

SPECIAL REPORT —

Sunday Laws in Europe

ROME IS URGENTLY TRYING TO GET THE EU TO ENACT A EUROPE-WIDE NATIONAL SUNDAY LAW

In April 2007, we began sending you a lengthy collection of reports on the steadily increasing efforts of the Catholic Church to initiate a Sunday Law in America.

With this ultimate objective in mind, the Vatican started *Christian World Forum* in 2001, so those laws could later be extended throughout the world. It has become the largest international ecumenical organization. Then a Baltimore cardinal started *Christian Churches Together* (CCT) in 2002, so the churches of America could unite in pushing through a National Sunday Law in the U.S.

At a CCT meeting held in Pasadena, CA, on February 6-9, 2007, a *Ten Point Statement* of Objectives was quietly approved. Two points in that *Statement* are of special interest to us. They are the only points on which CCT, and its member churches, could work powerfully to coerce the U.S. Congress into enacting radical, new legislation. Here they are:

“3. The Ten Commandments are to be subscribed to by the nation . . .”

“7. Throughout all the land, a National Day of Rest shall be honored by governments, industrial manufacturers, and public shopping facilities.”

These objectives would **require U.S. federal legislative enactments and presidential approval**, before they could be implemented.

Although the CCT now has more member churches than the National Council of Churches, **a National Sunday Law will probably not be enacted in America until this gigantic new ecumenical structure and its discordant churches and members have been coordinated into a cohesive force able to coerce Congress into enacting such a law.** So we are waiting for further developments within the CCT.

But, at the same time that it is working steadily toward this objective in America, Rome is also working toward similar fulfillments in Europe.

It is much easier to do this now, for the many nations of that continent are now loosely leagued into the *European Union* (EU). **All that is needed is to get influential leaders in Europe to coerce the *European Parliament* to enact such a law there!**

In Europe, as in America, the various Protestant churches are, as usual, in disarray,—**while the Vatican quietly works with a steady purpose, marshaling all its available forces for the coveted objective** of enacting Sunday Laws there also.

As you know, the Spirit of Prophecy says that it will be the National Sunday Law in America that will initiate the enactment of similar laws throughout the world. We are told that other Christian nations will pass such a law, and then other nations throughout the earth. (*See pp. 38-39 in our book, The End of Time for a complete col-*

Pope Pius VI had planned to start a united Europe organization, but Napoleon’s capture of him in 1798 kept the pope from carrying his plan through to completion.

It is said that **Pope Leo XIII** (1878 to 1903) was in fact the instigator of certain political movements whose end result was our modern European Union (EU).

Pope Pius XII (Hitler’s Pope) actually blamed the people’s lack of desire to unify globally as the reason for Hitler’s rampage. (Pope Benedict XVI is anxious to declare Pius XII to have been a saint.)

On November 14, 2008, the Vatican’s Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) published an article wherein they discussed the following agenda during their annual Autumn meeting:

“The financial crisis has exposed a deeper spiritual crisis and a misguided set of values . . . The financial crisis also offers the opportunity to question more

incisively the lifestyle of western society . . . It is up to Christians to make their fellow-citizens aware that moderation can be synonymous with quality of life and with happiness, because it helps to distinguish the essential from the superfluous . . .

“In the same spirit, the Bishops called for respect for Sunday rest as one of the foundations of the European social model and as a way of balancing work and family life. In recent years, Sunday as a weekly rest day has been threatened by legislation in many Member States, thanks to liberal and consumerist-driven political concepts.

“In the context of the present economic crisis, the COMECE Bishops call on the Members of the European Parliament to assume their responsibilities and include the protection of Sunday in the *Working Time Directive* that will be submitted to the *European Parliament’s* vote by the middle of December.”

The entire article will be quoted in greater length later in this present report.

2 *lection of Spirit of Prophecy quotations on this.)*

At any rate, we are told that it will be a National Sunday Law, covering the entire United States, which will be the impetus to start the Marking and Sealing time. (*See pp. 83-92 in The End of Time for a complete understanding of this.*)

It is possible that Sunday Laws may be enacted in other nations, before the key one is passed in America. It may be the strictly enforced nature of the U.S. law that will make it stand out as the one to initiate the Marking and Sealing time, and rather quickly lead to similar laws elsewhere.

This present documentary report is about this recently accelerated drive to enact a single, continent-wide National Sunday Law throughout all of Europe! It may or may not succeed. We may know shortly, for the next plenary debate of the *European Parliament* is scheduled for December 16.

In the following reports from several European sources, you will find some duplication of information; but it is important that you understand what is taking place and the reasons given for it. As usual, our own church news media is remarkably silent on this matter (although this present report may prompt some kind of comment in the *Review*.)

The following reports are given in the chronological order of when they were first released. Expect to find them filled with British spellings.

ORDER OF EVENTS—

[November 23, 1993—The European Working Time Directive was approved by the *European Parliament*, **but did not require a weekly rest day.**

December 1996—The European Parliament voted that a day of rest must be imposed on the workers in every nation in Europe—**but it did not say it had to be Sunday.**

1996-2008—The Catholic bishops' conference (COMECE) has led out in efforts to coerce the EU to require that Sunday be this required weekly day of rest, but so far without success.

August 24, 2006—Under heavy pressure from the Catholic bishops, the EU voted that the rest day could, "in principle," be Sunday; but each nation should decide the day.

November 2008—The bishops are very close to pushing Sunday through as the mandatory EU-required rest day for all Europe.

December 16, 2008—The EU will decide on this matter. I will not publish this until after that date, so at the end of this report I can tell you what happened.

The following documents will provide you with an overview of Sunday Law developments in Europe:

"Car free days" - began in 1956, gained great momentum in the early 1990s, now done in over 1,500 cities and some nations in Europe and around the world;—and nearly always Sunday is the specified day for not driving a car.

November 23, 1993—The EU enacts the European Working Time Directive.

[The basic EWTD is enacted.]

November 15, 1996—EU Court demands a day of rest, but decides it does not have to be Sunday.

London Times, "Major confronts EU over 48-hour Ruling," 13 November 1996—

[British Prime Minister] John Major paved the way for confrontation with the European Union lasting up to and through the general election yesterday when **he pledged to reverse a European Court of Justice verdict imposing a 48-hour maximum working week on Britain.**

The Prime Minister, in a move that won the backing of most Tory MPs (members of the parliament), and particularly the Euro-sceptic wing, announced **he could not accept the ruling of the Luxembourg judges** and that if it was not changed he would block any agreement in the inter-governmental conference shaping Europe's future.

As the *European Commission* accused Mr. Major of trying to hold his EU colleagues to ransom, **amendments were tabled by Britain in Brussels last night that would have the effect of overturning the ruling and blocking alleged loopholes to prevent related European laws being imposed on this country** by the same route.

But the Commission delivered a quick and predictable rebuff. Jacques Santer, its President, told Mr. Major to get on with implementing the new rules as quickly as possible.

In a letter from Brussels to Downing Street, Mr. Santer rejected the Prime Minister's call, in a letter earlier in the day, for the ruling to be reversed so British workers can be excluded.

Mr. Major's tough line ensured that Britain's attitude to the ruling—giving workers the right not to be forced to work more than 48 hours against their will, a statutory entitlement to three weeks' paid holiday **and a compulsory weekly rest day**—would become a central election issue, apparently pleasing strategists in both main parties. Tony Blair immediately squared up to the Prime Minister in the Commons, asking if he would fight the next election on the slogan: Vote Tory for no right to a holiday. [After he later left office, Tony Blair, a secret Catholic church-goer for years, publicly became a Roman Catholic.] . . .

However, senior ministers made plain that Mr. Major's tough line would be evident at next month's Dublin summit. **Ministers called the ruling the thin end of the wedge and said, if Britain did not act to close the loophole, a raft of new EU social legislation would follow.**

One small government victory was the court finding that the compulsory rest day need not be a Sunday.

About five million public sector workers will be covered by the ruling from November 23, but most already have similar or more favourable agreements.

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John Monks, the TUC General Secretary, called the ruling great news. Adair Turner, the CBI Director-General, said it was legislation at its worst. Brussels officials were delighted. This is a good day for social Europe, said Pdraig Flynn, Social Affairs Commissioner.

London Times, "Major confronts EU over 48-hour Ruling," 13 November 1996.

December 12, 1996—EU Court adds that it would be good if the selected rest day was Sunday.

European Union Parliament, "Sunday Working: No to Sunday working," Thursday, 12 December, 1996—

Following the [EU's] Court of Justice's decision to annul the clause in the working time directive providing for Sunday to count as a rest day, MEPs (members of the European parliament) adopted a resolution calling on the member states to 'pay due regard to the tradition and cultural, social religious and family needs of its citizens and to recognise the special character of Sunday as a day of rest' when transposing the legislation into national law. The decision was taken on the grounds that there were no specific health and safety reasons to single out Sunday.

But MEPs representing a wide range of cultural, religious and national traditions were adamant that Sunday should remain special.

David Hallam (Herefordshire and Shropshire, PES), a methodist lay reader, pointed out that deregulation had had an adverse effect on the lives of ordinary working people and disrupted family life. **As he put it, 'Let us have a good rest at least once a week on a Sunday.'**

Alan Gillis (Leinster, EPP) agreed. **Sunday was a focal point for families, he said, and vital to foster religious, recreational and cultural contacts.**

The resolution recognises the rights of other religious groups in a multi-cultural society and the right for an alternative rest day.

For the Commission, Pdraig Flynn said the ruling did not affect workers' rights to a minimum rest period of 24 hours once a week and that it was up to the member states to decide how this would be written into the new directive."

—European Union Parliament, "Sunday Working: No to Sunday working," Thursday, 12 December, 1996; European Union Parliament, Daily Notebook, December 12, 1996; all italics theirs.

May 31, 1998—Papal Apostolic Letter calling for the nations of earth to enact National Sunday laws.

[On May 31, 1998, on the occasion of the Solemnity of Pentecost in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, Pope John Paul II issued an Apostolic Letter, entitled *Dies Domini* [The Lord's Day], after the two words which open the papal statement.

In this official decree from the Vatican, the pope declared that all nations everywhere should enact National Sunday Laws. (This 37-page statement is ana-

lyzed in WM-843-846.) This papal document was prepared by Joseph Ratzinger, who on April 24, 2005, became Pope Benedict XVI. 3

Although ostensibly directed to Roman Catholics, yet, nested within this document is **a direct call to world governments to enact National Sunday Laws.**

In order to place as much of these statements here, without enlarging this report, the type size will be reduced.

Excerpts from Pope John Paul II, "Dies Domini," May 31, 1998—

"The Lord's Day—as Sunday was called from Apostolic times—has always been accorded special attention in the history of the Church because of its close connection with the very core of the Christian mystery. In fact, in the weekly reckoning of time Sunday recalls the day of Christ's Resurrection."—Page 1, section 1.

"The fundamental importance of Sunday has been recognized through two thousand years of history and was emphatically restated by the Second Vatican Council."—Page 2, section 3.

"Paul VI emphasized this importance once more when he approved the new General Roman Calendar and the Universal Norms which regulate the ordering of the Liturgical Year."—Page 2, section 3. [This occurred near the conclusion of Vatican II, and primarily concerned a revised arrangement for yearly church festivals and holy days.]

"The coming of the Third Millennium, which calls believers to reflect upon the course of history in the light of Christ, also invites them to rediscover with new intensity the meaning of Sunday: its 'mystery,' its celebration, its significance for Christian and human life."—Page 2, section 3.

"I note with pleasure that **in the years since the [Vatican II] Council this important theme [of strengthening Sunday sacredness] has prompted not only many interventions by you, dear Brother Bishops, as teachers of the faith, but also different pastoral strategies which—with the support of your clergy—you have developed either individually or jointly. On the threshold of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, it has been my wish to offer you this Apostolic Letter in order to support your pastoral efforts in this vital area.**"—Page 2, section 3.

"Until quite recently, it was easier in traditionally Christian countries to keep Sunday holy because it was an almost universal practice and because, even in the organization of civil society, Sunday rest was considered a fixed part of the work schedule. Today, however, even in those countries which **give legal sanction** to the festive character of Sunday, changes in socioeconomic conditions have often led to the profound modifications of social behavior and hence of the character of Sunday. The custom of the 'weekend' has become more widespread, a weekly period of respite, spent perhaps far from home."—Page 2, section 4.

"Given this array of new situations and the questions which they prompt, **it seems more necessary than ever to recover the deep doctrinal foundations underlying the Church's precept, so that the abiding value of Sunday in the Christian life will be clear to all the faithful. In doing this, we follow in the footsteps of the age-old tradition of the Church,** powerfully restated by the Second Vatican Council in its teaching that on Sunday, 'Christian believers should come together . . . [to receive the mass, etc.]' "—Page 3, section 6.

"It is clear then why, even in our own difficult times, the identity of this day must be protected and above all must be lived in all its depth. An Eastern writer of the begin-

4 ning of the third century recounts that as early as then the faithful in every region were keeping Sunday holy on a regular basis.”—Page 11, section 30.

“What began as a spontaneous practice later became a juridically sanctioned norm [i.e., National Sunday laws were enacted and enforced]. *The Lord’s Day has structured the history of the Church through two thousand years: how could we think that it will not continue to shape her future?*”—Page 11, section 30.

“Given its many meanings and aspects, and its link to the very foundations of the faith, ***the celebration of the Christian Sunday remains, on the threshold of the Third Millennium, an indispensable element of our Christian identity.***”—Page 11, section 30.

[Then, suddenly, we come to sections 64 through 67, which refer directly to the need for strong governmental legislation and enforcement, and active efforts by the offices of Catholic Church leaders to see that it is done everywhere:]

“For several centuries, Christians observed Sunday simply as a day of worship, without being able to give it the specific meaning of the Sabbath rest. ***Only in the fourth century did the civil law of the Roman Empire recognize the weekly recurrence, determining that on ‘the day of the sun’ the judges, the people of the cities and various trade corporations would not work. Christians rejoiced to see thus removed the obstacles which until then had sometimes made observance of the Lord’s Day heroic [difficult]. They could now devote themselves to prayer in common without hindrance.***

“It would therefore be wrong to see in this legislation of the rhythm of the week a mere historical circumstance with no special significance for the Church and which she could simply set aside. Even after the fall of the Empire, the Councils did not cease to insist upon the arrangements regarding Sunday rest. In countries where Christians are in the minority and where the festive days of the calendar do not coincide with Sunday, it is still Sunday which remains the Lord’s Day, the day on which the faithful come together for the Eucharistic assembly. But this involves real sacrifices. For Christians it is not normal that Sunday, the day of joyful celebration, should not also be a day of rest, and it is difficult for them to keep Sunday holy if they do not have enough free time.

“By contrast ***the link between the Lord’s Day and the day of rest in civil society has a meaning and importance which go beyond the distinctly Christian point of view.*** [The Sunday rest is needed by everyone.] ***The alternation between work and rest, built into human nature, is willed by God Himself,*** as appears in the creation story in the Book of Genesis (cf. 2:2-3; Ex. 20:8-11): rest is something ‘sacred,’ because it is man’s way of withdrawing from the sometimes excessive demanding cycle of earthly tasks in order to review his awareness that everything is the work of God.”—Page 22, sections 64-65.

“Finally, it should not be forgotten that ***even in our own day*** work is very oppressive for many people, either because of miserable working conditions and long hours—especially in the poorer regions of the world—or because of the persistence in economically more developed societies of too many cases of injustice and exploitation of man by man. [Everyone needs to stop work once a week.] ***When through the centuries, she has made laws concerning Sunday rest, the Church has had in mind above all the work of servants and workers,***

certainly not because this work was any less worthy when compared to the spiritual requirements of Sunday observance, but rather because it needed ***greater regulation to lighten its burden and thus enable everyone to keep the Lord’s Day holy.*** In this matter, my predecessor Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical Rerum Novarum spoke of ***Sunday rest as a worker’s right which the State must guarantee.***”—Page 23, section 66.

“In our own historical context there remains the obligation to ensure that everyone can enjoy the freedom, rest and relaxation which human dignity requires, together with the associated religious, family, cultural and interpersonal needs which are difficult to meet if there is no guarantee of at least one day of the week on which people can both rest and celebrate. Naturally, this right of workers to rest presupposes their right to work and, as we reflect on the question of the Christian understanding of Sunday, we cannot but recall with a deep sense of solidarity the hardship of countless men and women who, because of the lack of jobs, are forced to remain inactive on workdays as well.”—Page 23, section 66.

“Therefore, also ***in the particular circumstances of our own time, Christians will naturally strive to ensure that civil legislation respects their duty to keep Sunday holy.*** In any case, they are obliged in conscience to arrange their Sunday rest in a way which allows them to take part in the Eucharist, refraining from work and activities which are incompatible with the sanctification of the Lord’s Day, with its characteristic joy and necessary rest for spirit and body.”—Page 23, section 67.

—Excerpts from Pope John Paul II, “Dies Domini,” May 31, 1998.

December 19, 2002—Italian government says the required rest day does not have to be Sunday, but Vatican officials protest and say it should be Sunday.

Catholic World News, “Italian Political Dispute over Sunday Sabbath,” Dec. 19, 2002—

VATICAN, Dec 19, 02 (CWNews.com)—***Italian religious and political leaders have been caught up in a heated debate about the observance of the Sabbath.***

The European Union has set up the policy that every member-state must have one day of rest during the week. But the policy explicitly states that the designated day need not be Sunday, since for reasons of “religious pluralism” a nation’s government might choose another day.

In Italy, the designation of Sunday as a “day of rest” was first set in 1993. That policy was changed in 2000, however, when—in order to grant more flexibility for employers—the nation required only that every employer produce workers with a 24-hour rest period each week. ***But by August 2003, under the new European policy, Italy will again be required to fix a certain “day of rest.”***

In an interview with the daily *Corriere della Sera*, Bishop Giancarlo Bregantini—who heads a committee dealing with social issues for the Italian bishops’ conference—remarked that attitudes on the observance of the

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Sunday Laws in Europe

**PART TWO
OF THREE**

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Sabbath are “already bad enough” without a change in national policy. **He said that any move away from the Sunday rest would be “a perverse act.”** And Cardinal Pio Laghi, the former prefect of the *Congregation for Catholic Education*, asked *La Repubblica*: **“How can you overlook the fact that Sunday is a special day for millions of Europeans?”**

—*Catholic World News*, “Italian Political Dispute over Sunday Sabbath,” Dec. 19, 2002. [A second Catholic World News Report reiterated this concern in their February 2003 report.]

March 3, 2004—European unions demand that the day of rest be Sunday. (Notice the reasons given for why it must be the rest day.)

Lengthy quotations from the European labor union coalition are a major part of the following article.

European Trade Union Network, “Vienna Dialogue Unites European Commerce Trade Unions: Guard the Social Dimension - No Thanks to Sunday Trading,” Press Release, March 3, 2004—

UNI Commerce affiliates in different parts of Europe are signing up to a declaration calling for a ban on Sunday trading. The initiative comes from the so-called *Vienna Dialogue*, which brings together unions from Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia and other countries. *UNI Commerce* affiliate GPA is the driving force behind this cooperation, which will be highlighted through joint activities in European border regions on First of May.

In a call for action, **European trade unions for commercial workers stress the need for building broad coalitions to stop Sunday trading in Europe.** At the *UNI-Europa Commerce Conference* in Stockholm in May 2003, **Europe’s commerce unions voted unanimously in support of a call to retain or introduce bans on Sunday retail work.**

Sunday plays a special role

“Sunday plays a special role in the cultural life and traditions of the Europeans, the unions say in their Vienna statement. As a day of rest, Sunday has defined the rhythms of life for time immemorial, enabling people to maintain contacts and providing opportunities for cultural and social encounters,” the declaration states.

“From the standpoint of the unions, **the day of rest on Sundays is a significant achievement of our society and culture that we must preserve and defend.** Work on Sundays is acceptable only if its purpose is to protect the lives, health or safety of the public or to meet important social and cultural needs. The people who do

this work must be compensated by giving them time off *en bloc* and ensuring that they can participate fully in society. The fundamental right to practice religion freely on this day must also be safeguarded, **since Sunday has special ethical and religious significance for many people in Europe.”**

“The constant attacks against Sunday as a day of rest in the retail sector are the consequence of senseless, mutually destructive competition, primarily among multinational retail groups. It is not the interests and needs of consumers that are at stake here, and definitely not those of retail employees. This is a battle for market share and market power. This power struggle is not only destroying European retail structures and local access to shopping; it is also increasingly at odds with the traditions and identities of the individual member states and their laws. **There is no vital social need for shops to open on Sundays,**” the unions say.

Commercial workers want free Sundays

“Claims that the majority of retail employees are more than willing to accept Sunday work in exchange for extra pay do not match reality. The truth is that in some member states, people work on Sundays so that they and their families can survive in the face of low pay and a high cost of living. It is not true that money can make up for the benefits of time spent resting with the family or the restorative effects on workers’ minds and bodies.

“In view of the social importance of a day of rest on Sundays and the problems faced by retail employees, **the unions and their members, irrespective of national boundaries, support a strict limitation of Sunday work** to the amount that is essential to meet basic social and economic needs. The unions believe that **the day of rest deliberately arranged by society defines a fundamental standard of social and economic prosperity,** and as such it always remains up-to-date and relevant **as a humane force for shaping society.** In this way, **the day of rest on Sundays is an essential expression of temporal prosperity** in a united, social Europe before the background of an increasingly wealthy society, and is therefore indispensable.”

In addition to economic gains, the people in the accession countries expect the expansion of the *European Union* to improve their personal living and working situations while maintaining respect and appreciation for their traditions and identity. **This also includes respect for the day of rest on Sundays.** At the same time, people in the member states – above all in border regions – are worried about negative influences resulting from different opening hours and labour regulations.

Take people seriously

“If European unification is to succeed, then **people’s hopes, expectations and fears must be taken seriously.** Employees – including retail employees – must have the feeling that their concerns and needs for protection, in-

6 cluding the basic human right for time away from work, are taken just as seriously as those of major corporations and capital; otherwise we will not achieve the level of support required to guarantee the ongoing development of **this project for peace.**"

In their statement, **the commerce trade unions call on European and national institutions and associations to join them in a campaign to preserve and respect the day of rest on Sundays:**

"They hope that alongside the unions, civil organisations and associations will recognise the interests of their members and **show active solidarity for Sunday as a day without work.**

"They are asking churches to continue raising their voices publicly in favour of restrictions to Sunday work as opposed to the pure profit motive.

"They expect employers and their organizations to respect the basic right of their employees to have time off work and take **the statutory days of rest**, and to support the initiative to limit work on Sundays to the amount that is essential to meet basic social and economic needs.

"They are calling on organisations and policymakers at the national level to use all available means in support of the most comprehensive possible implementation of **the right of all citizens to leisure time, and to pass laws to secure the principle of a day of rest on Sundays.**

"They are appealing to the institutions and leading personalities of the European Union and demanding that they **give the issue of rest on Sundays the emphasis it deserves** and develop a joint position, taking into account the social dimension and cultural identities for the protection of people in Europe.

"A united, free and democratic Europe needs more than economic and currency union **to continue developing peacefully.** It must also present credible prospects for social equilibrium and **a balancing of interests between employers and employees.** The **social dimension** of Europe cannot remain a mere slogan. It must be imbued with life for the benefit of all citizens and the overall political development of our continent!"

—*European Trade Union Network, "Vienna Dialogue Unites European Commerce Trade Unions: Guard the Social Dimension - No Thanks to Sunday Trading," Press Release, March 3, 2004.*

June 9, 2004—German high court forbids Sunday shopping.

BBC News, "Germany Rejects Sunday Shopping," June 9, 2004—

Germany's highest court has upheld the country's restrictive retail opening hours, disappointing consumers hoping to shop on Sundays and public holidays.

The *Federal Constitutional Court* said **the principle of rest on Sundays** and public holidays was **"sacrosanct."** . . . The retail lobby is now expected to focus its efforts on Germany's state governments, which have most influence over trading hours regulations. **But resistance to the 24-**

hour shopping culture remains strong in Germany, with trade unions protesting that the regulations are needed to safeguard workers' rights.

Michael Sommer, head of the DGB union, welcomed the court's decision. "It's a good day for shopkeepers who would like to have family lives that are just a little bit organised," he said. Church groups, keen to preserve Sunday as a day of rest, are also opposed to easing trading restrictions.

—*BBC News, "Germany Rejects Sunday Shopping," June 9, 2004.*

February 18, 2005—Quarreling back and forth in France over how often shops can be open on Sunday.

European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO), "Did Discussions End on Sunday Opening for Shops?" February 18, 2005—

Discussions on Sunday opening for shops have generated tension within the Government itself and strong opposition from trade unions. Following the intervention of the Prime Minister, **the maximum number of Sundays on which shops are legally allowed to open remains unchanged at 5.**

In July 2003, the Junior Minister of Local Freedoms, Patrick Devedjan, tabled a bill that would affect the traditional notion of Sunday as a rest day for employees. The proposed legislation aimed to increase the number of closing days on which, exceptionally, shops would legally be allowed to open **from 5 to 8.** This proposal, which led to an outcry, was followed by another bill tabled by majority member, Patrick Balkany, designed to **scrap Sunday as a statutory day of rest in the retail sector.** The lively discussions had resulted in these proposals being shelved until spring 2004, when Nicolas Sarkozy, on his appointment as Finance Minister, spoke of **raising the annual number of authorised Sunday openings to ten.**

Since then, the issue of the changes to the statutory working week has prompted action from trade unions, who have made it clear that they are opposed to Government moves to alter the 35-hour legislation (FR0502109F). Meanwhile, **the Government has given its approval for call centres to operate on Sundays** (FR0502104N). In February 2005, faced with increasingly vocal reaction from all quarters to the issue of company relocation and the promotion of a voluntarist industrial policy (FR0502106F), Patrick Devedjan, now Junior Minister of Industry, reiterated his proposal to **increase the number of authorised Sunday openings** with a view to providing the necessary support for the French textile industry, consumption and jobs.

The Minister of *Trade and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises*, Christian Jacob, was quick to demonstrate his **uncompromising opposition to the proposal** put forward by his counterpart at the Ministry of Industry. On 13 February 2005, the Minister of *Economy, Finance and Industry*, M. Hervé Gaymard, attempted to calm the dispute being waged by his two subordinates in the newspapers by stating that the opposition between them on

the issue was apparent rather than real. Whereupon the Junior Minister of Industry immediately let it be known that he would abide by the Prime Minister's decision on the matter.

As far as employers are concerned, The *Federation of Ready-to-Wear Garment Manufacturers (Fédération du prêt-à-porter)* added their support to the Minister of Industry's lead. The organisation has pointed out that when a focus group of its members was asked about the issue recently, **'the vast majority favoured Sunday opening for their outlets,'** especially since 'Sundays account for over 30% of their annual turn-over.' However, the chairman of the *National Federation of Clothiers (Fédération nationale de l'habillement)*, Charles Melcer, took issue with the appropriateness of protecting the French textile industry in this way given that retailers had recently recorded a rise in volume of between 3% and 5% during their traditional winter sales period. In his opinion, Sunday opening is irrelevant to the real problems and issues besetting the sector. He went on to say that 'to contend that Sunday opening would in any way offset the scrapping of Chinese quotas is laughable.'

The unions for their part wasted no time in rejecting the proposals put forward by the Minister of Industry. The *French Democratic Confederation of Labour (Confédération française démocratique du travail, CFDT)*-affiliated union in the sector denounced the Minister's initiatives on the grounds that **'allowing ready-to-wear outlets to open on Sundays would be only the first step.'** The *French Christian Workers' Confederation (Confédération française des travailleurs chrétiens, CFTC)*-affiliated union in the industry also stated that 'it was totally opposed to the plan' especially given that 'it will lead to job losses in the small retailer sector.' The *General Confederation of Labour-affiliated Retail Sector Union (Confédération générale du travail du Commerce, CGT)* called the Minister's proposal 'scandalous and provocative.' It sees it as nothing more than a move to require 'employees to work as and when employers decide.' The *General Confederation of Labour-Force ouvrière (Confédération générale du travail-Force ouvrière, CGT-FO)*-affiliated *Federation of Clerical Employees and Management Staff (Fédération des employés et cadres)* **came out against the move to increase the number of Sunday openings** and to extend *tourist areas*, contending that this is 'unfettered free-marketeering, designed to satisfy mass retailers and shops.'

Faced with this general uproar, the Prime Minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, brought the public arguments to an end on 18 February 2005. This issue had for several days poisoned relations between various Government ministers. **The Prime Minister stated that there would be no changes to the regulations governing Sunday opening for shops. He indicated, however, that he was keeping an open mind on this issue** and that the review of the law on pricing in the mass retailing sector (on 3 July 1996), known as the *Galland law*, would result in a detailed examination of the retail sector as a whole. Starting in March 2005, the Government plans to kick off a comprehensive three-year media campaign costing

eight billion Euro a year to promote local retailers.

—*European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO)*, "Did Discussions End on Sunday Opening for Shops?" February 18, 2005.

November 2005—As soon as Benedict was made pope, he called for Sunday as the day of rest in two major Catholic gatherings: in Italy and Germany.

Trumpet Journal, "The Pope Trumpets Sunday," November 2005—

In August, Pope Benedict xvi made Germany the destination of his first trip abroad [after his election to the papacy]. On Sunday, August 21, as part of the *World Youth Day* celebration, the pontiff conducted a mass with over one million people where **he stressed the importance of Sunday worship: "Sunday is a free day . . . Yet this free time is empty if God is not present,"** he said. "Sometimes our initial impression is that having to **include time for mass on a Sunday** is rather inconvenient. But if you make the effort, you will realize that this is what gives a proper focus to your free time" (*International Herald Tribune*, August 22).

These comments came just a few months after similar statements at a mass celebrating the closing of the *24th National Eucharistic Congress* on May 29. In front of 200,000 in the Italian city of Bari, **Benedict declared that the reinforcement of Sunday worship is fundamental to his mission . . .**

Pope Benedict perceives the secularist moral vacuum that has plagued Europe since the time of the Enlightenment. Now, after resounding rejections of the *European Constitution* by both France and the Netherlands in referenda earlier this year, European unification appears to be in disarray. But it seems Benedict wants to fill that vacuum . . .

As Texas-based think tank Stratfor said, "Europe, for geopolitical reasons, cannot be unified except beneath the heel of a conqueror" (June 2).

Pope Benedict is committed to reinstating the active observance of the Roman Catholic Church's chief icon: Sunday. He knows that to popularize religion in Europe, he has to reintroduce a means of promoting what marketers call "brand loyalty." **The most historic brand the pope can offer to bond the people together is the ancient day of worship.**

"We Cannot Live Without Sunday"

Note the terms Pope Benedict used in his May 29 mass to motivate the people to return to this ancient Roman practice: **"Sunday, day of the Lord, is the propitious occasion to draw strength from him, who is the Lord of life.** The Sunday precept, therefore, is not a simple duty imposed from outside. **To participate in the Sunday celebration and to be nourished with the Eucharistic bread is a need of a Christian,** who in this way can find the necessary energy for the journey [of life] to be undertaken . . . **We must rediscover the joy of the Christian Sunday."**

The pope concluded with this prayer: **"May today's Christians again become aware of the decisive impor-**

8 tance of the Sunday celebration” (Zenit, May 29).

The intensity of the papal commitment to enforcing Sunday worship in Europe was underlined in the pope's statements as reported by one of Italy's most popular conservative newspapers. **It reported his words as follows: “We cannot live without Sunday . . . The religious holiday of obligation is not a task imposed from the outside, but a duty of the Christian”** (*Corriere Della Sera*, May 29).

—*Trumpet Journal*, “*The Pope Trumpets Sunday*,” November 2005.

May 2006—French Courts require Sunday closing for a major firm.

WorldWatch, “*France Enforces Sunday Rest*,” May 2006—

In May, French courts ruled that the Louis Vuitton flagship store **must remain closed on Sundays in accordance with law**. The suit was brought against the famous Paris fashion house by the *French Confederation of Christian Workers*. Three facts are revealing:

1) The union that sued has no employees at the store.

2) All 300 employees of the store voted in favor of opening on Sundays.

3) An *Ipsos* telephone survey in April showed that 75 percent of French citizens polled approve of stores opening on Sunday.

—*WorldWatch*, “*France Enforces Sunday Rest*,” May 2006.

May 22, 2007—Sunday rest day controversy intensifies in Belgium.

Eurofound, Europa, “*New Regulations to Extend Sunday Shop Opening Hours*,” May 22, 2007—

New regulations on Sunday shop opening hours, introduced by government, are causing tensions among the social partners in the retail sector. Previously, the social partners had shown a united front in rejecting the government plans. However, **when the government went ahead with increasing the allowed number of Sunday openings a year, this united front crumbled**, and the issue of wage compensation for the proposed Sunday openings came to the fore . . .

Regulations on the opening hours of shops:

In Belgium, . . . **a shop owner is obliged to take an uninterrupted rest period of 24 hours each week, keeping it to the same day of the week for at least six months**. Shop owners can determine this rest period independently and can open on Sundays if they wish. However, other than a few exceptions, **they are not allowed to employ personnel on Sundays**.

The exceptions to this ‘day of rest’ rule are based on the following:

- The activity – some small shops are allowed to open on Sundays until 13.00 and can employ personnel during this time. Typical examples of such small shops would be bakeries, butchers, small food stores and florists;

- The location – shops situated in tourist centres, bathing or health resorts can always be open on Sundays.

A third exception in relation to the ‘day of rest’ had implied that **all shops could open three Sundays a year**. In March 2006, the Belgian government announced that **it wanted to raise the number of Sunday openings to six or nine openings a year. However, following a protest by a seemingly united front of sector representative social partners, the decision was postponed** and negotiation was handed over to these partners. They were asked to reach agreement on the topic before the end of 2006. After they failed to agree within the given timeframe, the government unilaterally took a decision on the issue in the *Council of Ministers* on 16 February 2007 . . .

New regulations

The new legislation stipulated that, from March 2007, Belgian shops can be open on six or even up to nine Sundays a year, if the local community council should agree.

However, the new law states that **an agreement has to exist between employers and employees on wage compensation for working on these Sundays. The new regulation therefore distinguishes between retailers with a trade union representation and those without union representation**. For companies without trade union representation, Sunday openings can only be organised if a collective agreement on wage compensation exists at sector level between the employer organisations and trade unions. Companies with trade union representation have more options: they can be bound by a sectoral agreement or, if no such agreement exists, the matter can be dealt with at company level or on an individual basis. **In the two latter situations, the new regulation prescribes that the wage for working Sundays has to be at least double the normal wage**.

Campaign for more liberalisation

An organisation representing small shop owners, the *Liberal Association of Self-Employed (Liberaal Verbond voor Zelfstandigen, LVZ)*, is **campaigning for a total liberalisation of opening hours**. According to LVZ, the whole package of regulations on shop opening hours, along with all the exceptions, should be abolished. **The association believes that opening hours should be decided by individual shop owners in consultation with their personnel**. In this regard, LVZ is supporting an online petition (in Flemish), set up by the owner of a bakery who was fined for not respecting the rules on opening hours. **The owner objected to the imposed fine on the grounds that his business as a normal bakery was being punished, while at the same time a petrol station shop could sell bread without incurring any such fine**. This campaign did not receive any support from the larger organisations representing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) like the *Organisation of the Self-Employed (Unie van de Zelfstandige Ondernemers, UNIZO)* or the *Neutral Union of the Self-Employed (Het Neutraal Syndicaat voor Zelfstandigen/*

Sunday Laws in Europe

**PART THREE
OF THREE**

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

Syndicat Neutre pour Indépendants, NSZ/SNI).

It remains surprising that this flexibility measure (BE0507301N) proposed by the government was at first rejected by the social partners in the sector and not just by the trade unions. In the near future, it will be interesting to see how the different sector committees involved in collective bargaining in the Belgian retail sector (TN0407101S) will conclude agreements on wage compensation under the new legislation (prepared by Guy Van Gyes, Higher Institute of Labour Studies (HIVA), Catholic University of Leuven).

—Eurofound, *Europa*, “New Regulations to Extend Sunday Shop Opening Hours,” May 22, 2007.

September 17, 2007—Benedict calls for all Europe to keep Sunday.

Trumpet Journal, “Pope Benedict XVI Attends Mass in Vienna,” September 9, September 17, 2007—

Pope Benedict XVI says your life depends upon worshipping on Sunday.

“*Sine dominico non possumus!*” “Without Sunday [worship] we cannot live!” Pope Benedict xvi declared during a mass on September 9 at St. Stephen’s Cathedral in Vienna.

Speaking on the final day of his three-day visit to Austria, the German pope voiced a strong call for Christians to revive Sunday keeping as an all-important religious practice.

“Give the soul its Sunday, give Sunday its soul,” he chanted before a rain-soaked crowd of 40,000.

Benedict said that Sunday, which he stated has its origin as “the day of the dawning of creation,” was “also the church’s weekly feast of creation.”

Warning against the evils of allowing Sunday to become just a part of the weekend, the pope said people needed to have a spiritual focus during the first day of the week, or else leisure time would just become wasted time.

Sunday worship, he warned, was not just a “precept” to be casually adhered to, but a “necessity” for all people.

In the opening greeting, the archbishop of Vienna said a movement in Austria had been initiated to protect “Sunday from tendencies to empty [it] of its meaning.”

In Austria, most businesses are restricted from operating on Sunday. However, some business groups are pressuring the government to be allowed to open, a move Roman Catholic groups vehemently oppose.

During Benedict’s trip to Austria, he called for Europe to look to its Christian roots, to trust in God and to defend traditional values.

The pope has been very vocal about Europe’s Christian—or Catholic—roots, and is pushing to have them included in the European Constitution.

—*Trumpet Journal*, “Pope Benedict XVI Attends Mass in Vienna,” September 9, September 17, 2007.

November 6, 2008—Catholic bishops press hard for a mandatory Sunday rest day for Europe.

COMECE: “*The Debate on Sunday Holiday Must be Brought before the EP.*” Thursday, 6 November 2008, report released by Servizio Informazione, Religiosa, Via Aurelia, Roma—

Regret and disappointment are expressed by Father Piotr Mazurkiewicz, Secretary General of the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community (COMECE), on the decision of the President of the European Parliament Employment and Social Affairs Commission, motivated by procedural reasons, to vote some amendments put forward by seven Euro-deputies from different parties to include Sunday as a day of rest in the new Working Time Directive which is being examined by the EP.

“In reality,” explains the COMECE note, “the amendments will add to the directive’s article 5 a second paragraph according to which ‘the minimal weekly rest must include Sunday.’” Then there is the proposal to “highlight the importance of Sunday holiday for the protection of workers’ health.”

“If the European Parliament is taking seriously the point clearly outlined in the directive,” says the COMECE, “it would be logical that it completed the present text with a disposition on Sunday as a day of weekly rest.”

Hence, the wish that “the Eurodeputies will make all their possible [sic.] to include the debate and the vote on Sunday holiday, the foundation of the European social model, in the plenary debate scheduled for next December 16.”

—COMECE: “*The Debate on Sunday Holiday Must be Brought before the EP.*” Thursday, 6 November 2008, report released by Servizio Informazione, Religiosa, Via Aurelia, Roma.

November 7, 2008—A second Catholic article on the Bishops’ drive for a European Sunday law.

COMECE, “*EU Bishops Call for Debate on Sunday Working,*” released through Independent Catholic News, Geneva, 7 November 2008—

EU Bishops have expressed regret that the European Parliament is not planning a debate on Sunday working in its new Working Time Directive.

The Parliament is now deliberating on the Second Reading on the revision of the Working Time Directive of 2003. On 22 October, seven Members of Parliament tabled amendments to the draft recommenda-

10 tion of the rapporteur Alejandro Cercas, asserting that the minimum weekly rest period “shall in principle include Sunday.”

They also underlined **the importance of a work-free Sunday for the protection of workers’ health**, saying: **“The likelihood of sickness in companies that require staff to work on Sundays is greater than in companies that do not require staff to work on Sundays. The health of workers depends, among other factors, on their opportunities to reconcile work and family life, to establish and maintain social ties and to pursue their spiritual needs. Sunday, as the traditional weekly rest day, contributes to these objectives more than any other day of the week.”**

In their justification the parliamentarians point to the fact that **“absenteeism and sick-leave increase significantly in companies working on Sunday.”** This negative impact on workers’ health “is mainly due to the consequences for social, especially family life.” Sunday “is the natural choice for family related activities, as childcare facilities and schools are closed.”

If the Parliament wishes to be serious about the aim of reconciling work and family life - a goal which is explicitly mentioned in the Directive - it would make sense to complete the current draft by adding a provision on Sunday as a weekly rest day.

COMECE is encouraging Euro MPs to use the Parliament’s Rules of Procedure, in order to enable a debate and **vote on the protection of Sunday at the Plenary on 16 December.”**

—COMECE, “*EU Bishops Call for Debate on Sunday Working*,” released through *Independent Catholic News*, Geneva, 7 November 2008.

November 10, 2008—A non-Catholic article on this controversy.

The Parliament, Politics, and People (Brussels, Belgium), “Bishops Hit Out over Debate on Working Time Directive Report,” November 10, 2008.

Europe’s Catholic bishops have criticised MEPs for ‘failing to protect’ Sunday in new EU working times regulations.

Piotr Mazurkiewicz, secretary general of the Brussels-based *Bishops’ Conferences of the European Communities* (COMECE), expressed disappointment that a debate on the protection of Sunday had not taken place “apparently due to procedural obstacles.”

He was referring to a discussion in parliament’s employment and social affairs committee where MEPs debated a revision of the EU working time directive.

Some MEPs unsuccessfully tabled an amendment recommending that the minimum weekly rest period “shall in principle include Sunday.”

The amendment was put forward by seven MEPs from the *European People’s Party* (EPP), the *Party of European Socialists* (PSE) and the *Alliance of Liberals and Democrats* (ALDE).

But the failure to put this amendment to the vote incensed Mazurkiewicz, a Polish priest, who was recently elected to the top COMECE post.

He said the protection of Sunday “is a cornerstone

of the European social model and an issue of central importance for workers and their families.”

He added, “If the parliament wishes to be serious about the aim of reconciling work and family life – a goal which is explicitly mentioned in the directive – **it would make sense to complete the current draft by adding a provision on Sunday as a weekly rest day.”**

—*The Parliament, Politics, and People (Brussels, Belgium), “Bishops Hit Out over Debate on Working Time Directive Report,” November 10, 2008.*

November 11, 2008—A fourth article.

Clerical Whispers: Fides - Libertas - Veritas, “Bishops Call on European Parliament to Protect Sunday as Rest Day,” Tuesday, November 11, 2008; posted by Sotto Voice—

“The protection of Sunday is a cornerstone of the European Social Model and an issue of central importance for workers and their families.”

So said Piotr Mazurkiewicz, the secretary general of the Commission of Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community (COMECE), who is calling for action on this proposal.

He expressed his disappointment that a debate on the protection of Sunday has not taken place apparently due to procedural obstacles.

The European Parliament is now deliberating on the Second Reading on the revision of the Working Time Directive of 2003.

On 22 October 2008, seven Members of Parliament from the ranks of the *European People’s Party* (EPP), the *Party of European Socialists* (PSE) and the *Alliance of Liberals and Democrats* (ALDE) tabled amendments to the draft recommendation of the rapporteur Alejandro Cercas (PSE), **according to which the protection of Sunday was to be anchored in the Working Time Directive.**

To that end, the existing Article 5 of the Directive was to be complemented by a second paragraph according to which the minimum weekly rest period “shall in principle include Sunday.”

Furthermore, MEPs tabled a new recital [version] in order to underline the importance of a work-free Sunday for the protection of workers’ health.

It says: “The likelihood of sickness in companies that require staff to work on Sundays is greater than in companies that do not require staff to work on Sundays. The health of workers depends, among other factors, on their opportunities to reconcile work and family life, to establish and maintain social ties and to pursue their spiritual needs. **Sunday, as the traditional weekly rest day, contributes to these objectives more than any other day of the week.”**

In their justification the parliamentarians point to the fact that **“absenteeism and sick-leave increase significantly in companies working on Sunday.”** This negative impact on workers’ health “is mainly due to the consequences for social, especially family life.” Sunday “is the natural choice for family related activities, as childcare facilities and schools are closed.”

If the Parliament wishes to be serious about the aim

1 of reconciling work and family life – a goal which is explic-
4 itly mentioned in the Directive – it would make sense to
7 complete the current draft by adding a provision on Sun-
0 day as a weekly rest day.

The Secretariat of COMECE encouraged Members of the European Parliament to make full use of the flexibility within the Parliament's Rules of Procedure, in order to enable a debate and vote on the protection of Sunday to take place in the Plenary on 16 December 2008.

The protection of Sunday is a cornerstone of the European Social Model and an issue of central importance for workers and their families.

—*Clerical Whispers: Fides - Libertas - Veritas*, "Bishops Call on European Parliament to Protect Sunday as Rest Day," Tuesday, November 11, 2008; posted by Sotto Voice.

November 20, 2008—COMECE is deeply agitated to push the Sunday law through to success.

Catholic Communications Network, "The Financial Crisis Is a Test for the Values of European society: COMECE Autumn Plenary Assembly 2008." Press release, 20 November, 2008—

The financial crisis has exposed a deeper spiritual crisis and a misguided set of values. The sense and value of human work has been pushed to the background in the general struggle for profit, the COMECE Bishops stated with regret on the occasion of their Autumn Plenary Assembly. This meeting, which took place from 12 to 14 November **in the new offices of COMECE in square de Meeûs 19 in Brussels**, was also marked by the presence of Piotr Mazurkiewicz as the new Secretary General.

[COMECE = *Bishops' Conferences of the European Communities*. Note that COMECE has established a new office in Brussels, so it can more heavily influence EU decisions.]

Bishop Adrianus Van Luyn, President of COMECE, called for the scale of the crisis not to be underestimated: "Whoever considers the cause of the financial crisis to reside solely in a lack of transparency and legal accountability is perhaps overlooking the fact that it is far more our societal model that is being called into question. An economic model that is based on the continued and unlimited consumption of limited resources can only end in tears." He believes that **the deeper cause of the financial crisis lies in "a misguided set of values."**

In the same spirit, **the Bishops called for respect for Sunday rest as one of the foundations of the European social model and as a way of balancing work and family life. In recent years, Sunday as a weekly rest day has been threatened by legislation in many Member States** thanks to liberal and consumerist-driven political concepts. **In the context of the present economic crisis, the COMECE Bishops call on the Members of the European Parliament to assume their responsibilities and include the protection of Sunday in the**

Working Time Directive that will be submitted to the European Parliament's vote by the middle of December.

For their part, the Bishops tasked the COMECE Secretariat with setting up an Expert group to consider the principle of reciprocity in relation to religious freedom. The report of this group will be presented to the Bishops during their next Plenary Assembly in March 2009.

—*Catholic Communications Network*, "The Financial Crisis Is a Test for the Values of European Society: COMECE Autumn Plenary Assembly 2008." Press release, 20 November, 2008.

November 27, 2008—Both Catholic and Protestant organizations meet with EU president and urge Sunday Law mandate throughout EU nations.

Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community, "Church Representatives Meet the French EU-Presidency," COMECE release, 27 November, 2008—

Following a now well-established tradition, representatives of the Churches in Europe, which consists of The Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE [RC]), and The Conference of European Churches (CEC [Conference of European Churches; Protestant]) met the French EU-Presidency today in Paris. The French State Secretary for European Affairs, M. Jean-Pierre Jouyet, received the Church representatives in the *Foreign Affairs Ministry*.

The discussions focused on institutional issues (the future of the EU and the Lisbon Treaty) and on the financial crisis. The Church representatives, in their exchange of views with the State Secretary for European Affairs, **expressed their wish to see the Sunday rest day being better protected in national legislations as well as in the future EU Working Time Directive which is currently being revised.** In our societies and in our economies, where efficiency has become the ultimate criterion of valuation, **Sunday rest allows the individual to be placed at the centre of society and calls attention to the fact that he is free and not the slave of work.**

In view of the meeting of the European Council for Justice and Home Affairs on 27 November, the delegation of Church representatives also raised several issues related to refugee resettlement and to the return policies in the European Union. The delegation emphasized the need for a truly common EU policy on migration and asylum, which protects the human rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, and which regards integration as a two-way process, involving both migrants and host communities.

Then the COMECE and the CEC representatives and the Church representatives in France expressed to the French EU-Presidency their deep concern about the rights of minorities around the world, especially where

12 Christian minorities are subjected to persecution. They called on the EU Member States and the EU Institutions to make respect for religious freedom, which is a fundamental right, a major plank of their Foreign Policy.

The Church representatives also discussed the dramatic situation of Iraqi Christians whose extinction would signify a major injustice. It would mean that the Dialogue between cultures is not anymore possible and that ethnical and religious communitarism prevails over the universality of human rights.

Finally the representatives also discussed global issues like climate change and EU-Africa relations. They recalled the specific contribution Churches and Christians could bring in helping to address these challenges, through their reflections, examples and local initiatives.

The Churches were represented at this meeting by:

- Mgr. Antoine Hérouard, Secretary General of the **French Catholic Bishops' Conference**

- Arsenius Kardamakis, **Ecumenical Patriarchate [Orthodox Church]**

- Pastor Yves Parrend, Secretary General of the **Protestant Federation of France**

- H.E. Christian Kratz, **Auxiliary Bishop of Strasbourg, delegate to COMECE [RC]**

- Piotr Mazurkiewicz, **Secretary General of COMECE**

- Reverend Rüdiger Noll, Director of the Church and Society Commission and Associate General Secretary of **CEC**
—*Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community, "Church Representatives Meet the French EU-Presidency," COMECE release 27 November, 2008.*

THE EU WORKING TIME DIRECTIVE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

[November 23, 1993—The European Working Time Directive was approved by the European Parliament, but did not require a weekly rest day.

December 1996—The European Parliament voted that a day of rest must be imposed on the workers in every nation in Europe—but it did not say it had to be Sunday.

1996-2008—The Catholic bishops' conference (COMECE) has led out in efforts to coerce the EU to require that Sunday be this required weekly day of rest, but so far without success.

August 24, 2006—Under heavy pressure from the Catholic bishops, the EU voted that the rest day could, "in principle," be Sunday; but each nation should decide the day.

November 2008—The bishops are very close to pushing Sunday through as the mandatory EU-required rest day for all Europe.

December 16, 2008—The decision by the EU Parlia-

ment was to be made as to whether a European-wide, Sunday rest day would be enacted. —But, by the end of December, no press releases of any kind have been found which says that this legislation was even considered on that day, much less passed.

When we obtain additional information on this, we will notify you!

August 24, 2006—The EU Working Time Directive is a collection of regulations which limit the maximum length of a working week to 48 hours in 7 days, and a minimum rest period of 11 hours in each 24 hours. Article 5 requires that the rest period include Sunday, but the requirement that it be Sunday has been hotly contested for years.

EU Business, "EU Working Time Directive," 24 August 2006—

. . . The main provisions stated in the EWTD were to ensure that workers enjoyed:

- A maximum 48 hour working week averaged over a reference period;

- A minimum daily rest period of 11 consecutive hours a day;

- A rest break where the working day is longer than six hours;

- **A minimum rest period of one day a week;** and

- A statutory right to annual paid holiday of 4 weeks;

- Night working must not exceed eight hours a night on average.

—*EU Business, "EU Working Time Directive," 24 August 2006.*

The EU Working Time Directive

Section II: Minimum rest periods - Other aspects of the organisation of working time

Article 3: Daily Rest

Article 5: Weekly Rest Period

Article 3: Member States shall take the measures necessary to ensure that every worker is entitled to a minimum daily rest period of 11 consecutive hours per 24-hour period.

Article 5: Weekly Rest Period

Member States shall take the measures necessary to ensure that, per each seven-day period, every worker is entitled to a minimum uninterrupted rest period of 24 hours plus the 11 hours daily rest referred to in Article 3. The minimum rest period referred to in the first subparagraph shall in principle include Sunday. If objective, technical or work organisation conditions so justify, a minimum rest period of 24 hours may be applied.

Article 7:2. The average working time for each seven-day period, including overtime, does not exceed 48 hours.

—*Source: The European Commission, "EU Working Time Directive."*