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THE WEEK IN EUROPE

UK concern over scrutiny of EC legislation. A call has been made this week for more effective scrutiny of EC legislation by the House of Commons Legislation Committee. The call came from Conservative MP William Cash and reflects growing concern in the Commons about the volume of European legislation already reaching the House, and the difficulty MPs have in giving it effective scrutiny. Draft legislative proposals from the Commission are scrutinised at Westminster by the Select Committee on European Legislation which has the power to recommend that they be debated. Ministers are not supposed to take any decisions in Brussels on the proposals recommended for debate in Westminster until those debates have been held. But since the passing of the Single European Act in 1987, permitting many decisions to be reached by majority verdicts, it has apparently become more difficult for ministers to hold up European legislation until the Commons has pronounced on it.

On the same day the Prime Minister made public her concern about the extent and scope of European legislation. Speaking at Question Time in the House of Commons, Mrs Thatcher told MPs she was "deeply concerned at the number of EC proposals in the pipeline". She said it was "very difficult to get the full facts about them", adding: "we need a very careful watch on the tendency of the Commission to get an increasing competence about many matters which are not necessarily for the single market of 1992".

Commission gives to Hillsborough victims. The European Commission is making an emergency donation of 400,000 ecus (#260,000) to help the families of the dead and the worst casualties from the football disaster last month. The donation is a token of European Community solidarity to the people hardest hit by the tragedy. The Commission says it wants the money channelled to the disaster victims as speedily and directly as possible.

Brittan challenge to US banks. In a speech to the annual conference of the US Bankers Association for Foreign Trade in Phoenix, Arizona, on Monday, Commission Vice-President Sir Leon Brittan dismissed US fears of a "Fortress Europe" in the financial sector and challenged the US to change its own legislation if it wants a more liberal banking environment. He said: "Far from building a fortress we are taking a sledgehammer to existing national restrictions and clearing the ground for a new, more open Community banking sector". He also told his US audience: "We invite you to follow our example and make the US banking market just as open and competitive as that in Europe".

Rethink on telecoms deregulation. Following a thumbs-down by Telecommunications Ministers in Brussels last week to a plan by the Commission to impose deregulation unilaterally on the telecom industry without going through the usual consultation with EC Governments, the Commission is to reconsider its plans to liberalise data telecommunication services in the EC. The original Commons intentions allowed under Article 90 of the Treaty of Rome, would have eliminated long delays but the method chosen is opposed by most Governments. The Directive, proposed by the Commission late last year, would oblige national telecom authorities to admit free private competition for the supply of data communications, data banks, electronic mail and financial transfers. National authorities would continue

to have sole control over the physical networks themselves, as well as telephone and telex services. The Article 90 method was used last year to liberalise the telecommunications terminal markets but is now being challenged in the European Court of Justice by four EC Governments.

Andriessen speaks on monetary union. Addressing a Conference on World Electronics in London last week, Commission Vice-President Frans Andriessen said that notwithstanding the fact that 1992 constitutes a major political challenge, "European integration cannot and will not be limited to the Single Market". He went on: "The European Union, the declared objective of the Single Act, to which all Member States did subscribe, cannot be achieved as long as essential elements related to it are ignored. European monetary integration is part of it". He concluded: "The stage by stage approach as proposed in the Delors Committee Report is not designed to hide the political commitment from the outset to the final objective, that is the economic and monetary union characterised ultimately by irrevocably fixed exchange rates between national currencies and finally, a single currency".

More aid to Lebanon. The Commission has decided to give Lebanon further humanitarian aid totalling 2.5m ecus (#1.6m). The aid will consist of medicines, food and 15,000 tonnes of fuel.

Commission-EFTA Steering Group. The Joint High Level Steering Group, foreseen during the EC-EFTA Ministerial meeting in Brussels on 20 March and proposed by Commission Vice-president Frans Andriessen in Oslo on 17 April, met for the first time last week in Brussels. The Commission delegation was headed by Horst-Guenter, Director-General of External Relations, and the EFTA delegation by Ambassador Barth of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. The next meeting of the group will be on 25 July.

A European Central Bank? Perspectives on Monetary Unification after Ten years of the EMS. Edited by Marcello de Cecco and Alberto Giovannini. Cambridge University Press for CEPR. Price #35 hardback, #12.95 paperback. CEPR's latest volume reviews the arguments for monetary unification and examines in detail the costs and benefits of a common currency and central bank.

London Office Reorganisation. Because of the massive increase in demand on the services of our office due to the drive to complete the Single Market by the end of 1992, we are having to make a radical reorganisation in our method of working. A new section has been established - Information and Media headed by Robert Elphick with Giancarlo Pau as his Deputy - which will be the focal point of inquiry for journalists, Government organisations, trade associations and others who are in regular contact with us. As regards the public in general, opening hours for the Library are from now on between 10.00 and 13.00. Telephone enquiries can be accepted only between 14.00 and 17.00. We would point out that information on the activities and policies of the European Community may also be sought from UK Government sources, such as the Dept. of Trade and Industry. There are also numerous European Documentation Centres throughout the UK (list available on request). European Information Centres for small businessmen can be contacted by calling Freephone Enterprise.

Diary Dates

Europe Day	9 May	
Informal Environment Ministers	5 - 7 May	Cacares
Energy Council	11 May	Brussels
TREVI Ministers meeting	11-12 May	Madrid
Informal Agricultural Ministers	15-16 May	Salamanca
Development Council	16 May	Brussels
Informal ECO/FIN Ministers	19-21 May	S'Agaro-Gerona
Education Council	22 May	Brussels
General Affairs Council	22-23 May	Brussels
European Parliament Session	22-26 May	Strasbourg
Our next briefing will take place on Thursday, 11 May at 11.30 am		