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Report

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

on the ~~tenth~~ report of the Mines Safety and Health Commission and on the fourth report of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission

Rapporteur: Mr H.E. JAHN

PE 34.617/fin.

By letter of 15 November 1973 the President of the European Parliament authorized the Committee on Public Health and the Environment to prepare a report on the tenth report of the Mines Safety and Health Commission and the fourth report of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission.

At its meetings of 30 October and 20 November 1973 the committee considered the reports of these two commissions and adopted the motion for a resolution and the explanatory statement unanimously on 20 November 1973.

The following were present : Mr Della Briotta, Chairman; Mr Jahn, Vice-Chairman and rapporteur; Mr Lagorce, Lord Lothian, Mr Martens, Mr Willi Müller, Mr Noè, Mr Premoli, Mr Radoux (deputizing for Mrs Orth), Mr Vernaschi 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 tenth report of the Mines Safety and Health Commission and on the fourth report of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission.

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the tenth report of the Mines Safety and Health Commission and the fourth report of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission,
- having regard to the report by the Committee on Public Health and the Environment (Doc. 247/73),

1. Notes with satisfaction that both the Commission of the European Communities and the two safety and health commissions have complied with some of the requests made in its resolutions on the previous annual reports of these commissions;
2. Is disappointed, however, that the Commission
 - (a) has still not made the long overdue increase in the secretarial staff of the Mines Safety and Health Commission,
 - (b) has not yet increased the secretarial staff of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission, even though it itself considers this essential.
3. Regrets that the Commission does not endorse the arguments it has repeatedly put forward in regard to staffing, and therefore renews its urgent appeal to the Commission to take the necessary measures in this sphere.
4. Is concerned both about the increasing frequency of serious accidents in mining and about the unfavourable trend in iron and steel industry accident rates;
5. Regrets that in absolute figures by far the greatest number of fatal accidents occur in the independent auxiliary and subsidiary industries and therefore urges the Commission to take appropriate measures to curtail this unfortunate trend;
6. Regrets that the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission was again unable to obtain the necessary statistics for 1972, and therefore calls upon the European Commission to prevail upon the authorities concerned to provide complete statistical data in future;

7. Welcomes the fact that the two commissions have complied with its previous request inasmuch as they have drawn certain conclusions in their reports on the basis of statistics and surveys;
8. Would like the two commissions to try and include in their future reports more detailed information on developments in the training of new and, in particular foreign employees;
9. Urges the Commission to encourage the recruitment of safety officers from the ranks of migrant workers, recruitment in industries employing large numbers of migrant workers, as this method has already proved very satisfactory;
10. Regrets that neither commission has looked into the effects of different wage systems and working times on safety and health in the sectors concerned, and therefore reiterates its request that these investigations should now begin immediately;
11. Notes with regret that the frequently repeated request for a decision on the recognition of pulmonary emphysema as an industrial disease has still not been met, and therefore insists that the Commission should prevail upon the Council and the Member States to see that the steps necessary for the solution of this problem are taken without delay;
12. Reiterates its request that the activities of the Mines Safety and Health Commission and the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission be extended to other mining industries and other branches of industry, priority being given to sectors connected with the iron and steel industry and mining;
13. Regrets that the two commissions have not yet been able, partly through shortage of staff, to start important new work on health conditions at the place of work and the state of health of employees, or to supply information in this area, which could have been done with the aid of the working parties appointed for this purpose;
14. Welcomes the fact that the two commissions are compiling comparable statistics, and trusts that the difficulties experienced in practical evaluation will shortly be resolved;
15. Is also in favour of the two commissions examining possibilities of working together closely and - where expedient - coordinating their activities in certain specific areas;

as regards the work of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission

16. Regrets that in 1972 only three of the eight existing working parties had held meetings;

17. Welcomes the fact that, on the initiative of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission, a film was made on the ten principles of accident prevention which could be of great benefit to the many people concerned;
18. Welcomes the increasing distribution of the documents produced by the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission;
19. Notes with regret that, contrary to the wish of the European Parliament, the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission has not dealt with the problems of air pollution by the iron and steel industry or with industrial noise, and again requests that this commission should try to find a satisfactory solution to the problems involved;

as regards the work of the Mines Safety and Health Commission

20. Welcomes the fact that the Mines Safety and Health Commission has discussed the question of widening its terms of reference and has stated its readiness to extend certain areas of activity by stages, and therefore urges that the European Commission take the necessary steps without delay;
21. Notes with regret that the Mines Safety and Health Commission has still not prepared a comparative survey of the regulations and directives on accident prevention applied and in force in the Community, as a basis for common rules;
22. Again urges that a joint central body be set up to draw up outline provisions for making the latest information on safety and health immediately accessible to all mines in the Community, and regrets that the tenth report has nothing to say on this matter;
23. Repeats its request of last year for a report on the use of fire-damp meters in all acceding countries;
24. Welcomes the participation by the Mines Safety and Health Commission in advertising and promotional campaigns by Member States on safety and health in mining and urges that material and financial support, which is at present inadequate, should be greatly increased in the years ahead;
25. Draws attention furthermore to its earlier resolutions on the annual reports of the two commissions, which clearly express its concern to secure an effective safety and health policy;

26. Calls upon its appropriate committee to check carefully whether the Commission of the European Communities, the Mines Safety and Health Commission and the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission comply with the demands made in this resolution, and to report back to it where appropriate;
27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution and the report of its committee to the Council and Commission of the European Communities, and to the Ministers responsible for safety and health in mining and in the iron and steel industry in Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

1. The fourth report of the Steel Industry Safety and Health Commission and the tenth report of the Mines Safety and Health Commission relate to the calendar year 1972. As already pointed out in the European Parliament's last report, problems continue to be encountered in obtaining the statistics needed by the Steel Commission. For example, the Committee on Public Health and the Environment did not receive the final data on accidents in the iron and steel industry until the end of October 1973, while the figures quoted in the fourth report only cover the period up to 1971. Your committee again calls attention to this unhappy state of affairs and hopes that it will not recur next year.

Moreover, the data refer only to accidents and provide no systematic information on health protection in the sectors in question. In your committee's view, its wish that the two commissions should intensify their activities in the area of health cannot be met without the comprehensive statistical data.

Your committee would also welcome an attempt on the part of the two commissions to explore the possibilities of compiling statistics as far as possible in the same form. This would not only allow comparison between the accident situations in the two sectors, but would also make it generally easier for readers of the two reports to grasp the information contained in them.

Furthermore, the two commissions must be asked to collaborate as much as possible in areas where this is feasible and desirable. It is not clear from these reports whether or not such collaboration already exists.

I. Matters concerning both commissions

Staffing

2. Once again this year your committee notes that both commissions have not enough qualified staff to cope with the various urgent tasks assigned to them. For example, the Mines Commission reports that shortage of staff prevented it from starting work on medical problems, which also cover environmental factors such as noise, vibrations, heat and lighting.

Your committee deplores this situation in the strongest possible terms and therefore earnestly calls upon the Commission to take steps to remedy it. At a time when a great deal is often and rightly said about the need to improve safety and health conditions at work, it is highly

paradoxical that quite modest requests for staff increases in organizations entrusted with important work precisely in these areas cannot be met.

The question of staffing was dealt with at length in earlier reports of the European Parliament, which drew attention to the need for staff with specialized qualifications appropriate to the activities of the two commissions, e.g. doctors, safety engineers, and so on. It is plain that staff with such specialized qualifications are in fact required, as is also an increase in administrative staff. There would be no purpose in going into the regrettable situation again at length, although this should not be taken to mean that the committee is satisfied with the existing state of affairs.

Accident trends

3. Your committee has expressed its regret at the growing rate of serious accidents in mining and the incidence of accidents as a whole in the iron and steel industry. At the same time it welcomes the marked improvements attained in certain areas. A very marked reduction is noted in the number of fatal accidents in the iron and steel industry, where, according to 1972 statistics just published, the figure fell from 115 in 1971 to 93 in 1972. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the increase in the overall accident figures recorded in 1967 has now clearly been arrested, at least in the case of fatal accidents, which in previous years had always exceeded 100.

In fact the statement in the fourth report to the effect that in absolute figures by far the greatest number of fatal accidents occur in independent auxiliary and subsidiary industries, is disturbing. The committee therefore considers that the Commission should take appropriate measures to try and arrest this dangerous trend.

There is still less cause for satisfaction with the trend in the overall number of accidents involving absence from work, which rose from 73,882 in 1971 to 74,391 in 1972. A comparison of this figure with those for 1967 and 1968 reveals a very serious deterioration in absolute terms and an increase in frequency from 80 in 1967 to 82 in 1968 and to 97 in 1972. This means that the frequency almost reached the 1960 level of 98. This is naturally a significant and worrying development. Your committee trusts that the Steel Industry Commission will spare no efforts to reverse this trend.

The Mines Commission also recorded a partial improvement in the statistics relating to its field of activity, where the number of fatal accidents fell from 182 in 1971 to 147 in 1972. This is a welcome

tendency and it is hoped that with appropriate efforts on the part of everyone, including the Mines Commission, a further improvement will be shown in the future. The number of serious accidents in mining however, has remained stable but not decreased, for although the total number of serious accidents fell from 6,249 in 1971 to 5,763 in 1972, the frequency i.e. the number of serious accidents per million working hours - showed a slight rise, namely from 15,088 to 15,600. This is in fact the highest frequency recorded during the period covered by the tenth report, which goes back to 1958 when the frequency was only 13,551. There is therefore every reason to stress this situation and to hope that it will be possible not only to hold the figure steady at this level, as in recent years, but also to bring about a real improvement in the years ahead.

Information needs of new and, in particular foreign workers

4. Your committee is aware of the two commissions' concern that new workers should receive the fullest possible information relating to their particular sector. This is especially important in the case of workers from other countries with inadequate knowledge of the language and general experience of industrial work. Your committee is fully aware of the very great difficulty of carrying out systematic statistical investigations dealing in particular with the position of migrant labour at work, and is therefore all the more anxious to discover to what extent these important information needs are being met, either through the two commissions or through other agencies. Your committee would therefore welcome details on this matter in the next report by each of the two Safety and Health Commissions, and also information on the remuneration, accommodation and social protection of migrant workers.

In Germany excellent results have been achieved with safety advisers recruited among migrant workers. Your committee therefore recommends to the Commission (which provides the secretariats for the two Safety and Health Commissions) that it should encourage Member States to adopt this method throughout the Community as soon as possible.

Study of the effect of different systems of remuneration and working hours on safety

5. Your committee notes that, despite the wishes expressed by the European Parliament in the past, the two reports make no mention of any research into the effect of different systems of remuneration on safety. Nor do the reports touch on the effect of different systems of working hours. Your committee believes that attention should have already been given to these aspects and stresses once again the need for urgent action in this field. It is generally accepted that such factors have a bearing on safety in terms of both accident figures and health. It would therefore be proper and desirable for the two commissions to embark on research in this area, or at any rate to declare their intention of doing so within the limits of the staff available.

Occupational diseases

6. In view of the fact that the terms of reference of the two commissions relate only to the prevention of pathological conditions but do not include the recognition of specific illnesses as occupational diseases, your committee appeals to the Commission to press the Council and the Member States for a decision on this matter. This appeal is all the more urgent as it is now about 10 years since the European Parliament first called for the recognition of pulmonary emphysema as an occupational disease. The European Parliament's last resolution requested that such a decision should be taken within at most two years. Your committee therefore reiterates its call for a solution to this problem. It considers that, although the recognition of occupational disease does not fall within the terms of reference of the two commissions, it is entitled to ask them to report on the information available in this domain.

Extension to other branches of industry

7. Your committee again calls attention to the European Parliament's wish for the terms of reference of the two commissions to be extended to other industrial and mining undertakings in the Community, and urges the Commission to support this development. Your committee is aware that the Commission has drawn up plans along these lines in connection with its proposals for a programme of social action. This would be an important step towards improvement of safety and health in a large number of undertakings, but it presupposes a substantial increase in the staff and funds available to the commissions in question. This is essential if we are to overcome the present difficulties and reach a situation where effective and wide-ranging measures can be taken in this field. The report of the Mines Commission suggests that careful consideration should be given to the various possibilities of extending its activities to all raw materials-producing industries. A gradual transition is proposed, the terms of reference being extended initially to cover underground mining of raw materials, and subsequently to opencast mining operations. The importance of this extension of the activities of the Mines Commission can be appreciated in the light of the fact that a total of 238,000 employees working for 18,200 undertakings would be brought into the reckoning (excluding Denmark and Ireland). Your committee notes with satisfaction that the Mines Commission has given its attention to this matter. It would, of course, be glad to learn in the next report of the Steel Industry Commission that it, too, had broached these problems.

Health Protection

8. With reference to the above comments on the shortage of staff in the secretariats of the two commissions, your committee finds it deplorable that this deficiency should be one of the principal causes of the inability of the two commissions to undertake research in the area of health protection (preventive medicine) or to carry through any effective measures. For instance, the special working party on health protection of the Mines Commission was unable to meet at all last year on these important matters, and work on a whole series of major medical and environmental problems had to be abandoned. The report of the Steel Industry Commission likewise makes no mention of work on health protection. The Committee on Public Health and the Environment realizes that the two commissions must give priority to work already in progress, but calls upon them to set up the necessary working parties or else instruct existing working parties to continue or complete this work as soon as is compatible with other commitments.

II. The Steel Industry Commission

9. Only three working parties met during 1972: five working parties did not meet at all. This reflects a low level of activity which is partially, of course, attributable to the difficult staffing situation. The three working parties that held meetings only did so on a total of four occasions, each of the meetings lasting at least two days. Your committee takes the view that it should have been possible, despite the shortage of staff, to hold a greater number of meetings and thus increase activity. It is to be hoped that in its report for 1973 the Steel Industry Commission will in due course be able to report a greater level of activity by its existing working parties.

10. Your committee learned with interest of the production of a very useful film to illustrate the ten-point accident-prevention programme drawn up by the Steel Industry Commission. The film will probably be made available to a number of interested parties in the second half of 1973. It may well be that collaboration between the two commissions might be particularly desirable in this area from the standpoint of both safety and cost, among other factors.

11. Your committee notes with satisfaction the wider dissemination of the information material put out by the Steel Industry Commission, and is pleased that the European Parliament's request for data on the scope of information activity, expressed some time ago, has been met. Your committee also notes with interest the current preparation and availability in the near future of a checklist to make it easier for undertakings to establish whether they comply with the requirements of the Steel Industry Commission's

ten safety points. Your committee furthermore supports the Steel Industry Commission in its efforts to obtain statistical data on trends in accidents not involving absence from work, since such data would make it easier to assess the present situation and hence help in the prevention of all forms of accidents.

III. The Mines Commission

12. Your committee welcomes the Mines Commission's statements in its tenth report on the possibilities of extending its range of activities to other raw materials-producing undertakings. Attention is called to the comments made in section 7.

13. Your committee welcomes the list of regulations on safety and health protection adopted in the Member States in 1971 and 1972. In contrast, it is necessary to point out once again, as the European Parliament did in its last report, that no comparative survey has yet been compiled on the safety regulations applicable in the individual Member States. Your committee realizes that this is an ambitious task but feels that it should not be beyond the capabilities of the Mines Commission, especially as this wish was brought to its knowledge a long time ago. Moreover, the accession of the United Kingdom to the Communities on 1 January 1973 made it even more urgent to approximate the legal provisions of the Member States in this area, among others, in view of the fact that coal production in the United Kingdom is almost equal to the combined output of the original Member States.

14. Your committee regrets that no common central agency which could draw up outline provisions to promote the dissemination of the latest information on safety and health protection to all mining undertakings in the Community has as yet been set up and appeals again to the Commission to show the necessary political resolve. Attention is also called to the European Parliament's report, prepared by Mr Pêtre on behalf of the Committee on Social Affairs and Health (Doc. 324/72).

15. Furthermore, your committee found no evidence that the Mines Commission had complied with Parliament's request for details on the actual use of firedamp meters in the three new Member States among others. Your committee therefore reiterates its request for this information. It acknowledges the fact that the working party on firedamp is actively studying these problems.

16. Your committee welcomes the Mines Commission's participation in various publicity campaigns in the Community and is, moreover, satisfied with its activity as a whole, since both the commission itself and the working parties have held numerous meetings and only three of the eleven working parties failed to meet in 1972.

IV. Concluding remarks

17. The Committee on Public Health and the Environment would like to take this opportunity to thank the two commissions for their valuable work during the year under review. Your committee is aware of the difficult conditions under which they have to work in view of the continuing shortage of staff. Your committee felt compelled to criticize certain aspects, but this should not be allowed to overshadow the generally laudable work of both commissions. At the same time, your committee would like to pay tribute to the imposing amount of work done by the secretariat of the two commissions.

Finally, your committee welcomes the form in which the reports were submitted, but calls attention to the need for better practical evaluation of the statistics.

