



COMMISSION
OF THE EUROPEAN
COMMUNITIES

8 Storey's Gate London SW1P 3AT
Telephone: 01-222 8122
Fax: 01-222 0900

WE/22/89
15 June 1989

THE WEEK IN EUROPE

Lone UK opposition to Social Charter. EC Labour and Employment Ministers from ten of the twelve Member States endorsed the concept of a Social Charter at a meeting in Luxembourg on Monday. The UK stood alone in its opposition in principle to the Commission's proposed Charter for workers rights. Denmark abstained on the motion endorsing the Charter, saying that while it had no objection to the draft, it must first consult its own social partners - employers and unions - which normally settle such issues there. The UK Employment Secretary, Norman Fowler, said: "We are being asked to sign a blank cheque, before anyone has defined what the rights would be, what they would cost". However, the ten other countries consider that the solemn declaration outlining the principle of the Social Rights Charter should also be followed up by pertinent legislation. Six governments, including the FRG, felt the Commission was being too timid and appealed to Commissioner Vasso Papandreou to prepare detailed legislation as quickly as possible. The issue will come up again at the European Summit in Madrid on 26 and 27 June.

Green light given to technical standards. EC Trade and Industry Ministers, meeting in Luxembourg yesterday (Wed), gave the go-ahead to common technical requirements for industrial machinery, whereby products conforming to basic safety norms are guaranteed free access across the EC. Other agreements reached included proposals to allow the incorporation of single person businesses in all EC countries, common rules on food inspection and labelling of food batches and the suspension of customs duties on imports into the EC of more than 500 chemicals. The Community's Television without Frontiers Directive ran into trouble however when Ministers discussed progress over lunch. With the Dutch in the lead, strong objections were raised as to the wisdom of Community involvement in the Audio-Visual market. The Directive remains on the table with the Council having three months under the Single European Act procedures to make a final decision. Audio-Visual policy was one of the priority objectives identified at the Rhodes Summit last December. It may also be debated at the Madrid Summit later this month. The 24 nation Council of Europe's Convention on the matter is now being ratified.

Far-reaching car pollution curbs agreed. EC Environment Ministers agreed a far-reaching deal on measures to curb car pollution in a meeting in Luxembourg last Friday. The new standards for small car emissions - 19-22 gm per test cycle for carbon monoxide and 5-5.8 per test for a combination of hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxide - will be brought in for new models from 1 July 1992 and for all new cars after 31 December 1992. The final package was markedly "greener" than the Commission proposal on the table and its acceptance was due to the determination of a key group of countries, led by the FRG and the Netherlands, to bring forward the date of implementation and ensure that the EC sanctioned immediate national tax incentive schemes aimed at encouraging consumers to buy "cleaner" cars. A Community framework for national tax incentives will enable Member countries to subsidise up to about 85% of the cost of fitting catalytic converters, the only technology now available which is able to meet the new EC norms. All this means that there has been a major decision to cut exhaust gases throughout the EC by 60-70%. After the meeting Commissioner Carlo Ripa di Meana said: "The agreement is a great leap forward for Europe ... The strict norms which we have decided on are an effective defence of the environment and respond to the growing demands of public opinion".

The final compromise in Luxembourg, opposed only by Denmark and Greece, retains original Commission proposals which were endorsed in April by the European Parliament. These cover carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxide emissions.

Go ahead for USSR trade negotiations. EC Foreign Ministers meeting in Luxembourg earlier this week have signalled their willingness to negotiate with the Soviet Union the most ambitious trade and co-operation agreement ever signed with an Eastern bloc country. They agreed that encouragement for joint investment and research ventures and action to combat common environmental problems would have high priority in any future agreement. However, it seems unlikely that such an EC-USSR agreement would be ready for signing before the end of the year. The Foreign Ministers also agreed on phasing out all remaining EC quantitative restrictions on imports from the Soviet Union.

Commission authorises UK acquisition. Under the competition rules of the European Coal and Steel Community Treaty, the Commission has authorised the acquisition by ASD PLC of the entire share capital of Welbeck International Ltd. Both companies distribute steel products and will between them have approximately 9% of the UK stockholding market, putting them in third place in the UK.

EEC-Algeria Co-operation Council. The latest EC-Algeria Co-operation Council took place in Luxembourg on 12 June. The Commission was represented by Commissioner Abel Matutes and the Algerian Government by Foreign Minister Bonalem Bessaih. EC-Algeria trade : EC imports 1988 4.79m ecus; EC exports 1988 3.69m ecus; EC trade deficit 1.10m ecus.

Lome and emergency aid. Under Article 204 of the third Lome Convention the Commission has granted aid for refugees and repatriated persons as follows: Mozambique refugees in Malawi (270,000 ecus or £180,000), Namibian refugees in Angola (750,000 ecus or £500,000) and Guatemalan, Salvadorean and Honduran refugees in Belize (500,000 ecus or £330,000). Emergency aid of 225,000 ecus (£150,000) is to be given to Sri Lanka and 600,000 ecus (£400,000) to Angola.

Daily and Conference Dates

Joint TUC and European Commission Conference "Learning from each other" 22 and 23 June, Manchester. For details contact TUC on 01-636 4030 Ext 269 or 274.

1992 Briefing. The next in our series of 1992 Briefings will be given on Thursday 29 June by Tom Garvey who heads the European Commission's department responsible for Industrial Standards and Technical Harmonisation. The briefing will begin earlier than usual at 11.00 am. Those interested are asked to contact Carole Smith on 01-222 8122 Ext 236.

"The Single European Market : the external implications". Jointly organised by Confederation of British Industry and Royal Institute of International Affairs. 21 July at CBI HQ, Centre Point, London WC1. Speakers include Commission Vice President Frans Andriessen and Ambassador Rufus H Yerxa, Deputy US Trade Representative, GATT.

Money Europe '89 Conference, Edinburgh Sheraton, 16-19 October. Details from Money Europe '89, 50 Richmond Street, Glasgow G1 1AP.

European Parliament Session	15-18 June	
ECO/FIN Council	19 June	Luxembourg
Agricultural Council	19-20 June	Luxembourg
Fisheries Council	21 June	Luxembourg
Industry Council	21 June	Luxembourg
ECO/SOC Plenary Session	21-22 June	Brussels
European Council Summit	26-27 June	Madrid
Social Affairs	10 July	Brussels
ECO/FIN Council	10 July	Brussels

Our next briefing will take place on Thursday, 22 June at 11.30 am.