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trade union information

TRADE UNION BULLETIN

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1. EUROPEAN COUNCIL IN PARIS ON 12 AND 13 MARCH - CONCLUSIONS OF THE PRESIDENCY

The European Council had a broad exchange of views on the situation in the Community in the light of the latest developments on the world political and economic scene.

It noted that these developments involved new risks and considerable uncertainty. The Community must face them resolutely. By further strengthening its cohesion and improving its internal equilibrium, it will be able to make an effective contribution to international economic development and the consolidation of world peace.

I. Economic and social situation

The European Council noted that although there were several positive factors, the economic and social situation in the Community remained unsatisfactory in various respects.

Owing, in particular, to the concerted action laid down by the European Council in July 1978, which should be continued unflinchingly, a resumption in growth has been observed in most Member States. It should continue during the coming months unless the world economic situation is disturbed by a continuation of the tensions now being experienced on the oil market. In this respect, the European Council asked the Council (Ministers of Economic and Financial Affairs) to examine the possible consequences of these tensions on the Community's economic prospects.

While the rise in prices slowed down in 1978 and the differences between the rates of inflation in the various Member States were reduced, further tensions have become apparent in the first months of 1979. The fight against inflation must therefore continue to be the first objective of economic policy in the Member States, especially those where prices are still rising fast. Its success is an essential condition for establishing the basis for stable and lasting growth. The European Council also noted that growth was currently strong in those countries with the lowest rates of inflation.

The balance of payments situation has improved in several Member States. However, there are still excessive differences between the various countries which will have to be reduced. There is also a danger that the balance of payments will be adversely affected by the deterioration of the world oil situation.

In this context, the European Council noted that trade relations between Japan and the Community continued to be seriously out of balance, to the detriment of the latter. It expressed the wish that the consultations which the Commission has started with the Japanese Government should lead this year to substantial progress towards opening up the Japanese market to imports of manufactured goods from the Community.

The European Council also acknowledged the importance of the implementation of the Japanese Government's expressed intention to increase its official development aid significantly.

In spite of the resumption in growth, the employment situation continues to be a major anxiety. The continuation of the efforts made to improve economic structures is an essential factor for increasing employment.

These efforts will have to be supplemented by specific measures designed to help reduce unemployment.

II. Employment and social policy

The European Council devoted a large part of its proceedings to the employment situation and social policy. It acknowledged that priority should be given to improving the employment situation, which continues to give rise to concern.

The European Council emphasized the importance of consultation with both sides of industry at the national and Community levels. It welcomed the Economic and Social Committee's contribution. The European Council noted with satisfaction the intention of the Ministers for Social Affairs to take the necessary measures to improve the work of the Community tripartite meetings between the organizations representing workers, those representing employers and the Community. It invited both sides of industry to take steps to develop their dialogue at Community level, where appropriate on a sectoral basis.

The European Council confirmed the importance it attached to improving youth employment and its wish that the Council keep the new aids from the Social Fund in favour of young people under review. It instructed the Council to study the following measures which should help, along with others, to improve the employment situation:

- to make training better adapted to employment by developing "alternance" in training, i. e. by coupling practical on-the-job training with theoretical training in a training establishment, body or department;
- to limit the systematic use of overtime;
- to improve the employment of women by encouraging diversification of the jobs open to them and giving women greater access to vocational training.

The European Council stressed the importance of the social measures taken by the Community in favour of workers in the iron and steel industry and other crisis sectors.

The European Council requested the Commission to continue its efforts to improve the effectiveness of the European Social Fund by directing its assistance more selectively towards the solution of current employment problems.

The Council also noted the importance of a co-ordinated contribution by the various Community financial instruments to the intensification of the fight against unemployment.

The European Council requested the Council to report back to it at its next meeting on the practical action taken on the basis of the above guidelines.

The European Council asked the Commission to submit a communication on the social and economic implications of a coordinated reorganization of working time.

III. Energy

The European Council observed that the current state of the world oil market confirmed the urgent need to implement the decisions taken by the Community to reduce its dependence and contribute to an improved world energy balance.

The Community must accordingly continue and intensify its action in order to reach its medium-term objectives and to improve its immediate situation.

The Member States renewed the undertaking given in Bremen in 1978 to reduce the level of the Community's dependence on energy imports to 50 % by 1985. By that date the Community will limit its oil imports to the level reached in 1978. In 1979, the Community and the Member States will pursue a policy designed to reduce oil consumption to 500 million tonnes, i. e. around 25 million tonnes less than forecast.

The Community and the Member States will step up their efforts to make the best possible use of Community hydrocarbon and coal resources. The programmes for the production of electricity from nuclear sources must be strengthened and speeded up whenever conditions so permit; the use of solar and geothermal energy must likewise be further developed.

With regard to energy saving, the new measures taken at national or Community level must not adversely affect the level of economic activity in the Member States and will therefore be aimed particularly at the consumption of energy by Government departments and public authorities, heating of business and residential premises and at a more rational use of energy by motor vehicles. The price policies of the Member States must be designed to contribute to the attainment of these objectives.

The Council (Energy) will initiate a review of the energy policies of the Member States. As regards production, it will ensure that these policies are convergent and will adopt joint objectives to support this convergence. It will adopt the necessary provisions at Community level to pursue the development of oil technologies, promote the use of coal and nuclear energy and make use of new sources of energy through an increased research and development effort and through demonstration projects.

As regards energy saving, the Council (Energy) will ensure that the Member States' policies are comparable, with particular reference to the efforts which they make to contribute to the solution of the current difficulties.

It will carry out the desired harmonization and will determine any additional means of intervention which might be applied at Community level.

To enable the Community and the Member States to face crisis situations:

- the competent institutions of the Community must finalize the Community crisis mechanism, the principles of which were adopted in 1977;
- the Council (Energy) will regularly take stock of national measures.

The European Council affirmed its conviction that the presentation on the oil market created a worrying situation; any worsening in this situation would constitute a serious danger for the world economy.

Maintaining the balance of the world energy market presupposes major

efforts by all countries: by importing countries - in particular the United States, Japan and the Community, which must slow down the growth in their requirements, and by producer countries which must manage their resources in a balanced manner the development of the world economy is to continue.

In addition, the Community emphasizes the necessity of a dialogue with the producer countries. It supports the statement in which the Government of Saudi Arabia calls for rapid consultations between consumer and producer countries. It also supports the proposal recently made by the President of Mexico, Mr Lopez Portillo, regarding worldwide consultation on world energy problems.

The European Council emphasized, in this connection, the urgent need for the Community to supplement its approach towards supply problems, particularly by as extensive and accurate a knowledge as possible of the quantities of oil and petroleum products imported into the Community, together with their prices, so that a full dialogue might be undertaken with the producers on the real state of the market. The European Council invited the Council (Energy) and the Commission to adopt, as a matter of urgency, all the necessary measures, particularly with regard to monitoring of the market.

IV. Convergence

The implementation of the EMS, which will constitute an important contribution towards the development of stable and lasting growth in the Community, must be supported by increased convergence of the economic politics and performances of the Member States.

The European Council invited the Council (Economic and Financial Affairs) to strengthen the means of coordinating economic policies, on a proposal from the Commission. It took note with interest of suggestions which the Netherlands delegation made in this connection.

Achievement of the convergence of economic performances requires measures for which the Member States concerned are primarily responsible, but in respect of which Community policies can and must play a supporting role within the framework of increased solidarity.

The European Council took note of the communication which it had requested the Commission to draw on this subject. It had an exchange of views on the means for arriving at improved convergence.

It emphasized the need for the Community Institutions to ensure more efficient use of the existing instruments in order to attain this objective.

It invited the Council and the Commission to examine in depth how the Community could make a greater contribution, by means of all its policies taken as a whole, to achieving greater convergence of the economies of the Member States and reducing the disparities between them.

To this end, it asked the Council to examine, in the light of the above guidelines, what action should be taken on the proposals contained in the above communication from the Commission and to submit a report at the next meeting of the European Council.

V. Common agricultural policy

The European Council had a detailed exchange of views on the common

agricultural policy, in the light of a communication from the Commission. It confirmed the importance which it attaches to the fundamental objectives of this policy, which is one of the achievements in the construction of Europe. It noted that growing imbalances on agricultural markets had led to an increase in expenditure on agricultural support.

It considered that a prices policy suited to the situation and a search for measures adapted to each type of production would be likely to correct the imbalances which had become apparent on certain markets and to avoid the build-up of surpluses.

The European Council expressed its interest in the improvement of the agricultural structures policy, particularly in favour of the least favoured regions of the Community, and invited the Commission to submit additional proposals in this sector.

Also, with a view to enlargement, the Council hoped that the efforts to improve structures undertaken in favour of the Mediterranean regions would be continued with a view to ensuring that the interests of all agricultural producers in the Community received equal consideration.

The European Council invited the Council (Ministers for Agriculture) to consider what improvements would be needed for the proper functioning of the common agricultural policy with due regard to the objectives laid down in the Treaty of Rome.

2. ETUC STATEMENT ON THE OUTCOME OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL IN PARIS ON 12 AND 13 MARCH

"The Executive Committee of the ETUC is bound to be very critical of the outcome of the Paris European Council. On the vital question of how to provide jobs for the Community's 6 million registered and 3 million unregistered unemployed workers, the discussions at the meeting do not appear to have gone much beyond generalities. This indicates poor preparation stemming from a lack of political will at the national and the Community level to take really decisive measures to promote employment.

It is necessary to recall that only a year ago the Heads of Government agreed in Copenhagen that to reverse the unsatisfactory trend in the economic and social situation it was essential that the Community achieved an annual growth rate of 4,5 % by the middle of 1979. Shortly afterwards, at the Bremen European Council in July 1978, the Heads of Government launched a concerted action strategy to achieve "a considerably higher rate of economic growth and thus reduce the level of unemployment".

The middle of 1979 is now only a few months off but far from reaching either the target of 4.5 % or "a considerably higher rate of growth", the Community is probably only growing at an annual rate of 3.5 % compared to the growth rate of 2.8 % recorded in 1978 and there are doubts about how long this will be sustained.

The ETUC is critical of express central economic targets only in quantitative terms instead of also setting qualitative objectives, but there can certainly be no doubt that at current rates of development the employment situation in the Community will deteriorate yet further and the number of unemployed will increase yet further.

A properly prepared review of the effectiveness so far of the concerted action strategy together with an appreciation of the medium-term situation facing the Community should therefore have been presented to the Paris meeting, and decisions on how to reinforce the strategy at both national and Community levels should have been taken accordingly. The European Council's consideration of the energy situation after the most recent oil price increases should have been an integral part of this discussion.

The ETUC remains absolutely convinced that full employment must be the prime aim of economic policy and the Executive Committee is therefore deeply concerned that the conclusions of the Presidency of the meeting say that the fight against inflation must be the first objective. The ETUC certainly fully recognises the need to control inflation which is increasingly structural in nature. To tackle each of the many internal and external causes and to prevent, for instance, companies making unjustified price increases, a planned approach incorporating price surveillance policies is essential. But to elevate the fight against inflation above the fight against unemployment, and indeed to implicitly counterpose them, is socially dangerous because it strikes a blow at one of the pillars on which social peace was constructed in many of our societies after the Second World War. And experience in any event has shown that high unemployment and low capacity utilization, while certainly resulting in lost production which could have met many needs, have had very little long term effects on the real causes of inflation.

With regard to the specific measures which are required to promote employment, the communiqué does record that the European Council discussed some measures to help young and women workers, to improve training schemes and to limit the systematic use of overtime. This does not go nearly far enough.

In the ETUC's view, it is absolutely essential that national industrial and sectoral plans, coordinated at the European level, should be drawn up to deal with the severe and growing structural problems confronting our economies. The nature of economic development must be brought under social control since it cannot be left to so-called market forces, which are increasingly just a few big companies.

A major expansion of public investment, particularly though not exclusively in the tertiary sector, is required in order to create jobs and to meet people's needs. Measures to safeguard and to create jobs in the private sector must likewise be vigorously pursued. And for working people to have a real commitment to the Community, its own capacity to help fight unemployment must be considerably expanded: this calls for an enlargement of the Social and Regional Funds and for a Community Budget which gives due importance to the fight against unemployment in its spending priorities.

A vital part of national and European economic and social strategies must be significant and rapid reductions in working time. The ETUC has made its position clear on many occasions and we did not look to the Heads of Government themselves to make detailed proposals, but we certainly did and do think that the time has come for a declaration of principle at the highest level supporting the reduction of working time so unblocking the way to Community as well as to national action. Instead, yet another study was proposed.

Among the other subjects discussed by the European Council was the European Monetary System and the Common Agricultural Policy.

The ETUC's position on the EMS, which was communicated to the December 1978 European Council, is essentially that if it is managed in such a way that it helps the fight against unemployment, and provided that it is not seen as a substitute for specific and coordinated economic policies, then it will have our support. However, it is clear that the system's success depends to a very great extent on effective measures being introduced both to achieve a faster rate of economic development in all Community economies, and to reduce the disparities within and between them. It is very disappointing that the "concurrent studies" which the European Council set in train last year to produce proposals to reach these objectives appear to have made virtually no progress. In our view the introduction of the EMS reinforces the need for the concerted action strategy to be updated, and to be pursued on a medium-term basis with more vigour than has so far been the case.

With regard to the CAP, the ETUC is disappointed that the European Council was not prepared to support fully the Commission's proposals for the 1979-80 Season. The Commission has said very clearly that the Community cannot go on producing vast quantities of agricultural produce for which there is no market, and a price freeze for the agricultural year ahead, together with measures to contain milk surpluses and to improve structural policy, has been proposed.

The ETUC therefore welcomes the decision of the Council of Agricultural Ministers on 29th March to freeze for three months the prices of foodstuffs in surplus. This will be of great assistance to all housewives and families. The Executive Committee urges the Council to continue the freeze until these surpluses have been removed.

However neither the Commission's nor the Agricultural Council's proposals, though in line with ETUC policy, go nearly far enough. In particular, neither the Council nor the Commission have given sufficient attention to the employment implications of agricultural policies. What is required is the elaboration of a long-term Community agricultural and food development plan, designed both: to achieve a better balance in agricultural markets through the use of more realistic prices levels combined with direct income support measures; and to fight rural and agricultural unemployment, to promote new job opportunities, and to achieve a better regional balance.

The ETUC will be returning to these issues at its Munich Congress (14-18 May 1979).

3. EXTRACTS FROM A SPEECH BY MR H. VREDELING, VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION, TO THE FNV (NETHERLANDS TRADE UNION FEDERATION) IN EINDHOVEN ON 17 MARCH

Today we have a chance such as we have never had before to raise for serious discussion and negotiation an important question such as work-sharing in the nine countries of the Community. If after all that we again fail to make full use of the opportunity then it is our own responsibility. It is the responsibility of us all, the Commission, the trade union movement and the employers and particularly of all the Governments to introduce a European system of work-sharing.

The attitude adopted by the Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs and the Heads of Governments a week ago was positive enough. Their communiqués offer at least hope that a European approach to this problem will be launched. But the Communiqués are no more than words. All I can do is express my hope that these words will be transformed into deeds. If this

does not happen then the outlook, on the eve of the European elections, will be very bleak indeed.

Work sharing also involves wage sharing. Pushing up together a little in the factory to make room for the unemployed means also that the wage packet will grow a little more slowly and in some cases - mainly for the higher earners - it might become a little lighter. But the sacrifice does not need to be quite as dramatic as used to be thought. The increasing costs arising from a reduction in working time in industry can be offset in part by a reduction in costs for society as a whole - a reduction resulting from the fact that unemployment benefits no longer have to be paid to those who used to be unemployed and have now obtained work as results of measures to reduce working time.

The Commission is working on the following measures in the field of work-sharing:

- a reduction in the systematic use of overtime;
- measures to restrict the use of workers from temporary employment businesses;
- measures to facilitate part-time work. (At the same time, however, ensuring that not only women find their way into part-time jobs);
- improvements in the shift system and, more generally, a reduction in working time for workers engaged in arduous or unpleasant work;
- the introduction of an early pension, although on a flexible and non-compulsory basis;
- the periodic alternation of training and work and the promotion of retraining by means of educational leave, for example.

Priority among these measures will depend on the effect they are likely to have on the availability of employment.

This means that we are not free to choose among these measures. The trade union movement, too, will have to put aside any preference it may have and leave the final choice to the free interplay of social forces and negotiations.

This series of ideas to be realized at Community level is no more than a modest beginning. Nevertheless, and certainly in this area, small steps inevitably lead to great consequences - particularly now that, as in the Commission plan, the small steps cover such a wide range. The means and possibilities which we have in mind can combine to form a kind of closed front which mean that even a modest initial policy move can produce widespread and significant effects.

4. INFRINGEMENT PROCEEDINGS RELATING TO THE TWO DIRECTIVES ON EQUAL TREATMENT FOR MEN AND WOMEN - BRUSSELS, 22 MARCH

The Commission has decided, on a proposal by Vice-President Vredeling, to initiate proceedings before the Court of Justice under Article 169 of the EEC Treaty against Member States infringing the Directives implementing the principle of equality between men and women at work.

In accordance with Directive 75/117/EEC relating to equal pay for men and women, infringement proceedings will be introduced against Denmark, the

Netherlands, the Federal Republic of Germany, Luxembourg, France, Belgium and the United Kingdom.

As for infringements of Directive 76/207/EEC relating to equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions, proceedings will be initiated against the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands.

INFRINGEMENTS OF DIRECTIVE 75/117/EEC (equal pay)

Denmark

- (a) The Law of 4 February 1976 applies only to the "same" work and not to "work to which equal value is attributed" (Article 1).
- (b) The Law does not stipulate that discriminatory clauses in collective agreements are null and void; this appears to be determined merely by legal opinion (Article 4).
- (c) The supervision of the application of the principle of equal pay in undertakings does not satisfy the requirements of the Directive (Article 6).

Netherlands

The Law of 20 March 1975 does not apply to public sector employees (Article 2).

Federal Republic of Germany

- (a) German jurisprudence in this connection is based solely on the very general terms found in Article 3 of the Basic Law of 1949, the Federal Republic being the only Member State which has not passed a specific law aimed at implementing the principle of equal pay (Article 1).
- (b) The supervision of the application of the principle of equal pay in undertakings does not satisfy the requirements of the Directive (Article 6).

Luxembourg

- (a) In the public sector, a head-of-household allowance is given to any married male civil servant; however, the same allowance is granted to married women officials only under very restrictive conditions which are not applied to men (Article 3).
- (b) Similar provisions govern household allowances or housing allowances in some private sector collective agreements (Article 4).

Belgium

- (a) A household allowance is granted to married male civil servants but is only given to married female civil servants if they have children in their care (Article 3).
- (b) Similar provisions apply to health service employees (collective agreement of 31 October 1975 made obligatory by the Royal Decree of 3 November 1976) (Articles 3 and 4).

France

Certain additional pay advantages are granted, especially in the semi-public sector, to employees considered as heads of household (Article 3).

United Kingdom

A restrictive interpretation would be given to the concept of "work of equal value" on the basis of Section 1(5) of the Equal Pay Act: an employee could not demand equal pay for work of equal value unless a job evaluation system were operative in the establishment where he/she worked (Article 1).

INFRINGEMENTS OF DIRECTIVE 76/207/EEC (equal access)

Two Member States have not fulfilled the obligations of the Directive within the period laid down:

Federal Republic of Germany

The examination of the new measures proposed has not been completed.

Netherlands

The draft law implementing the Directive has not yet been passed by Parliament.

The Commission is currently examining legislation passed by the seven other Member States in order to check that they comply in every respect with the Directive. Subsequently, it will initiate infringement proceedings where necessary.

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The Governments of the Member States concerned will shortly receive a letter from the Commission inviting them to make their comments known, within sixty days, with respect to the abovementioned problems. The Commission may then, after having taken note of these comments, address a reasoned opinion to the relevant Member State. If this State does not comply with the reasoned opinion within the new period laid down by the Commission, the latter may decide to refer the matter to the Court of Justice.

5. OPINION OF THE ETUCF (EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COMMITTEE OF FOOD AND ALLIED WORKERS) MEMBER UNIONS IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY ON THE AGRICULTURAL MARKET SITUATION IN GENERAL AND THE SUGAR INDUSTRY IN PARTICULAR

1. The agricultural market situation in the Community is characterized by growing surpluses in various sectors and a price level generally far higher than that prevailing on world markets. Moreover, consumption is tending to stagnate and, in certain sectors, even to fall. The storage of surpluses and their subsidized export to non-member countries have placed an intolerable financial burden on the Community budget. This also prevents a strengthening of the Social and Regional Funds at a time when this is urgently required.

The food industries are important "customers" for numerous agricultural products. The trade union organizations therefore call upon the Community institutions to adopt a consistent common agri-food policy in the framework of the long overdue reform of the agricultural policy. The European trade union organizations and employers' associations must

be involved in formulating this policy.

2. The sugar industry is an important sector of agri-food policy. Consequently, the Commission is called upon to adopt a coordinated policy on the production of beet sugar, cane sugar and isoglucose when proposing new rules for the organization of the sugar market.
3. The trade union organizations welcome the efforts made by the Commission with a view to the renewal of the Lomé Convention, including the provisions relating to the sugar sector and cane sugar imports. The existing import quota should be maintained in the next Convention with ACP countries.

The construction of food industries in ACP countries is an important precondition for the direct processing of raw materials in these countries. Furthermore, it would improve the employment situation and increase the standard of living of the workers in these countries. At the same time, steps should be taken to guarantee an outlet on the world market for ACP countries products.

If, as a result, restructuring proved to be required in certain sectors of industry in the Community e. g. those based on cane sugar, the industries concerned should be sustained through aid from the Social and Regional Funds.

4. The trade union organizations note with concern the evolution of employment in the Community's sugar industry. "Technical progress" achieved by increasing automation has not only led to higher production rates, but also to the closure of undertakings and a substantial reduction in employment. The sugar industry is currently investing enormous sums in microprocessors.

The trade unions fear that this "technical revolution" will result in the loss of even more jobs.

Such a policy is in direct contradiction with the objectives set by the Governments of the Member States with a view to fighting unemployment and restoring full employment. The trade unions therefore consider that the Commission should take steps to open a dialogue between the two sides of the sugar industry and to guarantee political control over employment.

5. In this context, the trade union organizations adopt the following objectives:

The common policy on sugar industry must take account of habits, of traditions and of technical developments. The harmful side-effects of technical developments should be minimized.

Trade union collective bargaining policy must aim to ensure the highest possible level of employment by pressing, in particular, for a better distribution of the available volume of work and adequate provision for monitoring the introduction of new techniques.

6. In order to safeguard employment, the trade union organisations intend to pursue the following objectives in their national collective bargaining:

1. Shortening of the working week to 35 hours as a general rule.
2. Shortening of the working week during the peak season to 40 hours per week.
3. Introduction of the four-shift system.
4. Lengthening of annual holidays, i. e. minimum six weeks per year.
5. Shortening of the working week for older workers: workers aged 55 to work a 35-hour week; those aged 60 or over only a 30-hour week.
6. All these reductions in working time to be granted without reduction in pay.
7. Compensation of overtime by means of time off.
8. Special leave for shift work, whether performed during the peak season or not.

The trade union organizations feel that their national collective bargaining policies should be supported in parallel by measures taken at Community level.

6. EUROPEAN FORUM ON THE REDUCTION OF WORKING TIME ORGANIZED BY THE CONFEDERATION FRANCAISE DEMOCRATIQUE DU TRAVAIL (CFDT - FRENCH TRADE UNION FEDERATION) IN PARIS ON 28 MARCH

In the presence of numerous representatives of the press and its own federations and regional unions, the CFDT began its campaign for the "general reduction of the working week to 35 hours in order to create jobs" with a European Forum in Paris on 28 March.

Taking part were Mr Wim Kok (FNV), Mr Aldo Bonaccini (CGIL), Mr Eugen Loderer (IGM-DGB), Mr Georges Grinberg (FGTB) and Mr François Staedelin (ETUC). The CFDT was represented by Mr Edmond Maire (General Secretary), Mr Michel Rolant and Mr Albert Mercier (National Secretaries).

A valuable discussion

The Forum allowed the CFDT and its guests to compare publicly their analyses, experiences, objectives and strategies with regard to the reduction of working time.

First of all, some points on which there was general agreement:

- Employers and governments in all the countries were claiming, on the pretext of the need to maintain competitiveness, that it was impossible to contemplate a reduction in working time at national level alone. Above and beyond this, however, employers in all the Member States were united in refusing to contemplate the reduction of working time as a solution at all and had repeated this at the last Tripartite Conference.
- Since the crisis, wages had everywhere been held down in such a way as to swing the scales heavily in favour of the employers and they had been the only ones to profit from the results of increased productivity.
- Because of the decline in the number of contributors, in all countries, social protection schemes (social security, insurance, unemployment)

are in financial difficulty. This state of affairs was everywhere being taken as an excuse to call the cover provided into question and the fiscal pressure on workers was increasing.

In the face of this situation, substantial progress had been made in the search for a common analysis by the organizations affiliated to the ETUC. Hence the numerous points of convergence in the unions' views especially in relation to:

- The extent of crisis. All were agreed that an increase in growth alone would not provide an answer to the problem of unemployment. In addition to this, there was the problem of the introduction of new technologies - especially data processing and its effects on employment.
- The unacceptability of the present level of unemployment - six million unemployed in the Community, not taking into account the underemployment of young people and of women.
- The great danger this situation represented for democracy, given that unemployment had often been the breeding ground of Fascism and political opportunists.
- The need for economic planning on a European scale, for investment control and for new international cooperation links.
- The vital importance of general reduction in working time as a means of ensuring employment for everyone and improving the quality of life.

However, though all were agreed that priority should be given to securing a reduction in working time, there was some difference of emphasis from country to country regarding the form taken by this demand and the supporting action.

According to Mr A. Bonaccini, the objective in Italy was to reduce the working week from 40 to 38 hours. In addition, workers should have the right to retire irrespective of age after paying social security contributions for 35 years and worker control should be extended to overtime, taxation, investment and their allocation.

According to Mr E. Loderer, Germany's trade unions hoped to achieve a reduction in working time (longer schooling), retirement at 60 and longer breaks during working hours, especially for piece work - 6 to 12 minutes per hour to be paid as working time. Although the steelworkers' strike in December 1978 had failed to secure the introduction of a 35-hour working week, the six weeks' paid holiday and additional rest days obtained were steps in the right direction and would have positive effects on employment.

In the Netherlands, whilst the maintenance of the purchasing power of workers on average or low wages was, Mr W. Kok stated, the first of the trade unions' demands, a reduction in working time was one of the central demands pursued by the unions in their collective bargaining with a view to improving employment in both quantitative and qualitative terms. This demand also took various forms: lowering the age of retirement, shortening the working day/week.

Mr G. Grinberg from the FGTB explained that, faced with the choice between a 35-hour week without loss of earnings and an increase in purchasing power, his federation had given priority to the first of these without,

however, abandoning either its opposition to the limitations imposed by the incomes policy or its freedom of action. In spite of opposition from the employers, trade union action in Belgium had brought about substantial advances both within many individual undertakings and at the level of whole industries as regards shortening the working week (an average of 38 hours for production workers and employees of multinationals such as Gervais-Danone, Philips and Caterpillar; 37 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours in banks and insurance companies and 36 hours for newspaper workers and department stores).

On behalf of the ETUC, Mr François Staedelin reminded those present of the programme to be presented at the Munich Congress on this subject and of the importance placed by the ETUC on discussion between its affiliated organizations with a view to ascertaining points of convergence in spite of their different situations and approaches to trade union action. The ETUC, he said, regarded the reduction of working time as a priority demand calling for intensified supporting action on the part of the workers.

The task of outlining the CFDT's position in this debate fell to Mr A. Mercier.

Given the widespread desire among workers to "work less so as to give everyone work and improve the quality of life" and bearing in mind the employers' strategy, work-sharing through a reduction in working time was, Mr Mercier said, clearly one of the keys to solving the current employment problems.

In order to gain the active support of all workers and ensure that results would be achieved at all levels in relation to working time, the general objective of 35 hours a week should, the CFDT felt, be pursued through specific priority demands formulated as close to shop-floor level as possible.

Depending on the circumstances, these demands might include: a fifth shift on the basis of a 33-hour week or for those on continuous shift work a 36-hour week; a return to the 40-hour week for other workers; 38/35-hour weeks in some sectors. Other possibilities might include the abolition of Saturday working, longer holidays, a shorter working day, longer breaks, earlier retirement, etc.

Finally, in view of the extent of the crisis, the most visible symptom of which was the seriousness of the present employment problems, and the need to move towards a new pattern of development, the CFDT favoured the formulation of demands aimed at bringing job creation and the improvement of working conditions within the scope of negotiation on the same basis as remuneration and the reduction of working time.

Bringing the forum to a close, the General Secretary of the CFDT, Mr Edmond Maire, underlined the importance and value of such a discussion and drew attention to the degree of agreement achieved on the analysis of the situation and the demand to be pursued. He then went on to state his conviction that: "Workers in our countries are increasingly aware of the growing influence exerted by Europe on their living and working conditions and of the fact that any step forward in one country without a parallel step forward in the others is fragile and limited. But no one claims that nothing can be done unless we are entirely united."

A European class consciousness is developing which has the potential to redirect the process of building the Community towards the goal of a socially progressive Europe.

7. MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE EMF (EUROPEAN METALWORKERS' FEDERATION), ON SHIPBUILDING AND PROTECTION AGAINST THE POLLUTION OF THE SEAS, IN BRUSSELS, 19 AND 20 MARCH

At a meeting in Brussels on 19 and 20 March which was chaired by the President, Hugh Scanlon, the Executive Committee of the EMF (European Metalworkers' Federation) devoted particular attention to the shipbuilding and repairing sector, and, in connection with these industries, to the fight against the pollution of the seas and the measures needed in this field.

The Executive Committee unanimously decided to advocate the implementation of a series of demands aimed at improving the safety of tankers.

The measures advocated by the EMF are as follows:

1. The size of tankers must be limited to 100 000 - 150 000 dwt.
2. Tankers carrying chemicals must be equipped with a double hull.
3. The installation of separate water ballast and loading tanks must be prescribed both for new tankers and for those already in service.
4. The maximum capacity of a loading tank must not exceed 10 000 cubic metres.
5. Special measures must also be taken to reduce the risks currently taken - e. g. the installation of an auxiliary steering system, two autonomous radar systems, two autonomous gyro-compasses, etc.

The European metalworkers' unions consider that the cost of these measures would be low, since the necessary production capacities already exist but are not at present utilized to the full.

A SCRAP AND BUILD PROGRAMME

The EMF Executive Committee also examined and approved the outline of a "scrap and build" programme for ships, whose main advantage would be to modernize fleets, to reduce their present overcapacity and to promote more efficient forms of transport, at the same time facilitating the implementation of environmental protection policies by eliminating obsolete and potentially dangerous vessels.

The EMF considers that, even if these measures were only taken at European level to begin with, if they were applied without delay they would - quite apart from environmental considerations - be useful and of advantage for protecting jobs and shortening the duration of the crisis in the shipbuilding industry.

The EMF stresses that this sector, which has been seriously affected by redundancy and unemployment, has a labour force at its disposal which could carry out this additional volume of work.

THE REDUCTION OF WORKING TIME

The Executive Committee also surveyed the progress made so far in the

various countries in negotiations with employers in the metal industry. The Committee deplored the fact that employers were refusing - seemingly as a body - to reduce working time.

The Committee reasserted that the trade union organizations were determined to pursue their efforts to have this demand met.

The fourth General Assembly of the EMF, to be held in Copenhagen, was scheduled for 29 and 30 May 1980.

Note

The text of the EMF catalogue of demands entitled "Against the pollution of the seas - measures to be taken in shipbuilding to improve security of tankers" can be obtained from the EMF Secretariat - 38 rue Fossé-aux-Loups (Bte 4) (Tel.: 217 27 47), 1000 Bruxelles.

8. EXECUTIVE MEETING OF THE CONFEDERATION GENERALE DU TRAVAIL (CGT - FRENCH TRADE UNION FEDERATION) ON EUROPE AND THE CGT IN PARIS, 3 AND 4 APRIL

Europe is a reality acknowledged by the CGT.

If Europe is to meet present-day economic and social needs, it must, in the CGT's view, be a place where the means of production are under the control of workers and the population at large and where respect for national diversity and independence is combined with the promotion of cooperation. A peaceful Europe in which they may settle effectively and democratically the questions which concern them at all levels of the undertaking, of the area or of the region, whether relating to national or international problems, that is to say a Socialist Europe.

The present day construction and development of the Europe of the "Community" raises numerous delicate problems on which the CGT presents its opinion, without at the same time claiming to cover exhaustively all these questions.

This summary combines all the positions taken by the CGT in the history of the construction of Europe and the practical steps which led the way to its realization.

Comments made by the CGT on European problems are not based on a circumstantial approach. From the very start of the creation of European organizations and at each stage in that development (attempt to establish a European Defence Community, creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, Treaty of Rome), the CGT fixed its positions, moved by a two-fold concern; to defend the interests of workers in our country and national interests; international solidarity in the struggle by workers against employers. These comments have been proved by facts.

Even though the Common Market was presented as an opportunity for an unprecedented development in social progress, French workers have had to resort to an intense and often difficult protest battle to maintain their existing rights and to gain new rights in the face of political aims favouring social regression.

Common Market growth runs parallel to that of international capitalism.

After a period of economic growth which benefited the monopolies a period of acute crisis followed.

The present day economic slump, the increase in unemployment, inflation and monetary imbalances illustrate this situation and reveal that as much by its nature as by inclination, the EEC, as an expression of the Europe of capital, is unable to solve the problems facing our country and by implication its workers.

This confirms the positions held by the CGT since the beginning: workers cannot base their hopes on an integrated Europe and its institutions whose policies are fixed according to conditions which are geared to the interests of the multinational groups which dominate it.

French employers and governments have played an active role in the construction of Europe.

Taking these factors into account as well as the reality of the construction of Europe, the documents adopted at the 40th Congress specified the CGT's fundamental positions.

New data, concerning both the economic and social fields where the crisis is getting worse and the proposals for institutional reforms, are now worth deeper investigation as our analysis progresses.

They require the French and European trade union movement, and the CGT in particular, within the scope of its responsibilities, to state their positions, their willingness to carry on the fight as the largest single organization in Western Europe and to reveal their policies.

In spite of major setbacks caused by the peoples' struggle for national independence, there is no doubt that North American imperialism continues to play a dominant role in the development of international capitalism as revealed by the crisis. Within the framework of cooperation with the principal capitalist countries it defines strategies for increasing the value of and accumulating capital.

Europe occupies an essential position within these strategies.

The birth of the Common Market has been marked by this reality.

It is both the expression of the solidarity of monopolies and an important element in the development of the crisis, given the activity of the multinationals.

This American hegemony extends to all fields, economic and social, political and military.

American investment in Europe increased by 3.7 % from 1962 to 1976. The European share in the total amount of American investment abroad has continued to increase, from 13.8 % in 1946 to 37.2 % in 1975. American investments occupy a decisive position in some sectors.

Community economic and commercial negotiations take place mostly within the framework of international institutions; EEC bi-lateral and multi-lateral agreements are marked by the supremacy of American multi-national groups and by dominant positions within the EEC.

From this point of view, the decisive role of the dollar makes it possible to change the direction of economic and social policies, an influence which can also be seen in IMF policies.

These elements weigh decisively in the power struggles between the major capitalist countries and take shape especially because western summits endeavour to establish worldwide coordination covering regional decisions and more especially European summits.

The economic power of multinational groups, which exerts great influence on national economies via the policies of these groups, also depends on development disparities and contradictions between Member States with the assistance of governments and institutions.

The London Summit in 1977 emphasised the cohesion of austerity policies by harmonizing national plans designed to make it the new growth strategy.

The EEC institutions in which governments participate and which are equipped with a technocratic machinery to support the policies of the large groups of financiers and industrialists act in fact on behalf of monopolist interests.

In many cases this results in measures going way beyond the Treaty of Rome and contrary to certain social assurances which should have been taken into consideration.

This subordination can be seen both in austerity plans and in commercial negotiations and Community policies.

These various factors have contributed to a reorganization and concentration on redeployment within and outside Europe which has nothing to do with fair work-sharing. They emphasize regional and national imbalances for the benefit of capital but also for more powerful economies and entail extremely serious social consequences for the living and working standards of all European workers.

From this point of view, it is advisable to assess the role and the decisive position of the Federal Republic of Germany. To do this, we cannot neglect the attitude and behaviour of the West German Government which influences Community policies as well as the economic and social options of Member States.

This is why the CGT, true to its international positions, today as yesterday, carefully makes a distinction between the West German Government and employers on the one hand and West German workers on the other.

If the dominant position of West German monopolies results in furthering their interest in the development of the Common Market, it is clear that it is not capable of removing the fundamental causes of the crisis nor of preventing its appearance in the Federal Republic of Germany.

These monopolies entail serious economic and social consequences for German workers: increased pressure on living conditions and on purchasing power, as proved by the struggle for jobs, the 35 hour week, salaries and retirement schemes.

West German capitalism does its utmost to defend its own interests which can obviously tend to disputed with American monopolies especially in

the search for foreign markets. But whatever the source of these disputes, whatever the scope for movement enjoyed by West German trusts, nevertheless when important issues are at stake as a general rule the latter opt for alignment with the position of the United States within the worldwide class struggle.

The Bonn Summit where Western governments gave way to North American demands also strengthened the predominance of the Federal Republic of Germany in Europe.

The economic power of West German capitalists in relation to the Community which is estimated at 30 %, the relative strength of its military reserves, estimated at 40 %, and the undebatable power of the Mark, allow us to judge West Germany's role in the operation of the European Monetary Fund and in the establishment of cartels and agreements. Of the 12 groups which make up EUROFER, 6 are West German. Within DENELUX, the new steel cartel, in partnership with various European groups, the West Germans represent the major influence which clearly permeates the whole of the EEC's iron and steel policy and in particular the policy of the French Government.

The CGT emphasizes the responsibility of the French Government and French employers which, by their policy of national surrender, industrial reorganization and social regression, contribute to this general imperialistic drive which aims at safeguarding and developing the interests of French monopolies in the context of international and European competition.

Integration and National Sovereignty

This situation leads to a stepping up of the struggles to realize both the basic demands of European workers and their democratic aspirations.

The deterioration of the crisis which is developing on all fronts reduces the efficiency of the monopolists' ways of producing profits. The progress towards economic integration, which is not without its contradictions, is one attempt to respond to this trend.

From the setting of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the results of which everyone can now see, to the introduction today of a European Monetary System, integration has been progressing gradually. It mainly involves the overlapping of the different national policies to an extent even where their ability to take independent decisions is surrendered.

Integration is taking shape in an increasing number of fields: agricultural, economic and monetary policies, social and commercial affairs, defence, arms manufacture and farm policy, with the decision making processes becoming more and more centralized.

In reality, this process of integration is adjusted to the interests and objectives of international monopolies to which governments, and especially the French Government, are seeking to give increased freedom.

Integration cannot resolve the economic and social problems connected with the worsening crisis. Integration tends on the other hand to heighten the contradictions, aggravate the effects of capitalist competition and encourage the domination of one state or group of states over Europe.

Integration leads to a process of "hypercentralization" and of increased authoritarianism, removing workers even further from decision making

centres just when the widespread development of democracy on all levels is an increasingly urgent necessity.

Direct elections to the European Parliament are enshrined in the Treaty of Rome.

In the CGT's view, what is involved are all the attempts, whatever their source, to give the European Parliament supernational decision making powers, thereby calling into question our country's ability to make independent decisions, threatening to impose on France policies which it does not want, to aggravate the anti-social and anti-democratic character of a policy which would crush the workers and block the way to democratic change.

In this connection, the CGT renews its constant preference for national independence by means of and thanks to the powers of each country's institutions which act as a basis for fair and widespread cooperation. The CGT reaffirms its belief that a Europe of the workers cannot be built without the workers' struggles in each country to obtain their common or converging demands being stepped.

Enlargement and Cooperation

The current attempts to enlarge the EEC to include three further countries: Spain, Greece and Portugal cannot in the slightest way contribute to changing the deep-seated character of the process of economic integration dominated by monopolies and encouraged by the will of governments.

The transition from six members to nine proved this and there is no real reason to think that a Community with 12 members will turn out differently.

This is even more the case since these enlargement proposals are being made within the framework of the structural crisis of capitalism. The crisis results in the weakening of the productive apparatus and the whole of the economy. The situation in some sectors has become extremely precarious as a result.

The admission of these three countries will accentuate economic, social and regional imbalances because the disparities in the level of development existing within the whole of the enlarged EEC. It will help accelerate reorganization in favour of the monopolies and will aggravate the results and the attendant social and human difficulties especially within the most vulnerable agricultural and industrial sectors and the regions most affected by the crisis.

The CGT is by no means recommending a system of autarchy as the way to solve these problems, but considers that the enlargement of the European business market and the reorganization and modernization of economic sectors must be deliberately organized by the public authorities in the interest of the workers and of the population concerned and not be subject to the blind law of monopolistic competition which leads to disaster on the economic level and tragedies on the human level.

With this in mind, the CGT demands here and now negotiations with trade union organizations to find economic, industrial and social solutions.

Our country needs a true policy of cooperation.

The CGT's interest, that of the workers, is in the construction of a new international economic order based on a trade pattern which will be mutually advantageous.

In the face of the capitalist power network, international economic agreements should strive to guarantee national needs. This is one of the CGT's objectives in its struggle.

For cooperation to be really profitable, it must depend on the growth of an economy in which all our country's assets and all its resources will be developed. The economy must be open to the world as a whole.

This view involves doing everything possible to create the right conditions for a united struggle by the workers of Europe. To this end, the CGT intends to work with all trade union organizations in the countries concerned in order to examine joint approaches which correspond to the demands and the common interests of workers. Of these, the CGT devotes considerable efforts to planning its relations and solidarity with trade union organizations in these countries.

Even if we do not like it, the Common Market as it stands is a fact which we take into account in planning our action; it has practical repercussions on the life of the workers of our country.

This is why the CGT has equipped and is equipping itself with a programme of proposals and demands concerning the EEC in its present state.

FOUR MAIN LINES DETERMINE OUR ATTITUDE

1. The Treaty of Rome

The CGT acts with the aim of modifying the underlying nature of the Treaty of Rome: it is mainly an expression of solidarity between monopolies. Even if it shows some positive aims, in practice, they have largely remained dead letters.

The CGT envisages two lines of action: to fight for the implementation, observation and extension of the positive aims and to struggle against the measures which establish the hegemony of capital.

We call for the extension of trade union rights and prerogatives, without discrimination, and the democratization of Community institutions.

The CGT will plan initiatives, both for negotiating outline agreements and for proposals to be submitted to the competent EEC authorities.

2. National sovereignty and cooperation

The CGT obviously takes into account the reality of some phenomena and some economic constraints which call for either bi-lateral, multi-lateral or Community consultations and solutions on questions of mutual interest (e. g., high technology industries, the aerospace industry, etc.).

But effective cooperation of this kind can only assert itself on solid national bases and if it rejects all idea of subordination. Common decisions and policies must result from agreement between the different countries concerned against all supranational arbitrariness.

Along such lines, cooperation brings about a more real and more just economic reality of exchanges between countries and relations between states, of a more open approach to the world and capitalist integration.

It accentuates the effective solidarity of the Member States without for all that enforcing this solidarity at the expense of other European countries and developing countries.

It removes in addition all possibility of workers competition and proves in actual fact the international solidarity of the workers.

3. Proposals for action and objectives

Two major features characterize our trade union strategy in the common interest of the workers:

- a) to step up our battle against multi-national companies and first and foremost against French multi-national companies. This battle is concentrated in three areas:
 - the setting up at group level of a workers' representative body;
 - the publication of the group's consolidated balance sheet;
 - informing and consulting this organization on investment policy and job prospects.

Such an organization, subject to structural provisions, equipped with such powers, would be a major step towards new means of control and intervention by workers.

- b) to propose solutions and demands of an economic and social nature which could be discussed with European trade union organizations in order to form a common front for action and negotiations.

These proposals are subject to a different logic than that of austerity and of profit, a logic asserting a new efficiency by satisfying needs as opposed to the policy of unavoidable stagnation, and the myth of generalized overproduction.

The CGT considers that by concentrating action against multi-nationals and in order to obtain such solutions, the European trade union movement would effectively oppose the hold of capital and therefore the deep-seated causes of the crisis.

4. Our trade approach in Europe

Without ambiguity or conditions, the CGT hopes for the development of its relationship with all Western European organizations, and, at all levels, in order to act together for common objectives.

The ruling powers impose increasingly tight constraints and exacerbate class contradictions. The problems of employment, purchasing power, living and working conditions, trade union freedoms are at the centre of trade union preoccupations.

Social struggles reveal the similarities between demands. Possibilities for common action thus appear based on proposals such as: joint or tripartite negotiations to achieve outline agreement on:

1. The search for ways of achieving a policy of full employment;
2. A real reduction in hours of work without loss of salary, in particular the introduction of a 35 hour week;
3. The progressive harmonization of social protection and the maintenance and improvement of its provisions.

The opening of joint or tripartite negotiations on:

1. Health and safety conditions at work;
2. The observation, maintenance, improvement and equality of social rights for migrant workers and their families;
3. Compliance with the articles in the Treaty of Rome relating to the female labour force;
4. The drawing up of global social provisions for frontier workers.

The CGT also declares its desire for trade union cooperation and united trade union action to preserve the trade union rights acquired in each country and to extend and guarantee these rights on a European scale.

The CGT states that it supports the drawing up of the European Trade Union Charter on workers' trade union rights and freedoms.

Similarly, the CGT is striving for and proposes European trade union cooperation at all levels in the first phase of negotiations on trade union rights required to face the power of multi-national companies. It is especially a question of the right to trade union representation and the means for bargaining, information and control.

The responsibility of the European trade union movement is directly involved.

Its power does not depend on the integration or the enlargement of the Community. It rests in the ability of the whole movement to coordinate action on convergent demands (e. g., on the CGT proposal for a European initiative to obtain a 35 hour week). The presence of all trade union organizations in Western Europe and their cooperation within one federation would be essential.

Experience shows, moreover, that the best way to promote demands on a European scale and to create the necessary conditions for coordinated action is to actively continue the struggle on a national level.

Capital and multinationals conduct their activities and their forms of exploitation within the framework of national realities; trade unions in their attitude and conduct cannot lose sight of this without being seriously lacking in trade union responsibility.

No opposition exists between national struggles on the one hand and the interests of the workers of Europe who are searching for convergent action at European level on the other hand; on the contrary.

This is the reason why the CGT and its organizations hope to plan

a more powerful struggle, especially in the sectors and regions most threatened by European projects.

According to the CGT the essential driving force behind all improvement and change is the pressure of the workers' struggles.

However great it may be, the responsibility of trade union leaders in bargaining cannot dissassociate itself from the indispensable action of the masses.

Certain forces are clearly at work to divide the European trade union movement, putting their political objectives and ideological differences before the trade union approach and the defence of workers' interests. In doing this they are striking a blow at their so-called solidarity and their efficiency.

At a time when all of the working classes should unite to oppose the capitalist offensive, such attempts, whatever their source, must incur unanimous and powerful reprobation.

The best answer is to plan united initiatives and rely on the power proposals for action.

In this way, the CGT reaffirms its continuing desire to belong to the ETUC and emphasises the benefit of an ETUC which is strengthened, independent, sovereign and rich because of the diversity of its constituent members.

But, while awaiting the outcome of this legitimate project, the CGT considers it necessary to plan united action by the workers of Europe and their trade union organizations and will use every possible means to ensure that such an objective takes shape as soon as possible.

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