance. Thus, if there is a bumper crop and prices fall, then farmers' incomes will have to be made up with money from the Community kitty.

Secondly, the Commission has no control over decisions taken by the Nine's Agricultural Ministers. So, if the Ministers decide to raise the price of agricultural products by 2%, adding some £310 million to the Community bill, this money has to be found, even though the Commission disagrees with the price rise in its effort to avoid surpluses.

The situation may change as the Community's receipts hit their upper level—if no new finance is found—and there could well be then a situation where the Budget Commissioner acts as a Finance Minister controlling the spending of different departments, rather than as little more than a bookkeeper.



Against this background of limited finances, another more immediate and political quarrel has broken out. The UK considers that under the present financing arrangements it is being penalised, since it tends to import much of its food and industrial needs from the rest of the world and hence collects duties and levies on them which automatically become Community income.

Estimates are that next year, the UK, which has the third lowest gross domestic product per head of the Nine, will make a net contribution to the Budget of some £1 000 million. Ways of trying to remedy this imbalance have been discussed for many months and the matter was due to dominate the European Summit in Dublin being held as *Euroforum* went to press.

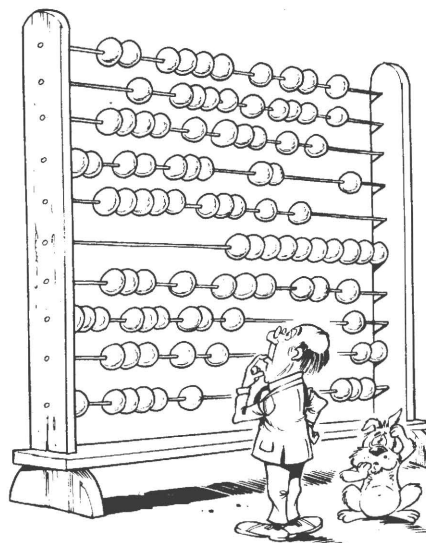
But it is important to keep a sense of perspective about the Community budget. The original estimate for next year's expenditure was £11 000 million although this has risen somewhat since. This is less than 3% of the national budgets of the Nine and less than 1% of gross national product.

By way of further comparison, in 1976, when the Budget was approximately half its present size, it was less than the Rhineland-Westphalia budget, or the interest on the British national debt, or spending by the French and Italian Ministries of Education or twice the size of the Irish budget.

In the same year, the Budget was worth some £40 to everyone in Ireland and £28.70 to every man, woman and child in Denmark. Next year's Budget will in value mean a contribution of only £39 a head from Community citizens.

Thus, it can be argued that the Budget is in no way excessive when you consider it has to pay for virtually all Community agriculture and a number of other policies in the regional, social, industrial, energy and development aid areas.

At the same time, it pays the salaries of some 16 000 people working in the European institutions. These include those working in the European Parliament, Commission, Court of Justice, Court of Auditors and the Economic and Social Committee, both in the Community and in representational offices in third countries.



The actual procedure for adopting the Budget, which is currently in its final stages, is both lengthy and complicated. Whereas in the UK, for example, the Chancellor of the Exchequer merely presents his budget to the House of Commons, where his party generally has a majority, the Community Budget goes through many more stages.

Commission officials work out their estimates for the next year's Budget and send these to the Council of Ministers in the middle of June. These are then examined by the Council and invariably pruned back.

The draft is then sent to the European Parliament, which shares considerable budgetary power with the governments. Euro MPs, equally predictably reinstate most of the funds knocked out by the Council of Ministers.

The amended draft then goes back again to the Ministers, who by a qualified majority can overrule any change proposed to what is known as compulsory expenditure. This is spending authorized by the Treaty of Rome. It essentially concerns the CAP and accounts for 80% of the Budget.

Once again the draft goes back to the Parliament, which has no more say on compulsory expenditure, but it can propose changes to non-compulsory expenditure (regional, social and energy policies etc), provided these are kept within a legal limit set each year by the Commission. There is provision for discussions on budgetary matters between the Council and the Parliament by means of what is known as the concertation procedure.

The Budget for the following year is adopted, usually just before Christmas.

Parliamentarians seek to narrow the gap

The serious problems facing the European Community are essentially due to the economic gap between the nine member states and can only be bridged by developing proper common policies. This is the view of the European Parliament as expressed in a major debate on economic convergence and the Community budget at its last session.

During the day-long debate, members stressed the need to reduce the imbalances between the rich and not-so-well-off countries—a gap that continues to grow despite the efforts of the Community.

Many British Euro MPs also pointed to the fact that there should be some reduction in the net contributions the UK makes to the Community budget. Next year, it is estimated these will top £1 000 million.

The final resolution adopted at the end of the debate noted that the financial imbalances caused by the present system are 'a serious problem', which calls for 'an immediate solution'.

It also stated that there should be a new and lasting system of financial equalisation between Community countries based on the concept of GDP per head. In this way, the economically weaker states would not pay a disproportionate share of the Community budget.

HEALTH

Abortion: a matter of nine separate points of view

The termination of pregnancies is not a matter within the responsibility of the European Community, David Andrews, the Irish Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and current President of the Council of Ministers, made clear to members of the European Parliament recently.

And he rejected suggestions that Article 100 of the Treaty of Rome makes it possible to provide for harmonization of national laws in this delicate matter.

Mr Andrews was replying to a question tabled by a French socialist member, Roger-Gérard Schwartzenberg, in which he asked whether the nine member states should not harmonise legislation in the form most conducive to women's liberties in order to solve the problem created by the growing number of women who travel to member states with liberal abortion laws to have their pregnancies terminated. However, since the subject was raised in the Parliament it is worth looking at the way the different Community member states view abortion.

There are wide divergences in attitudes to abortion from one member state to another, as was illustrated recently at a meeting in Paris organized by the French Ministry of Health and Social Security attended by delegates from each member state. Belgium, Ireland and the Netherlands have no law legalising abortion while all the other six have.

When the United Kingdom passed its Abortion Act in 1967, abortion was still illegal in most other European countries (though Denmark was another early legislator. The British law made abortion legal if two doctors agreed that a continued pregnancy would risk damaging the mother's physical or mental health or that of other children in the family. Abortion can take place up to the 28th week of pregnancy and is free on the National Health Service. There are no residence or nationality requirements, but the law does not apply to Northern Ireland.

According to British delegates at the Paris meeting, some 150 000 abortions are performed annually, with the pro-

portion of foreigners involved decreasing as the laws in neighbouring countries are liberalized. In the year 1975-76, fewer than 20% of the terminations were carried out after the 13th week of pregnancy and only 1.5% after the 20th week.

Not everyone is happy with the law, however, and four attempts have been made to change it, particularly as regards restricting the private sector (where two thirds of the abortions are carried out), reinforcing conscience clauses for doctors and nurses who might be called upon to perform abortions, and—this question is still being debated—shortening the maximum time period from the 28th to the 20th week of pregnancy.

In 1973 Denmark passed its most recent and liberal law regarding abortion. A woman who lives in Denmark can request an abortion during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy (and later if a socio-medical committee agrees). The request can be made to a doctor or specialist institute and the cost is reimbursed on health insurance.

The Danes at the conference emphasized that the abortion legislation came after several years of contraception campaigns and that the number of pregnancies terminated had stopped increasing to the point of actually decreasing since 1977.

They have been able to collect a good deal of statistical information over the years and can show that, for instance, the number of women needing more than one abortion is low (about 5%) and that 97% of terminations take place before the 12th week.

One experiment whereby free contraceptives have been systematically given to everyone having an abortion over the past three years in certain regions of Denmark has shown that these areas now have the lowest number of abortions in the country.

Between 1974 and 1978 France, Germany, Italy and Luxembourg all passed laws permitting abortion. The French law, voted for a five-year period in 1975, comes up for reconsideration before the end of this year.

At the moment, a woman 'in distress' can request an abortion in the first 10 weeks of pregnancy (or at any time for a therapeutic abortion, which is claimable on health insurance), so

long as she has medical consultations and social counselling, and her parents consent if she is a minor.

In 1976, Germany modified the law it passed in 1974 and now permits abortions, claimable on health insurance, up to the 12th week of pregnancy for a woman 'in distress' and up to 22 weeks for eugenic reasons. The woman must see a counsellor at least three days before the termination is due to take place. Application of the law varies from Länd to Länd and from city to city, with Berlin and Hamburg, for instance, having three times the national average. According to German delegates at the conference, between 80 000 and 90 000 abortions are performed every year, and a certain number of Germans also go to other countries to get abortions.

Problems in applying the law also exist in Italy, where a law allowing abortion was passed after much discussion in June 1978. A woman is now able to ask for an abortion claimable on health insurance during the first 13 weeks of pregnancy. Medical consultations are obligatory, and so is parental consent for minors.

According to the Italians, problems arise because of the shortage of hospital beds and the conscientious objection of large numbers of doctors and nurses to performing abortions (the Vatican has declared that anyone taking advantage of the law will be excommunicated).

The law in Luxembourg, passed in November 1978, covers contraception as well as abortion. A woman 'in distress' can, after medical consultation, ask for her pregnancy to be terminated during the first 12 weeks and claim the cost back on health insurance. Some problems still remain, according to the Luxembourg delegates, especially for immigrants and minors who often travel to the Netherlands to get abortions.

In Ireland and Belgium the situation is quite different. In Ireland the 1861 'Offences Against the Person Act' makes the termination of a pregnancy a crime unless the mother's life is in danger. Penalties range from several years imprisonment to detention for life. The Irish are at present less concerned with the question of abortion than with a possible relaxation of the laws regarding contraception.

In Belgium, the situation is less clear, with a repressive law that is not very vigorously applied. In 1974 a national committee on ethical problems was set up to consider the questions of contraception and abortion.

In the Netherlands the situation is a paradoxical one. A projected law legalizing abortion was rejected in 1976, but it is extremely difficult for doctors to be prosecuted for performing abortions, and Dutch representatives at the Paris meeting said that some 70 000 were carried out last year on both Dutch and foreign women.

Not everyone is happy about this situation, but it seems that doctors practising abortion are not committing an infraction if they are conforming to the rules of their profession. The Dutch pointed out that sterilization is also increasing, for both men and women, and in 1977 six times as many people were sterilized as had abortions.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Town planners get together to discuss common problems

'Urban problems in the European Community' was the theme of a recent conference held by the European Commission in Liverpool. The aim of the three-days of discussion was to examine the town planning and urban development policies of the nine Community member states now and in the near future, to assess possible solutions to the problems that arise and to outline ways of improving urban conditions.

An insight into the role that the Community could play in assisting the member states was given by the Commissioner responsible for environment policy, Lorenzo Natali, and the head of the Commission's Environment and Consumer Protection Service, Michel Carpentier.

Mr Carpentier told delegates that the individual governments which are most immediately-affected by specific problems, are in a better position to take action than the Community institutions. The Community should only act where absolutely essential, in cases where the problem to be resolved required more than national action.

In the context of town planning and urban development, the Community has a central role to play in pollution control, particularly as pollution is no respecter of national frontiers. It also has a role to play in facilitating the exchange of information and experience between member states on common or transfrontier questions.

Although there are many links between local and regional authorities in different member states, the regular exchange of experience (often hampered by domestic commitments, lack of resources and language barriers) is not well-established. Nevertheless, a successful link-up between Coventry, Rotterdam and Lille, which was given some financial support by the European Commission, shows the need for and feasibility of cooperation.

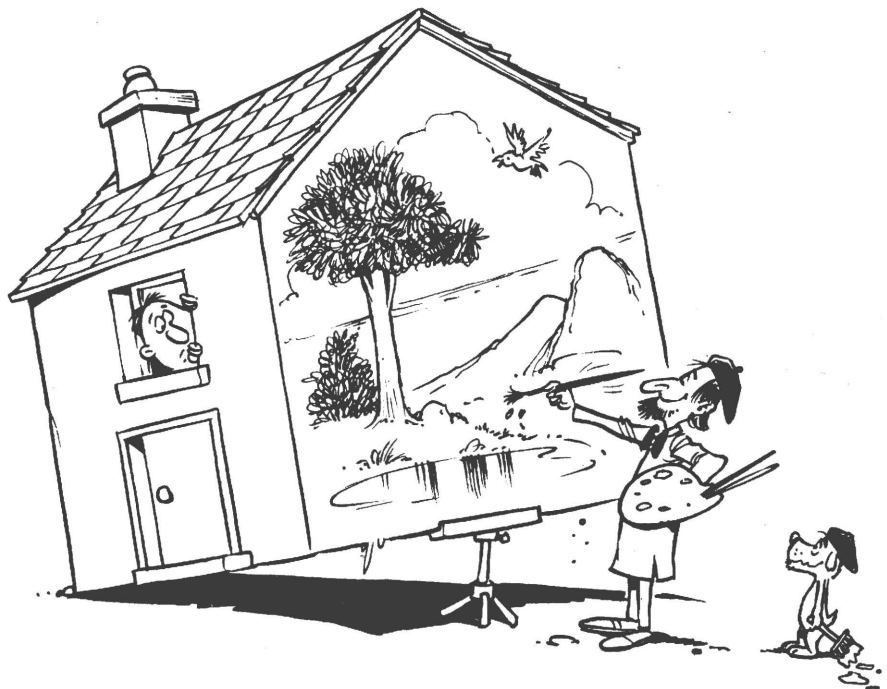
The Commission also helped citizens' action groups from five different European cities to meet in Brussels last October. These groups, guests of the Brussels Atelier de Recherche et d'Action Urbaines (ARAU), found that the social and environmental problems they faced, especially when redevelopment of their areas was planned by public authorities, were very similar.

The Community could extend its support to local governments by improv-

ing education and training in town planning, through the promotion of research and discussion on major issues, such as the concept of the city as a place to live as well as work and the consequences for the Community as a whole, now and in the longer term, of trends and policies relating to population distribution and land-use in the member states.

Other speakers outlined for the delegates just what these trends and policies were, and Professor Stefano Garano of Rome University detected growing public awareness of the problems of city management: the philosophy of urban planning is tending towards arresting the physical expansion of major cities and saving the core areas.

Attention is being paid not only to the preservation of physical structures but also to the protection of the inhabitants, especially the poor, and of existing economic activities. Abrupt redevelopment of whole central areas, a feature of urban renewal in the 1960's, has slowed down or stopped. Improving living conditions in the suburbs is a goal receiving more emphasis. Medium-sized towns outside the metropolitan areas are also gaining importance in the national urban network.



THIRD WORLD

Helping developing countries to help themselves

The main thrust of future cooperation between the European Community and the 58 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) developing countries belonging to the new Lomé Convention is likely to be in the industrial cooperation sector.

ACP exports already enjoy virtually free access to the Community market. What these countries need now is aid in developing their processed raw materials exports to the Community.

This does not necessarily pose a threat to European industry. The ACP states will tend to concentrate on labour intensive industries where they enjoy a comparative advantage e.g. shoes, textiles and timber. The Community can focus on computers, telecommunications and other high technology industries. Moreover, the ACP states offer a large market for the export of European technology, know-how and capital goods.

One of the main innovations of the 1975 Lomé Convention was the creation of a Centre for Industrial Development. Based in Brussels with a mixed ACP Community staff, its main aim is to facilitate contacts between ACP and European businessmen. It also helps to mobilise European capital, technology and management expertise to meet ACP needs. Special emphasis is placed on processing raw materials.

In its draft annual report on its 1978 activities, just published, the Centre says it identified 283 industrial development projects in the year compared with 141 in 1977. Of these projects 12 are actually being implemented, 19 are in the final phase of negotiation and 40 are still being studied.

These 71 projects would involve investments of \$1 800 million and create over 18 000 jobs in ACP states. However, five of the projects account for 86% of the investments.

About four-fifths of the projects were initiated by the ACP states and taken up by the Centre after it has undertaken project identification missions. The remainder were proposed by European firms.

Nearly 75% of the projects concern the processing of raw materials both for local markets (e.g. groundnuts and cotton) or foreign markets (e.g. wood and leather).

The Centre has also backed projects using technologies adapted to local conditions, as well as those for developing renewable energy sources. For instance, there is a 'green petrol' project in the Sudan producing energy from sugar molasses.

Regional projects are also encouraged. For instance, there is an integrated steel project in which Swaziland iron ore will be used to produce steel in Kenya.

Towards a new economic relationship: are we turning the corner?

Trade, as well as aid, is one of the main demands of the Third World in the North-South dialogue between industrialized and developing countries.

Economic interdependence is a key feature of the new world economic order which both the developing and developed countries are trying to establish through the dialogue.

A primary aim of the dialogue is that free hand outs from rich to poor countries will be substituted by a fairer trading system in which the Third World obtains greater benefit from its rich natural resources by exporting processed industrial and agricultural goods rather than the raw materials.

The tide may already have turned, at least in relation between the European Community and the 58 ACP states belonging to the Lomé Convention. For the first time since 1977, the Community's trade balance with the ACP states has plunged into the red. The deficit of £1 100 million for the first half of this year was the highest to date.

A big drop in Community exports to the ACP states, as well as a marked growth in imports, were the main reasons for this change of trend.

During the first half of 1979 Community exports to the ACP states were worth £3 300 million, a drop of 18% compared with the same period in 1978. On the other hand, Com-

munity imports rose 20% to £4 400 million.

The largest drop was the 45% fall in sales to oil-rich Nigeria, the Community's main ACP export market. However, sales to the Ivory Coast, the second largest market, substantially increased due to its higher coffee and cocoa export earnings.

Manufactures, especially transport equipment and machines make up nearly 90% of Community exports to the Lomé countries.

Higher oil prices were the main reason for the increased value of Community imports. Oil imports from Nigeria and Gabon rose by over 50% in value. At the same time the value of copper imports from Zambia and Zaire rose substantially following the recovery in copper prices.

Most of Nine still dragging their heels on development aid

How does aid given by the European Community for developing countries compare with that given by other industrialized countries?

A member of the European Parliament recently pointed out that aid given by the nine Community Member States is less than half the United Nations target of 0.7% of gross national product (GNP) agreed to by industrialized countries.

The member John O'Connell of the Irish Labour Party, also complained that Community aid is too closely tied to its former colonies, especially in Africa. He urged that much more aid be given to the poorest countries, wherever they might be.

The European Commission pointed out in reply that two Community member states have already exceeded the UN target. Net official development assistance (ODA) given by the Netherlands represents 0.82% of its GNP and that of Denmark 0.75%.

The Commission added that the Community's overall aid performance is better than that of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Paris-based OECD which includes all the leading western industrialized

countries. Aid given by the Nine represents 0.45% of their GNP compared with 0.35% for the DAC group as a whole.

The Commission also explained that 1 of the 58 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries belonging to the Lomé Convention feature among the world's poorest with a per capita GNP of less than \$265 per year.

In recent years Community aid to other parts of the world, especially Asia, has been considerably extended. In 1978, payments from the Lomé Convention's 4th European Development Fund accounted for only just over half the total aid given by the Community.

Food aid accounts for a major part of this other aid and the major criterion in its allocation is the 'poverty' factor.

Community to send further aid to Kampuchean victims

The European Community is to send an additional £15.5 million to the aid of the people of Kampuchea as part of an emergency six-month plan totalling £50 million. A further £23 million will be needed for Kampuchean refugees who have fled to Thailand, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The Community's contribution is in addition to £3 million which it has already provided for relief organizations working in Kampuchea and will be used in the same way: the bulk in cash for purchasing medicine, transport equipment, seeds and other essentials, and the rest for the purchase and distribution of rice.

This brings the Community's total contribution, including the possible supply of 1 500 tonnes of milk, to £20 million, the bulk of it in cash. Community member states have also announced bilateral contributions totalling £6 million.

The Community is also giving aid worth £19 million in cash and food to the South-East Asian 'boat people'.

In addition, the Community's 1979 food aid programme provides for the supply to Vietnam of 86 000 tonnes of cereals, some of which is earmarked for Kampuchean refugees in Vietnam; 15 000 tonnes of milk powder and 4 000 tonnes of butteroil, which is equivalent to £18 million.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

The Fourth World: the hidden shame of our society

Every 1.5 seconds a child is born in India. Every month are 1.7 million babies. Every year there are 21 million more mouths to feed. This is the rate at which the Indian population is expanding.

But due to poverty and malnutrition 2.5 million babies die before their first birthday. That is the price of poverty.

You might say India is far away—even further than Cambodia.

In our rich industrialized countries there is no mass poverty. But it exists all the same and is all the worse for rubbing shoulders with great wealth.

About 4 million people in the European Community, representing 5% of the total population, live below the poverty line. They are known as the 'Fourth World'. Our shame.

Small, undernourished, often completely illiterate, they are despised and deprived. Deprived of schooling (because they are obliged to start working—or scrounging—while still young). Deprived of social security (unable to cope with all the paperwork). Deprived of a normal job (no-one employs 'layabouts'). Deprived of a civic life (for lack of an educated interest).

They are unable to express their problems in associations, trades unions or political parties because they do not know they exist. Also they feel ashamed because they are 'foreigners' to all of us.

However they are our fellow citizens. They live—or rather survive—alongside us in our countries. They are our brothers, neighbours and fellow citizens.

But they have to live with their reputation. As one of them said, 'We are wrapped up in our shame'.

Their wretched poverty and isolation on the fringe of society is handed down from father to son and from generation to generation. Those children who survive—'out of 14 only 5 are still living in our family' says Georges W. of Brussels—rub shoulders daily with violence. How could they avoid it—escape the inevitable?

It is easy not to steal if you are rich. How can one resist the temptation when one is obliged to eat a meal of peeling paint from the slum in which one lives (a real case).

This poverty round about us, which we try to forget in order 'to live in peace with ourselves' must be destroyed. Indeed, it can be.

This was the rallying cry of the 'campaigners for a new hope' who were brought together recently by the association 'Aid for all distress—Fourth World'. Nearly 500 activists, experts, research workers, teachers, doctors and civil servants or men and women of goodwill met in the Unesco buildings in Paris recently for an International Congress on Children of the Fourth World.

Activists from Europe, America and developing countries wished to describe what they had seen, exchange experiences and try to aid the Fourth World.

Heart-rending testimonies. Experiences which appear as drops in the ocean compared with the enormous problem of poverty. Calls for action were also made as the Fourth World has scarcely any alternative spokesman than this handful of men and women determined to eradicate poverty from our society.

The Congress unanimously called for the public authorities to guarantee the following rights of the Fourth World:

- a minimum family revenue
- an adequate family home
- health services
- education
- cultural and leisure facilities
- work.

And above all the right to human dignity. The dignity of the Fourth World which is also our dignity.





NEWS AT A GLANCE

The Iranian problem

The events in Iran are a touchstone for the world economy, according to Energy Commissioner Guido Brunner. He said that the interests of western industrial countries can only be protected if they stand together. And now the good news: Mr Brunner said that the Community's reserves of oil are sufficient and the anti-crisis measures it has taken are adequate to withstand without too many problems the uncertainties of the winter months.

Award-winner

The European Parliament, in the person of its President, Simone Veil, has been awarded a prize worth £ 50 000 by the Alexander Onassis Foundation in recognition of 'the role played by the European Parliament in promoting mutual understanding between peoples and the respect for human dignity'.

Businessmen gloomier

The business climate indicator for Community industry fell by two points in October, according to the latest monthly business survey. This reinforces the impression already apparent in August and September that business confidence on the part of industrial chief executives is declining.

More out of work

For the first time since last March the number of persons registered at public employment offices in the Community rose to just over 6 million. Unemployment as a percentage of the civilian working population rose from 5.5% in September to 5.6% at the end of October.

Taxing your tank

As part of its efforts to promote energy-saving measures, the European Commission is studying the influence of taxation on the consumption of petrol, diesel and LPG (gas) for motor vehicles.

Drink a pinta

Community citizens are drinking more milk—19 000 million tonnes last year compared with less than 18 000 million in 1974.

More food aid

The European Commission has asked the Council of Ministers to approve an increase in the Community's aid in butteroil from 45 000 tonnes last year to 55 000 tonnes this year. Demand for such food aid has almost doubled in the period.

Seeking clarity

Members of three groups in the European Parliament have asked the Commission to clarify the Community's external relations policy, particularly in relation to the PLO.

A new applicant

The newly-independent Caribbean island of St. Vincent has applied to become the 59th developing country to join the Lomé Convention.

A costly move

During a debate in the European Parliament on the administrative expenses of the Community institutions, Budget Commissioner Christopher Tugendhat said he was not convinced that a transfer of all Commission departments to Brussels would mean a significant saving.

Energy warning

Europe's economy could collapse within the next decade unless the energy problem it solved, Commission President Roy Jenkins has warned. He said the test for the Community was to break the traditional link between energy consumption and economic growth. In other words, we must learn to produce more using less energy.

Emergency aid

The Community is to send emergency aid worth £ 186 000 to the Central African Republic following an appeal by the Republic's President.

Closing borders

The Community has signed an international convention on the prevention of cross-frontier pollution. It was negotiated under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Europe.

Monitoring oil deals

The International Energy Agency has started to register crude oil transactions on a monthly basis. The procedure will be co-ordinated closely with the Community's own monitoring work.

Too sweet

The European Commission has approved the general outline of a five-year programme to cut back excess sugar output. In addition to the overproduction of sugar beet in the member states, the Community is committed to import a certain amount of cane sugar from developing countries.

Keeping in touch

External Relations Commissioner Wilhelm Haferkamp paid an official visit to Mexico last month and was due to visit Finland on December 4-6.

Taking stock

A study is to be made of fish stocks in Community waters. Both the size and location of fish will be taken into account. It is hoped that a common fisheries policy will be established in the near future, a step which the European Parliament urged on the Council and the Commission in a recent resolution.

Common problem

Work-sharing was the main topic of discussion when representatives of the Commission, European employers and trades unions held one of their regular meetings in Brussels last month.

Dearer food

The Community's Farm Fund spending has more than doubled since 1973, the first year of enlargement. According to the latest report, for 1978, spending on market support and agricultural modernisation was £ 5 300 million compared with £ 2 500 million in 1973. The biggest increase last year was—you've guessed it—in the milk sector, which is heavily in surplus and which the European Commission is desperately trying to overhaul.

FOCUS

All aboard for a new experiment in conservation

European Community energy experts are currently considering a project which could put Europe's industry onto the energy-saving road, a road from which it has often been discouraged in the past by high initial investment costs.

The European Commission, in consultation with national experts, is working on a proposal for the use of 'energy buses' throughout the Community. This is expected to be ready soon.

All nine member states are apparently in favour of the idea, and five have already decided to implement it. Italy, France, the Netherlands and Germany have made proposals for introducing it and the Dutch are expected to have the buses ready to go early next year.

So what, you will by now be asking, is an energy bus? Well,

it is basically a normal bus fitted out with one or two mini-computers, energy-measuring instruments, demonstration equipment and video units, and manned by a team of engineers.

It goes on tour, carrying out on-site energy audits to help small and medium-sized companies in particular to find the fastest and cheapest ways of saving energy.

Before the visit takes place, company managers are asked to fill in a questionnaire on their company's heating, ventilation, air conditioning and boiler systems, on the types of fuels they use and on their current energy costs.

When the bus arrives, the audit team reviews the facts in the questionnaire with the management and then compiles a historical analysis of the company's energy consumption, identifying areas of potential savings.

So far, pretty normal stuff. Then, however, the energy bus engineers carry out the on-site analysis of the company's facilities, which identifies specific areas of energy use. The management of the company is then invited aboard the bus for a presentation outlining the results of the computerized analysis.

The audit team show present energy consumption, possible future energy costs, areas of potential savings and the benefits

of an energy conservation programme.

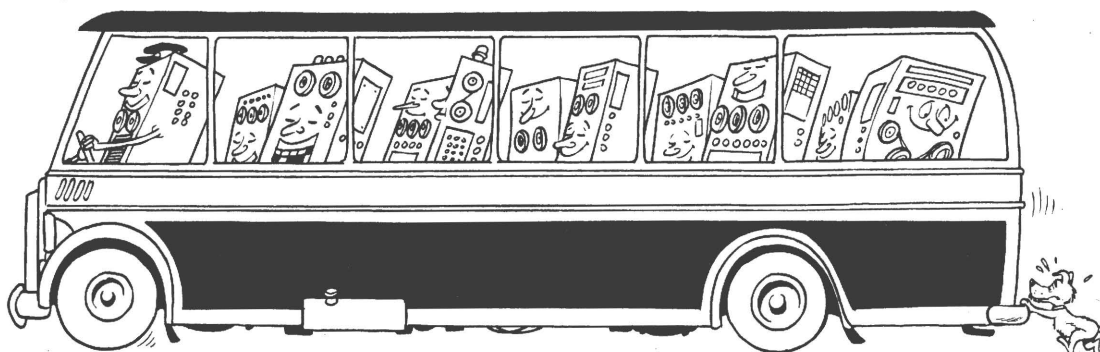
Most important, a variety of different computer programmes are used to determine cost advantages linked to particular conservation measures, and advice is given on how to implement an effective energy-saving programme.

Energy buses have been in action in Canada, where the idea originated, since 1975. Under the Community's economic and cooperation agreement with Canada, representatives from the European Commission attended a seminar on the Canadian energy bus programme in Ottawa last June and saw for themselves how the buses operate.

They came back impressed, and keen to cooperate. Canada will provide the initial technical know-how for the project, and it is hoped to be able to apply it to a variety of Community industries.

Once the energy buses are in operation, national computers will be linked up to a central computer in the Community's joint research centre at Ispra in Italy, which will act as an information exchange relay station.

Meanwhile, a demonstration energy bus from Canada is expected in Europe at the beginning of next year. All aboard!



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