

Direction A

INFORMATION (Coordination of Legislation)

GREEN CARDS NEED NO LONGER BE SHOWN

The Six have agreed that from August 1, 1972, road-traffic insurance "green cards" need not be produced by citizens of Community countries when crossing the frontiers between them. They will still, however, be necessary and will have to be produced - for example - during a police check after an accident. The card will remain an essential document testifying to the existence of the necessary insurance policy.

At first sight the change may seem a modest step, but it is psychologically an important milestone along the road to European unity.

Certainly in the past 15 years many decisions have been taken within the context of the Common Market involving an assortment of sectors - the steel industry, textile and farming as well as in the important but highly technical monetary field. These decisions have often passed almost unnoticed by the public. Ordinary people think of "the Common Market" as a way of removing customs barriers at the frontiers, or even more simply, of abolishing the frontiers themselves.

The way was cleared for the new decision by the adoption by Italy, on June 12, 1971, of a system of compulsory road traffic insurance. It then became possible to harmonize the Italian law on the subject with the laws which had already existed for a long time in the other member countries. On January 31, 1972 the Council of Ministers accepted a draft directive submitted by the Commission only two weeks before.

Juridically, the way in which the green card is to be abolished is significant. The Council has in effect used the procedure envisaged by Article 100 of the Rome Treaty which established a precise method by which the Commission and the Council are able to harmonize laws which have a direct bearing on the working of the Common Market.

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In doing so they chose the Community decision which makes life easier for millions of motorists and which can readily be understood by them.

Another Community decision of a similar nature, proposed by the Commission and approved by the Council of Ministers on May 28, 1969, is unfortunately often ignored by customs officials who have not yet heard of its existence. This is that private luggage should be exempt from examination by the customs, and that certain goods, previously subject to heavy duties, should be allowed through duty-free.

It is decisions like these that, as far as the Common Market is concerned, interest the man-in-the-street, the housewife and the consumer in general. Such decisions bring home to ordinary people the reality of the Community. )

The customs officials are for the moment still there, with their regulations and prohibitions. Ministerial circulars are not always followed, and the lines of motor cars at the frontiers remain.

The Commission is well aware of this state of affairs and is directing its efforts toward the gradual removal of barriers until frontiers are no more than historic symbols. But there are many technical obstacles still to overcome.

Britain is consulting with the Community about easier arrangements on "green cards" for British motorists on the Continent.