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Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment

on the report from the Commission of the European Communities on the development of the social situation in the Community in 1973 (Doc. 2/74)

Rapporteur: Lady ELLES

PE 36.610/fin.

The Council of the European Communities forwarded the Report on the Development of the Social Situation in the Community in 1973 (Doc. 2/74) to the European Parliament.

The Committee on Social Affairs and Employment appointed Lady ELLES rapporteur on 19 February 1974. It considered the draft report at its meetings of 21 March and 10 April 1974 and adopted it at the latter meeting by 8 votes to 3.

The following were present: Mr Bertrand, chairman; Mr Adams, vice-chairman; Lady Elles, rapporteur; Mr De Koning (deputizing for Mr Girardin), Sir Douglas Dodds-Parker, Mr Laudrin, Mr Pêtre, Mr Vermeylen, Mr Wieldraaijer.

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A

The Committee on Social Affairs and Employment hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution, together with explanatory statement:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the Report on the Development of the Social Situation in the Community in 1973

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Report on the Development of the Social Situation in the Community in 1973 (Doc. 2/74),
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment (Doc. 51/74)

1. Agrees that the most important achievement of 1973 in the social field was the adoption of a resolution by the Council embodying its support for a social action programme, and congratulates the Commission on its first full year of work under this programme since the Paris Summit Conference of 1972;

2. Approves the Commission's choice of priorities for this programme and welcomes the initiatives so far taken;

3. Expresses its satisfaction with the widening of the scope of the European Social Fund, at the same time noting with disapproval the reduction of resources available to the Fund;

4. Notes also with disapproval the continuing absence of a comprehensive Regional Development Fund designed to make progress towards correcting imbalances of income between regions of the Community;

5. Urges the Commission to study the advantages of existing social security schemes in the Member States for assistance to the elderly and the low-paid;

6. Welcomes the proposals so far made towards improvements in health and safety regulations in industry and emphasizes the need for severe penalties in cases of negligence on the part of the employer;

7. Hopes that the Commission will impress upon both sides of industry the paramount need for harmonious industrial relations at a time when inflation threatens the economic well-being of the Community, and that the Commission will make continuing efforts to develop schemes to safeguard the purchasing power of the people;

8. Urges the Commission to ensure that shortages of raw materials are not used by industry as a means of making excessive profits, and that all allegations to this effect are investigated thoroughly with a view to establishing the facts;

9. Notes with alarm the decline in the birth rate as shown in the statistical survey of social indicators;

10. Notes with disappointment the increase in the number of unemployed (represented as a percentage of the civilian labour force) and urges the Commission to submit proposals to the Council to resolve this problem;

11. Welcomes the Commission's efforts to establish the principle of equal pay and conditions for women;

12. Looks forward to the publication of the information bulletin on vocational training, promised for 1974, and hopes that this will mark a new approach to the problem of retraining with a view to ensuring greater flexibility in the employment market.

13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution and the report of its committee to the Council and the Commission of the European Communities.

B

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

1. The proposed Motion for a Resolution embodies the committee's opinion on the Report on the Development of the Social Situation in the Community in 1973. We must recognise first of all that 1973 was a difficult year both for individual Member States and for the Community as a whole, and that the problems of inflation and energy supply, although economic in origin, inevitably had an effect on the Community's efforts in the field of social affairs. The kind of action envisaged in the social programme of the Commission has therefore been rendered more than ever urgently necessary for many of the Community's citizens.

2. In the light of this, it is most disturbing that the resource allocations of the European Social Fund should have been reduced in 1973, and that so far there are few signs that a comprehensive Regional Development Fund will be established to alleviate the hardship and disequilibrium still experienced in many outlying areas of the Community.

3. The Committee would like to emphasize how much a successful social action programme can do to ease the tensions brought about by economic uncertainty throughout industry and the public services, in addition to such improvements as may be made in the welfare of particular groups. Of these groups the migrant workers are not only one of the most numerous, they are also the clearest example of a social problem inextricably bound up with imperfections in the Community's overall economic development. Our long-term aim must be to provide more jobs in the labour-exporting areas. Further we view with considerable alarm the decline in the birth rate (represented as live births per thousand of the population), which can only result in an increased dependence on the part of host-countries on the migrant labour force. It is all the more urgent to give opportunities for training and careers to those groups which have hitherto been neglected, or in part discriminated against - women, who constitute 52 per cent of the population of the Community, as well as many millions of handicapped who, with special training, could make a useful contribution to the labour force as well as fulfilling their own potential.

The committee looks forward to being able to give every encouragement to the Commission's proposals concerning vocational training and retraining. We believe that greater mobility of labour is of high importance in the flexible well-managed economy upon which we shall all be dependent in the future. Only by continuing with the initiatives taken in 1973 can we hope to make our economy sufficiently strong to withstand the disruptive effects of inflation.