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1. PRESIDENT ORTOLI ADDRESSES GERMAN DGB CONGRESS

The German trade union confederation DGB held its 3-yearly congress in Hamburg from 25 to 30 May 1975. François-Xavier Ortoli, President of the European Commission, addressed the congress as follows:

By inviting me to speak at your congress, you are once again confirming your faith in Europe and your support in the building of Europe.

Right from the beginning, the Trade Unions, particularly the German Trade Unions, have been our natural allies in the march towards united Europe. Even before the Federal Republic of Germany came into being you reestablished the cross-frontier links with your comrades in the other European countries, which had been broken by the war, and so helped to promote a climate on the old continent favourable to the rise of the European idea. Similar efforts, which were clear demonstration of the will for a European revival, encouraged Robert Schuman, so very soon after the end of the Second World War, to make that historic declaration of 9 May 1950, whose 25th anniversary, with President Scheel present, was celebrated a few days ago in Paris, as the anniversary of the birth of a new Europe.

That call for a real community - as the point of departure for a united Europe - should find a particularly favourable echo among Trade Unions, one of whose *raison d'être* is just that, the institution of solidarity.

And in fact from the first day on, you took part in the negotiations to draw up the treaty establishing the ECSC; indeed you did more, for the fact that, for the first time, occupational claims, backed by wide-ranging social provisions, found incorporation in an international treaty, through provisions which were mandatory on the European authorities, is due to your efforts. Thereafter you never ceased to work actively towards European integration.

25 years of progress; and a long way to go still. The Community is far from achieved, particularly in the field of social and socio-structural policy. You were right, never to make that a pretext for rejecting Europe or keeping aloof from it; on the contrary, the imperfections impelled you to redouble your efforts and suggest improvements which we invariably welcomed with the greatest interest. So, let us hope today that the Commission's recent proposal on the European company and the comprehensive provisions it contains on worker participation, will soon benefit from your critical contributions.

Yet your contribution to the construction of Europe has not been purely restricted to Community activities. You are fighting in other areas, with exemplary determination, to reach, along with your comrades in other Member States, the minimum agreement required to provide effective defence for the interests of European workers.

Community enlargement extended your task at a time when Europe was strengthening its place and impact in a troubled world. Today we look towards the United Kingdom, which will be called upon to vote in a referendum on 5 June next in favour of, or against, staying in the Community. I hope very sincerely that the result will be in favour and that together with all our friends in the Community, we shall manage to convince our Member States' citizens that the confined frontiers between national States are, in this latter half of the twentieth century, out-of-date barriers to social progress.

No one can deny, however, that every one of the Community countries today faces the same problems, and that, logically, the same questions call for the same answers so that, in addition, lack of unity would operate to our disadvantage. For twenty-five years your choice has been for Europe. This was courageous and it was far seeing. Europe today is uneasy and full of self-questioning. Be courageous and far seeing once again. Our economic interdependence, the defence of our common interests in a troubled world, the creation at European level of a democratic society aiming at economic and social progress and human dignity demand that we continue to integrate, and promote true unity, not a weak form of cooperation which does not involve us deeply in a common future.

Much as this may seem self-evident, it appears equally difficult to suit our actions and still more our behaviour, habits and ways of thinking, to it all. The vital problems of the moment, inflation, unemployment, our great dependence on imports of energy and raw materials, are not sufficiently felt as in fact, a call to stand together; nor does Europe today appear to offer prospects capable of rousing our peoples. It is vital, therefore, if we really do want to bring to a successful conclusion the vast European project drawn up twenty-five years ago, that we again open up such prospects.

And as quickly as possible, for Europe is approaching significant deadlines in the near future. The first direct election to the European Parliament is due to take place in 1978, i.e. in three years' time. The added democratic authority which Europe will acquire, following that first election, will make it possible, and also necessary, to advance from Economic Community to European Union, a new and decisive stage in the political and economic integration of our countries. The day is coming when European citizens will want to know why they are being asked to vote, and what kind of Europe they are going to be citizens of.

These questions are too important to leave to the experts or diplomats alone. The answers must come out of an imaginative and creative discussion, open to all who are concerned over our continent's future.

This is why I rely on the German Trade Union Federation to demonstrate its sense of responsibility, once again, as it did in 1950 and has done so often since then, and to make its contribution towards defining the Europe of tomorrow. That Europe, for which your comrade and former President, Ludwig Rosenberg, expressed the need a few days ago, in words which I would like to echo:

"The only way to a meaningful and freedom-loving future is to bind the free peoples of Europe together into a real political and economic community, in which human dignity, freedom and social justice vanquish nationalism, arrogance and hatred.

This is the one victory of any value, and the only one worth fighting for, and even making sacrifices for."

2. VICE-PRESIDENT HAFERKAMP DISCUSSES ECONOMIC SITUATION WITH EMPLOYERS AND UNIONS

Wilhelm Haferkamp, vice-president of the Commission, met representatives of employers' organisations and unions in Brussels on 22 May 1975. This was the first time that the Commission had held a consultation with both employers' organisations and unions, although meetings are held with them separately on a regular basis.

The discussion was about the present economic situation and future prospects. Hopes were expressed for a picking up of economic activity in the near future. Emphasis was placed on selective economic stimulation policies, as recommended by the Community institutions since last year. The participants stressed that coordination of economic stimulation policies at community level could make an essential contribution to stability and therefore this coordination should be intensified.

The participants agreed to have further open and in-depth discussions on economic policies.

3. JOINT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN SEA FISHING

A programme for social harmonisation in sea fishing in the EEC was unanimously adopted and signed by employers' organisations and unions at a plenary session of the joint committee on this subject held in Brussels on 22 May 1975.

The programme of the "European bureau for vocational training in sea fishing" was also adopted. The working group concerned was requested to prepare a constitution for the bureau.

The participants discussed and approved - with reserves concerning certain textual changes - an opinion on fire precautions for fishing vessels. The working group was requested to study the application of this opinion (use of specialised centres).

Finally the committee issued an opinion drawing the attention of the Commission to the catastrophic situation in the fisheries sector and asking for measures to be taken urgently to counteract the economic and social effects, mainly unemployment not only in fisheries but also in connected sectors (processing, shipyards, etc.).

4. EUROFIET DEFINES AIMS FOR WHITE-COLLAR WORKERS IN INDUSTRY

The Trade Section of Clerical and Administrative Employees of Eurofiet, meeting in Geneva early in April, instructed the Secretariat to carry out a survey and comparative study of the legal provisions and collective agreements concerning unemployment benefit, and other measures of protection for staff dismissed from their jobs in European countries.

The Section noted and approved the surveys carried out by the Secretariat on:

- development of working conditions;
- commercial travellers;
- paid leave for training;
- numbers of union members.

The section discussed the working conditions of managerial staff in detail and also the organisation of the Eurofiet Conference, on problems facing managerial staff, which the Executive Board had asked it to prepare, in Brussels in late November.

The Section confirmed that the only way to enable employees to understand just what multinational companies were doing was for trade unions to exert pressure and at the same time for national and international authorities to draw up regulations on disclosure.

The Section emphasized that if any effective action was to be taken, close contacts would have to be maintained between the International Trade Sections and the ICFTU and ETUC.

It decided to publish regular comparative studies on collective agreements, covering the staff of European multinationals.

The Section also instructed the Secretariat to ensure that the problems of clerical staff were touched upon in the employer/workers joint committees now being set up by the European Communities.

5. EUROPEAN TRADE UNIONS DISCUSS NUCLEAR ENERGY

In previous years the unions represented in the energy group of the European Trade Union Confederation had examined other aspects of European energy policy and meeting in 1974 in Luxembourg and Liège, concluded that a European oil agency should be set up; meeting now in Obernai, at a symposium organised in conjunction with the Trade Unions Division of the Directorate-General for Information (Obernai, Luxembourg, 16-18 April 1975) they examined the implications of extending the use of nuclear energy. The energy group representing unions of gas, electricity and nuclear workers was joined by representatives of a number of national trade union organisations affiliated to the ETUC.

No real conclusions emerged from this meeting, except that all felt that the increased resort to nuclear energy was by no means "inevitable". The unions refuted any fatalistic arguments, stating that political and trade union circles could do something if they tried, and that any attitude finally adopted should be based on the most objective study possible.

After two days of scientific talks on the various economic, social, political and ethical aspects of the nuclear question and a full day's discussions, resigned supporters and ardent opponents of the extended use of nuclear energy managed at least to reach one conclusion: if nuclear energy was to be used more widely, then this must be only a temporary solution and research must also be carried out with a view to changing over to other less potentially dangerous forms of energy. All agreed on one point: whatever might be one's political views for or against nuclear energy, nuclear power stations did exist. The question to decide was whether there should be more of them, and how the safety of both the workers employed on them, and of the people living around them, was to be ensured. The most vehement line was taken by the Dutch unions, which called for a five-year moratorium on all plans to expand nuclear energy.

The group will hold further discussions with a view to harmonising the views of national unions, the idea being that public authority responsibility should be extended by bringing all energy sources under public control. Account will have to be taken of public opinion trends, for the peoples in the various regions of Europe are becoming steadily more opposed to nuclear power.

The one thread running through all the public discussions, controversies and polemics for or against nuclear energy was the oil crisis. The end of an era of abundant cheap energy, highlighted by both the rise in prices and the possibility of the taps being turned off by the producer countries, on economic or political grounds, or by profit-seeking multinational companies, meant that some new form of equilibrium had to be found.

As Mr. J.C. Charrault, Head of the Nuclear Energy Division in the European Commission's Directorate-General for Energy, pointed out, the EEC had already made its mind up. The only solution feasible was to step up the use of nuclear energy between now and the end of the century, since Europe did not seem to have any other cheap and reliable substitute source of energy available, pending the appearance of new energy sources, when we leave the twentieth century. There was no doubt that difficulties would arise in developing nuclear energy, but none of them would be insurmountable if resolute action was taken immediately.

This Community statement was the first item on the agenda of the symposium on nuclear energy; in all there were seven introductory statements covering the full range of the consequences arising out of using nuclear power. Mr. E. Hubert, lecturer at Liège University, also stressed the benefits of nuclear energy, especially as a factor in the increased contribution anticipated by the industrialised countries, towards raising the standard of living in developing countries, because enormous quantities of energy would be

required. Unlike the other speakers, he also felt that, inasmuch as the ultimate aim of any aggressive war was to acquire new resources, diversifying energy resources would make for equilibrium and peace.

In contrast Mr. Manfred Siebker, Member of the Club of Rome and managing director of SCIENCE (Society of Independent and Neutral Consultants in the European Community), disagreed not only with the idea that increased resort to nuclear energy was inevitable, but also with the view that demand was also bound to rise. Mr. Siebker felt that our countries had no need for more energy. On the contrary they needed treatment to take them off their addiction to the "consumption drug", in other words, a real cultural revolution was required. In any case, he added, to have no more energy than at present, or to have less energy than at present, was not the same as having no energy at all. "If we took advantage of all the scientific, cultural and socio-political developments that have occurred since 1960, during years of low energy consumption, we might even considerably improve the quality of our lives, and use less energy, spend less time at work, or in fighting consume less, and yet live life to the full".

Mr. Robert Gibrat, a Paris teacher, took a less radical line than Mr. Siebker; his view was that nuclear energy was "unfortunately" inevitable. But he agreed with Mr. Siebker that the main danger lay not in radiation levels or in the effects of possible nuclear accidents, but rather in the appearance of a new risk, "latent in human nature itself". Aggressive and violent men would always be tempted to steal plutonium. "A nuclear energy society implies organised disciplined people, content with their lot", and capable of resisting temptation. He therefore proposed that the research be immediately undertaken to make new sources of energy available in time. Mr. Gibrat proposed that an international research agency be set up, to be financed by the proceeds of a tax on nuclear energy.

After Mr. J. Brinck (International Resources Consultants - Alkmaar, Netherlands) had summed up the uranium resources available, Mr. L. Puiseux, lecturer at the Paris Dauphine University, summed up the economic and social benefits of stepping up the use of nuclear energy, as well as the hazards facing workers, people living nearby, and the future of humanity as a whole. He stressed the responsibility of labour unions and political parties in selecting the great technological alternatives affecting the future of mankind. What was involved, amounted to choosing a civilisation.

Mr. Dieter von Ehrenstein, of Bremen University also stressed the hazards of atomic energy, as regards the people working in nuclear power stations or living around them, and the potential dangers which could arise in periods of civil disturbance or war.

Here he was in agreement with the thoughts expressed at the beginning of the symposium by Mr. De Groote, former member of the Euratom Commission and now at the Free University of Brussels, who was chairing the meeting; his fear was that a kind of super-police force would be set up, theoretically to protect the population but in fact capable of being used for other political or social purposes.

Should nuclear energy be used more extensively, subject to appropriate safeguards, or should we rethink our societies so as to reduce our energy requirements? In view of what they said at the meeting, the unions representing Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Norway are likely to move on to a genuine political choice, halfway perhaps between the two extremes.

The Obernai symposium was the first of its kind, held by the energy group of the European Trade Union Confederation since the sudden death of its Chairman, Alfred Misslin. The ETUC General-Secretary, Théo Rasschaert, paid tribute to the memory of Alfred Misslin and to the farsightedness of a man who - in 1968 - had already understood that labour unions should get down to working out their own energy policy.

6. EUROPEAN POLICY OF THE ITALIAN CGIL

On 20 and 21 May 1975 the CGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro) devoted one session of its Executive Committee to examining the international aspects of the policy of trade union unity.

The report presented by Mr Bonaccini was unanimously approved.

The question of how far European trade unions can make a real advance towards unified action seemed, from Mr Bonaccini's report, to be the Gordian Knot which must be swiftly cut by the labour movement in view of the demands imposed by the economic crisis and international developments.

The CGIL is perfectly aware of the difficulties in the way of setting up a joint Trade Union programme. The present crisis cannot but accentuate these difficulties, which may well strengthen the trend back to national action, or result in according precedence to international trade unionism instead of strengthening the ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation).

In the CGIL view, the ETUC is the only valid starting-off point for building-up an effective policy and Trade Union action in countries of Western Europe.

For this reason the CGIL feels that the ETUC should be open to every labour organization in Southern Europe.

Strengthening the ETUC must also lead to developing the procedure whereby industrial boards are set up. It is extremely important for the CGIL that solutions to the grave problems now posed by the economic crisis, unemployment, and industrial modernization, be found within the framework of the most effective possible Trade Union structures.

As regards the Community, the CGIL document also states that the speech delivered some months ago by Mr Ortolí, President of the Commission, to the European Parliament, provides an acceptable basis for discussion, and that the process of European integration is now passing beyond the intergovernmental cooperation stage.

7. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ITALIAN BUILDING INDUSTRY UNIONS ON EMIGRATION PROBLEMS

In nearly all of the EEC countries, the building industry is one of the sectors worst hit by the crisis, and by the policies put into force by governments restricting demand.

A large proportion of the more than 4 000 000 unemployed in the Community are building workers, and above all, immigrant workers.

What is more, official statistics take no account of immigrants in process of returning to their country of origin.

The sometimes tragic situation of immigrants calls for trade union action, coordinated internationally, to safeguard jobs and prevent the crisis from bringing about any further worsening in the working and living conditions, and wages of immigrant workers.

With this in mind, the United Federation of Building Workers (CGIL, CISL and UIL) called an international conference in Rome on 7, 8 and 9 March 1975, on emigration problems. At this conference, which was organized in collaboration with the Trade Union division of the EEC, the Trade Unions of some dozen European and Mediterranean countries were represented. Representatives of the European Federation of Timber and Construction Workers, the Italian Government, the EEC Commission and the ILO, also took part in the work. Very briefly, the political proposal put forward by the Italian Trade Unions was as follows: the problems of immigrants cannot be solved except by fighting for full employment and equal rights for all workers. The European Trade Unions must therefore set up a common action platform to deal with the economic crisis and an employers' strategy the tragic consequences of which are now being felt above all by the immigrants, but which tomorrow will more and more affect the national labour force.

Among the various proposals put forward in conclusion, we would mention in particular one which calls for the ETUC to set up a working party whose main task it would be to coordinate at European level Trade Union policies on unification. There were also demands that every Trade Union should put pressure on their respective governments to implement the measures required to fight unemployment, and to promote the construction of low-rent housing.

The Italian Trade Unions then launched an appeal to all European countries to carry out a major campaign in Trade Union organizations to recruit a larger number of immigrant workers. To that end, the Italian Trade Unions called upon immigrant workers' organizations and associations to encourage by every means possible the strengthening of Trade Unions in the host country.

8. CONGRESS OF THE BELGIAN FGFB

Far-reaching reforms will be required if the great divide between rich and poor is to be bridged and society made more just and more democratic, as in the present economic climate it must be. It was these reforms, set out in a 1976-1980 union plan, which were discussed and unanimously adopted by the Annual Congress of the Belgian General Federation of Labour (FGFB), in Brussels on 18, 19 and 20 April 1975. The plan, adopted as a counter to the five-year State plan, also served as the FGFB electoral platform in the trade union elections in private-sector Belgian firms between 28 April and 31 May.

These basic options, selected by the FGFB Congress as a means of creating a democratic socialist society, will continue to be maintained not only at Belgian national level but also at European level, where the European Trade Union Federation - speaking for all the workers of Western Europe - will be pursuing its struggle against multinational undertakings and seek to bring the European Community closer into line with the desires of workers.

Even during periods of economic growth, as FGFB General Secretary Georges Debunne pointed out, distortions, large-scale unemployment, regional imbalances, country to country imbalances and social inequalities occurred while unbridled growth was proving extremely expensive to society; pollution, urban congestion, land speculation, etc. The end to growth was now leading to greater inequality. As economic power had become concentrated more and more in the hands of world-wide big business, local, regional, national and European authorities were witnessing growing unemployment, suffering loss of income and paying for the process of rationalisation which national capital was trying to carry out.

In confirmation of the guidelines adopted at the extraordinary congress of January 1971, this FGFB Congress reaffirmed its determination to transform society, through a policy whereby unions would make specific demands with a view to achieving a socialist and democratic society and attaining simultaneously "economic, political, social and cultural democracy, free of discrimination on grounds of sex, age or race". For this purpose the FGFB felt it was essential to change the power relation hitherto typified by a liberal based economy amassing profits for the benefit of a tiny minority. Considering the structural scale of the crisis currently affecting the capitalist system, Congress decided on its priority objectives as regards structural reforms, worker control and joint decisions at all levels.

PUBLIC HOLDING COMPANIES

There is no doubt that the outstanding demand made by Congress was the one concerning public economic action. The FGFB regarded the failure of the private sector, particularly in creating jobs, as evident, and cited the failure of economic planning to take account of the aspirations of the people and the failure of public authorities to take the initiative. The Federation therefore proposed setting up a public holding company "as powerful as the Société Générale and ten times more active". The company should enjoy full autonomy and possess adequate financial and technical resources. In general terms, the Congress felt that public undertakings should always retain full managerial autonomy, to enable them to operate effectively without bureaucratic interference. It also felt that companies set up by the public holding company, or in which the public company had a major shareholding, should involve worker control at all levels.

Likewise with a view to extending public intervention in the economy, the FGFB Congress called for a number of measures designed to give rise to a public financial sector. The public authorities felt it "should assume a major role in the financial sector with a view to its socialisation". A public financial sector could then be set up on the basis of the existing semi-public financial institutions, but should also fulfil certain of the functions of a public bank.

ENERGY

Turning to energy, FGFB reaffirmed the views it had expressed in certain European organisations, to the effect that energy is the outstanding factor in production

and should be brought under public control. Oil supplies should not be dependent on the goodwill of the multinationals. The time had come for the state to take a hand. Electricity production should be nationalized, while any decision on nuclear energy should be deferred until adequate research had been carried out on health and environmental protection. "The power of decision over the building and operation of nuclear plants cannot be left up to the discretion of the private-sector".

Still on expanding the role of the public sector, the FGFB proposed that a single company be set up to provide public passenger and goods transport for the whole country. All these measures were adopted as part of a design - worth mentioning- to operate the economy for the purpose of improving the quality of life. In other words, as stated at the previous FGFB Congress, public intervention in the economy, planning, and public holding companies were not ends in themselves, but ways of attaining full and better employment and of constantly improving working and living conditions.

FORMATION AND CONTROL COMPANY

The measures outlined above should be paralleled at company level, but it should be noted that the FGFB firmly rejected any idea of sharing in management, preferring the idea of total workers control. Joint representative bodies, such as safety and hygiene committees and plant councils, it felt, should be employed to the full to strengthen worker control, while the powers of works committees should be increased with the same objective in view.

The FGFB therefore attached primary importance to training workers, so as to enable them to exercise control effectively. Training should be provided at all levels and centred around an autonomous trade union institute, with extensive subsidies. General Secretary Georges Debunne considered that the state should provide at least Bfrs 1 000 million over the coming five years.

EQUALITY

No improvement in the quality of life is possible in a society where discrimination still exists. For the FGFB, a society where equal rights existed would be one in which women were integrated at all levels of social, political, economic and cultural life. Congress therefore reiterated its determination to eliminate all discrimination based on one's sex. It again demanded that abortion should cease to be a criminal offence in Belgium.

Congress also stated that all discrimination against young workers and migrant workers should be eradicated. It would do all it could to see that the law protected the rights of migrant workers as regards residence, employment, education, training, culture, accommodation, and involvement in social, political and Community life. In general terms it called for a rational and well organised immigration policy, and was indignant at the idea that migrant workers should be used as cheap labour.

EUROPE

In European and international affairs, the Congress expressed solidarity with poor peoples and those labouring under the yoke of dictatorship, particularly in Spain and Chile. It recalled how pleased it had been in 1973 when the European Trade Union Confederation had been set up, taking in virtually all the labour unions of Western Europe, and instructed its delegates to the ETUC Executive Committee to continue working for joint action. Perhaps it is worth reminding the reader that the ETUC combines all the labour unions of Western Europe with the exception of the French CGT.

Turning more particularly to the European Community, the FGFB demanded tripartite consultations between management, public authorities and unions on the major problems facing Europe such as unemployment, inflation, energy, economic democracy, and relations with developing countries, so as to give Europe a new stimulus "and to enable the workers to mould the European Communities along lines more compatible with their aspirations". The FGFB regarded coordination of trade union action at European level as the most important objective of trade union strategy for the next few years.

In line with its own preference for trade union unity, the FGTB reaffirmed its desire to share a programme and act together with the Confederation of Christian Trade Unions, its partner in Belgium in the unions' common front, the aim being to change the structure of society.

INFORMATION

Taking as its basis the principle that if democracy is to be attained information must be more readily available, Congress also considered the situation of the Belgian press and the new statute now being drawn up for Belgian Radio and Television. Congress denounced the failure of the public authorities to take any action on the press crisis which could only have damaging effects on democracy, and demanded that a thorough review of the serious problems raised by the actual or threatened disappearance of certain newspapers. It would also work to ensure that the new RTB statute was less reactionary than before, and less hostile to the workers and organisations representing them.

General Secretary Georges Debunne, Deputy General Secretary Alfred Delourme, and National Secretaries André Genot, Jean Gayetot, Georges Gogne and Georges Derieuw were re-elected by acclamation. The FGTB has one million members.

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