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COMMUNITIES

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THE WEEK IN EUROPE

Delors urges quicker move towards political union. In a keynote speech to the College of Europe at Bruges on Tuesday, Commission President Jacques Delors called for Community leaders to move more quickly towards political union, so that the EC could enter into a "global Partnership" with the United States and become more open to other countries, including nations of the Eastern bloc. The President warned that the EC risked "falling apart" if it did not react to upheavals in Eastern Europe by strengthening its own bonds, especially by accelerating progress towards monetary union. At the same time Delors set out to allay fears of a European "super-State" when he said: "There is no plot against nations. No one is being asked to give up their patriotism. But each European should feel a part of the European Community, as a sort of second country." He called on EC leaders to fix a date at their Summit in Strasbourg in December for an inter-governmental conference to amend the Treaty of Rome in readiness for monetary union and hinted that such an exercise should be extended to a complete revamping of the Community's institutions. The President argued for a division of responsibilities whereby the Twelve Member States would keep financial control over internal and external security, their legal system, education, health, social security and civil defence - about 95% of public expenditure. The remaining 5% would be accounted for by EC administered spending in such areas as agriculture, research, technology and regional aid.

Delors insisted that pooled sovereignty would guarantee diversity and pluralism among nations. Still on the issue of sovereignty, he suggested that for most countries it was mythical anyway. "The facts are there, which must lead each nation to ask itself what are in fact its margins of manoeuvre and its autonomy in the modern world, whether we are talking about the growing interdependence of our economies or the globalisation of financial markets." Turning to Eastern Europe he indicated that the Twelve should complete their process of convergence so that the Community may serve as a model to the East. "Above all, European Communism is exploding before our eyes.... If we refuse to consider these new challenges then, I have no fear in saying, not only would we fail in our responsibilities, but the Community would fall apart or we would see its momentum halted by the weight of internal contradictions." The President also pointed out that Europe was on the move in other directions with the application of Turkey and Austria to join the EC and with the increasingly close dialogue between the EC and EFTA.

Limited scope of Social Charter. On a 24-hour visit to London this week, Commissioner Vasso Papandreou told the House of Commons Select Committee on Employment that belief that the proposed Social Charter will seek to impose an EC-wide minimum wage is unfounded. She said the Charter's practical implications depended on the Commission's forthcoming action programme of legislative proposals to implement it, but emphasised the degree of national diversity it would allow. However, she added that the Commission was considering the breadth of proposals that could be included under majority voting rules within the Council of Ministers because they were linked to health and safety. On the Charter's reference to workers having the right to a decent wage, she said the definition of a decent wage would vary not only between countries, but between regions and industries. Such declarations had no binding force on Member States and there would be no recourse to the European Courts. Only the parts of the Charter which emerge in legally binding Directives could be used in that way. The Commissioner told the Committee that the commission would respect the fact that countries had

different attitudes, cultures and aspirations. The Charter, she said, emphasised the principle of "subsidiarity" or the devolution of responsibility. She concluded: "The need for a Community social policy arises not only from considerations of social justice, it is also essential for economic reasons. For example, it is clear that an equitable social order accepted by the majority of the population is a very important factor, conducive to economic development and the efficiency of production and growth."

Move towards road haulage single market impeded. Transport Ministers, meeting in Luxembourg on Monday, failed to reach agreement on the sensitive issue of cabotage, or the practice of allowing a foreign hauler to operate as though it were providing a domestic service. At the moment cabotage, which is an essential ingredient if many of the promised economic benefits of 1992 are to materialise, is banned throughout the EC for the road haulage, although the UK allows it in shipping. At the same meeting Ministers did, however, agree a Directive which aims to cut the noise levels of certain older aircraft. The new measure effectively bans Community airlines from buying so-called Chapter 2 aircraft from non-EC carriers though they can continue to trade them inside the EC and to fly into the Community.

New initiative on Poland and Hungary. EC Foreign Ministers, meeting at Chateau d'Esclimont in France over the weekend, agreed on an urgent high-level visit to Poland and Hungary as a follow-up to the on-going EC aid programmes to the two countries. It is expected that Commission President Jacques Delors and Roland Dumas, French Foreign Minister and current Chairman of the EC Council of Ministers, will visit Warsaw and Budapest, probably during November.

Ripa di Meana in Sofia. Speaking at the opening of the CSCE meeting on the protection of the environment in the Bulgarian Capital, Sofia, on Monday, Commissioner Carlo Ripa di Meana said: "Times are rapidly changing on our continent. Especially in the Eastern part of it. This gives us in the Community a special responsibility to think about future relations between the Community and the rest of Europe. We must take care that East and West do not drift apart in some specific areas, such as the environment precisely now that we seem to be closer than ever before. There is also a risk that West European industry goes East in order to profit from more relaxed environmental standards. We should avoid this happening at all costs."

Brittan launches "Signpost Europe". Last Friday Commission Vice-President Sir Leon Brittan launched the Signpost Europe office in Newcastle upon Tyne, the first of its kind in the EC. The office has been established to provide an effective channel of communication for information on Community matters relevant to local interest groups. Sir Leon also addressed a Conference in Manchester on 1992 Competition Policy at the end of the Greater Manchester Europe Week. Kent Europe Week has just begun.

Annual Economic Report adopted. Yesterday (Wednesday) the Commission adopted the 1989/90 Annual Economic Report which shows an expected increase in real Community output in 1990 of about 3%, compared with 3.8% in 1988 and an expected 3.5% in 1989.

Conference and Diary Dates

UK Centre for European Education National Conference, Tuesday 7th November, at the University of London Institute for Education. Theme: "The national curriculum and international experience".

Agriculture Council	23-24 October	Luxembourg
4th ACP/EEC Ministerial Session	27-29 October	Luxembourg
Agriculture Ministers (informal)	29-31 October	Beaune
Energy Council	30 October	Luxembourg
Social Affairs Council	30 October	Luxembourg
General Affairs Council	6-7 November	Brussels
ECO/FIN Council	13 November	Brussels

Our next briefing will be on Thursday, 26 October at 11.30 am.