

Editorial

A Brand New Commission?

The new Commission which took office on 6 January 1993 is a remarkable combination of old and new. The commissioners of British nationality were, unusually for those who have made a success of their first mandate, renominated for appointment by common accord of the government of the Member States. Quietly and effectively, Bruce Millan has steered the application of regional policy during the last four years and his mandate is duly extended to cover the Community of the Regions which will be set up under the Treaty on European Union. Sir Leon Brittan moves from competition to external economic affairs and commercial policy. His distinguished tenure on the competition portfolio, aided in no small measure by a highly competent *cabinet* staff, is now followed by responsibility for another high profile area of fundamental economic importance for the future of the Community. It remains to be seen whether the appointment of Karel van Miert to the competition portfolio, after a successful tenure of the

transport portfolio, will lead to a shift in emphasis concerning competition policy. Sir Leon's free market approach highlighting purely competition considerations may be expected to be somewhat changed in the hands of a commissioner more open to considerations of industrial and social policy in the application of competition law. There still remains a certain tension between the more socialist-orientated commissioners and their free market brethren, although the lack of a clear policy orientation does little more than reflect the balance in the EC Treaty itself. It remains to be seen whether the commitment in the Treaty on European Union to the principle of an open market economy with free competition will bring about any change in the present neutrality between planning and free market approaches which is characteristic of the Community structure.

The new Commission takes office in the wake of the Single Market celebrations which saw throughout the Community a chain of beacons and signals illuminated to herald the completion date of the White Paper Programme launched with such ceremony in 1985. It will be the task

of the new Commission to ensure the proper functioning of the Single Market at the same time as preparing the way for new accessions to the Community and for the achievement of the goals of the Treaty on European Union. The appointment of top quality commissioners such as Hans van den Broek, who succeeded Frans Andriessen's distinguished tenure shows the importance which Member States attach to ensuring the quality of the members of the Commission. Certainly the new Commission is a worthy successor to the old with sufficient gravitas to bode well for a successful mandate. A condition *sine qua non* for a successful mandate is, however, the independence of the Commission and it will be important that those who have recently left national polities or still have ambitions in that sphere remember that they are required to act in the interests of the Community during their mandate and not in the interests of the promotion of their own careers. By and large the Commission has hitherto fulfilled its obligations in this respect but it is still essential that standards do not slip.

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