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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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Action taken by the Conference on the proposals contained in Resolution 73

Communication

1.

1. In response to a request by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe that it should be informed of any action which the E. C. M. T. might find it advisable to take on the proposals contained in Resolution 73 (1955) of the Consultative Assembly, the Council of Ministers of Transport duly considered that Resolution.

2. After noting that, in any case, it would be applied only by the member countries of the Council of Europe, the Council of Ministers of Transport considered in turn the comments on technical problems made under point 2 and recommendations concerning organisation reproduced in paragraph 3 of the Resolution.

3. As regards the technical problems, the Council of Ministers of Transport makes the following comments :

a. Railways' deficit At the request of the Council of Ministers of Transport, a report on " The Problem of the Financial Situation of the Railways " has just been prepared by the International Union of Railways. This Report, which was approved by the directors of the railway administrations of the member countries of the E. C. M. T., raises practically every aspect of the general problem of the co-ordination of transport. Owing to its length it will be . examined very thoroughly, and the Council of Ministers of Transport proposes to determine its attitude with regard to it at the October, 1956 Session.

b. Transport on own account Conscious of the fact that this problem is one of the essential factors of transport policy, the Council of Ministers of Transport has included it in the programme of work of the E. C. M. T.

c. Eurofima The Constituent Acts of the Eurofima Company were signed at Berne on 20th October, 1955 by the Ministers of Transport of fourteen countries. The procedure of ratification is in progress. Ratification by the State where the Head Office of the Company is situated (Switzerland), expected for April, 1956, will result in the provisional application of the Convention by the other signatory countries, so far as is compatible with their constitutional requirements. The Company can then be formed and begin to operate.

d. European Road Investment Fund As certain aspects of this problem are of general economic interest, the 0. E. E. C. has been consulted concerning it. The procedure of consultation is in progress.

e. Effects of direct tariff measures applied to products covered by the ECSC Treaty The E. C. M. T. plans to make a joint study of this subject with the High Authority of E. C. S. C. and with the co-operation of the International Organisations concerned.

f. Air transport The Council of Ministers of Transport has not lost sight of the importance of co-ordinating the solutions of certain problems of common interest to surface transport and air transport. It proposes to continue its action on these lines.

4. The discussion by the Council of Ministers of Transport on the subject of the recommendations concerning organisation, contained in the second part of Resolution 73, brought out, first, the need for maintaining the unity of action of the Conference, which is a major achievement in European co-operation. This unity of action is also necessitated by geographical considerations and the interdependence of transport problems. In order to maintain it, the Governments gave the Conference a very flexible constitution. This is shown, amongst other things, by the possibility of setting up Restricted Groups where the countries composing them may, without fear of opposition by other countries, freely attain the aims which they have in view. Owing to this flexibility, the Conference is able to adapt itself to the most varied circumstances.

5. This adaptability has already been used to effect in various ways. First, means of co-operation between the E. C. M. T. and the international nongovernmental organisations with which it maintains relations have been clarified and strengthened : in particular, provision has been made to allow their representatives to sit together more frequently, so as to facilitate the discussion of steps to encourage co-ordination of the various means of transport. Moreover, the Council of Ministers of Transport has taken into consideration a proposal of one of its members that, for the study of certain practical problems which, by their very nature, could not easily be assigned to an existing organisation, recourse should be had to experts belonging, for example, to the teaching body of the universities and particularly competent in transport economy.

6. Should anything more be done for the moment? The Council of Ministers of Transport has some doubts on this subject : indeed, the Resolution adopted at Messina by six Ministers for Foreign Affairs and the subsequent work of the Brussels Committee of Governmental Delegates have resulted in the promotion of ideas which will no doubt have some influence on the nature of the transport problems to be dealt with on at international level and on the actual manner of dealing with them. Until these ideas become concrete, it would seem premature to create any new institution such as a permanent European Transport Committee which might, in the comparatively near future, be no longer adapted to the changing circumstances.

7. It follows from the above that on many points the Council of Ministers of Transport has been able to take account of the wishes of the Council of Europe. This is a matter for satisfaction, and the Council of Ministers would like to take this opportunity of expressing its appreciation of the interest shown by the Consultative Assembly in the main problems of European transport and in the work of the E. C. M. T.