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\*\* Two years ago the Heads of State or Government of the Community countries asked the European Commission to draw up a SOCIAL ACTION PROGRAMME. Since then the Council of Ministers has approved a programme, stated which actions have priority, and adopted certain proposals for directives presented by the European Commission. Other proposals are currently undergoing examination by the Council and still others are being formulated in the Commission's departments.

ANNEX 1 gives a short summary of the progress made in implementing the Social Action Programme of the Community.

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\*\* Over the last decade, the EXODUS FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE, in Community States, has generally been greater than forecast, and everything points to the probability that it will continue at the same pace. Farm workers are leaving the countryside in their tens of thousands in the Benelux countries, and in millions in Germany, France and Italy. Between 1950 and 1970 about half of all the farm workers in Community countries have had to leave the land. This is one of the main findings of a report drawn up by the Commission, on the RETRAINING OF WORKERS LEAVING AGRICULTURE, in the six founder members of the European Community.

ANNEX 2 gives a brief summary of this report.

\*\* Water, air, soil and some food products (fruit, vegetables, dairy products) often contain PESTICIDE residues or other TOXIC SUBSTANCES used in industry. The content of these products in the environment is very low but may prove dangerous to man, since they persist in the human organism as well as in the environment. One group of products, the "organo-halogen compounds", which are found in insecticides and herbicides and used in printing and the electrical industry, are a particular source of environmental pollution. It is therefore of paramount importance to make an objective assessment of the hazards that the presence of these compounds in the environment represents for man and his surroundings. To fill this need the Commission's departments have undertaken to cooperate with specialists from the Member States in a number of studies.

ANNEX 3 gives a short account of the results of these studies.

\*\* The next meeting of the Community's CONSUMERS' CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (see IRT No 202) will be held on 18 October in Brussels. Agricultural prices, consumer credit, and the Community's energy situation are on the agenda.

\*\* An investigation into the CURRENT CIRCULATION OF "INDUSTRY AND SOCIETY" has shown that the bulletin is available in 105 countries. Its present circulation is divided up as follows, between the different languages: French - 30.8%; German - 18.2%; Italian - 12%; Dutch - 10%; English - 19.5%; Danish - 9.5%.

\*\* In FRANCE several events occurred on the CONSUMER PROTECTION front in the last few months:

- (i) Since 1 February 1972 it has been compulsory to mark all prices, but this regulation is far from being observed. The findings of the UFCS (Union féminine civique et sociale = Women's civic and social union), in a survey conducted at 8 618 sales outlets, were that 52% of shopkeepers keep to the regulation, 14% never mark any prices, and the remaining 34% observe the regulation only to a very limited extent. The shopkeepers concerned were informed of the UFCS's findings. This organization will soon be conducting another enquiry of the same type, at the same outlets. In January 1974, the Fédérations des Familles de France (associations representing family interests in France) associated themselves with this action by distributing 3 000 leaflets in the Cherbourg area, calling for a boycott of shops which did not mark their prices.
- (ii) The "holiday" campaign mounted in 1973 by the regional union of consumers' associations for Aquitaine, repeated this summer, is of interest in that it protects the consumer on holiday. This campaign, which was carried out in cooperation with local authorities and the departments for domestic trade and prices, meant that, by having a weekly rota of staff on duty in the main tourist centres in Aquitaine, certain court actions between tourists and local traders could be settled. It is to be hoped that this activity will spread beyond the boundaries of Aquitaine in 1975.
- (iii) Finally, an activity undertaken this year in the market at Chantilly by a consumer club, has the merit of being original and enables the consumer to take immediate action. From the time the market opens, club militants collect and write up on a big blackboard the lowest prices for each article on sale.

\*\* From 24 to 29 November the Commission is organizing a seminar in Munich for welfare workers concerned with MIGRANT WORKERS. This is another activity in the series organized by the Commission, with the aim of improving working and living conditions for migrant workers, one of the priorities of the Community's

Social Action Programme (see ANNEX 1 of this issue). The object of the seminar is to examine the situation of migrant workers, and to give social workers the opportunity of discussing current problems with colleagues and experts from other Member States and of obtaining information from institutions dealing with migrant workers. Particular features of the programme for the meeting are a demonstration of audio-visual methods, a visit to a car factory where special language courses are given for migrant workers, a visit to German schools which have a large proportion of children of foreign workers, and a visit to a migrant workers' committee in Munich.

\*\* In reply to a written question by a Member of the European Parliament concerning the BALANCE OF PAYMENTS DEFICIT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, the European Commission states that there is no basis for the view that Great Britain's accession to the Community has had an unfavourable effect on the British balance of payments. The Commission makes it clear that the United Kingdom's entry into the Community has opened up tremendous new opportunities for British exporters. The other eight member countries comprise a market which, in 1973, totalled about US \$200 000 million, or one-third of total world imports. Since the creation of the Community customs union in 1959, the value of intra-Community trade has increased more than elevenfold, or twice as fast as that of world trade as a whole. British exports to the six original members of the Community increased by 38%, compared with an increase of 25% in exports to the rest of the world. As the progress of the Community towards a single trading unit proceeds over the next few years, British exporters should be able to increase substantially their share of the Community market.

\*\* The European Community has just published a directory of FOOD RESEARCH centres in the countries of the European Community. The publication provides exhaustive data on more than 500 research centres, which makes it an important tool for research workers, consumer organizations and similar bodies. The directory is on sale at the Publications Office of the European Communities, PO Box 1003, Luxembourg. A report on industrial food research in the European Community, designed to supplement the directory, will be published soon.

\*\* In conjunction with other French, Belgian, Polish and Rumanian universities and institutes, the University of Paris VII has decided to arrange a SUMMER COURSE ON BASIC ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS. The European Commission welcomes this initiative, and has just decided to grant aid to the organizers, particularly to help publish the course material.

SOCIAL ACTION PROGRAMME - PROGRESS REPORT

Almost two years have elapsed since the Heads of State or Government meeting in Paris invited the Community Institutions to draw up a Social Action Programme. In October 1973 the Commission presented a draft programme to the Council of Ministers which the latter adopted in January 1974 (see I&S - No 1/74). The Council expressed the political will to adopt the measures necessary to achieve a number of objectives in the social field, covering the period from 1974 to 1976, and laid down a list of priorities.

1. First set of proposals

Several weeks after submitting the Social Action Programme, the Commission put forward concrete proposals for seven immediate actions. These were:

- (i) Assistance from the European Social Fund for migrant and handicapped workers;
- (ii) An action programme for handicapped workers;
- (iii) The setting up of a European General Industrial Safety Committee, and extension of the competence of the Mines Safety and Health Commission;
- (iv) A directive providing for the approximation of legislation of Member States concerning the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women (see I&S - No 2/74);
- (v) General implementation of the 40-hour working week by 1975, as well as 4 weeks annual paid holiday by 1976;
- (vi) The setting up of a European Foundation for the improvement of the environment and of living and working conditions (see IRT No 213);
- (vii) Approximation of the Member States' legislation on collective dismissals (see IRT No 182).

In June 1974, the Council of Ministers of the Community adopted the first three proposals, namely, intervention of the Social Fund in favour of migrant and handicapped workers, the programme in favour of handicapped workers, and the setting up of a safety committee. These three decisions therefore constitute the first definite action taken by the Council of Ministers in the social field.

## 2. Second set of proposals

During the second half of 1974 the Commission has forwarded three further proposals to the Council on the following matters:

- (i) The setting up of a European Vocational Training Centre (see I&S - No 13/74);
- (ii) The harmonization of laws for the protection of the acquired rights of workers in the case of mergers and takeovers (see I&S - No 24/74);
- (iii) Specific action to be taken in favour of migrant workers, by implementing existing provisions (see I&S - No 13/74).

At the same time Dr Hillery, Vice-President of the European Commission, announced that the Commission was preparing an action programme for migrant workers and their families which would be submitted before the end of the year. A special task force is now preparing the various proposals which will aim to improve the conditions of free movement within the Community of workers from Member States, improve the reception arrangements for migrant workers and achieve equality of treatment for Community and non-Community workers and promote consultation on immigration policies towards non-member states.

## 3. Actions between now and the end of 1974

Between now and the end of the year the Commission will be presenting proposals to the Council for a further series of priority actions which will include:

- (i) Actions to achieve equality between men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion;
- (ii) An action programme for health and safety at work beginning in those sectors where working conditions appear to be most difficult;
- (iii) Measures to combat poverty by drawing up pilot schemes (see I&S - No 26/74).

The Commission is also actively engaged in promoting appropriate consultations between Member States on their employment and social protection policies, and the promotion of better cooperation between national employment services.

The Commission also intends to extend the present system of joint committees representing employers and trade unions, which have helped in improving working conditions in the sectors of agriculture, road transport, sea fishing and railways. The work of the committees in facilitating collective agreements will be helped by the scheme the Commission has begun, for setting up a European index of collective agreements.

Also on this subject, a conference planned for the month of November on the subject of "work organization, technical development and motivation of the individual" (see I&S - No 8/74) will give the Commission valuable help in drafting its proposals on improving working conditions and assuring greater involvement for workers in the life of undertakings.

A number of other measures will also be put forward by the Commission before the end of the year. They include:

- (i) Plans for improving the analysis, forecasting and research on the labour market;
- (ii) Proposals for an improved system of social indicators.

A RURAL EXODUS IN EUROPE AND RETRAINING OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

Over the last decade, exodus from the countryside, in Community States, has generally been greater than forecast, and everything points to the probability that it will continue at the same pace. Farm workers are leaving the countryside in their tens of thousands in the Benelux countries, and in millions in Germany, France and Italy. Between 1950 and 1970 about half of all the farm workers in Community countries have had to leave the land. This is one of the main findings of a report drawn up by the Commission, on the retraining of workers leaving agriculture, in the six founder members of the European Community.

1. Reasons for leaving

- (a) In the Benelux countries, the proximity of industrial areas in need of labour, and the prospect of a higher wage, often combine with the opportunity for part-time farm work to make the farm worker turn to a new job.
- (b) In France, the economic factor is even stronger. Farm workers here do not leave the land. Instead, they feel disbarred - for the land can no longer support them. It is the chance of a job and a house that make them leave.
- (c) In Italy the growing disparity of their earnings, by comparison with the advance of other social classes, caused real distress among farm workers between 1951 and 1968. It was this factor which precipitated the exodus.
- (d) In Germany, to date, 4% of the labour force has left agriculture every year, mainly for economic and financial reasons. Very few have given up work merely because of their age. Most have transferred to other economic sectors.

2. What happens to the ones who leave agriculture?

Generally speaking in the six founder members of the Community it has been noted that a farm worker who leaves the land usually becomes an unskilled labourer.

- (a) In Belgium, 60% of ex-farm workers have become unskilled labourers.
- (b) In the Netherlands, 60 to 70% of the older farm workers who left the land are unskilled; 10% of farm workers' sons learn a trade dependent on farming, 30% take up administrative work and 60% become unskilled labourers. 40% of the daughters become salesgirls, social helpers or primary school teachers; 30 to 35% take up domestic employment.
- (c) In Germany most of the migrants continue in the job for which they were trained. A large number of labourers who leave agriculture without re-training, take the opportunity of further training, offered under the law to promote employment.
- (d) In France, over 70% of ex-farm workers become skilled or unskilled workers; and 77% of the women, skilled workers, domestic servants or daily helps. Lack of qualifications and low wages typify this category, 19% of which are bricklayers or building workers, 30% unskilled labourers and maintenance men, and 14%, haulage unit operators.
- (e) In Italy, farm workers also turn to jobs requiring very low skills. In addition, Italian farm workers have been a considerable source of supply for the European labour market during the past few years, particularly for industries in North Germany.

### 3. Promoting the retraining and readaptation of farm workers

Farm workers and their families, leaving farming, do so, to some extent, "on their own". In other words they are the ones who have to put up with the wrench of leaving their own surroundings and families, the change of pace and working conditions, and sometimes unemployment, in other words the whole change-over to working-class status which differs so radically from that of the "peasant", in Western Europe.

The purpose of the research conducted over several years by the OECD, the Member States of the Community, and the Community itself, is to discover ways and means of transforming this exodus, now regarded as a normal phenomenon affecting all of modern civilization, into an additional asset to the economies of every country concerned, and an opportunity of advancement for those involved.

Despite the efforts made, the means employed are quite inadequate to provide new work for peasants in their own locale, and develop the rural areas of the Community through a regional development policy.

Conditions affecting the mobility of farm workers would be much better if all stages of the change-over were aided. There should be coordinated intervention at all points where problems arise, and action should be concerted by reference to an overall plan, bearing not only on the problem of training but also on employment and housing.

It is in this field that the European Social Fund has a contribution to make (see I&S - No 4/74).

Grants from this Fund take individual situations into account. It is very flexible and helps finance specific projects. This means that in some cases retraining should be encouraged, in others, housing; and in still others, setting up ex-farm workers in small-scale businesses.

ASSESSING THE HAZARDS INVOLVED IN THE USE OF  
PESTICIDES AND SOME OTHER TOXIC PRODUCTS

Water, air, soil and some food products (fruit, vegetables, dairy products) often contain pesticide residues or other toxic substances used in industry. The content of these products in the environment is very low but may prove dangerous to man, because they persist in the human organism as well as in the environment. One group of products, the "organo-halogen compounds", which are found in insecticides and herbicides and used in printing and the electrical industry, are a particular source of environmental pollution. It is therefore of paramount importance to make an objective assessment of the hazards that the presence of these compounds in the environment represents for man and his surroundings. To fill this need the Commission's departments have undertaken to cooperate with specialists from the Member States in a number of studies.

The results of the work done on pollution levels in water, air, the soil and food products have revealed that organo-halogen compounds are found generally in all environments. The content, however, is very low and varies according to product, environment and geographical location.

In the atmosphere traces of insecticide occur of the order of 0.001 mg/kg. The level of contamination of surface and sea water is fairly low. Very little measurement has been undertaken as far as drinking water is concerned, but according to available information it would seem that the percentage of contamination is not significant. However, this is an area where extra care should be taken, since it represents a direct line of attack on man.

As far as foodstuffs are concerned, many measurements have been undertaken and it has been found that the tolerance levels currently applied are very rarely exceeded. Traces of DDT have still been discovered, but the general prohibition on its use should result in the residues decreasing. Fruit, vegetables and, above all, dairy products still appear to be a regular source of pesticide residues in the diet of Europeans. Although the regulations as to maximum content have not been infringed, it would appear that some soils treated do contain a residue of harmful products.

A small number of measurements to determine the level of impregnation of human biological tissues by organo-halogen compounds have been carried out for the Community as a whole, which means that there are no statistics representative of

the true situation. However, the levels measured in Member States allow the conclusion to be drawn that no immediate risk exists for any of the population. Nevertheless there is still a need for more intensive study of this aspect, so that an effective programme of supervision can be set up and the effect determined of low dosages of such products on man, particularly in the long term.

One programme on the determination of organo-chlorine pesticide residues in fatty materials involved comparing the results obtained in the Member States from analysis of one particular sample. This experiment was conducted with the cooperation of 30 laboratories throughout the Community. It showed that in general, analyses carried out by the laboratories were satisfactory for the great majority of products analysed. All the participants in this experiment were able to compare their techniques and experiences in the course of a meeting organized by the Health Protection Directorate of the European Commission.