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ORAL QUESTION (0-116/79)

with debate pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

by Mr MÜLLER-HERMANN, Mrs WALZ, Mr HERMAN, Mr d'ORMESSON, Mr FUCHS, Mr SASSANO, Mr HOFFMANN, Mr SÄLZER, Mr RINSCHÉ and Mr CROUX

on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democratic Group) to the Commission of the European Communities

Subject: Adequate long-term energy supplies at reasonable cost

It is essential to secure adequate long-term energy supplies at reasonable cost if the European Community is to maintain and improve present living standards, safeguard its international competitiveness and restore full employment within an expanding economy. If unemployment is to be effectively tackled and social security extended, a solution must be found urgently for the energy problems.

In the long term, the European Community has no significant oil and gas reserves and no new, easily accessible coal deposits. Furthermore, there is insufficient Continental shelf for oil prospecting and production.

Given the prospect of fierce international competition in the 1980s for diminishing supplies of oil and natural gas, coupled with the existence of a very grave threat to the political independence of major oil-producing countries and to the safety of sea routes used to transport energy, the Community must, as well as saving energy, as is being constantly reiterated, concentrate in the coming decades on the use of home-produced and imported coal - as far as possible using refining processes - and on the use of nuclear energy, and the development of new or alternative energy sources.

The Community must also take account of the Third World countries in its energy policy and, as a highly industrialized economic zone, ease the pressure on the world energy market by developing nuclear power and other new energy supply systems and by not depriving the developing countries unnecessarily of the more easily accessible forms of energy. This programme requires exceptionally high investment and is subject to exceptionally long lead times.

Convinced that these problems can be mastered only by a major concerted effort, we put the following questions to the Commission:

1. Given the drop in population growth and the 4% annual growth target, what is the Commission's realistic assessment of energy needs for 1985, 1990, 2000? When will solar, geothermal, wind and tidal energy be available for use, in what quantities and at what cost? Will it be economic to use biomasses and agricultural waste or surpluses for energy production? What effects on energy policy does the Commission expect from the more widespread use of heat pumps?
2. What conservation measures, what technological innovations does it intend to apply and how much money does it intend to invest to ensure a reduction in the prevailing 1 : 1 ratio between economic growth and energy consumption to around 1 : 0.6? What savings can be made by standardization in industry and the home?
3. What is the estimated capital requirement for the basis of the Community's new energy supplies? Is the estimated investment requirement of between US \$36,000,000 million and \$46,000,000 million for three generations of world energy production, based on costs and dollar value in 1975, correct? What is the basis for Commissioner Brunner's statement at the latest seminar arranged by the Batelle-Institute on the occasion of the International Motor Show in Frankfurt, that an unprecedented level of capital expenditure would be required? How does it envisage that a capital requirement of this order can be accommodated in commercial and economic terms, particularly where the capital invested begins to show a return only after lead times of unprecedented duration?