

Austrian Federal Chancellor, Wolfgang Schüssel. To show his disapproval of Austria's ruling coalition, the French Finance Minister turned in all directions several times on his arrival in the Belgian capital to draw the journalists' attention to the sticker and the message it conveyed. His delegation, he said, had enough stickers for the other ministers. Later the Belgian Finance Minister, Didier Reynders, joined his French colleague. What constitutes good taste is, of course, arguable, but some things are totally lacking in taste.

Dr Wolfgang Schüssel is the Federal Chancellor of the Republic of Austria. As secretary of the parliamentary group of the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) for many years, as Secretary-General of the Austrian Economic Federation, as Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs and Vice-Chancellor, he had a blameless career. Since 1995 he has been the Federal party chairman of the ÖVP, a party which, like no other in Austria, has always pledged its allegiance to a democratic Europe. On 4 February 2000 Dr Wolfgang Schüssel was sworn in as Federal Chancellor. Over the years the Austrian people have been able to see how efficiently and professionally he operates. There cannot be the slightest doubt about his European mentality and attitude. The Council is therefore asked when it intends to put a stop to this evil campaign of character assassination and to ensure that common sense prevails in relations among European partners and friends.

Reply

(25 May 2000)

The Council has not taken a view on this subject and cannot therefore comment on the issues raised in the Honourable Member's question.

(2000/C 374 E/193)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0812/00

by **Michl Ebner (PPE-DE) to the Council**

(20 March 2000)

Subject: Remarks by the Belgian Foreign Minister Louis Michel on the Austrian Government

At last, on 27 February, the Belgian Foreign Minister Louis Michel described his outspoken remarks on the Austrian Government as foolish and withdrew them. The international press agencies reported that he had described his call on Belgian tourists not to travel to Austria because of the new government coalition as incredible and verging on bad taste. But anybody looking for a Belgian reappraisal of its strategy of isolating Austria had their hopes dashed two days later.

In the interview in the Belgian weekly 'Le Journal du Mardi' published on 29 February Michel expressed his hope that the sanctions imposed on Austria by the 14 Member States would topple the Vienna Government. Asked the goal of his strategy towards Austria, he answered: 'I should like to bring down the present Austrian Government. Haider is undoubtedly a neo-Nazi, but Wolfgang Schüssel is his accomplice out of pure personal ambition'. Louis Michel, with his contradictory pronouncements, in blatant contrast with the European ideal of dealings between the Member States on the basis of partnership and responsibility, has set a precedent for relations between the countries in the European Union. The European project for peace and stability based on responsible economic, political and social cooperation on the basis of trust is being jeopardised by reckless and insensitive remarks such as Mr Michel's.

What does the Council intend to do to halt the process of disintegration in the Union since the strategy of isolating Austria began?

Reply*(25 May 2000)*

The Council has not taken a view on this subject, and cannot therefore comment on the issues raised in the Honourable Member's question.

(2000/C 374 E/194)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0816/00

**by Juan Naranjo Escobar (PPE-DE), Carlos Carnero González (PSE)
and Salvador Jové Peres (GUE/NGL) to the Commission**

(21 March 2000)

Subject: Compatibility of Member States' social policies with Community law, particularly with the directives on the award of public works contracts

On the basis of the Beentjes case law findings, the Commission appears to be taking the view that requirements of a social nature can be included in the conditions for implementation of the contract, provided that certain publicity requirements are fulfilled and non-discrimination is guaranteed. Does the Commission not consider that including these requirements in the contract's implementing conditions, instead of in the criteria for awarding contracts, reduces the chances of success for some EU businesses competing in the tender, and thus implies a major obstacle to the internal market? (A business that does not have a certain number of fixed posts cannot compete in a tender whose implementing conditions demand this minimum, whereas it could take part in a tender in which the creation of stable employment was one of the criteria for awarding the contract, for instance with a value of 20 % of the total points, and might gain the contract if it did well on the other award criteria.)

Paragraph 9 of the 1999 employment guidelines says that each Member State must give special attention to the needs of disabled people and develop preventive and active policies to promote their integration into the labour market. In paragraph 7 of the Council's Resolution on equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities of June 1999, the Council says such opportunities 'will be enhanced if specific attention is given to recruitment and retention of employees'. Are these not sufficient reasons to justify a public administration in including disabled access to employment as a tie-breaking criterion in the award of contracts, especially when the same Resolution encourages the Community's own institutions to 'promote equal employment opportunities for disabled people within their own services, by enacting rules while taking full advantage of existing legal instruments and practices' (paragraph 5)?

Is there not a need to amend Directive 93/37/EC⁽¹⁾ concerning the coordination of procedures for the award of public works contracts, with the aim of clarifying the above concepts, taking account of the European Union's current priorities, to ensure that in this way the Member States can adapt their social measures to meet their citizens' needs?

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 199, 9.8.1993, p. 54.

(2000/C 374 E/195)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0817/00

**by Juan Naranjo Escobar (PPE-DE), Carlos Carnero González (PSE)
and Salvador Jové Peres (GUE/NGL) to the Commission**

(21 March 2000)

Subject: Compatibility of Member States' social policies with Community law, particularly with the directives on the award of public works contracts

Article 136 of the Treaty on European Union says that the Community and Member States must have as their objectives the promotion of employment with a view to lasting stable employment and the combating of exclusion. And the conclusions of the Vienna European Council of 11-12 December 1998