

EEC. They include differing product standards and safety and health requirements, government procurement practices and cumbersome customs procedures. Moreover, except within the EEC, European countries are still free to use measures of contingent protection against one another, such as anti-dumping and countervailing duties though generally only after prior consultation and joint study. On the other, the members of the Community, although they have not completed their hand common market, have in some respects moved beyond this level of integration towards economic, and perhaps eventually political, union. How far they will actually succeed in going in this direction is a matter for speculation at the moment.

Different Approaches

Especially in the early post-war years, a variety of approaches were taken towards integration. Even before the war was over, the governments-in-exile in London of Belgium and Luxembourg (which had formed an economic union in 1922) and of the Netherlands agreed to establish the customs union which became known as BENELUX. Instead of starting with a detailed blueprint, enshrined in a treaty (as the EEC countries did later), they took a series of practical steps based on protocols, conventions and ministerial agreements over a period of almost 15 years. Then they capped the process with a Treaty of Economic Union which codified and consolidated what had been done and reaffirmed the principles and intentions.

In 1948, the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) was set up to help in distributing Marshall Plan aid and to further economic cooperation between the member countries. The convention establishing OEEC provided for the rapid completion of customs unions and free trade areas already agreed upon (this effectively meant BENELUX) and the study of other possible arrangements along these lines. However, this part of the work rapidly degenerated into an effort to standardize descriptions of tariff items, largely it seems because of British opposition to anything more ambitious. OEEC concentrated on freeing up international payments and getting rid of QRs. It also set up a number of industry sector committees, with a view to coordinating European investment plans and avoiding duplication.

The disappointing results of this approach was probably one of the factors leading to the decision of Germany, France, Italy and the BENELUX countries to set up the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951. In effect it was a sectoral customs union with some elements of supra-nationality and provisions to maintain a competitive environment, ensure a greater degree of stability in production and trade and promote rational development of the coal and steel industries. The very success of this initiative and the relationship of iron and steel and coal to their many downstream products and to other forms of energy,