

'France has increased sales of coal by 53 %' from Le Figaro (25 September 1953)

Caption: On 25 September 1953, the French daily newspaper Le Figaro makes an initial assessment of competition policy in the coal and steel sectors.

Source: Le Figaro. dir. de publ. Brisson, Pierre. 25.09.1953, n° 2 813; 126e année. Paris: Le Figaro. "La France a accru de 53% ses ventes de charbon", auteur:L., J. , p. 11.

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France has increased sales of coal by 53 % in Community countries since the opening of the common market.

Competitors are finding it difficult to establish themselves amongst the steel producers

After the meeting of the Consultative Committee, which recently took place in Luxembourg, we may take stock of the situation, a few months after the common market in coal and steel began operations.

As far as coal is concerned, we are in a difficult situation because of falling consumption in inland navigation, power stations and the iron and steel industry. The industries concerned have asked the Community to investigate the causes of this slump, which seems to have resulted, in part, from the lowering of fuel prices following the reduction of marine transport tariffs.

The reaction to these difficulties of the six countries of the Community has been to strengthen their union. They have imported less from third countries and have made better use of their own resources. In seven months, Germany has exported to other countries in the Community 426 000 tonnes of coal more than it did last year, an increase of 8 %. Similarly, Belgium has increased its exports by 448 000 tonnes or 34 %. It is France that has seen the strongest growth in proportional terms in coal exports: 301 000 tonnes, or 53 %.

However, the common market in coal remains far from perfect. In most of the countries, the export and import of coal is regulated by centralised bodies. The consumer is not able to choose in open competition between the domestic product and one from abroad. The High Authority intends to remedy this situation in the very near future. In France, it has taken steps to abolish the *Caisse de péréquation des combustibles domestiques* [Domestic Fuel Equalisation Fund], which was distorting the freedom of the market. From 1 October, its powers will be restricted and, in six months, all discrimination eliminated.

We note finally that the production of coke, a product that the Community lacked, has increased by 1 305 000 tonnes in the first seven months of 1953.

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