

Market-Makers

You've seen the ads, you've heard the hype. Now's the chance to discover what 1992 amounts to behind the hard-sell. We begin with our guide to the basics: the processes and people who will bring Europe to our doorsteps

Europe's Sea Change

What has made 1992 possible is the agreement of European Community (EC) member states, nearly two decades after the founding Treaty of Rome, to carry out its original aims: political and economic union. The instrument for executing this decision is the Single European Act (SEA), which since 1987 has been the legislative backbone of the effort to bind together the Western European nations. The SEA allows the development of a single Euro currency system, with its clumsy-sounding unit of money, the ECU. Research and technology collaboration, foreign affairs co-operation, environmental protection powers and more supranational decision-taking are all within the scope of the SEA. But despite this range of provi-

sions, one aspect of integration has dominated the agenda: the internal market.

The 'completion of the internal market', as the jargon has it, involves the EC in implementing some 300 measures which will remove various barriers to free trade and guarantee the free movement of people within EC boundaries: by December 31, 1992.

Physical frontier controls will be removed, tax advantages between countries ironed out and technical barriers — the range of specifications, procedures and standards which stop goods and services freely circulating — will be ended or harmonised. A massive exercise in deregulation? A free market gone mad? Or simply a process of re-writing the rules to meet the needs of an increasingly internationalised capitalist economy? •

ID Delors

Jacques Delors is about the closest there is to a superstar on the Euro Left. A fine performance at last September's TUC Congress won him admiration and some British converts to his approach to European integration. For Delors represents the human face of the single market: it is he, as President of the European Commission, who has focused attention on the 'social dimension' measures which promise to mitigate the grimmer social effects of 1992.

The EC has always had social policy objectives. But Delors has provided a political impetus designed to set in place a framework of rights and social policy regulations to parallel the sweeping economic change. These would cover health and safety at work, support for disadvantaged groups, more



training programmes, minimum standards for work conditions, and bigger allocations to the social and regional funds. In principle, it means EC involvement in parental leave, part-time workers' contracts, employees' use of VDU screens, fire prevention in the workplace, equal pay, development money for the poorest southern European regions, trade union consultation rights and much more. In practice all these things will be the subject of political battles within the various decision-making bodies of the EC, with no certain pre-ordained outcome.



ABC of QMV

Quite a Major Victory for common sense. After years of insisting that consensus must be the basis for all decision-taking, the EC Council (government ministers from each member state) has finally allowed itself to vote. The SEA allows a good number of the 1992 proposals to be decided on by qualified majority voting (QMV) in the EC Council, thereby ending the ability of any one country to veto progress. Small wonder Mrs T is working on a plan to screen the forest of proposals com-

ing from the upstart EC Commission for Council approval. If the Whitehall lawyers can push proposals into categories still needing unanimity, the British can use their veto and Canute may yet hold back the SEA.

ps: a 'qualified' majority is 54 votes out of 76. Britain, France, West Germany and Italy each score 10 votes. Spain has eight, the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece and Portugal five, Ireland and Denmark three and Luxembourg two. Unlike *jeux sans frontieres* there is no joker. •

Mind The Gap

Coming up fast on the inside track of Euro jargon is the 'democratic deficit' or 'democracy gap' as it is sometimes translated. This useful shorthand sums up growing concern at the imbalance of power wielded by the various EC institutions. In short, the directly-elected European Parliament is little

more than a consultative watchdog, compared with the 'civil service' commission which originates all EC measures or the behind-closed-doors decisions of the Council of Ministers. As the truly supranational supplants the national arena, it is becoming clear just how underdeveloped are the mechanisms for democratic intervention in the EC. •

ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT VOTING TURNOUT IN EACH COUNTRY (%)

| Country | 1979 | 1984 |
|-------------------|------|------|
| Belgium* | 91.4 | 92.2 |
| Luxembourg | 88.9 | 88.8 |
| Italy | 84.9 | 83.4 |
| Greece* (1981/84) | 78.6 | 77.2 |
| West Germany | 65.7 | 56.8 |
| France | 60.7 | 56.7 |
| Denmark | 47.8 | 52.4 |
| Netherlands | 58.1 | 50.6 |
| Ireland | 63.6 | 47.6 |
| United Kingdom | 32.3 | 32.6 |

*Voting is compulsory

Matter Of Opinion

You could be forgiven for not having noticed that we're in a pre-election period. But on June 15, Britain and Northern Ireland go to the polls to elect 81 Euro MPs (MEPs) for a five-year term which will take us through the 1992 changes.

Betting types might care to lay odds on whether the UK can beat its own unchallenged record for non-voting: two-thirds of us decided not to bother with Europe in the last two elections (see above). But

EC is even more divisive in Denmark (see below).

Despite the ad campaigns we remain unconvinced of the merits of 1992, with only 47% declaring the single market a good thing. Interestingly Luxembourg, France, Germany and Denmark also lack majority conviction in the benefits of 1992.

As for the detailed policy implications of a more federal Europe, 71% of us would favour a common defence organisation (EC countries' average is 72%). But we are

Attitudes to European Unification (Autumn '88)

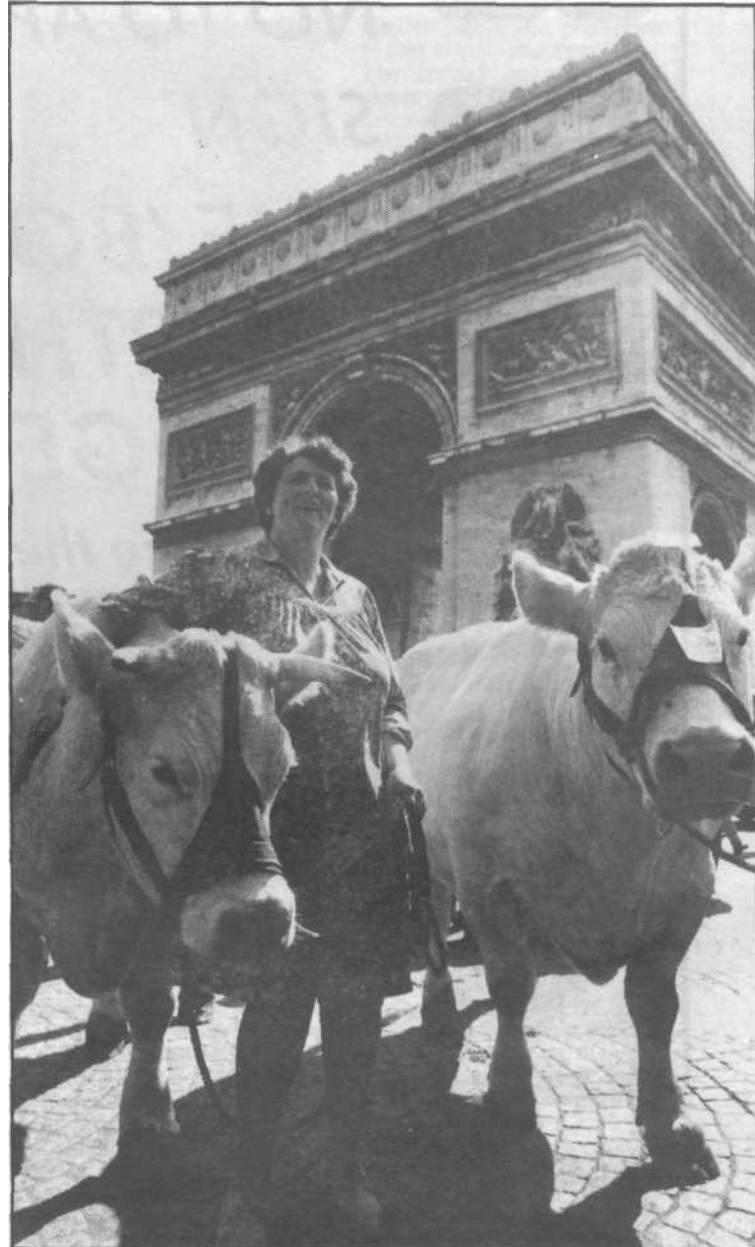
| | | Britain | Denmark | EC12 |
|---------|-----|---------|---------|------|
| For | (%) | 61 | 53 | 79 |
| Against | (%) | 26 | 43 | 12 |

is it ignorance or antipathy which keeps us away from the ballot-box?

EC public-opinion surveys during 1988 show that despite 68% of us being aware of 1992 and the single market (just below average awareness for EC countries), we have a marked reluctance to endorse greater federal European power.

We aren't alone however: the

loathe to relinquish control over foreign policy - and even more so to give up our currency! Asked if they were for or against creating a single European currency, the ECU, 28% of the UK sample said they were while 58% gave it the thumbs-down. The Italians have no such qualms, giving the ECU an overwhelming vote of confidence by 77% to 8%. •



River Deep, Mountain High

We don't hear so much about the wine lakes and butter mountains any more. But those graphic features of the 1970s' political landscape were the result of the most advanced element of European-level regulation: the common agricultural policy (CAP). Today, a fully federal system operates. Agriculture ministers meet monthly, the sector takes up about 65% of the entire EC budget, and a whole 'green money' system has evolved to smooth out the effect on farm prices of exchange-rate variations. Ironically, it

is the manipulation by national governments of the green currency — to gain an advantage for their domestic farming interests — which is now leading the EC Commission to try and dismantle this element of Euro-planning as part of the 1992 process.

As for the surplus production, the squeeze is being put ever-so-gradually on the worst excesses. But mostly the unwanted produce is dumped at rock-bottom prices on an international market, with dubious benefits to those less developed countries that forsake their own agricultural development for a gift-horse. 0

V For Vasso

Most people would have to agree that the European Community has been rather a good thing for women in the UK. In a limited way, that goes for all member states: during the 1980s, implementation of EC directives has strengthened poor national provision for equal pay, equal opportunities and equal social security treatment throughout the Community.

These initiatives stem largely from DGV, the EC Commission department (or directorate-general) responsible for social affairs, employment, education and training. From January this year, DGV comes under the control of Ms Vasso Papandreou: the first-ever female Commissioner, a founder-member of the Greek

socialist party PASOK and former government industry minister, with a commitment to women's rights. At the TUC Women's Conference in March, she attacked the British government for blocking the EC's proposed improvements for parental leave. The draft directive which the UK has refused to approve would allow one or other parent three months' leave after the birth of a child to look after it. It's hardly revolutionary, considering that France currently permits 33 months, West Germany 10 months and Spain 9.5 months. The UK has no legal right to parental leave at all.

Britain has also opposed two other important initiatives launched by the EC Commission during the 1980s. The first would give part-time workers



similar rights and protection to that of full-time employees. The second was to extend employment rights to temporary workers. According to *Labour Research* (March '89) the UK has the highest proportion in the EC of women working part-time to full-time, at 45%. There is a real fear that the 1992 process will bring in its wake a levelling-down of employment conditions which will affect women particularly harshly. As the pattern of employment moves increasingly to one based on low-wage part-time work, with minimum job security, there may well be more jobs around for women. Lacking any framework of support for affordable child-care or minimum-wage levels, they are hardly likely to be better. •

Setting Standards

The Court of Justice in Luxembourg is the backdrop for a series of legal skirmishes which are defining the limits to the 'free' market of 1992. The battles are over the removal or dilution of individual countries' rules for defining product content and standards.

Round One in 1979 went decisively to the free-marketeers. In the now-famous Cassis de Dijon case, a German law defining minimum alcohol content prevented the import of this low-alcohol French liqueur into Germany under the label of 'liqueur'. West Germany's defence was on public health and consumer protection grounds, but the European Court ruled that the EC's free trade principles overrode this. The door was opened for challenges to a variety of 'content' rules, including the Ita-

Hans' pasta purity and German beer purity laws, and the French ban on the use of aspartame, an artificial low-calorie sweetener.

Round Two has only just been settled, but represents an important reverse. Denmark has strict rules restricting the import of non-recyclable containers, which had the effect of banning German beer sold in cans and non-returnable bottles. The Court in this case upheld the environmental protection argument advanced by the Danes as more important than the resulting trade restriction. These tussles are of real importance: manufacturers may gain significant expansion of markets and a possible saving on production costs. For the rest of us, the cost of that could be further environmental degradation or weaker regulation of product safety — particularly for our food. •

Wise Up On 1992

Catherine Hoskyns selects some of the best or most representative of the flood of 1992 material which has recently been produced.

Europe Without Frontiers — Completing The Internal Market *European Documentation*, 3/1988 (from EC Commission offices in the UK) — The Commission's own succinct and readable account, aimed at the general public, of what 1992 involves.

Research On The Cost Of Non-Europe (The Cecchini Report) — An ambitious study in 16 volumes, co-ordinated by economist Paolo Cecchini, into the costs of not completing the internal market. Contains a mass of useful information, regardless of one's views on the conclusions. A rather euphoric summary is **1991 — The Benefits Of A Single Market** Paolo Cecchini (Wildwood House, 1988, £6.95). More serious is **The Economics Of 1992** *European Economy* No 35, March 1988.

1992 — Myths And Realities JA Kay (London Business School, 1989, £10) — Cool analysis by the LBS which concludes that the impact of 1992 is being exaggerated, given the strength of national differences and traditions.

The Economics Of 1992 H Neuberger (British Labour Group of MEPs, 1989, £25) — A telling critique from a socialist standpoint, of both *The Cecchini Report* and the attitude and policies of the present government towards 1992. May be issued more cheaply later.

The Social Dimension Of The In-

ternal Market European Commission *in Social Europe*, special issue 1988 — The best account of the, so far tentative, proposals for a social programme to accompany the 1992 measures.

Europe 1992 — Maximising The Benefits, Minimising The Costs (Trades Union Congress, 1988, £2.50) — TUC report on the implications of the 1992 proposals and on the possibilities of campaigning for a 'core of workers' rights' to be incorporated into the programme.

An Opposition View Of 1992: The Myths, The Threats And The Response John Lambert (Agenor, Brussels, Oct/Nov 1988, £2.50) — Far and away the best critique of the politics of 1992 and its implications for the Left.

The effects of completion of the internal market in 1992 on women in Europe Marijka Van Hemeldonck (European Parliament Women's Committee, August 1988) — The only publication so far which deals with the gender aspects of 1992.

'Community whitewash — will an integrated Europe exclude the non-white population' Yasmin Alibhai (*The Guardian*, January 23, 1989) — Excellent article which raises important issues about the cultural chauvinism and anti-foreigner mentality inherent in the present proposals for 1992.

Reading list compiled from **The Europe 1992 Directory, A Research And Information Guide** (TCU/Coventry Polytechnic, end-April 1989, £10.95 inc p&p) Available from Coventry Polytechnic's Commercial Development Unit, Coventry CV1 5FB (0203 838727) •

Marxism Today Coming Next Month

May is the 10th anniversary of the election of Mrs Thatcher as prime minister. In the 10 years since then the face of British politics and society has been transformed. *Marxism Today* has for long been recognised across the political spectrum as the centre of the most acute analysis of Thatcherism. In our May issue we return to the question: what has Thatcherism done? Where is it likely to go now?

Plus an interview with US writer and poet June Jordan.

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