

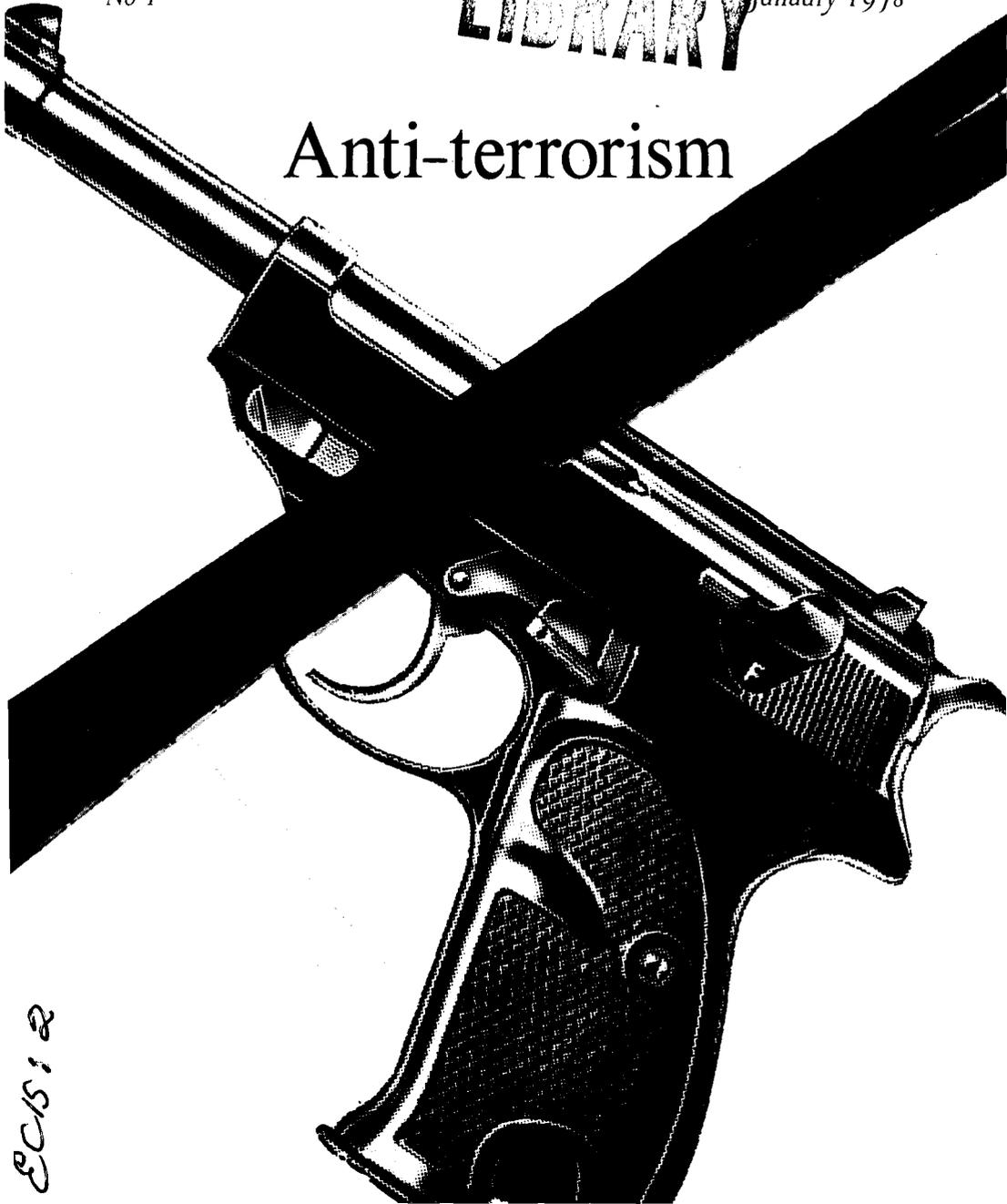
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# European Community

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## Anti-terrorism



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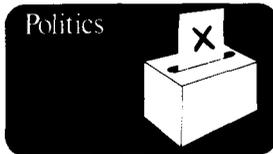
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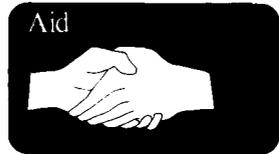
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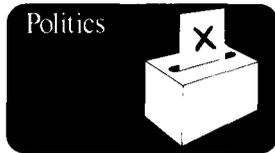
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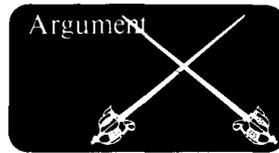
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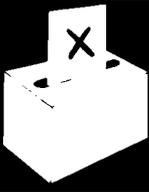
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# The Nine combat terrorism

## From a speech by Lord Harris, Minister of State, Home Office, November 9, 1977

International terrorist violence is a threat which is now experienced by pretty well the whole world community, and we see it in its sharpest focus in the industrialized democratic West. It ranges from the hijacking of an aircraft to the kidnapping of a private citizen for personal gain, to precisely the same action taken for avowedly political motives. It is, of course, this second problem, the one where political motives are involved, that confronts us all with the most severe challenge. Sometimes the kidnappers are men of considerable political sophistication and intelligence. They believe that if a democratic society can be subjected to a sufficiently high degree of violence, it will crumble. It is our task to ensure that these violent men and women do not succeed.

### British proposal

I am glad to say that this analysis is widely shared among our colleagues in the European Community. It was, indeed, because of this that the European Council agreed at its meeting in Paris in December 1975 to a proposal from the British Government that the Ministers of the Interior of the member States should meet together to consider this problem, and a number of other important issues. The first of these meetings

took place in Luxembourg in June last year, and the second in London in May this year when it was presided over by my right honourable friend the Home Secretary. As a result of these meetings, arrangements have been made for improving the exchange of information about terrorist acts, and the techniques for dealing with them. A number of working groups have been established in the technical field. And arrangements have been put in hand for the exchange of police personnel.

### Cooperation

There will also be — and I think that this is a matter of great importance — far closer collaboration in the area of police training. Only a week ago, I had an opportunity to welcome at the police college at Bramshill the directors of the police academies of all the countries within the European Community. I believe that increased cooperation of this character within Europe is an essential element in our strategy to defeat the menace of international terrorism, and I am glad to say that we are beginning to achieve this collaboration. I know how heartened we all were by the remarkable success of the German Government over the affair of the hijacked Lufthansa jet. As an operation, it was superbly conceived and admirably executed,

and I think that the whole House will want to congratulate Chancellor Schmidt on the outcome. I am glad to say that we were very pleased to be able to make some contribution.

I believe that cooperation of this character is of high importance, not only in limiting the terrorist threat but also in giving new significance to our commitment to the European Community. I think it is right to pay tribute today to all those who have

played a part in securing what I believe has been a notable advance in collaboration between member States of the Community — collaboration which has not received the degree of attention that some differences of opinion have sometimes secured, but which, nevertheless, is of crucial importance in maintaining the stability of democratic societies in Western Europe.

## Statistic of the month

### VAT rates

The following were the rates of VAT in force in the member States in April 1977.

Country	Date on which present rates introduced	Rates (%)				
		Standard	Intermediate	Increased	Reduced	Zero
1. Federal Republic of Germany	July 1, 1968	11			5.5	
2. Belgium	January 1, 1971	18	14	25	6	X
3. Denmark	March 1, 1976	15				X
4. France	January 1, 1977	17.60		33.33	7	
5. Ireland	March 1, 1976	20		35/40	10	X
6. Italy	February 8, 1977	14	18	35	1-3-9	X
7. Luxembourg	January 1, 1971	10			5/2	
8. Netherlands	October 1, 1976	18			4	X
9. United Kingdom	April 12, 1976	8		12.5		X

X Within their countries, these member States grant exemption from VAT [with entitlement to deduction or reimbursement of input tax (zero rating)] in respect of certain goods and services supplied to final consumers.

## Quotation of the month

'The Commission staff is smaller than that of the Wandsworth Borough Council.'

*Commission President Roy Jenkins, in the second Sieff Memorial Lecture, at the Royal Institution, London, on November 24, 1977.*



# The month in Europe

## **UK trade improves again**

Britain's exports to the rest of the European Community rose by 3½ per cent in the three months ending October 1977, while her imports from it remained stationary. The increased exports to the rest of the Community contrasted with a fall of 1 per cent in UK exports to the developed world as a whole.

## **No doctor drain**

There has been no rush of doctors to the rest of the Community since the barriers to their movement were lifted, says a report from the UK General Medical Council. More than a thousand doctors inquired about the possibility of going, but by October 1977 only 275 had applied for the necessary certificates, and only 219 had been granted them.

## **More Bank loans**

Recent European Investment Bank loans for Britain include:

- £52.7 million to the British Steel Corporation for improvements at the Ravenscraig Works, Motherwell, Scotland;
- £25 million to Lothian Regional Council for water supply and sewerage plans;
- £30.3 million for a series of water and power supply projects in the North-West, Wales, and Scotland. EIB loans to Britain now total £768 million.

## **Colombo in London**

On November 18, 1977, Emilio Colombo, President of the European Parliament, paid an official visit to the UK, and was received by Her Majesty the Queen, the Prime Minister, and the Leader of the Opposition.

## **More EC visitors**

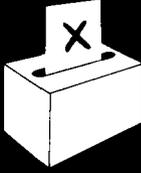
Visitors from other Community countries, not counting Ireland, increased in number by 24 per cent in the second quarter of 1977 compared with the same period in 1976. British visitors to the rest of the Community were 4 per cent fewer.

## **Cut-price butter**

The Commission has authorized the member States to sell 72,000 tonnes of cut-price butter, with a Community subsidy, to European consumers between November 15 and January 15. None of it may be more than four months old.

## **Research scholarships**

Four Britons, Mr and Mrs G. Pridham, of the University of Bristol, and Mr V. Mark Herman, and Miss Juliet Lodge, of the University of Essex, are among the winners of fifteen scholarships recently awarded by the Commission for research into European integration.



# Variety is our aim

## Roy Jenkins condemns unnecessary 'harmonization'

The fear that Community policies are leading to centralization and standardization, and making government and administration more remote from the real problems of ordinary people, is a potent one. Naturally, I cannot deny that, from time to time, there are cases where we make errors in proposals or decisions which do not take full account of the practical realities or of the special problems of particular areas; the Commission is not perfect, any more than Westminster, Whitehall, or other institutions of government. I admit that we do not always make proposals which are in accordance with the demands of the British Government, or of interested parties in Britain; nor should we be expected to.

### Open discussion

What I would strenuously deny, however, is that the Commission is engaged in the imposition of inappropriate and harmful regulations. In the first place, it is not a case of 'imposing' regulations at all: most important Community legislation goes through all the processes of consultation with the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee, and discussion in the Council of Ministers — at all of which stages the public interest, and indeed the

national interest, can be brought to bear upon our proposals before they reach the statute book. I sometimes wonder whether it is fully realized in the United Kingdom how open the Community system is to public discussion, as compared with the British tradition of government; and how often the press reports of 'decrees from Brussels' are really only proposals which are just entering the arena of public debate.

### No uniformity

In the second place, we have firmly put aside the idea of standardization for standardization's sake. It is no part of our philosophy or practice to enforce uniformity. What would be the purpose of trying to make the British act like the French or the Italians act like the Danes? But that is not to say that the British may not, after all, have something to learn from others. It is not necessarily a bad thing for Britain to be encouraged to see how other countries protect their consumers of food through stricter hygiene rules, or their workers through different social measures, and even to follow suit.

Sometimes misinformation leads to pure fantasy, such as the reports in the London press last July that the EEC was banning the use of the term 'mincemeat' because the product contains no meat!



# Sterling silver stays

## No EC hallmark

Small precious metal industries throughout Europe will not, after all, have to comply with a European Commission idea to introduce a uniform hallmark for the Nine. After criticism from local industries and assay offices in the United Kingdom that the proposed 'E' mark would not only be expensive, but would lower precious metal standards in Britain, the Commissioner responsible for Industrial Affairs, Viscount Etienne Davignon, announced on October 14, 1977, that the Commission proposals would be dropped. So the traditional hallmarks will remain.

At the moment there are two independent and distinctive systems working in Europe. The first is compulsory hallmarking, the traditional method which has been operating in Britain, France, Ireland, and the Netherlands for generations. All goods which are bought in any of these countries have to go through the laborious process of national hallmarking at one of the assay offices. In Germany and Italy, however, there is a much more liberal system which was worrying producers in Britain. In these countries, it is up to the purchaser to believe the producer. Each individual company enforces its own controls which are then registered with the Government. In

Italy, for example, there is a state register, rather like the central register for car numbers, to keep a check on companies.

A German product sold in the UK has firstly to be hallmarked in one of the four assay offices before it is legally ready for sale in the UK. This means that the free movement of precious metal goods within the Community is a laborious process. With the 'E' mark idea, a minimum standard would be set enabling each product to receive a legal stamp in its own country, but it would mean that products from, for example, Germany, which have lower silver content, could appear on the British market with the 'E' stamp.

The Commission has responded to a genuine UK worry that British products might be priced out of the general market as they contain a higher silver content than had been proposed. They felt that cheaper German or Italian goods in the shops would corner the market, as consumers would find it difficult to distinguish between the standards of those goods which have, for example, a British national stamp and those with a European one. Consumer and producer have won the day and the Commission now has to find another way to simplify hallmarks and introduce free movement of goods.



# Help for those in need

## Social Fund changes planned

Concerned about the difficulties of women finding employment and the needs of severely depressed regions of the Community, the Commission submitted proposals to the Council of Ministers for both to receive special help from the European Social Fund. These proposals were discussed and approved in principle on October 28, 1977.

### Older women

The Commission notes that, under a Council decision of February 1971, the Social Fund can already help women over 35 who wish to follow a professional or trade activity for the first time or whose qualifications, after a lapse, are no longer those in demand. Such help, however, can only be given in limited circumstances and no longer meets the needs of large numbers of women particularly affected by high unemployment in all the Community states.

Women today make up 36 per cent of the working population in the Community. In April 1977, out of 5.5 million registered unemployed, 2.2 million or nearly 40 per cent were women. The actual proportion was probably higher, since many women fail to register when they lose their jobs. An even more disturbing feature was that since

April 1976, unemployment among men increased by 0.9 per cent, unemployment among women increased by almost 15 per cent.

Such unemployment is affecting not only young women, but those, over 25, who wish to return to work after a period at home raising a family. One of their problems is that few have adequate vocational training. Community research has shown that between 60-85 per cent, depending on the country concerned, have had no vocational training or do not use their qualifications in their jobs.

### Special action

The European Council, at its meetings in March and June 1977, supported special action to help solve these problems. Following consultations with other institutions of the Community, the Commission has concluded that the best form of help from the Social Fund would be to remove certain specific obstacles to the employment of women as a means of helping them, not only during the present difficult time, but also to ensure a measure of greater opportunity in the future.

Research has shown that these obstacles are: lack of proper guidance and counselling services; the concentration of women in a

limited number of training and employment areas; lack of placement facilities, and insufficient follow-up at job level.

The Commission therefore proposes a programme of training that will apply only to women over 25, as it is they who have the greatest difficulty in finding employment. The vocational training, it suggests, should be preceded by an induction programme for employment (e.g. about life in a company, job prospects, etc.), and followed up by appropriate help in finding jobs suitable to their qualifications.

To carry out the programme, the Commission recommends that the Social Fund should also help finance the specialist training of staff, both in suitable teaching methods and with reference to the jobs and careers open to women other than in the traditional occupations.

## £8 million

The Commission estimates that the initial appropriation for the programme in 1978 will be 8 million European Units of Account (£5,200,000: 1 EUA = 65p), rising by 1981 to 20m EUA (£13m). Estimates are based on training exercises of an average four months' duration for some 6,000 persons at an average cost of 330m EUA (approx. £215m) a month, including expenditure on the specialized services of the training staff.

## Regions

Although the problems of unemployment for women are general throughout the Community they are worse, as for men, in particular regions.

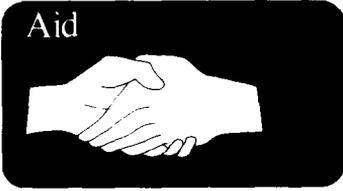
In June this year the Commission proposed a higher intervention rate from the Social Fund for regions suffering from prolonged unemployment or from the decline of vital industries.

The Council of Ministers dismissed the second condition, but asked the Commission to detail areas of prolonged unemployment that might be eligible for a 10 per cent increase in Fund intervention, i.e. to 60 per cent rather than the standard 50 per cent.

## N. Ireland, etc

The Commission recommends that Greenland, the French Overseas Departments, Ireland, Northern Ireland and the Mezzogiorno should fall into this category of region. It notes that, despite existing Community help these regions are still 'very backward' and will require massive intervention by the Community over quite a long period. Investigations have shown that, in respect of most reliable indicators, such as *per capita* GNP, population structure and rate of activity, unemployment levels, and net migration, all these regions exhibit structural weakness and underdevelopment. In the circumstances the Commission believes that *only* these regions should benefit from the higher intervention rate which, as far as possible, should be devoted to the provision of vocational training.

The proposal will not have any budgetary effect on the Social Fund, at least in the short term. It will, however, if approved, enable a greater proportion of the available funds to be used for the benefit of the five priority regions.



# Preferences for the poor

## Tariff concessions help the Third World

The Community is the largest importer and exporter in the world, representing 40 per cent of world trade. In 1976, imports into the Community totalled 140,000 million EUR (1), of which 62,000 million EUR, or 44 per cent, came from developing countries.

Trade with these Third World states has been eased by the Community's Scheme of Generalized Tariff Preferences (GSP), introduced by the Six on July 1, 1971.

The Commission has now sent the Council of Ministers proposals for the operation of the GSP in 1978. Because of economic recession in the Community the Commission has recommended the safeguarding of what has been achieved rather than the substantial annual improvements of recent years. All the same, if the proposals are adopted, the 1978 Scheme will cover a volume of trade amounting to 5,100 million EUA (1) for industrial projects and 1,300m EUA for agricultural products, representing a total of 6,400m EUA.

The Commission is concerned to ensure that, despite the Community's own economic difficulties, while

there may be a temporary halt to expansion, trade with developing countries should not be reduced.

### Background

The idea of a general system of preferences originated in the Community of the Six. It was considered at a meeting of GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) in 1963 and taken up by UNCTAD in Delhi in 1968.

It is implemented in different ways by the 10 countries that operate it. The Community was the first to introduce the scheme, quickly followed by Japan. The USA started its own scheme in January 1976, but so far no State-trading country appears to have followed suit.

The Community scheme allows for duty-free entry, subject to an annual ceiling, for all industrial manufactures and semi-manufactures and for partial tariff exemption for certain processed agricultural products. The Commission is proposing in 1978 to add a further 11 products to the latter list, totalling 307 in all.

An important aspect of the scheme is that it is not reciprocal; thus the

(1) 1976: 1 EUR = 64p

1978: 1 EUA = 65p

Because different units of account and Eurodollars have been used at different times for accounting, and because sterling has moved down and up against these units, and further because other Community currencies apart from sterling have been used in trade, moving independently against the different units of account or the Eurodollar, it would be misleading to translate global values in units of account, Eurodollars or the new European Units of Account into pounds sterling.

beneficiary countries are not required to grant corresponding duty-exemption in return.

Ceilings or quotas for manufactured products are calculated on the volume of imports from beneficiary countries in a given reference year, plus an additional amount, normally equal to 5 per cent of imports from non-beneficiary, i.e. industrialized countries. The 1978 scheme will be based on 1974 as the reference year, but the figures for 1975 have been taken into account. When the limits are filled, the normal rates of duty are or can be imposed.

Where sensitive products are concerned, i.e. those that can threaten native Community industries, the volume of preferential imports is allocated among the EC member States in the form of quotas. Further, to prevent the more advanced or more competitive of the beneficiary developing countries using up the Community preferences to the exclusion of others, amounts (butoirs) are fixed for each State.

## **Manufactures**

In 1973 the value of duty-free manufactured and semi-manufactured products into the Community of the Six was 1,185 million units of account. In 1978 it is expected to be 5,100m EUA.

Despite recession the Community has annually improved its offer to the GSP beneficiaries.

Nevertheless, owing to the precarious state of some of the Community industries the 1978 offers for a number of products, e.g. iron and steel and petroleum products, footwear and plywood, will be unchanged from 1977 levels. For products showing too high a growth rate, the rise in the ceilings will be limited to 50 per cent.

The Commission is also proposing some administrative improvements to make the scheme more flexible, and for the least developed countries, (LDCs), as before, there will be exemption from the imposition of customs duties on imports that exceed the ceilings.

## **Textiles**

Since 1973 tariff quotas and ceilings have risen from 42,631 tons to 85,725 tons in 1977 — a volume the Commission proposes to maintain.

Tariff preferences for textiles have been granted to countries who signed or accepted the earlier Long Term Agreement on cotton textiles (LTA), replaced in 1974 by the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA).

The 1977 scheme established a link between the MFA and the GSP and introduced more restrictive arrangements on 'over-competitive' beneficiary exporters, while introducing more flexible arrangements for the benefit of LDCs.

The Commission proposes to maintain the same position in 1978.

## **Regional integration**

The Community GSP has also been designed to accommodate the member countries of regional economic groups by extension of the rules of origin. Thus, the Community has adopted a cumulative system for exports entering the EC from 'common markets' such as the Central American Common Market, the Andean Group and ASEAN.

The Commission is always seeking ways to improve the scheme and encourage developing countries to utilize its advantages to the full. To this end it has arranged seminars, provided information, and produced a practical guide for users of the system.



# Saving paper

## The Commission shows how

By using re-cycled paper for internal documents, the European Commission has saved 20 per cent of its paper bill.

It would like this example to be followed more widely, and has recently suggested to the Council of Ministers that there should be a three year research programme to encourage the re-use of paper. Starting in 1978 and costing about £2,000,000 the programme would seek to improve existing re-cycling techniques and to develop new ones that are more economic and take greater account of ecological factors.

### Re-cycling

The environmental case for re-cycling is strong. Each ton of paper re-cycled 'saves' 2-3 cubic metres of wood, equivalent to about 15 medium-sized trees. Energy can be saved, too, as production of wood pulp from re-cycled fibres uses four times less energy than production from raw wood.

### Payments

Re-cycling also helps the Community's balance of payments. Net imports of paper material represent more than half of the Community's

paper and board consumption in the last 10 years, resulting, in 1975, in a deficit with third countries of nearly £2,000m. (3,000m units of account: 1 ua = 65p.) Even with an intensive afforestation programme, which might double current production of wood in 20 years' time, it is impossible to make up this deficit.

### Less garbage

The paper industry has already found in re-cycling an effective way of offsetting problems arising from importing pulp wood and fresh pulp and of withstanding competition from Scandinavian and American products. In addition, many public authorities see re-cycling as an economical way of eliminating waste paper from urban refuse. If collecting and re-cycling techniques can be improved imports of raw materials can be reduced, thus lessening Community dependence on the outside world for vital supplies.

### Problems

But there are still problems. At present waste paper is used mainly for lower-quality products, such as paper board, corrugated paper and other types of wrapping paper. Here the rate of use (quantity of waste

paper used/quantity of paper produced) is about 40 per cent, compared with a rate of use of only 6.5 per cent for high quality paper, such as that used for printing or domestic and sanitary use.

If the latter rate is to be improved new techniques are required, particularly in the removal of inks and coatings, as well as staples and plastics which are often mixed with waste paper.

## Volume up

At present, however, the re-cycling industry is not geared to cope with an increased volume of waste. An unpredictable and chaotic market has hindered expansion and investment. Research undertaken by the industry itself is mainly concerned with the development of machinery, products and processes, rather than with the broader principle of conservation of raw materials. Further, as much of the work is secret, the research tends to be carried on piecemeal in a number of laboratories, without consultation or co-ordination.

There is certainly a need for more coordination and positive results. On current projections, the use of paper and board will increase in the Community and other industrialized countries, while fibrous raw materials for the industry will be in short supply.

## Recovery rate

In 1975, paper and board *consumption* in the Community was 24.7 million tonnes; paper and board *production* 18.8 million tonnes, and the quantity of waste

paper used was 7.9 million tonnes. This showed a recovery rate of waste paper to consumption of 32 per cent and a rate of use in production of 42 per cent. By encouraging research the Commission hopes to raise the rate of use to 58 per cent in the early 1980's.

## Research

Following up pilot investigations by CREST (the Scientific and Technical Research Committee), the Commission has proposed financial help for four main areas of research, to be undertaken in cooperation with public and private bodies in the member States.

## Priorities

The Commission considers that the most important topics are:

- A detailed study of the resistance and chemical properties of re-cycled fibres in comparison with new fibres, e.g. how many times can paper be re-cycled, and for what purposes; what are the effects of multiple re-cycling on fibres?
- Improved techniques for the removal of additives to waste paper such as grease, plastics, coatings, adhesive tape and metal.
- Removal of ink, including the relationship between different types of ink and de-inking, and the treatment of effluent from waste paper re-cycling plants.
- Use of fibres from solid urban waste and consideration of health problems that may be caused by the use of re-cycled fibres.

An Advisory Committee, consisting of three representatives from each member State will advise the Commission on the handling of the research.



# Correspondence courses

## Protection for students

Students within the nine Community countries who take correspondence courses at home are offered new protection under a proposed Directive recently submitted by the Commission to member States. Its provisions would safeguard the rights of students who do not live in the same State as the course organizer and who might thus be at a special disadvantage.

In particular the EEC Directive seeks to ban misleading advertisements, door-to-door recruitment, poorly qualified instructors and contracts which override the interests of the students.

### Traps

Students have not always been fortunate in the past with their correspondence courses. Teaching material is usually sent in instalments, so that it is difficult for a student to assess the value of the course as a whole or to decide, before signing a contract, whether he or she is likely to be able to complete the course. Often students have been persuaded by door-to-door salesmen or telephone conversations, or high-pressure advertising to sign contracts for courses which are either too advanced or too elementary to be of benefit.

Five member States have already passed laws aimed at preventing

some abuses. The Directive proposes to raise standards in all Community countries to a level which already exists in some.

The proposals, if agreed, would be put into effect by the individual governments of the Nine. All course organizers would be required to obtain in advance a certificate of quality covering both the course itself and the qualifications of their teaching staff. Those member States in which a system of compulsory accreditation would be considered as infringing the laws on freedom in education, would be permitted to introduce a system of voluntary accreditation, but member States where accreditation is compulsory would nevertheless be allowed to forbid or restrict activity within their territory of non-accredited organizers.

### Detailed Advertisements

Advertisements for mail order courses which, in the past, have sometimes been over-optimistic, would in future have to be far more specific. They would have to confirm that the organizer had been officially accredited and give the size and location of his establishment (not merely a post-box delivery number or an accommodation address).

The purpose of the course, the subjects covered, and the enrolment

standards for the student would be set out, together with the qualifications of the teaching staff, the length of the course, and how recently the teaching material had been up-dated to take account, for instance, of new legislation or changes in business or accounting practices, or scientific techniques. The advertisements would tell the student what diplomas or certificates he could expect to receive on completing the course, what recognition these documents had received, and what openings he might expect to find as a result.

The student would also be protected against aggressive door-to-door canvassing by sales promoters. Member States would agree to ban 'any visit the purpose of which is to advertise, give advice or even conclude a contract in respect of participation in a course, unless the person visited has previously been sent publicity on home study courses offered by the organizer, has received teaching material relating to a course, or has requested such a visit in writing.'

No organizer would be permitted to offer cash payments to students who enrol.

Contracts would have to be in writing, and would specify the names of the parties, the name, purpose and description of the course and its normal length, the total cost of the course with the costs of books, equipment or material being shown separately, the interest, if any, charged if the course is paid for in instalments, and a statement specifying whether the teaching material sent to the student becomes his property or is merely loaned to him. (In the past some students have found themselves landed with unexpectedly heavy bills for books and equipment which they did not

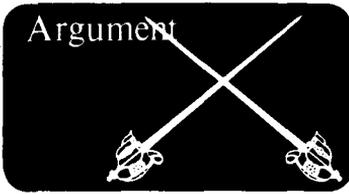
need.) The contract should specifically confirm the particulars which the organizer is obliged to set out in advertisements for the course, and should also state the circumstances in which the student can terminate the contract for the course.

The student would be permitted to terminate his contract within seven days from the date of receiving the first teaching materials, after the contract has been signed and returned. After the end of the seven days they would still be able to terminate the contract if they became unemployed or seriously ill. After six months he/she could end the contract at any time without giving a reason but with due notice of three months or less.

Under the terms of the Directive, the student could not be called upon to provide security or to cover his obligations by taking out a bank loan, an insurance policy or any similar contract, nor be required to pay in advance a sum greater than the fees corresponding to three months of the course which must not, in any case, exceed twenty-five per cent of the total cost of the course.

In the past, some mail order contractors have insisted on a 'fringe benefit' clause obliging the student to pay damages or penalties in certain eventualities — e.g. loss of confidential teaching material. This, too, is now forbidden.

Under the Directive the student would also, in certain circumstances, be able to benefit from the laws protecting those who enter into normal hire purchase agreements, though not all the provisions of such acts would apply to home study courses. Member States would also be allowed to pass laws giving still better protection to mail order students.



# Parliamentary reform

## Hugh Dykes, MP, on suggestions for improving the European Parliament

One thing the Parliament could do fairly easily is to be more selective in what it chooses to discuss. In its desire to be consulted by the Council of Ministers, it has become inundated with draft proposals, believing it must take a view on each and every item in order not to lose its grip. Instead, it should let trivial matters go through on the nod and concentrate on the important issues.

Greater selectivity should start in the Parliament's specialist committees (which, unlike those of the British House of Commons, but like the Congress, consider draft legislation before it reaches the house).

The Committees have the power to decide not to pass an item down if it is a minor, routine or technical matter. Cutting down on opinion-swapping between Committees could also save time and effort. Most Committees are grossly overloaded. The Parliament should also debate and vote *directly* on documents from the EEC Commission, not its own reports. The 'rapporteur' system is overdone.

Another useful reform would be to set aside different days in the plenary session for different purposes. Some British Euro-MPs like the idea of private members' days, adjournment business after 10.00 p.m., supply days for each political group and question time every day (say, for an hour). Members from

other national parliaments may want to see some of the more successful of their own procedures translated to the European Parliament. Other improvements might include a reduction in the number of votes taken. At present, voting is far too frequent, and it is not even recorded properly. Committee votes too should be reported in detail, and the press and public admitted.

More one-day debates on major EEC policy issues, such as the Common Agricultural Policy and economic and monetary union, might help to build up a genuine debate. And private members need more scope to submit, for instance, draft legislation to the Commission and the Council. At present almost all business is in the name of political groups or committees. Most importantly, the Parliament needs to insist on greater budgetary control.

In preparation for direct elections, there is a strong argument for changing some of the Parliament's members now, bringing in a younger age group. The Dutch — and now the Germans too — already accept that service in the European Parliament is a respectable stepping-stone in a domestic political career, not a dead end. Others may follow.

Lastly, the Parliament should settle on a permanent home.