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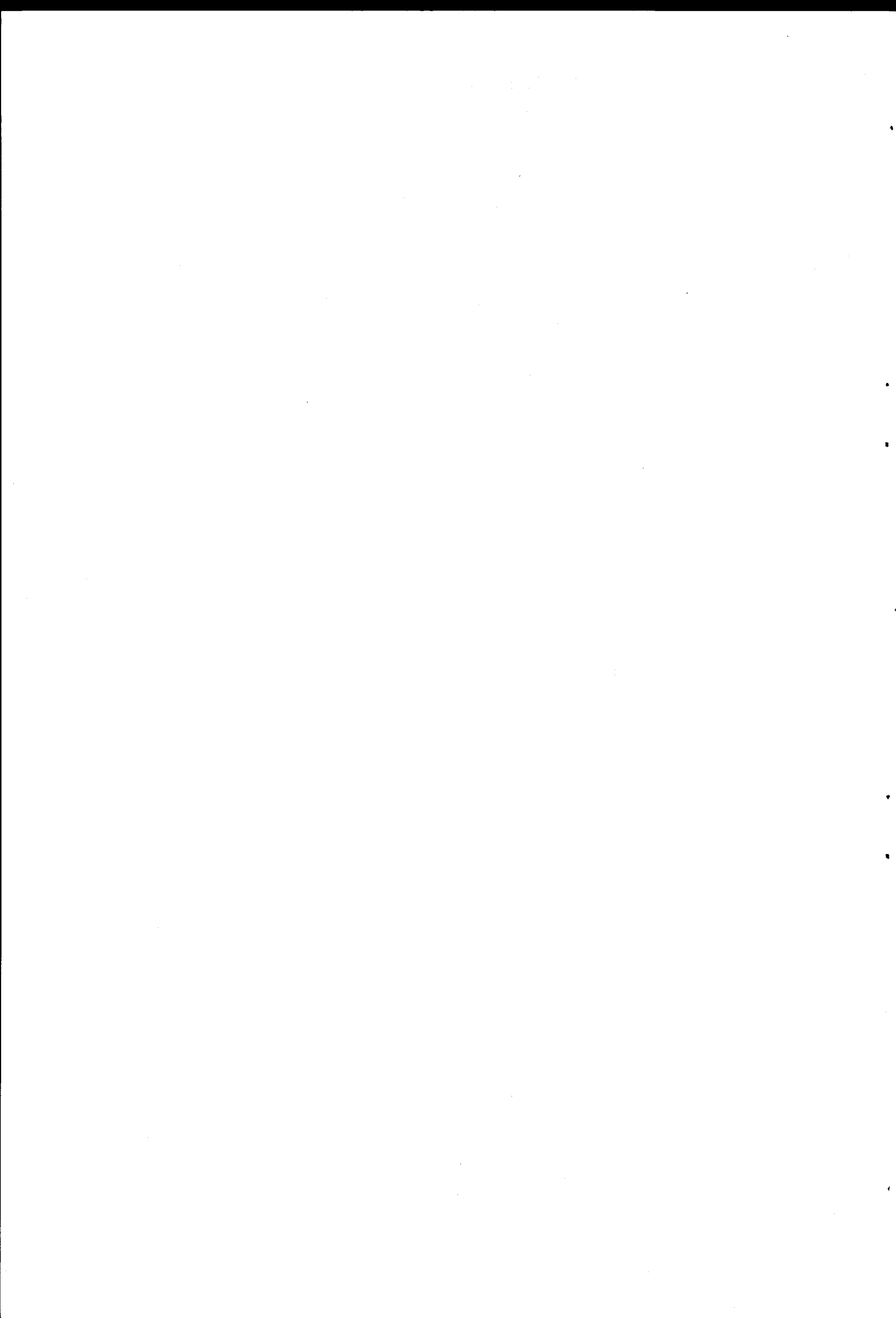
drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Public Health and the Environment

on the ~~Eleventh~~ Report of the Mines Safety and Health Commission and the Fifth
Report of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission

Rapporteur: Mrs E. ORTH

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PE 38.756/fin.



By letter of 25 November 1974 the President of the European Parliament authorized the Committee on Public Health and the Environment to draw up a report on the Eleventh Report of the Mines Safety and Health Commission and the Fifth Report of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission.

On 4 November 1974 the Committee on Public Health and the Environment appointed Mrs Orth rapporteur.

The Committee on Public Health and the Environment considered these reports at its meetings of 18 November 1974, 8 January, 20 March and 21 April 1975 and unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution and explanatory statement on 21 April 1975.

Present: Mr Della Briotta, chairman; Mr Jakobsen, vice-chairman; Mrs Orth, rapporteur; Mr Albersen, Lord Bethell, Mr Brégégère, Mr Herbert, Mrs Iotta, Mr Martens, Mr Meintz. Mr W Müller and Mr Walkhoff

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The Committee on Public Health and the Environment hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution, together with explanatory statement:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the Eleventh Report of the Mines Safety and Health Commission and the Fifth Report of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Eleventh Report of the Mines Safety and Health Commission and the Fifth Report of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Public Health and the Environment (Doc. 78/75),
 - considering that the renewed increase in the importance of coal mining as a source of energy will lead to a rise in the number of workers in the coal sector,
1. Notes with satisfaction that in 1973 the number of fatal accidents showed a further decrease in both the coal-mining industry and the iron and steel industry;
 2. Regrets, however, that the non-fatal accident rate is tending to rise in these two sectors;
 3. Regrets that, during the period under review, the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission has apparently done nothing and the Mines Safety and Health Commission very little in connection with the protection of the health of the workers concerned;
 4. Urges both commissions to investigate the extent to which sound training of workers and information campaigns using brochures, slide shows, films and other methods could contribute to the improvement of industrial safety;
 5. Urges both commissions to base their choice of investigations to be undertaken solely on their value for the safety and health of the workers concerned and in particular not to allow themselves to be guided by financial considerations when implementing the results obtained;

With regard to the activities of the Mines Safety and Health Commission:

6. Wonders whether the priorities governing the selection of topics to be studied are correct and requests the Mines Safety and Health Commission to consider whether priority should not be given to the investigation of the following:
 - (a) prevention of dust formation,
 - (b) training and instruction of all workers,
 - (c) consequences of mechanization;
7. Urges those responsible in the Mines Safety and Health Commission to take steps to ensure that an increase in the maximum permissible CH₄ concentrations does not lead to a deterioration in the protection of the health and safety of the workers concerned;
8. Regrets that various working parties have not been able to meet owing to a shortage of staff in the Secretariat and urges the Commission of the European Communities to take the measures necessary for a definitive solution of this problem;

With regard to the activities of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission:

9. Hopes that the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission will provide a full and clear description of the activities of the various working parties in its future reports;
10. Notes with satisfaction the useful activities of the Working Party on Safety - Oxygen and the Working Party on the use of Explosives in the Blast Furnace;
11. Regrets that the shortage of staff in the Secretariat has prevented the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission from disseminating quickly and on a wide scale the information it has collected on safety in the iron and steel industry despite the ever-increasing need for such information.
12. Notes with surprise that the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission has not yet been able to draw up a programme for the future;
13. Urges that consideration should be given to the possibility of setting up a working party on psychological and sociological working conditions;

14. Wonders whether the working methods of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission should not be improved to give workers more direct benefit from the results achieved;
15. Recalls moreover its previous resolutions on the annual reports of the Mines Safety and Health Commission and the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission, which had the dual objective of achieving real safety and a pertinent policy on health protection;
16. Requests its appropriate committee to check carefully whether the Commission, the Mines Safety and Health Commission and the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission take account of the wishes expressed in this resolution and, if necessary, to report on this matter;
17. Requests its President to forward this resolution and the report of its committee to the Council and Commission of the European Communities and to the Member States' ministers responsible for safety and health in the mining and iron and steel industries.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTI. General Remarks

1. Both the Eleventh Report of the Mines Safety and Health Commission and the Fifth Report of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission concern the calendar year 1973.

These reports were not forwarded to the European Parliament until October 1974.

As pointed out in previous reports drawn up by the European Parliament, obtaining the statistics required for the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission remains a problem. It was not until December that the departments of the European Parliament received the accident figures for the iron and steel industry in 1973. These figures are far from complete since the new Member States have not yet been included, and in addition the data on accidents in the Netherlands were not available by the date of publication.

2. In connection with these statistics reference should be made to the considerable difference as regards the figures given in the reports by the two commissions.

The Mines Safety and Health Commission reports any accident resulting in incapacity for work of at least 4 days, while the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission records any accident leading to incapacity of 1 day.

3. We note that the statistics of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission are based on accident figures supplied by the industry itself whereas those of the Mines Safety and Health Commission are based on figures provided by the individual Member States.

It should also be noted that the interpretation of the accident statistics is a very difficult matter since the recording criteria applied do not satisfactorily reflect the actual situation.

For example, the duration of incapacity depends not only on the seriousness of the injuries received, but also on other factors, such as the attitude of the person concerned.

II. Eleventh Report of the Mines Safety and Health Commission

4. The Mines Safety and Health Commission was set up in 1956 with the object of looking into safety in coal-mines and establishing ways of improving the situation in the coal-mining industry. In 1965 its terms of reference were extended to include health questions. Its competence remains,

however, restricted to coal-mines. In the report drawn up by Mr JAHN on the Tenth Report of the Mines Safety and Health Commission (Doc. 247/73) the European Parliament reiterated its request that the Mines Safety and Health Commission's activities be extended to include other extractive industries and urged the Commission to take the necessary action. The Commission met this request by submitting to the Council, on 20 December 1973, a proposal for a decision to confer on the Mines Safety and Health Commission the task of continuing its preventative action in the field of safety and work in the whole range of extractive industries. In the report drawn up by Mr Gibbons (Doc. 384/73) the Committee on Public Health and the Environment welcomed these proposals, which fulfilled some of the hopes that had been expressed by the European Parliament.

5. Account should be taken of the fact that, as a result of the present energy policy situation, coal is increasingly replacing oil as a more 'secure' source of energy. Higher production can only be achieved by increasing the absolute number of underground workers. This may well lead to a greater number of accidents, which will in turn result in a considerable increase in the workload of those responsible for safety.

This raises the question of whether the subjects studied by the various working parties of the Mines Safety and Health Commission, which admittedly contribute generally to safety in the mines, are well chosen from the point of view of priorities.

6. The following can be said in connection with the various working parties:

(a) As regards the Working Party on Rescue Arrangements, Mine Fires and Underground Combustion, it should be noted that CO-filter self-rescuers are in general use only in the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic, where they are even prescribed by law.

It is surprising that opinions differ on the value of these devices and that their usefulness is even contested in some Member States. The Committee on Public Health and the Environment believes that the Mines Safety and Health Commission should take a general decision on the value of these appliances and, if this is favourable, recommend their use in all Member States.

(b) It is to be regretted that due to a shortage of staff the Working Party on Electrification was not able to conduct further investigations, since electric cables and equipment are still the cause of many accidents. Although adequate safety criteria exist in this field, in many cases they are only partially applied, if at all.

The most serious problem as regards not only safety but also health protection remains dust control in coal-mines.

In many respects solutions have already been found. However, considerable difficulties must be overcome, above all in respect of certain extraction methods and the underground transport of coal.

(c) On page 18 of the Mines Safety and Health Commission's report (item 2.6.2.4.) we read that the recently published documents on dust control have failed to take account of new sources of dust in mines such as powered supports, and crushers.

The Working Party on Health, which is responsible for research into this field, did not, however, meet in 1973. The question is, therefore, whether the problem of protecting the health of underground workers is considered to be less important by the Mines Safety and Health Commission.

The Committee on Public Health and the Environment consequently asks the Mines Safety and Health Commission when the Working Party concerned will begin to seek methods of preventing dust formation in mines as far as possible.

(d) Although the subjects studied by the Working Party on Joint Accident Statistics are important, a number of questions can be asked in this context:

- Do the available data really provide a satisfactory basis for forming an opinion on the causes of accidents?
- Is it known why there should be such a striking difference in accident frequency between the six Member States and Britain?
- Can greater attention not be paid to the causes and consequences of 'less serious accidents', seeing that they also fall within the terms of reference of the Mines Safety and Health Commission?

7. Thorough training of miners is, according to one inspector, of considerable importance for safety in mines since inadequate training periods give rise to an increase in accident frequency.

The Committee on Public Health and the Environment also believes that instruction on how accidents can be avoided should be livened up with the aid of exhibitions, films and slide shows.

8. The report of the Working Party on Ventilation and Firedamp reveals that its members took the trouble to visit mines where outbursts had occurred.

Work is also proceeding on a directive concerning the conditions under which the maximum permissible firedamp limits may be raised by exemption.

The Committee on Public Health and the Environment urges those responsible in the Mines Safety and Health Commission to take steps to ensure that an increase in maximum permissible CH₄ concentrations would not lead to a deterioration in the protection of the health and safety of the workers concerned.

At the request of the European Parliament the Working Party is studying the use of firedamp monitoring instruments, and the Committee on Public Health and the Environment would be grateful to see the results of this study.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium and other countries this equipment has been in use for many years, and as the results of the abovementioned study are not yet known, the Committee on Public Health and the Environment requests that it be established how widely it is already being used and whether further improvement is possible.

9. The Working Party on Mechanization was not able to meet in 1973. Once again it must be asked whether the subjects that this Working Party is supposed to discuss should not be given priority, considering their great importance. The consequences of automation and of mechanization should also be examined. Despite its positive effects on underground working condition, mechanization represents a considerable accident risk. This results not so much from mechanization itself as from the transport of the necessary components.

10. 'Roof control' is still a serious problem since accidents primarily occur at the face.

Separate props are still used for roof support even though there are already relatively safe methods that give uninterrupted support, thus reducing the danger of falls.

The study of this problem is too important for shortage of staff to be given as the reason for not considering these questions.

11. The same applies to the Working Party on the Effects of Working Time on Safety at Work, with particular reference to difficult or unhealthy places of work, which was set up at the request of the European Parliament but was unable to meet owing to shortage of staff. Your committee asks whether the Working Party has been able to meet in the meantime.

III. Fifth Report of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission

12. Although the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission is concerned not only with safety but also, as a result of a request by the European Parliament, with health in the iron and steel industry, the Fifth Report makes no mention of the health aspect.

The report drawn up by Mr Adams on the First Report of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission (Doc. 16/71, p.5) pointed out that the latter could do valuable work above all in connection with the protection of the working man:

'Your committee is surprised that the activities and objectives of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission remain limited to safety at work. It points out that to improve the living standards and working conditions of workers within the meaning of Article 46 of the ECSC Treaty, not only safety at work but also the protection of the health of the working man is of importance. To this end dust, smoke, fumes and gases must be prevented and controlled in the iron and steel industry. No one will seriously contend that workers' health is not affected by air pollution of this kind. It is in this field above all that the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission can do valuable work by putting forward proposals for the practical application of the results of investigations and studies carried out pursuant to Article 46 of the ECSC Treaty.'

13. It is worthy of note that, as the Fifth Report points out, the increase in the frequency rate of accidents causing absence from work coincides with the substantial increase in production, the enormous rise in the number of workers, the rise in the number of foreign workers and the considerable turnover in the work-force. This clearly reveals that the coincidence of these elements with production and work-force aspects has an effect on accident frequency.

14. As already stated in the general remarks, the statistics on accidents at work available to the Committee on Public Health and the Environment for 1973 are far from complete.

The committee is, however, pleased to note that the number of fatal accidents again fell.

15. With regard to the meetings of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission the committee wonders when the Commission will finally get down to drawing up a programme.

This question becomes particularly pertinent when pages 5 and 6 of the Fifth Report are read:

'At the meeting on 15 January 1973, it:

- held a discussion aimed at designing the future programme of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission;
- decided to hold a major debate on its future programme at the next meeting.

At the meeting on 10 July 1973 the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission:

- discussed its future programme and decided to ask the Secretariat to present a draft programme at the next meeting, based on suggestions submitted by members;'

The question also arises as to who carried out the 3rd research programme on 'Pollution Control in the Iron and Steel Industry' and whether it is possible to obtain more details of this programme.

16. The Committee on Public Health and the Environment notes with surprise that the Working Party on the Organization of Accident Prevention spent two meetings, in February and May 1973, drawing up a questionnaire to enable individual concerns to discover how they are placed as regards accident prevention activities.

It also seems that it was not possible for the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission to discuss this questionnaire until 1974, and it must be asked whether this could not have been done during its meeting of 10 July 1973.

If the activities of the various working parties and of the Commission generally proceed at so slow a pace, the committee wonders whether the work that is done is really of any use to the workers concerned.

The committee urges the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission not to restrict the instruction in the basic principles of accident prevention to safety experts, but to extend it to all workers in the wider interest of safety at work.

17. The Committee on Public Health and the Environment wonders why the mandate of the Working Party on Safety - Tapping the Blast Furnace has been concluded and if there are no more problems in this area.

18. The committee also asks if the Working Parties on Safety - Overhead Travelling Cranes, and Safety - Gas Lines, did not meet owing to a shortage of staff.

19. The reports drawn up by the Working Party on Safety - Oxygen and the ad hoc Working Party on the Use of Explosives in the Blast Furnace are the only ones to give a real insight into the working parties' activities, the ad hoc Working Party in particular having clearly indicated where the difficulties lie in its field of study and how it intends to conduct its investigations.

20. In connection with the dissemination of information on the principles of accident prevention the Committee on Public Health and the Environment would suggest looking into the possibility of using brochures and slide shows in order to inform all workers of the ten principles.

21. Regarding the study on damage control the committee urges that the results be published as quickly as possible since they will enable safety at work to be improved.

22. It also requests that the possibility be examined of setting up a working party to look into the psychological and sociological factors of work since these factors, and more specifically the duration and rhythm of work, the number of foreign workers and the increase in labour-force turnover, lead to a rise in accident frequency.