

Schmidhuber

promotion of local facilities, such as tourism, old and new small businesses, vocational training and road-building to extend communications while at the same time paying particular attention to the environment.

In the motion for a resolution the rapporteur draws attention specifically to environmental protection, a problem which was raised by Mr Graziani in an oral question in July of this year. I can reassure you that environmental protection is a very important aspect of all common actions, especially in mountain regions. It has been proved that in endangered mountain areas more than anywhere else environmental protection and the protection of natural resources has to be integrated into the regional economic development.

This is also the line adopted in the 1987-1992 Community environmental protection programme which contains a whole series of measures for the practical implementation of this policy, such as an environmental impact assessment or demonstration projects for job-creating environmental protection. Mountain regions are mentioned specifically in this action project to ensure that in Community environment actions they are given special consideration.

The Commission appreciates the special difficulties of the mountain regions. The Community is trying to take these into consideration in a number of complementary measures, whether in the field of agricultural and environment policy, regional policy or other Community policies. The Commission will continue and indeed increase its efforts in future along these lines as far as it is able.

(Applause)

MUSSO (RDE), rapporteur. — (FR) I should like to thank all those who have taken part in the debate and especially the Commissioner who, as you have said, is addressing the House for the first time.

I do not take serious issue with any of the points which have been made; equally I have very few objections, with two or three exceptions, to the amendments which have been tabled. I think that some of them are repetitive. I think that one or two amendments are not pertinent and that may be through misunderstanding due to linguistic difficulties.

But I would like to dwell on two speeches.

Firstly, reference was made to Corsica, and I was too modest to refer to it myself. It fell to Mr Pordea to remind us that 90% of agricultural products were imported into Corsica; I would point out that it is not 90% but 95%. I hesitated to mention Corsica but he has given me the opportunity and I am grateful.

Secondly, someone said he was against the report. He is absolutely entitled to his own opinion, but he des-

cribed the report as inept and asked me if I knew what a mountain was and if there were any where I came from. I would point out to him that Corsica is a mountain which rises out of the sea. As one of my colleagues, I think it was Mr Arbeloa Muru, spoke of what happens in mountains, perhaps I may tell you, that I live in a region which, sadly, has no more than 7 inhabitants per square kilometre in some tiny mountain regions, where the houses are dilapidated, the roads are full of potholes, the doors hang on their hinges and the roofs are falling in. I have tried as best I could — but no one is perfect — to put into my report everything reasonable for a report to Parliament and not what was irrelevant or comes from the realms of fantasy, of Utopia, or perhaps simply of demagoguery.

And finally I turn to you, Commissioner, to thank you and say that we know all the measures taken by the Commission to try to halt the abandonment of the land, but unfortunately they have not proved sufficient.

That is why we draw your attention once more in our report to this question, because Europe of the Twelve is all very well, but what will become of Europe if it loses a large part of its soul, a large part of its interior, namely all the inhabitants of its mountain regions? That could cause serious social problems that you cannot even dream of at this stage.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT. — The debate is closed.

The vote will be taken at the next voting time.

8. Regional problems of Ireland

PRESIDENT. — The next item is the report (Doc. A 2-109/87) by Mr Hume, on behalf of the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning, on the regional problems of Ireland.

HUME (S), rapporteur. — Mr President, I am delighted to be able to present this report which was passed unanimously by the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning and I hope naturally that it will receive the same treatment in this House today.

This report was originally drawn up in response to motions tabled by the Irish Members Mr O'Donnell and Mrs Lemass. It must be discussed I believe in the wider context of the whole debate on regional policy which is taking place as a result of the proposals by the European Commission which will be discussed by the Council of Ministers. We must remember also that although this report is about Ireland, the thrust of the

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report and the direction in which it is going is of significance to the other poorer regions of this Community.

I am very conscious, coming from the northern part of Ireland, that the Single European Act and its implementation was the subject of a very serious debate in Ireland itself. One of the major issues that was very prominent in that debate was the failure of the European Community to narrow the gap between the richer and the poorer regions of this Community and statements by the Commission during that debate indicating a new approach to regional policy which would be more favourable to the more deprived regions had a major influence on that debate. Those proposals by the Commission have since been published in their comprehensive proposal on reform of the structural funds and those proposals are crucial to the future of the poorer regions and are the background against which this report must be considered. They put forward certain conditions for a future regional policy which I believe to be essential to the more deprived regions of this Community, the first being, of course, a reduction in the number of areas that would be in receipt of regional funding in the future, the second being an increase in funds that would be available for regional policy.

Of course it is quite obvious to most of the Members from the poorer regions of this Community that those regions coincide with regions that are heavily dependent on agriculture and future changes in the common agricultural policy will have a very serious impact on those regions. It is therefore absolutely essential that there be a heavy transfer of funding to the structural funds to compensate for that.

The third condition in that comprehensive set of proposals on the reform of the structural funds, was the increased involvement of the regions in the management of Community resources. In going round the regions of Ireland in preparing this report I found an enormous fund of frustrated energy seeking to be released and to get involved in the business of self-help and of building up the poorer regions. We were told in the debate on the SEA that the completion of the internal market was crucial to raising living standards all over Europe. I have no doubt that will happen. But what was not said was that the raising of living standards all over Europe does not necessarily guarantee that the benefits will be evenly distributed. A rising tide lifts all boats, we are told. There is no doubt that a rising tide *does* lift all boats, provided, of course, that you have a boat. That is the point the poorer regions would want us to remember when we are discussing the effects of the internal market and to ensure that the benefits would be evenly distributed throughout the Community as a whole and in particular to the poorer regions.

If that is to be the case, it is absolutely essential to have a Community regional policy for, I might suggest, the

first time. Up till now we have had a Regional Fund and not a policy. That regional policy should ensure a more even distribution of benefits and include the basic conditions laid down in the Commission's comprehensive proposal on the reform of the structural funds.

The report itself, which should be of interest to other regions as well because of its thrust confines itself to a limited number of themes. It argues that the Irish economy would benefit from the creation of a number of regional authorities. These authorities could stimulate and coordinate economic development in their regions. In addition, Community regional policy now places increasing emphasis, as I have just said, on the participation of local and regional bodies in the implementation of Community programmes. Ireland could be hampered if it did not possess such a structure.

Secondly, the report argues that the Irish Government should make fuller use of the provisions of the ERDF regulation, particularly those covering integrated operations and measures to develop the indigenous potential of the regions and programmes of Community interest. The Irish Government in the past has concentrated heavily on project financing rather than programme financing.

Thirdly, the report suggests that Ireland should receive a higher rate of Community contribution towards defraying the public expenditure element in investments, following the precedent of 70% authorized for Portugal. I would regard this particular proposal as especially crucial because it must be remembered that if all the changes forecasted in the CAP, etc. take place, there will be increasing pressure on the poorer regions and the present 50% contribution will no longer be sufficient to enable those regions to develop and benefit under the post-SEA situation.

The other proposal in the report relates to the City of Dublin which has developed such acute social and economic difficulties, many of them arising from the effects of the common agricultural policy and the drift from the land into urban areas. It asks that the Community should contribute to an integrated operation for that city.

The report draws attention to the concentration of technological resources, both knowledge and hardware, in Dublin. This type of concentration also occurs in other areas of the Community. There is too much centralization of these crucial technological resources. The report urges the Commission to draw up a programme under the ERDF similar to the STAR programme adopted last year, to spread the benefits of advanced telecommunications to the islands and peripheral regions of the Community and to ensure that within each Member State they are also widely spread over the different regions.

Those are the basic proposals and the basic themes of the report. These proposals are addressed to both the

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Irish Government and the Commission. At a press conference in Dublin today the Irish Minister of State for European Affairs made a major statement on Irish regional policy which, in my opinion, goes in the same direction as this report. Therefore, I welcome it. It specifically endorses the proposal for a programme for Dublin and asks the Commission for a study to examine how the serious social and environmental problems of that city can be tackled with the help of the Commission and the European Community. The statement also says that Ireland should avail itself of European Community funding possibilities to the maximum possible extent under the new approach set out in the recent comprehensive proposals on the reform of the structural funds. It said that the Irish Government had decided to move towards a programme basis rather than a project basis — which is an essential element in this report — for assistance from Community development for structural funds. I naturally welcome that approach. I would, of course, point out, as is pointed out in the government statement, that the Council of Ministers has yet to approve fully this new approach as set out by the European Commission. The Irish Government has committed itself to supporting that at Council of Ministers level and I hope, as someone from one of the poorest regions in this Community, that the larger Member States will at last live up to all their lofty sentiments about cohesion and convergence and see that it is their duty to help.

Finally, this report is addressed to the European Commission. I look forward to the Commission's response as through this report . . .

PRESIDENT. — Mr Hume, your speaking time is up.

HUME (S), rapporteur. — I hope the Commission will look at paragraphs 16, 18 and 19 of the report and will respond positively to them. Of course, I hope that this House will unanimously adopt this report as the committee has done.

(Applause)

O'DONNELL (PPE). — Mr President, at the outset I would like to say as author of the motion for a resolution which initiated this report that I would like to congratulate Mr Hume for the very comprehensive and very constructive report he has presented to us here today. I am naturally very pleased also that the Hume report fully endorses the main objective of my motion for a resolution which was to focus attention on the serious socio-economic situation in Ireland and on the urgent need for the Commission and the Irish Government to get together and to formulate a coherent and coordinated regional development strategy for Ireland utilizing the methodology of integrated regional development programmes, a methodology which is ideally suited to the Irish situation. I am pleased to learn from Mr Hume that a major state-

ment was made by the Irish Government this morning announcing its intention to proceed along the lines of integrated programmes and I welcome this statement.

There is no doubt whatsoever that special action is needed on Ireland. The synthetic index shows Ireland as one of the least-favoured regions in this Community. And, because of its exceptionally high dependency on agriculture, Ireland is faced with additional, and very serious, economic and social consequences arising from the changes in the common agricultural policy. Quite clearly special action on Ireland is now needed.

The Hume report also takes account of a motion for a resolution by Mrs Lemass and a report by Mrs Banotti seeking an integrated operation for Dublin. Dublin, where one-third of the population of Ireland is now concentrated, must of course be taken into account in any report on the regional problems of Ireland. An integrated operation for Dublin is necessary but it must be considered within the framework of a national policy of balanced regional development involving decentralization and devolution of powers to the region. Otherwise, Dublin will continue to grow, not only to its own detriment, but to the detriment of the rest of the country as well. It is worth noting that recent statistics show that the new suburban area of Tallaght in Dublin now contains a population greater than that of Limerick City.

Since the Hume report was tabled, however, the Irish Government has decided to disband the regional development organizations and no alternative regional structure has yet been announced, even in the Minister's statement today. But it is understood that the matter is under review and is being studied. It was in the light of these circumstances, as an interim measure and in order to expedite the creation of a regional structure which would facilitate the introduction of integrated programmes outside of Dublin that I tabled amendments suggesting regional development authorities similar to the SFADCO model should be established in the two regions adjacent to the mid-west. The Cork-Kerry region which has suffered very severely from the decline of traditional urban industries and also from rural depopulation, particularly in the south-west Kerry area, is badly in need of this type of strategy. The Connaught to Donegal, Monaghan and Cavan region, which are in the West of Ireland, probably the least-favoured region in the whole country, badly needs such a programme.

The three development bodies then which I have suggested, that is SFADCO in the mid-west, one for the south-west and one for the west would cover the least-favoured western regions of Ireland from Donegal to Cork and Kerry and would provide an ideal framework for joint Community and national government action. I am convinced it would release a powerful new dynamic leading to the development of the indigenous resources of the western half of Ireland