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Dr R T Gottesman
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Dear Roy,

I promised to let you have in summarised form the oral comments I made at the meeting in Philadelphia about developments in Europe. These are attached and indeed in one or two cases have been updated by further events both favourable and unfavourable.

I hope our American colleagues find this summary of interest.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. York', written in a cursive style.

John York

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SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENTS
IN EUROPE AS PER SEPTEMBER 1989

AUSTRIA

Growing political pressure to ban or restrict PVC in packaging, construction and interior decoration. Parliamentary hearings have taken place in which politicians expressed on the one side, that something is to be done to reduce PVC consumption, on the other side that PVC plays a vital role in the caustic soda and chlorine balance. No decisions have been taken so far.

BELGIUM

PVC and PET producers and the trade are working constructively together in bottle collection and recycling schemes. There are positive contacts between industry, environmental groups and government. Situation generally under control at present.

LVM and two other companies have, together with the Flemish Region, formed ECOL, a company to engage in the material recycling of mixed plastics.

DENMARK

Environmental Minister repeatedly insists on voluntary reduction of 50% in total PVC consumption by 1992, with further reductions thereafter, or a total ban by 1993. Dioxin formation is the major issue, although actual evidence favours the PVC industry's case, supported by a Dioxin report from the Danish authorities themselves, as yet unpublished.

A new, more aggressive structure for the PVC defence has recently been formed with Wavin playing a lead role.

FRANCE

The "Pelican" bottle collection and recycling project, jointly run between Gecom and the largest French Federation of Ecologists, is working well. This project is also supported by the Environmental Minister.

SPI-10451



GERMANY

The Toepfer decree took effect 3/89 and imposes a mandatory deposit of 0.50 DM on all beverage containers, following a massive campaign by Coca Cola to introduce PET one way bottles. PVC bottles so far have not been affected because of a transition period to allow for collection schemes to be established. Toepfer now also propose that refillable bottles should be favoured to one-way bottles, which are to be limited to a small percentage of the overall drinks market.

A draft text has been introduced by the Toepfer Ministry, proposing the elimination of plastic packagings which are not "environmental friendly". All plastics are to be labelled by 1990 to help recycling. Hearings took place to collect industry and ecologists' views, and a decision is expected by year end.

A motion was put by the Green Party to the parliament to stop PVC manufacture altogether, claiming that it can be substituted. Again, hearings took place to collect views from industry, ecologists and neutral experts, but a decision to totally ban PVC is unlikely to pass the parliament.

Pressures from town councils to ban PVC from public buildings ("PVC free zones") is diminishing somewhat in the light of more rational debates about the economic and ecological balance for PVC and its substitutes.

HOLLAND

Much more hostile atmosphere, with environmental groups engaging in anti-PVC campaigns and refusing to speak with the industry in seeking working solutions, though the Environmental Minister is prepared to collaborate. The campaigns concentrate on PVC packaging, leading the main super market chains to request from their suppliers to no longer use PVC.

The PVC working group within the Dutch Plastic Federation is extremely well organised and counselled by a specialist in environmental communication. They have managed to produce solid evidence that the specific dioxine concerns were attributed to the malfunctioning of the incinerator and not from the PVC in the waste. Working Groups are also being established on all sensitive issues to collect and compile information in order to arrive at an objective report. Workshops will then be held with the Ministry, with an invitation to the environmental groups to participate.

ITALY

The new waste law has obliged municipalities to organise separate collections of plastic bottles, bags, glass, paper and metal. Regional consortia are to be created to include industry and local authorities to develop recycling schemes, financed by industry. Incineration is an integrated part when energy recuperation is coupled.

Assoplast is waiting for a decision from the Government on how to regulate the consortia, with a good chance that their proposals become accepted with only minor changes.

The PET and PVC bottle collection and recycling scheme as set up by Tecoplast is developing well. 32 Supermarkets are now equipped with the "Azzura Mangiabottiglie" automat, with another 40 in preparation.

A PR campaign has been launched by Assoplast in order to improve the image of plastic materials in the public.

A 100 lira tax on PE bags has come into effect, with biodegradation still being a major topic in the discussions.

SWEDEN

Concerns are increasingly expressed about PVC as a user of chlorine, similar to what developed in the paper industry, where a tax for the use of chlorine in the bleaching process is to be paid.

SWITZERLAND

A draft ordinance on beverage containers proposing a ban on PVC bottles and metal cans was published in early 1989. ASKI and other industry groupings firmly opposed to this draft leading the Government to enter new consultations until the end of the year. Meanwhile, industry is establishing collection schemes to recycle PVC bottles as an alternative to a ban, as well as offers to take back salts from the incinerators. The European Commission will also meet with Swiss authorities in October to express EC reservations regarding the Swiss proposal because of its serious impact on free trade.

However, previous measures have already cut PVC usage in packaging by 60%, a level unlikely to be exceeded.

UK

Strong pressure from well-organised environmental groups against the use of PVC in packaging, but the defence activities of the BPF are gathering momentum. The first phase of the Greater Manchester Project to evaluate the possibilities of recovering plastic from municipal waste has started and further progress has been made on activities at Sheffield Recycling City.

These include plastic bottle collection via bottle banks, the setting up of a BPF run site for all plastic collection and the formulation of an outside collection scheme to be started in November. Other towns and cities wish to join and Cardiff could be the second location for a similar initiative. Publicity has in general been good concerning these schemes.

Advance comments in the media on PVC and other plastics continue to be a regular feature and all of these are being immediately answered by the BPF.

Also the "green consumer" is being bombarded by not very accurate information and this is motivating the major retailers to take a green stance. The PVC producers, the BPF and the PVC Plastic Film Group in the UK has been active in presenting the facts about plastics and PVC to major retailers to try to control this debate. Industrial firms have also been active individually. The result is much activity and uncertainty. The Green Consumer Guide to Supermarkets was published on 28 September and it gives a much more optimistic view of PVC's future as a packaging material. The balance of the material used was much improved as a result of intervention by the British Plastic Federation and representations by the PVC industry earlier in the Summer.

All is quiet at the moment on the "cot death" front. The BPF is awaiting a report on the subject by the Government Scientist but it is feared that more work will be required by the industry in order to distance the industry from the problem.

DEVELOPMENTS AT EUROPEAN COMMISSION LEVEL

It is to be expected that new regulations for beverage containers will be proposed shortly to replace the 1985 directive, which obliged member states to reduce the volume of beverage containers in the waste stream and led to the German situation described before. The new regulation is likely to place refillable and recyclable containers on a same level, this means that collection and recycling of one-way bottles will have to develop. Mandatory deposits will most likely not be imposed on an European basis, but will be allowed in order to achieve significant levels of return. A figure as high as 80% may well be proposed.

The commission plans to propose by the end of this year a first draft of a directive regulating the plastic fraction of the municipal solid waste. APME has just adopted a text on this subject to submit to the commission, outlining the European producers commitment to contribute to plastic waste management. This includes a commitment to actively participate in material recycling developments. The commission is likely to propose a text which places significant constraints on the plastics industry, including the setting of ratios for material recycling.

Under revision is the regulation on Cadmium. The industry has provided its input and it seems, that the use of Cd stabilisers will continue to be allowed for PVC outdoor applications. However, some countries may adopt stricter regulations.

R. B.

R. BÜHL (with input from N. RUSSOTTO, ECVM)

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