

Week of November 29 to December 4

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"The fact that you are here in Brussels proves that you have, more than perhaps your elders, faith in the Community", declared Commissioner Ivor Richard before a gathering of young people..

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The European Community spent about 468 million pounds for development projects undertaken in the member states of the Lome Convention.

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If they are to make an impact, the European states should take joint action to develop their video communication sector. Mr. de la Malène, a member of the European Parliament has called on the European Commission to draw up a strategy for this area.

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EMPLOYMENT: Work for the young

"Today, we adults should be ashamed to face the younger generation of Europeans, many of whom have never known stable employment or independence and who are therefore not able to fulfil their role as responsible citizens".

It was with this telling observation that Ivor Richard, the European Commissioner for Employment, Social and Educational Affairs, began a speech in Brussels recently.

The speech was a part of the "Jobs for Youth Campaign" launched by the European Youth Forum of the European Community to emphasize the crisis in youth employment.

Currently, some 40 percent of the 11.5 million registered unemployed in the European Community are under the age of 25. In other words, some 20 percent of all persons under 25 in Europe are unemployed, about double the average rate.

It was before a session attended mostly by young people that Commissioner Richard summed up the situation and presented the broad outlines of future action envisaged by the European Commission.

He underlined the fact that the question of how to provide jobs for all these redundant young persons was the central theme of the so-called "Jumbo Council" meeting of Finance, Employment and Social Affairs Ministers.

This Council he noted, unanimously recognised that a question as crucial as this one required a reaction at Community level. It was therefore proposed that the European Social Fund be adapted to the new needs of European society in the decade of the 1980s. How? Basically, by providing this most important European Community instrument with adequate financial means in the war against youth unemployment. The Fund's resources currently amount to £932 million. The European Parliament has recommended that they be increased to £1.4 billion in the 1983 budget.

A decision is hoped for by the end of the year, when the Commission presents its programme in the struggle against unemployment.

DRUGS: No customs duties for drug dealers?

As well as being under constant threat of arrest, drug dealers within the Community have had, until recently, to pay customs duties for any drugs they tried to sell illegally in the Community. This was the situation until the European Court of Justice took two very important decisions.

In two judgments made public on 26 October 1982, the Court decided that no duties could be imposed on drugs illicitly imported into the Community.

The Court was taking action on two suits filed against drug dealers from the Federal Republic of Germany. As the two cases were similar, the Court decided to link them during the oral procedure stage and to issue the judgment on the same day.

The first case concerned a certain Mr. W. from Düsseldorf who was arrested and condemned to eight years in prison for dealing in heroin and cocaine. The second case involved a certain Miss E. who was found guilty of taking morphine into the Federal Republic before reselling it in Switzerland. She was given a one year suspended sentence.

A few months after they were arrested, the customs administrations in Düsseldorf and Fribourg, asked the dealers to pay duty on the illicitly imported drugs. The officials stressed that duties must be paid on imported goods - whether imported legally or not. Laboratories for instance have to pay duties on any drugs they legitimately import, argued the customs officials.

The Court had to decide whether illegal imports which are subsequently traded illegally in the Community, should be subject to customs duties. The Court decided that no customs taxes could be applied on imports of narcotics which cannot normally be integrated into economic and commercial circuits.

The Court also argued that all Member States have signed the United Nations Convention on narcotics which condemns dealing in drugs. Can one then subject such illegal traffic to government taxes?

RESEARCH: New directions

One little-known part of the European Community institutions is getting a new look as it pushes back the frontiers of science in all-important fields such as energy supply.

The European Community's Joint Research Centre employs some 2000 workers in laboratories at Ispra in Italy, Mol and Geel in Belgium, Karlsruhe in the Federal Republic of Germany and Petten in the Netherlands. They date back to when the original Member States launched Euratom, the joint research effort into the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Since then Community research has branched out into numerous other fields, such as environmental and raw materials research. Recently, it has also been developing a new vocation in training skilled manpower from the world's developing countries.

The European Commission wants to see increased diversification into environmental, agricultural and electronics research and training particularly of Third World technicians. But tight budget conditions have meant a delay in the start-up of some programmes.

A programme currently absorbing a large share of resources involves extensive study into the causes, effects and prevention of nuclear power plant accidents such as the one at Three-Mile-Island in the United States a few years ago. Researchers hope that their efforts will prevent any repetition of potentially dangerous nuclear incidents and help give the public more information about them.

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LIFESTYLE: Do you like foie gras?

What a relief ... we won't have to give up pâté de foie gras! The practice of stuffing geese to fatten their livers will go on, apparently because they like it.

But isn't it a rather cruel and disgusting practice? The answer, eagerly awaited by all the salivating gourmets looking forward to their foie gras at Christmas, is no, according to the European Parliament's Committee for the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection.

Geese, they say, are always hungry. Originally they were migratory, and accumulated fat in their bodies and especially around their livers before beginning their migration. Once they were domesticated, human beings began to exploit their gluttonous tendencies. It certainly wasn't a Twentieth Century discovery and Egyptian documents, dating back to 2 500 B.C. show that the fattening of birds was practiced in ancient times.

France is currently the leading producer of foie gras and the industry provides jobs for about 20 000 small farmers. Hungaria, Poland, Bulgaria, Chechoslovakia and Israel are also major producers, followed by Japan, Spain, Mexico, Argentina and Brazil who are all stepping up production.

The fattening period normally lasts between one and three weeks, when the geese are fed 700 to 800 grammes of food a day. The Parliamentary Committee says in its recent report that the fattening is done by a person who "gently but vigilantly helps the bird" eat its daily ration. The report stresses that when the "fattener" arrives, the geese actually start calling for more food.

The Council of Europe has also rejected calls for a ban on the fattening of geese for the production of pâté de foie gras in the European Community.

AGRICULTURE: Whisky galore

Golden grain fields swaying in a summer breeze can easily conjure visions of crusty French bread or steaming bowls of Italian pasta or the snap, crackle and pop of British breakfast cereal. But a bottle?

Believe it or not, the European Community countries use more than a million tonnes of grain cereals every year for distillation into hard liquor, according to figures just released by the European Commission.

More than 80 percent of the total is accounted for by the British. Scotland's whisky distilleries alone gobbled up nearly 800 000 tonnes of grain last year. Another 80 000 tonnes went into other grain-based drinks in the United Kingdom, like gin and vodka.

The Federal Republic of Germany, if not exactly on the heels of the British, certainly hasn't been slow to follow suit. In 1980 they used about 157 000 tonnes of grain to make a variety of "Schnaps" strong enough to make your hair stand on end.

Dutch "Genever"-drinkers were also thirsty that year, keeping up their spirits by distilling more than 17 000 tonnes of grain. Another 15 000 tonnes went towards keeping out the cold with fine whiskey in the Republic of Ireland.

"Aquavit"-drinkers in Denmark account for almost as much, followed by French tipplers who drank about 10 000 tonnes worth. But Belgium only used about 300 tonnes and Italy, Greece and Luxembourg practically none.

FISHERIES Threatened sole

Concern is growing over declining spawn stocks of sole in the North Sea, despite the imposition of quotas to limit the number of fish caught.

Fishermen are now catching nearly twice as many sole as they were in 1968 and Dutch Socialist MEP Eisso Woltjer feels that faster trawlers with bigger engines could be to blame for the depletion of stocks.

European Commission officials say that quotas will have to be observed more rigidly in future by European Community member states. New inspection and surveillance measures adopted in the summer should go some way towards conserving stocks, they claim.

DEVELOPMENT: Community expenditures in 1981

European Community aid to the Lome Convention countries in 1981 focussed on such different and varied projects as gold mining in Papua New Guinea and rice growing in Mali. If palm oil plantations in Liberia and water supply schemes in Tanzania are also taken into account, one has a better idea of just how the Community used almost 468 million pounds to help its 63 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) partners last year.

Community development specialists point out in their annual report on financial and technical assistance under the Lome Convention, that 1981 was a "good year" for Community aid efforts in the ACP States. Assistance was up by 43 percent compared with the previous year.

Most of this money was used to finance projects aimed at developing production in the ACP countries. This wide-ranging category includes projects designed to speed up industrialisation, rural production and tourism.

In addition to financing gold mining operations in the OK Tedi river in Papua New Guinea (where the money was actually provided by the European Investment Bank), the Community also assisted copper production in Zambia and Zaire. Mining is an important source of revenue for all three countries.

Community financing for industry involved three large sectors, including manufacturing, chemicals and agro-industry. The countries that benefited included Kenya, Burundi and Senegal.

The largest sector financed by the Community is, of course, the agricultural sector where a wide range of projects designed to improve the living conditions of the rural population in the ACP States were supported.

The emphasis in this area was on improving the productivity of export crops, that had been allowed to deteriorate over the years. Money was spent on improving coffee-growing in Uganda and cotton-growing in Chad.

Commitments were also made in the key area of food production where Guinea received money for extending its district farms and Cameroon obtained Community funds for the development of small farms practising inter-cropping, i.e. the cultivation of both cash and food crops.

Somalia received aid for the development of the Juba Valley and money also went to Togo, Mali, Madagascar and Uganda. In all countries, the emphasis was on boosting food production and improving water supplies and cattle farming.

Other sectors which received aid included the transport sector and the building of health and education infrastructures in the ACP States.

The emphasis in the infrastructure sector was on using local resources. For example, a hospital in Africa was constructed from local bricks made out of clay from a river bed and local craftsmen made the hospital furnishings. This means that in addition to providing health facilities for the rural population, the project helped to create jobs for local inhabitants. The building was also better suited to local weather conditions than any structure made of foreign material.

Some Community money also went to provide ACP nationals with scholarships to study subjects like economics, agriculture, science and technology.

The Community report also stresses that 1981 was remarkable from the point of view of water engineering projects. Almost 29 million pounds were given to one project alone: the improvement of water supply in Addis Ababa where the population is expected to rocket to 2 million by the end of the 1990s. The city is also becoming an important commercial and industrial centre. Once the project is complete, the city will be able to end water rationing.

In addition to the Addis Ababa project, Community aid also went to a number of rural schemes for digging wells in villages to improve water supplies.

VIDEOS: A European response to the Japanese offensive

A French member of the European Parliament has called for greater cooperation between European producers of home video equipment to face the challenge of Japanese imports.

The call follows attempts by the French authorities to protect their home market by channelling all video imports through the inland city of Poitiers. Christian de la Malène, who sits with the European Popular Democrat group in the Parliament, wants the European Commission to start by drawing up a plan of action to enable European manufacturers to compete more effectively on world markets. He says that interest in home video is growing and that the industry already provides thousands of jobs.

More cooperation between leading European firms resulting in joint efforts to research and manufacture standardised European products could be the answer to aggressive Japanese marketing, he claims.