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** On 1 and 2 October 1973 the European Commission held a preliminary exchange of views with government experts from the Community countries to examine the priority aims of a COMMUNITY POLICY FOR THE CONSUMER. The Commission is currently preparing a programme of action to improve the protection and information of consumers; it will present the programme to the Council of Ministers before the end of this year. During the meeting with the government experts, Mr Scarascia-Mugnozza, the European Commission Member with special responsibility for the environment, consumer protection, and press and information, underlined that the Commission had been invited by the Paris Conference in October 1972 to give more human emphasis to the European Community and to place the highest importance on improving the quality of life of all its citizens. A note on this subject is to be found in ANNEX 1.

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The information and articles published in this Bulletin concern European scientific cooperation and industrial development in Europe. Hence they are not simply confined to reports on the decisions or views of the Commission of the European Communities, but cover the whole field of questions discussed in the different circles concerned.

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- ** ANNEX 2 gives a selection of RECENT PUBLICATIONS added to the Scientific and Technical Library of the Commission of the European Communities. They may be consulted at the library (1, avenue de Cortenberg, 1040 Brussels, Loi Office, 1st floor, No. 43) or borrowed.
- ** Speaking on the subject of COMPETITION, Professor Guenther, President of the Federal Cartels Office (Bundeskartellamt), said that cases which were subject both to Community provisions and to national provisions on the control of competition should henceforth be settled by means of a Community regulation. Professor Guenther expressed this view at a meeting organized by the Economic and Monetary Committee of the European Parliament on the subject of the Bundeskartellamt's experience in the prior vetting of mergers, the supervision of dominant undertakings and the transparency of market dealings. A Community regulation of this type should improve the legal security of all concerned and give the Communities more institutional weight.

On the basis of his very long experience, the President of the Bundeskartellamt said he thought the prior vetting of mergers, which the European Commission had provided for in its proposed regulation (see IRT No. 104), was absolutely essential. He also considered that the consultation procedure now practised by the western industrial nations in the OECD framework was inadequate and in need of improvement.

- ** In its reply to a written question from Mr Jahn, Member of the European Parliament, concerning the powers of the European Communities in the area of ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, the European Commission recalled that "the constant improvement of the living and working conditions of their peoples" and "the harmonious development of their economies" were among

the objectives which the signatories to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community have set themselves and which are laid down in the preamble.

The Commission moreover pointed out that the Heads of State or of Government laid very particular emphasis at their meeting in Paris in October 1972 on the need to direct the Commission's activities more towards the improvement of the quality of life, and on the importance in this connection of a policy in the Community for protecting the environment. In the final communiqué issued from that Conference they accordingly "invited the Community institutions to draw up an action programme with a detailed timetable by 31 July 1973", (see IRT No. 185).

The European Commission confidently expects that its efforts to go further than an environmental protection policy guided solely by the essential requirements of competition will be successful. The Commission, acting in accordance with the conclusions of the Conference of the Heads of State or of Government who "were agreed in thinking that, for the purpose in particular of carrying out the tasks laid down in the various action programmes (which include the environment programme), it was desirable to make the widest possible use of all the provisions of the Treaties, including Article 235 of the EEC Treaty", is of the opinion that the implementation of the Treaties will enable a Community policy for the protection and improvement of the environment to be put into effect.

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- ** CONSUMPTION OF ELECTRICAL ENERGY in the enlarged Community increased by 8.7% in the first six months of 1973. Net electricity production by the nine member countries during this period reached a total of 491,319 kWh of which 407,779 kWh were produced by conventional power plants, 54,714 kWh by hydroelectric plants, 27,681 by nuclear generating stations and 1,146 by geothermal plants.
- ** At the initiative of the Liaison Committee of Small and Medium Industrial Enterprises in the Common Market Countries (EUROPMI), the FIRST EUROPEAN SYMPOSIUM FOR SMALL AND SCALE INDUSTRIAL FIRMS was held in Brussels on 4 and 5 October 1973. These categories of industry are anxious to be more closely associated with European policies and to get themselves recognized by the European Commission as fully-fledged partners in dialogue, i.e., to be admitted on an equal footing with the traditional negotiating parties.
- ** The Economic and Social Committee has given its agreement in principle to a draft decision put forward by the European Commission on the initial aspects of a joint project in regard to AIR TRANSPORT. The aim of this proposal is to determine the appropriate measures to be taken by the Community in order to improve, from the common viewpoint, the conditions under which air services operate and to arrive at prior consultation with the publicly and privately owned organizations operating in the air transport sector.

The Economic and Social Committee holds the view that the European Commission should develop, in agreement with the

Council of Ministers, a coherent overall concept of an air transport policy within the framework of a common policy on transport. Such an overall concept could, moreover, facilitate the setting up of a closely-knit intra-Community air transport network, the opening up of development areas and their integration into the economic and social life of the Community, an improvement in the profitability of scheduled routes and the encouragement of collaboration between the airline companies.

** The proposed directive on the approximation of the laws of the member countries concerning BREAD, put forward by the European Commission, has likewise been examined by the Economic and Social Committee which concluded that a harmonization, of limited scope, of the rules for manufacturing and marketing bread is needed in order to eliminate certain distortions of competition among the types of bread appearing in intra-Community trade and also to normalize and improve this trade.

The "EUR Bread" stamp suggested by the European Commission is looked upon unfavourably by the Economic and Social Committee since it would be liable to create the impression that a specific type of bread is to be uniformly introduced throughout the Community. Any bread meeting the requirements laid down in the directive could nevertheless carry this stamp optionally in order to be freely marketed in all the member countries.

The Committee made a particular request for detailed information on the preservatives used in the various types of bread to be furnished to the inspecting authorities in order to facilitate consumer protection.

** Forty-five IRON AND STEEL RESEARCH projects will qualify for financial aid from the Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The ECSC Consultative Committee has given a favourable opinion on the second round of 1973 steel research projects submitted to it by the European Commission for consultation. The aggregate total of the appropriations provided for amounts to 5,575,746 units of account.

A third programme of research into "TECHNICAL METHODS OF POLLUTION CONTROL IN THE STEEL INDUSTRY", likewise submitted by the European Commission to the ECSC Consultative Committee for consultation (see IRT No. 203), has also received a favourable opinion from the Committee. The appropriations earmarked for this five-year programme amount to 10 million units of account.

** An international symposium on the LABELLING OF IRRADIATED FOODSTUFFS will be held by the European Commission in conjunction with the Bundesforschungsanstalt für Lebensmittelfrischhaltung (Federal Research Institute for Food Preservation) on 24-25 October 1973 at Karlsruhe. Some eighty experts from the Community countries, the United States and various other European countries and international organizations will be participating in this symposium where about twenty papers will be given on the behaviour, in irradiated foodstuffs, of the three groups of important organic compounds, proteins, lipids and carbohydrates, and on the overall changes in the irradiated foodstuffs themselves.

The importance of this symposium lies in the comparative assessment of the analytical methods by which irradiation

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treatment of foodstuffs can be detected in order that the distribution of such foodstuffs may be supervised and the protection of consumers' health thus ensured.

** The European Commission recently published two Supplements to the Bulletin of the European Communities entitled:

- .. A COMMUNITY PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
- TOWARDS A COMMUNITY EDUCATION POLICY

These documents are on sale, the first at a price of Bfrs 30 and the second Bfrs 20, at the Office of Official Publications of the European Communities (case postale 1003, Luxembourg 1).

** A booklet on COAL AND STEEL CONVERSION IN ITALY has been published by the European Commission and is obtainable from the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, case postale 1003, Luxembourg 1.

IN AID OF A COMMUNITY CONSUMER POLICY

Improving the quality of life of every citizen is now one of the top priority objectives of a European Community willing to place its tremendous economic upsurge at the service of a more human and more equitable society. The Community is really every citizen's business and must show some tangible benefits in everyday life. Giving effect at the one and same time to a genuine consumer policy, a dynamic social policy and an effective environmental policy is a step in line with that new European philosophy which was spelled out by the Heads of State or of Government of the member countries of the Community at their October 1972 Conference in Paris.

European consumers have already drawn considerable benefit from the creation of a Common Market: between 1958 and 1971 their purchasing power rose some 74% in the Community of the Six, compared with 34% in the United Kingdom and 39% in the United States. During the same period the overall increase in consumption, expressed in terms of value, was on average 8.45%.

Nevertheless, although the consumers have been able to gain an advantage from the economic upsurge of the Common Market there has so far been no specific consumer policy at a Community level.

It is true that concern to protect consumers has given rise to a whole set of actions by the European Commission. Thus, in its work on the removal of technical barriers to trade, the Commission's main concern is to see that maximum safety standards are adopted, product quality vouchsafed and the purchaser's information guaranteed. We can, for example, quote the Community type-approval procedure for motor vehicles which is due to come into effect shortly (see IRT No. 197) and, being

based on the most stringent requirements now laid down in Member States, will go towards ensuring greater safety for drivers and passengers. Then again, the aim of the Community competition policy is to maintain a healthy competitive situation in the Common Market guaranteeing consumers a free choice and preventing outrageous prices.

However, it was becoming clear that consumers must be more closely associated with the construction of Europe and that a whole set of specific actions require to be carried out to secure better protection and more effective information for them. The European Commission is, therefore, now in the course of establishing an action programme for improving consumer protection and information which it will put before the Council of Ministers at the end of 1973 at latest and which will be the subject for extensive talks with consumers' representatives. In particular, on 1 and 2 October 1973 the European Commission had, the first exchange of views with government experts from the Community countries.

The consumer's physical protection and his legal protection must be ensured together. There are in fact quite a few relevant legal provisions in numerous fields within the States of the Community, but they differ from country to country and it would be better to work out a set of Community rules guaranteeing all its citizens the same protection and preventing the various national laws from distorting competition.

Harmonized laws will need to ensure the consumer's legal protection (e.g., against unfair commercial practices with regard, in particular, to door-to-door canvassing, against misleading advertisements, and in regard to credit sales, etc.).

Furthermore, consumer information and awareness are essential factors in an effective consumer policy: consumers should be aware of their rights

and of the measures that affect them personally. This job of informing is more especially performed by the Member States (notably through the medium of radio and television).

It is desirable, nevertheless, for consumers also to be informed of the Community measures affecting them directly. The Community should intensify its efforts in disseminating information to the public and in the first place to the journalists responsible for providing it with its news. Consumer information also now comes under industrial information as a specific activity in the Directorate-General for Information of the European Commission in liaison, naturally, with the Commission's appropriate technical departments.

Finally, there can scarcely be any doubt but that the consumer's voice has so far not made itself heard sufficiently loudly during the preparation and execution of the policy affecting him. The European Commission has in consequence decided to set up, at Community level, a Consumers' Consultative Committee whose task is to represent consumer interests to the Commission and to give advice on devising and carrying out schemes relating to consumer protection and information. Such advice may be given at the Commission's request or on the Committee's own initiative. The Committee will consist of twenty-five members, fifteen of whom will be representatives from consumer organizations, the other ten being people particularly well qualified in consumer matters. The Council will meet at least four times a year, and on other occasions at the request of half its members (see IRT No. 202).

The European Commission hopes thus to obtain enough specific and constructive suggestions from consumers. At the same time, the consumers organized at Community level will discharge their

responsibilities in Community projects relating to their interests.

It should be noted that for some time now any schemes closely affecting consumers have been concentrated in the environment, public health and consumer sections within the Economic and Social Committee and in the Committee on Public Health and the Environment within the European Parliament. This concentration will in future permit the discussion of consumer problems from all their aspects.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

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US Department of Health, Education and Welfare
Public Health Service, Division of Air Pollution
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US Environmental Protection Agency, Washington,
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Symposium held in Shirley, Solihull on 9-11 November, 1971

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Affecting Diesel Emissions - Motor Gasoline and Automotive

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