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** The European Commission has just proposed to the Council of Ministers of the Community that it adopt a Directive relating to the CONTROL OF THE SALE OF CHEMICAL SUBSTANCES which have proved DANGEROUS for human health and for the environment.

Details will be found in ANNEX 1.

** Research and development activities relating to energy raise problems which the European countries are not capable of solving alone: the amount of financial, technical and human resources needed to develop new sources of energy and the need for sustained action over a prolonged period means that Member States efforts must be integrated and international cooperation instituted. This is why the European Commission has just proposed to the Council of Ministers of the Community that it approve the main lines of a research and development programme "ENERGY FOR EUROPE".

A brief outline of the contents of this programme is given in ANNEX 2.

** To provide for better reciprocal information within the Community, we have asked different television producers to give us a brief indication of what each television network in the Community does for consumers.

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

The information published in this bulletin covers the European Communities' activities in the fields of industrial development, protection of the environment and consumer welfare. It is therefore not limited to recording Commission decisions or opinions.

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See the ANNEX "WHAT TELEVISION DOES FOR CONSUMERS" IN ITALY.

** In May EUROPEAN CONSUMERS pessimism about the general economic situation was less pronounced in most of the member countries than at the beginning of the year. However their confidence in an improvement in the economy during the next few months was still at a low ebb, and households were particularly worried about the employment situation. Consumers took a less unfavourable view of their own financial situation but they thought however that this had deteriorated compared with the previous year following price rises. A greater number of European consumers than at the beginning of the year intended making large purchases (car, freezer, washing machine, colour television, dishwasher, etc.). However for almost all durable consumer goods, the number of those planning to buy was below that of May 1973.

** The European Commission has just proposed to the Council of Ministers that it adopt a framework directive laying down general principles with which MATERIALS AND OBJECTS WHICH COME IN CONTACT WITH FOODSTUFFS must comply. Thanks to the implementing directives which would follow, this directive would make it possible to eliminate the legislative disparities in the rules in force at present in the Member States and to ensure the hygiene and health protection of consumers (materials and objects should remain inert on contact with food and not alter it detrimentally). Consumers would also be provided with adequate information (obligatory use of a conventional symbol "for contact with food", limitations on the use of the material if necessary, as well as the name and address of the maker, manufacturer or retailer responsible). These basic principles will be translated into actual implementing provisions in a series of specific directives concerning each group of materials (plastics, ceramics, paper and cardboard, etc.).

** In order to protect the European consumer against the abuses committed by certain traders and financial organizations, the European Commission

is at present preparing a proposal for a Directive to regulate CREDIT TERMS FOR PURCHASES in a uniform way throughout the Community.

Time-payment will be the first priority to be dealt with by the Commission, which considers that the consumer is in a position of weakness when he signs a contract in relation to the seller and to the bank, who have professional experience.

The European Commission intends to propose that contracts in the case of time-payment sales, personal credit, hire-purchase, etc., must list all the obligations of the buyer and the seller and that a period of reflection allowed before the purchase becomes effective.

** At present the technical rules concerning the anchoring of SAFETY BELTS differ considerably among the Member States and do not take recent technical changes sufficiently into account. For this reason the European Commission has just proposed to the Council of Ministers of the Community that it should rapidly adopt Community rules concerning the placing, resistance and the testing of anchorage of safety belts since this would both guarantee the free circulation of motor vehicles within the Community and also offer users the maximum possible safety and comfort.

** The rules on the definition, classification, packing, labelling, and composition of HONEY differ considerably in the Member States of the European Community. The Council of Ministers has just adopted a Directive harmonizing the different rules at European level and laying down a precise classification of honey according to its origin, (blossom honey or honey dew honey) or according to its method of manufacture (comb, pressed, extracted, etc.). The Community Directive also provides for a series of measures to provide greater protection and more information for the consumer. To this end, honey sold within the Community must comply with strict standards of purity, aroma, composition (water content, sugar content, mineral substances

content, etc.) while its labelling must be clear and legible and give an exact description of the product, its weight and the name of the producer and the packer.

** In GERMANY several events have occurred during the last months regarding CONSUMER PROTECTION:

After 16 years work a general reform of the Law on foodstuffs has been approved by the Parliament. Its principal advantages for consumers are: the standardization throughout the country of hygiene regulations; any advertising which refers to health is forbidden; all radio and television advertising of cigarettes is forbidden; consumers are given the possibility of obtaining their rights with regard to misleading commercial practices.

The Law on hire purchase sales will come into force on 1 October 1974.

In order to limit increases in rents, a Law organizing the protection of tenants against the abusive termination of leases is to become part of the Civil Code in 1975.

** The European Commission has just proposed to the Council of Ministers of the Community that it adopt a directive laying down for the whole Community a standard PERMISSIBLE SOUND LEVEL FOR MOTOR VEHICLES of between 80 and 88 decibels according to the type of vehicle instead of the 82 to 91 decibels at present allowed by Community regulations.

** At present the European Commission is studying the problem of the increasing nuisance caused by TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT in the neighbourhood of airports and will soon be organizing a meeting of national experts on this subject. According to the information received by the departments of the Commission, the technical adjustment to aircraft power units necessary to guarantee better PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT (reduction in noise and smell) may well cause problems of both cost and delays in the years to come. The cost of aircraft conversion kits which will be available on the

market from 1976 will be over US \$1 million for four-engined jet aircraft and about US \$300 000 for trijets; in addition, the rate of production of these kits means that conversion of existing fleets will not be completed until some time during the next ten years.

** The European Commission is organizing a conference on "THE QUALITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE IRON AND STEEL INDUSTRY" from 24 to 26 September in Luxembourg.

** The European Commission has recently published a report on "RADIOACTIVE WASTES FROM NUCLEAR POWER STATIONS in the Community - waste situation - radiological aspects". This report covers the years 1969 to 1972 and gives the figures for the discharges of radioactive waste (gaseous and liquid) from nuclear power stations in the Community. The French and English versions of this report can be obtained from the Health Protection Directorate of the European Commission, Centre Louvigny, 23 avenue Monterey, Luxembourg.

COMMUNITY REGULATIONS FOR THE SALE OF CERTAIN DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES AND PREPARATIONS

It has recently become known that chemical substances known under the name of polychlorinated diphenyls (PCB's) can constitute a danger to human health and the environment. Traces of these products have been found in poisoned fish and wild birds; chickens have been contaminated by the PCB's contained in plastic packaging materials, and, following an accident in Japan in an oil pasteurization plant, humans have suffered PCB poisoning. Indeed, it is now sometimes possible to detect in cows' milk PCB's used for herbicide purposes or in storage silos. Traces of this substance are also found in certain packaging materials used for food products as a result of the use of duplicating paper in the manufacture of paper pulp. For these reasons, it is necessary to limit the marketing and the use of PCB's, and the European Commission has recently proposed that the Council of Ministers of the Community adopt a directive to control the sale of this product. Under this proposal, PCB's could only be marketed for analysis and research purposes (with the exception of certain categories of insulators and cooling agents which cannot constitute a danger to health or the environment). It should be recalled that, following proposals from the European Commission, Community measures have already been taken to ensure uniform rules throughout the Community for the classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous substances and preparations which can constitute a danger for man or the environment.

ENERGY FOR EUROPE: RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Research and development activities in the energy field raise problems which the countries of Europe are unable to resolve on their own: the scale of the financial, technical and human resources which are essential for the development of new sources of energy, and the need to carry out projects extending over a long period makes it essential that the efforts of the Member States be integrated and that international cooperation be established.

For this reason, the European Commission has recently proposed that the Council of Ministers of the Community approve the main lines of a research and development programme entitled "Energy for Europe" and has pinpointed eight major priority sectors in which coordination should be organized at European level. These are:

1. Inventory of current research

A programme of action at European level must be based on well-founded qualitative and quantitative estimates. It is therefore necessary as a matter of urgency to draw up an inventory of the research and development work being carried out in the energy field in the member countries of the European Community.

2. Energy saving

In this field, the European Commission believes that the Community must take action on three levels: firstly, to coordinate the programmes in hand in the Member States; secondly, to encourage with the aid of Community funds new developments designed to save energy; and thirdly, to improve exchanges of information and to set up a system for the dissemination of the results of research so that they can be put to the best possible use.

3. Better use of fossil energy

To improve Europe's security of supplies, the European Commission proposes that coordinated research should be carried out to improve the productivity

of the coal industry. On account of the increase in the price of oil and natural gas, and in view of the uncertainty of the supplies of these products, it is also worthwhile to study processes for the conversion of coal into synthetic hydrocarbons. Lastly, a particular research effort is necessary to improve exploration, drilling and recovery techniques in the exploitation of oil and gas deposits.

4. Nuclear energy

To improve present solutions to the problems posed by a very large-scale use of nuclear energy, it would be advisable to carry out, as a back-up to the work going on within the industry, research and development work relating in particular to the protection of man and the environment against radiation, the safety of nuclear installations under normal conditions and in the event of accidents, the development of advanced fuels, methods of processing, transporting and eliminating radioactive wastes, etc.

A considerable amount of research and development work will also have to be carried out in the field of thermonuclear fusion from the stage of basic experiments up to the development of a prototype power station.

5. The use of hydrogen

In the long term, the use of fossil fuels for the production of electricity and for other energy purposes will have to be strictly limited. In an economy which is increasingly dependent on electricity, hydrogen constitutes an interesting medium from the point of view of storage and transport. If it can be shown that hydrogen can be produced under economic conditions, a replacement fuel will have been found for an economy based entirely on electricity. The introduction of hydrogen as a new energy carrier should be a priority area for Community action.

6. New and renewable sources of energy

It is essential that new sources of energy be developed. Solar energy and geothermal energy, in particular, appear to offer the greatest promise. The Community should pay particular attention to the definition and implementation of an action programme aimed at the use of solar energy for the production of heat for domestic use and for the production of electricity and fuel. It should also study thoroughly whether geothermal energy constitutes in the long term a possible replacement for fossil or nuclear fuels, and, if the answer is in the affirmative, it should define and carry out a programme of action on geothermal energy.

7. Environmental protection

Any programme for the development of new sources of energy or for the production and use of energy must be compatible with the objective of environmental protection and improvement. To this end, the European Commission will be presenting to the Council of Ministers of the Community a series of proposals which will stress the following fields of research: the siting of power stations, the desulphurization of combustion gases and techniques for the reduction of the volume of nitrogen oxides.

8. Preparation of overall models

Up to now, the supply, production, transport and distribution of energy have more often than not been carried out in a fragmentary manner, and the main concern has been with the technical and economic aspects. Today, however, it is necessary to concentrate more on the overall aspect of the problem and on the repercussions of the energy sector on society as a whole by taking into account the technical, economic, environmental, social and ecological factors as well. In particular, these aspects should be covered in the context of the projects "Europe + 30" (see I&S No 16/74) and the project for the European foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions (see IRT No 213).

WHAT TELEVISION DOES TO HELP THE CONSUMER IN ITALY

In order to encourage the flow of mutual information within the Community, we have asked the various television programme producers to tell us briefly what each television network broadcasting in the Community does to help consumers. The text below was sent to us by an Italian journalist specializing in consumer problems.

The first and only regular programme which the RAI (Italian radio and television) designed for the information of the Italian consumer was launched in the autumn of 1969 under the title "io compro, tu compri" (I buy, you buy). It went out every Thursday at 1300 hours and was very well received, being shown at a time which was particularly suitable for housewives.

The programme was broadcast over three periods: 1969/70, 1970/71 and 1971/72. During the latter period, the programme was shown during the evening. Subsequently, it was dropped for reasons not given officially, but, unofficially, this was said to be as a result of internal dissensions and the serious controversies which it aroused.

The programme almost always contained a live investigation on a problem of great topical interest with street interviews, followed by a discussion between specialists and members of the public, and supplemented by commentaries on the various topics. The style of the programme as a whole was more "sensational" than purely informational.

Intense controversies were set off by the investigations into calves bloated with water and fed on harmful feeding stuffs, into mineral waters and dietary products. These controversies were caused by the fact that the programme courageously denounced certain situations, but without offering any alternatives. For example, the broadcast on mineral waters had only one brand in mind in its denunciation. But since Italian television is not

allowed to mention the names of products the criticism appeared general - hence the serious difficulties encountered by the producers and the dropping of the programme.

Since 1973, Italian television no longer produces programmes devoted specifically to consumer problems, but the programme "A ... come agricultura" (A ... for agriculture) which has been running for a number of years, being broadcast every Sunday at 12.30 hours, devotes a few minutes to publicising the criticisms voiced by consumers on anything "that just isn't good enough". However, these criticisms are limited to the one subject of the broadcast - agriculture.