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UNCTAD: No charter for the industrial countries

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COMMENTS

EC Transport Policy

A Negative Report

The statement in the EC Commission's report for 1974 that the past year was marked by a reorientation of the common transport policy has amazed outside experts as much as those engaged in the transport industry. Even the well-meaning observer of the Brussels scene will look in vain for evidence of the acclaimed new course. Exaggerated enthusiasm about a noticeable improvement of the atmosphere in the Council of Ministers must not lead to the assumption that the failures of the past will soon be followed by tangible and durable achievements. There are still many tasks to be accomplished. The old and ever new question whether the transport market is to be liberalized before the terms of competition are harmonized or not is still a bone of contention although a modest partial success has indeed been achieved on "pick-a-back" transport. The same applies to the efforts for a common policy on shipping, ports and aviation and to many individual problems such as the system of road cost allocations.

It would be cheap and wrong to blame the Commission for irresolution in marking out a clear course for the European transport policy. On the contrary, by setting up working groups and putting out various reports it has shown an assiduity which would do credit to many a national government and the men responsible for transport policies. Faith alone however does not remove mountains — at least not while national self-interest and obstinacy make the design and pursuit of a jointly sustained European transport concept impossible. Once again the achievement has fallen short of the objective. The transport industry is not alone in having to learn a bitter lesson.

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UNCTAD

No Charter for the Industrial Countries

The dreaded clash between industrialized and developing countries did not occur at the spring meeting of the UNCTAD Raw Materials Committee which sat in Geneva for three weeks. On its agenda was the "Integrated Action Programme for Raw Materials" for which UNCTAD Secretary General Gamani Corea submitted the concept. It envisages a package of multilateral agreements

between the producers and consumers of the 18 most important raw materials concerning market regulation, price ranges, delivery and purchase commitments, stabilization pools and stockpiles and the encouragement of processing industries in the developing countries. The decision that the plan is to be studied and discussed further before action is taken as a victory for the moderates among developing countries who hope to accomplish their objectives by cooperation rather than confrontation with the industrialized countries. They have evidently come to realise that the raw material countries generally cannot emulate the example of the oil exporting countries and that to achieve a viable new economic order for the world, the mutual dependence of industrialized and developing countries must be taken into consideration.

This does not mean that the industrialized countries have now been given a charter for the continuation until further notice of the delaying tactics which they have tried out at many international conferences. The Corea-plan has been deferred but not shelved. Unacceptable though it may appear to be to the industrialized countries in its present form, it proposes to tackle problems with which the international community will sooner or later have to come to grips. The gulf between poor and rich countries is widening so rapidly that the plan cannot simply be dismissed as incompatible with market laws and needs. A constructive alternative must be offered to the countries of the Third World before long if an ultimate collision with them is to be avoided.

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OPEC

Slippery Oil

The scenario in the oil sector is still one of great activity. Never before have all the parties displayed such willingness to negotiate amongst themselves and also with the people on the other side. But while the western industrial countries are still searching high and low for a common basis which allows them to appear at the big meeting as a solid bloc, the OPEC has marked out its positions since Vienna and Algiers and has plastered over its internal differences.

When President Boumedienne declared in this opening speech at Algiers that the OPEC must defend and consolidate the achievements of pre-