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ORAL QUESTION (0-83/78)

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with debate, pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

by Mrs SQUARCIALUPI and Mr PORCU

on behalf of the Communist and Allies Group

to the Commission of the European Communities

Subject: Protection of the mother and child in the EEC countries

The unsatisfactory reply given by the Commission to Written Question No. 977/77 by Mr Dondelinger on the Commission's draft recommendation on the protection of the mother and child¹ impels us to address ourselves to the Commission again on this subject, with a view to encouraging possible developments in respect of that recommendation, above all on the eve of the international year of the child proclaimed by the United Nations, as we consider that the welfare of the child is determined in part by the conditions under which women approach motherhood.

While emphasizing that the application of the directive on equal pay and equal employment opportunities will

¹ OJ No. C 130, 19.7.1966, p. 2422

depend in part on the manner in which we tackle and solve problems concerning pregnancy and motherhood as they affect working women, and that at all events women ought to be able to choose motherhood freely and responsibly, we would ask the Commission whether it intends to undertake action to tackle all the social, moral, human and economic implications of the protection of the mother and child.

The Commission is specifically asked to:

- provide an up-to-date picture of the maternity benefits accorded to working women in the Member States, indicating the duration of leave, amount of allowances, and eligibility for career advancement, notwithstanding absence on maternity leave, and drawing attention to original provisions such as interchangeability of the parental roles;
- tackle the problem of the harmonization of rules for the protection of the mother and child in the various Member States, as differences in the amount of benefits may lead to a distortion of competition;
- undertake a detailed study of the cost of employing women, which is generally and superficially considered higher than that of employing men, above all because of the tasks which, given existing attitudes to motherhood, are assigned almost exclusively to women;
- give more attention and consideration to the problem of motherhood for working women than that manifested in the Council directive on equality of employment opportunities (Article 2), bearing in mind in particular that, where inadequate allowance is made for maternity, the price is paid not only by the mother but also by the child, especially during the first few months of life;
- take measures to make the social partners and public opinion alive to the fact that maternity is not a matter for the woman concerned alone but has a high social value and deserves the full support of society as a whole;
- ensure that the protection of the mother and child is not used as a pretext for confirming or renewing various discriminatory practices directed against working women.