

COMMUNITY JOURNAL FOR TRADE UNIONS
produced by the trade union division
(information directorate-general)

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OFFICE ADDRESSES:

Dublin: 29 Merrion Square
Dublin 2, Ireland

London: 20 Kensington Palace Gdns
London W8 4QQ, England

New York: 277 Park Avenue
N.Y. 10017, U.S.A.

Washington: 2100 M Street, N.W.
Suite 707, Washington 20037.

X/203/75-E

1. CAN WE LIVE WITH INFLATION?

Henri Simonet, Commission Vice-President, gave a talk on the subject "can we live with inflation?" to the De Bruyne Foundation on 20 March 1975.

The Commission Vice-President stated: "The dialogue between public authorities and representative bodies of the workers, employers, consumers, etc ... must take place not only at the national level but also at that of the European Community. Through a dialogue of this kind it is not sufficient to define the objectives; it is necessary to go further and agree on the way to achieve these objectives".

A first step in this direction was made by the unions and employers at the Conference on 16 December 1974, when they came together with the ministers of social affairs and the Commission.

At this Conference the representatives of the workers and employers stressed the need for a discussion not only with the ministers of social affairs but also with the ministers of finance on the economic and social situation of the Community.

However, it is clear that workers' organisations will not participate actively unless something more is offered than calling for wage moderation at a different level.

This moderation can only be called for in the framework of a global policy including structural reforms. It would be necessary to bring forward a series of projects aiming at greater participation and wider co-determination at enterprise level, sector level and general political level on the part of the workers and their organisations; and to bring about a fairer share of income and capital stock.

In this direction several formulas could be envisaged: saving schemes for building, participation in the profits of the firm, taxation of certain incomes, etc ...

"In any case it will always be necessary to conduct a strict campaign against tax evasion and to submit other incomes that those of the workers to 'moderation'".

"Once cannot sufficiently stress the importance of this renewed dialogue with the employers and trade unions". If this dialogue does not succeed, a satisfactory solution will be unthinkable.

2. EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL BENEFITS IN THE MEMBER STATES OF THE COMMUNITY.

The European Commission has prepared the tables which follow in reply to a written question tabled by Lord O'Hagan in the European Parliament:

Percentage of Gross national product devoted to Social Security¹

1. COUNTRY	1970	1971	1972
Belgium	18.0	18.4	19.2
Germany	20.3	21.2	22.1
France	18.3	18.5	18.7
Italy	18.7	20.1	22.4
Luxembourg	17.2	19.1	20.0
Netherlands	20.4	21.6	22.7
U.K.	16.2	16.6	17.1
Ireland	13.0	13.5	13.4
Denmark	19.3	21.1	20.8

Source: Report on the Development of the Social Situation in the Community in 1973. Brussels-Luxembourg, February, 1974.

2. Pensions on award for single persons with
40 years contributions or flat rate where indicated

		<u>% annual earnings</u>
Belgium		60
Denmark ²	about	34
Germany		60
France ³ / ₂		40 (50 in 1975)
Ireland	about	32
Italy		74 (80 in 1975)
Luxembourg ²		64 + fixed basis sum
Netherlands	about	48
United Kingdom ²	about	30

¹ Social Security covers whole field included by the Statistical Office of the European Community under the heading Social Accounts

² fixed sum

³ To which must be added pensions under Supplementary Schemes

3. a) Unemployment Benefit (Rate of benefit for workers in the General Scheme covering most insured workers)

COUNTRY	NORMAL RATE	MAXIMUM
Belgium	60% of salary	452 BF per day
Germany	62.5% - 80% of salary	2500 DM per month
France	90% of gross salary	
Italy	800 L per day	
Luxembourg	60% of salary	42767 FL per month
Netherlands	80% of salary	155.70 NFL per day
U.K.	£ 8.60 + earnings related supplement per week	varies with family situation
Ireland	£ 7.75 + 40% reckonable earnings between £ 14 - 50 per week	total not to exceed reckonable weekly earnings
Denmark	90% of average earnings	160 kr. per day ⁽¹⁾

3. b) Sickness Insurance (Rate of benefit for workers in the General Scheme covering most insured workers)

COUNTRY	RATE % OF EARNINGS	LIMITATIONS
Belgium	60	maximum one year
Germany	65 - 75	for same illness limited to 78 weeks over 3 year period
France	without hospitalisation 50	normally 1 year maximum
Italy	50 - 66.2/3	maximum 6 months per year
Luxembourg	normal gross salary	52 weeks maximum
Netherlands	80	one year, maximum earnings taking into account 778.50 FL per week
U.K.	£ 8.60 per week plus earnings related supplement and dependants allowances	312 days excluding Sundays
Ireland	£ 7.75 per week + earnings related supplement	based on contribution record
Denmark	90	792 kr. per week

(1) from 1.1.1975

3. c) Family allowances (Monthly allowance, without increases, for wage earner's family with 3 children as a percentage of average earnings, 1972)

COUNTRY	1972
Belgium	18.16
Germany	6.07
France	30.16 ¹
Italy	11.29 ²
Luxembourg	14.81
Netherlands	15.94
U.K.	5.69
Ireland	3.83 ²
Denmark	6.65

¹Including single earner allowance

²Irish family allowance were considerably increased in 1973 and Italian and German allowances in 1974

3. d) Paid Holidays

COUNTRY	LEGAL MINIMUM days/year 1973	NATIONAL AGREEMENTS days/year 1973
Belgium	18	20 - 22
Germany	15 - 18	18 - 24
France	24	24
Italy	12	14 - 20
Luxembourg	18 - 24	18 - 24
Netherlands	15 - 18	17 - 20
U.K.	-	15 - 18
Ireland	12	18
Denmark	24	24

Source: Report on the Development of the Social Situation in the Community in 1973. Brussels-Luxembourg, February, 1974.

4. Examination of the individual systems of each Member State shows that over the whole range of social benefits, no system could claim to be the most generous and comprehensive in every aspect.
5. British membership of the EEC involves no reduction of the standards and levels of payment of the British social security system.

3. SAFETY, HYGIENE AND HEALTH PROTECTION AT WORK

The Commission has approved Guidelines for a Community programme for safety, hygiene and health protection at work. The Guidelines set out the objectives and describe in general terms the actions for attaining each objective.

The Guidelines have been drawn up against a disturbing background. For several years the Community has recorded annually nearly a hundred thousand deaths and more than twelve million injured in accidents of all types. The human consequences are incalculable, but it is worth indicating that according to an estimate by the Commission services the total annual cost of these accidents in economic terms, that is both the direct and the indirect cost, amounts to more than 15,000 million units of account.

Industrial accidents, including occupational diseases, although not the major sector of risk as far as fatal accidents are concerned, represent the largest group of accidents taken as a whole. In Germany, for instance, the total number of accidents are grouped as follows: more than 30% at work, about 15% for each of the three groups - traffic, "at home" and leisure - and 25% in various other circumstances.

The Guidelines will be implemented by specific measures to be drawn up by the Commission in collaboration especially with the Tripartite "Advisory Committee for safety, hygiene and health protection at work" set up by the Council Decision of 27 June 1974 for this

very purpose. When nominations to the Committee by the Member Governments are complete, a first meeting will be held as soon as possible. A number of specific themes of activity have already been suggested by certain Member Governments such as dangerous products, use of benzene in industry, risks from use of vinyl chloride, noise, vibrations, dust, gases and vapours etc.

4. ADOPTION BY THE COUNCIL OF A PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME FOR A CONSUMER PROTECTION AND INFORMATION POLICY

On 14 April 1975 the Council adopted the preliminary programme of the European Communities for a consumer information and protection policy based on the proposal submitted by the Commission on 5 December 1973. This document is no less than a charter of consumer rights and will be a determining factor in all Community policies, making it possible for all citizens to assert these rights.

Aim of programme

A number of measures have already been adopted in the area of consumer protection and information, both at national and Community level, but never has it been dealt with in such detail as in the EEC preliminary programme for a consumer protection and information policy, presented by the Commission on 5 December 1973 and adopted by the Council on 14 April 1975.

This programme establishes the framework of a genuine consumer policy and constitutes a consumer charter based on five fundamental rights:

- (a) the right to protection of health and safety;
- (b) the right to protection of economic interests;
- (c) the right of redress;
- (d) the right to information and education;
- (e) the right of representation.

From now on consumer protection and information will cease to be a matter of uncoordinated action and will be ensured by reference to specific consumer rights.

(1) At Community level

Consumer policy will constitute a general framework for the provision of better consumer protection under the different Community policies such as the economic, common agricultural and social policies, as well as the approximation of laws, all of which affect the consumer's position.

(2) At national level

It will induce Member States to give official recognition to the five consumer rights and thereby provide increased protection. It will also enable all citizens and consumer associations to assert these rights, and to benefit from their application within their own country.

During 1975 the Commission will prepare:

- (i) a proposal for a directive on door-to-door selling and one on the labelling of foodstuffs;
- (ii) labelling regulations for certain categories of product other than foodstuffs;
- (iii) a proposal for a directive relating to the practice of stating unit prices for packaged products sold by weight or volume;
- (iv) a proposal for a directive on the harmonization of general conditions of consumer credit, including those relating to hire purchase.

The Commission will also encourage cooperation between bodies carrying out comparative tests, and organize surveys on consumer attitudes and retail price trends in Member countries.

5. THE PAUL FINET FOUNDATION AWARDS 245 NEW SCHOLARSHIPS

The Executive Committee of the Paul Finet Foundation has held its twenty-fifth meeting in Luxembourg.

The Committee considered 397 applications at this meeting and awarded 245 grants totalling Bfrs. 2,110,000.

Since the Foundation was instituted on 30 June 1965, 6,571 have been received and 4,647 grants awarded to a totals of Bfrs. 57,082,260. applications. Up to now, 1,024 candidates have been able to finish their studies under improved conditions with the help of the Paul Finet Foundation.

Applications for grants can be made by children of workers in one of the ECSC industries who died after 30 June 1965 (1 January 1973 in the case of British, Danish and Irish nationals) as a result of industrial injury or occupational disease.

The children should be receiving vocational training, general secondary education or further education at a university or equivalent establishment.

They should have an aptitude for the studies they are pursuing and be able to show good results.

The Paul Finet Foundation awards annual grants which can be extended a number of times. In this way, scholarship holders can rely on a Foundation grant throughout their studies provided their performance is satisfactory.

The amount of the scholarship is determined case by case, taking into account the candidate's means and the level and cost of his studies or training. The grants start at Bfrs. 5,500 (£) for studies at the lower secondary-school level and can rise to Bfrs. 40,000. for university studies.

New applications for the school year 1974/75 or applications for extension of grants should be sent, before 10 May 1975, to:

Secretariat of the Paul Finet Foundation
Commission of the European Communities
Centre Louvigny
Luxembourg.

6. THE COMMISSION CONSULTS THE TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONS

On 10 April 1975 representatives of the Commission directorate-general for industrial affairs met the trade union organisations in the building sector, in order to examine the community's draft action programme in this sector. It is intended to initiate cooperation among member states so as to set standards and to discuss certain technical problems in this field.

The employers' organisations had already given their approval to the action programme.

The trade union representatives agreed to cooperate in the implementation of the programme but they deplored the fact that it was not in line with the current economic and social situation in the building sector. The draft programme is based on an enquiry carried out by the Commission and deals with methods of work in the industry, legislative measures and national forecasts, etc. The programme calls for comparability of statistics, definitions and nomenclatures at Community level, compilation of a glossary of technical and legal terms and coordination of technical development.

European Commission Member A. Spinelli and representatives of the directorate-general for industrial affairs met delegates from automobile workers' unions on 11 April 1975, for an exchange of views on the situation in this key sector.

The trade unions agreed on guiding lines for the restructuration of the European automobile industry. Most of the trade union representatives were in favour of a restructuration directed towards an extension of public demand. There were divergent views on the appreciation of short-term economic trends.

7. ENLARGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS' UNIONS IN THE COMMUNITY

The Executive committee of the European Federation of Agricultural Workers' Unions, meeting in Brussels on 2 April 1975, accepted by majority vote the applications for affiliation from the following Christian agricultural workers' unions:

CSC Belgium - 3,000 members
CNV Netherlands - 9,500 members
NKV Netherlands - 10,900 members

as well as the union from the communist/socialist centre CGIL, with 517,000 members.

The European Federation now has 15 affiliated trade union organisations, representing overall 1,300,000 members. In the context of this enlargement the Executive committee of the Federation expressed its wish to follow the decisions and policies of the European Trade Union Confederation, which at its Copenhagen congress invited the European industrial committees to reflect the same composition as itself.

The executive committee affirmed the organisation's wish to collaborate with other trade unions in so far as they are democratic trade unions recognising the EEC as a valid platform.

8. TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A EUROPEAN TEXTILE, CLOTHING AND LEATHER UNION COMMITTEE

A joint meeting was held in Brussels on 24 March 1975 of representatives from the European textile, clothing and leather workers' federations of ICFTU and WCL international affiliation. They decided to create a common European organisation, with unions from the two groups being the sole founder members.

Any further application will be submitted to the executive committee of the new organisation, which will decide on it in the light of the basic principles of the applicant organisation.

9. IRISH UNION SEMINAR ON "EQUALISING OPPORTUNITY"

A seminar for female trade unionists to mark the inauguration of International Women's Year was held in Dublin from 7 to 9 March 1975. Organised by the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, the special working sessions included Dr. Patrick Hillery, Minister for Labour Michael O'Leary, and John Carroll, TGWU Vice-President, among its speakers. Various representatives of government departments and agencies with responsibilities in the area of equal treatment for men and women at work attended as well, as did over 80 female trade unionists.

The problems relating to the equal treatment Directive and Memorandum proposed by the European Commission were analysed by Dr. Hillery in the European context and by Minister O'Leary within the Irish framework. Dr. Hillery stressed that it would be necessary to develop a Community family policy in the future in order to see women's questions as ones affecting all of society. He hoped that the present economic recession would not be used as an excuse for delaying the equal pay application in the various firms. Women usually suffer first in an unemployment situation. They should not be asked to accept the added sacrifice of waiting for equal pay in a period of recession. The need for a Community information service and documentation centre for women was expressed. Dr. Hillery emphasized the hope that such bodies as the Community Economic and Social Committee would point to any loopholes or weaknesses within the Community Directive when preparing its opinion and recommendations.

Minister O'Leary stressed that it would be necessary to bring about a fundamental change in society's attitude towards women, before many of the disadvantages and injustices could be wholly removed.

In the name of the 150,000 strong I.T.G.W.U., John Carroll pledged to fight for a social and economic charter of rights for women, which was put forth by the Women's Advisory Committee of the union. He pointed out that one must learn to think of the broader aspects such as the need for a minimum wage rate for all citizens, so that possible further discrimination against women or anomalous situations would not be perpetuated.

In a paper on the "future role of women in Europe", Dr. Petra Kelly of the Community Economic and Social Committee stressed the need for transnational action and communication among individual women and women's organisations. The participants called for a better flow of information on women's questions between the European Community in Brussels and women's organisations in Ireland.
