day because of Mr González Triviño's unavoidable absence.

As in the first reading, the rapporteur has adopted a very supportive stance in his recommendation and I am glad to say that his four proposed amendments provide the basis for an acceptable compromise between the common position of the Council and the Commission's proposal. As the House will recall, the initial proposal suggested that third country aircraft suspected of not complying with internationally accepted safety standards should be checked at Community airports. As Mr Sindal says, this is a relatively modest proposition beginning, we hope, with even more comprehensive developments, but one that is certainly necessary.

Of course national authorities are already free to exercise that right of checking, of supervision and of detention but the added value of the Commission's proposal is that it introduces the facility for taking common action against unsafe aircraft or operators of those aircraft or their countries of origin that tolerate those standards. Regrettably, that feature was not recognised in the common position, nor was account taken of the legitimate interests of the public in being informed about the safety of the air transport they use. That, to say the least, is somewhat inconsistent, especially in those Member States where the law already obliges governmental organisations to release all the information that they receive.

The House knows that in safety matters we in the Commission always seek to achieve the delicate balance between providing legitimate information for the general public and securing publication of information that might be harmful to individuals or enterprises and have the effect of silencing information sources that we consider to be vital for the improvement of safety and safety standards.

None of our proposals would have departed from that convention of sensible and responsible balance. I am pleased therefore that the amendments proposed by the rapporteur will allow the Commission to propose common action against dangerous operators and will also achieve the correct balance between the dissemination and the protection of safety-related information.

For this reason the Commission supports all four of the amendments in Mr González Triviño's recommendation, subject to slight rewording of Amendment No 2 relating to the release of information to passengers' organisations. We would make that change simply because we believe that the issue is already well provided for in an earlier part of the same amendment.

In conclusion, I am particularly glad to see that the way is now open for the rapid adoption and implementation of European legislation that should contribute to improving the safety of people who travel by air and also of others, particularly of course those who live near airports.

Naturally, I am grateful to Mr González Triviño and his colleagues for their effective work and for their continuing cooperation in trying to advance the levels of safety for the travelling public.

IN THE CHAIR: MR COT

Vice-President

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow at 12 noon.

5. Legal protection of designs

President. – The next item is the report (A4-0315/98) by Mr Medina Ortega, on behalf of Parliament's delegation to the Conciliation Committee, on the joint text approved by the Conciliation Committee for a European Parliament and Council Directive on the legal protection of designs (C4-0467/98-00/0464(COD)).

Medina Ortega (PSE), rapporteur. – (ES) Mr President, the proposal we are presenting today – the joint text approved by the Conciliation Committee – is the result of a great deal of work in Parliament, the Council and, of course, the Commission.

The Commission first presented a proposal in this area five years ago, in 1993, involving both a directive and a regulation. The directive was to harmonise the relevant law in Member States, but ultimately of course there will be a regulation establishing a Community law, with the Community's own register and set of standards.

But there has been a problem from day one – a fly in the ointment, one might say – arising from the so-called 'repairs clause', because in practice, and even by law in some Member States, property rights in a motor vehicle model or design are contradicted by manufacturers having the right to reproduce visible and external vehicle parts for replacement without needing authorisation from the vehicle manufacturer.

This issue has major economic implications, because there are thousands of road accidents every day. Mr Kinnock was talking about aircraft accidents just now but, as we all know, far more people die on our roads in car accidents and, of course, the material damage caused each day in our Community amounts to truly astronomical figures. We are talking about thousands of millions of ECU, about vast amounts of work, and about something affecting intellectual property.

So this is not a trivial matter. It is an important issue because of its impact on employment in certain Community countries and regions where this is an important sector. It is also in the interests of the motor manufacturers to push for some kind of law, given the legislative diversity.

Five years have gone by and all we have been able to achieve is a kind of armistice. Parliament came out in favour of a formula involving the right to manufacture spare parts against payment of compensation to the vehicle
Medina Ortega

manufacturers, but the Council was unable to reach agreement. In the end, the final text maintains a sort of armistice – as I have just said – because Article 14, the 'repairs clause', was turned into a transitional provision, and under Article 18 the Commission must make an analysis of the situation and present proposals to complete the directive within three years. So we are currently at a standstill, with each state keeping its legislation in force and everyone doing their best not to interfere with the single market. If states change their legislation, they undertake not to make the internal market in these products even more difficult by doing so, but to use the opportunity to facilitate the liberalisation of the internal market.

We may not be very proud of the work that has been done, but this armistice does mean we have prevented a war.

However, the directive is more than just the repairs clause; a whole series of sectors were waiting for this directive to be able to consolidate their legal position, and the text includes useful provisions giving a definition of a design or model. Reference is made, for example, to the fundamental characteristic which a utility design or model must have in order to be recognised as such. This is the characteristic of innovation, and this innovation is primarily defined in terms of a certain visibility, so that an informed user can distinguish it from another earlier product by that innovation.

Obviously all this directive does is get things moving. The directive must be incorporated into the legislation of the various Member States.

There will doubtless be Community legislation and Court of Justice decisions to help us disentangle this matter. I hope the directive will achieve a final formula and also that, in the meantime, Parliament and the Council will progress with the approval of the regulation on the utility design and model, so that we end up having Community arrangements permitting free movement of all these products.

Gebhardt (PSE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the design directive which we are talking about today has a path of trial and tribulation behind it, but it is not yet out of the woods. The result of conciliation between Parliament and the Council has left open some important questions. Against this background, I should like to thank my colleague, Mr Medina Ortega, on behalf of my group for the steadfastness with which he has represented the concerns of Parliament before the Council and the Commission.

His steadfastness was particularly evident during the struggle for the so-called repairs clause. We only have to look at the motor vehicles sector to recognise the importance of this detail. The European Parliament has found a balance between the interests of the car industry, spare parts manufacturers and consumers. It would have proved the benefit of the European Union to its citizens if the Council had agreed to our proposal. It failed because of the egoism of individual Member States, which is not good evidence of Europe's ability to solve problems.

The result of conciliation which we agree to with bad grace is no solution. It merely postpones a solution. We shall therefore only agree to this legislative standstill because nothing will become worse through it, and because we assume that it will still be possible to achieve a satisfactory ruling on spare parts. This must prevent monopolisation – which restricts competition – and at the same time secure inexpensive repairs for consumers with spare parts of their choice.

The Commission has the job of making this objective achievable in the next seven years. Commissioner, we in Parliament and my group in particular will keep a close watch on how and whether this is happening.

Fontaine (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, this is perhaps one of the most difficult conciliation procedures we have yet had to conduct.

On this occasion, the dispute did not involve an institutional or budgetary matter. We had a fundamental divergence with the Council on an important point in the directive. Parliament obviously defended the so-called repairs clause that we had voted for in second reading by an overwhelming majority. The Council, for its part, rejected it unanimously.

After long weeks of informal negotiations which were, unfortunately, unsuccessful – Mr Medina reminded us earlier that this dossier has been pending since 1993 – we are now faced by a most uncomfortable alternative. Either we should seek a compromise with the Council on the controversial issue of spare parts, or we must accept that conciliation cannot be achieved, with the attendant risk that numerous sectors of activity which held high hopes regarding this directive would be seriously affected.

I am grateful to our delegation – and particularly to our rapporteur, Mr Medina Ortega, whose work has been outstanding and who has been angelically patient, if I may say so – for being so clear-sighted. It was concluded, upon mature reflection and after a discussion that was not always easy, that harmonisation of the legal protection of designs and models in all sectors of European industry was truly essential, and that we could not take the responsibility of deferring it any longer. Consequently, we had to find the best, or certainly the least bad compromise regarding the protection and use of spare parts for the repair of motor vehicles.

I have been struck by two things throughout this labourious process. I would like to mention them because they reveal, it seems to me, a positive development in the conciliation procedure. During the committee's first meeting, we entered into a very wide-ranging substantive debate, during which members of the delegation and members of the Council alike were able to fully express their differing points of view.

This might seem natural but, in some ways, it was unprecedented. We owe it to Lord Simon's determination to bring this matter to a successful conclusion and to his finely-honed political sense – and I would like to pay tribute to him here – as well as to the spirit of dialogue which
Fontaine

is gradually developing between the two arms of the legislative authority.

The second point that I would like to raise relates to the active support we have received from Commissioner Monti personally in this matter. It is sometimes said that the Commission might be uncomfortable in this conciliation procedure because it would have an unobtrusive role, to which it must be said it is not accustomed. But I consider that the Commission cannot but give the fullest effect to the final sentence of Article 189b(4) of the Treaty. Commissioner Monti understood this perfectly, as did Commissioner Kinnock, in connection with the Trans-European transport networks. I would like to thank him most sincerely for his effective contribution to lifting the dossier out of the rut into which it had sunk.

Our rapporteur and other Members have already spoken on the substance of the compromise proposal and so I will say only that, in my opinion, the 'standstill plus' solution, in conjunction with the Commission's very firm commitment, may well bring about the desired agreement between the parties involved. I think that we should vote for the joint text that is before us, emphasising that it is absolutely essential that the letter and the spirit should be fully respected. Commissioner Kinnock will without doubt restate the Commission's commitment to it later today. Meanwhile, Parliament will keep a watchful eye on developments.

Thors (ELDR). – (SV) Mr President, I wish to extend my warmest thanks to the leader of our delegation, Mrs Fontaine. Other speakers have described the work involved. Mrs Fontaine referred to developments in the conciliation process itself. These will, I believe, prove significant at subsequent stages, and I would congratulate Mrs Fontaine on the key role that she played.

As has been said, the repairs clause was a focal point in the discussion. We must not forget that this directive will lengthen the period of legal protection of designs in many Member States. It will also encourage the interest in safeguarding the right of design holders to protect the content of their work.

One aspect worries me, however. I have been observing the situation in my own country and looking to the future. How are we going to handle goods coming into the EU without such levels of protection? Our customs authorities would be well advised to address this.

My group accepts that we shall have to live with the outcome on the repairs clause, although it is far from ideal. We expect the Commission to honour its published undertaking to submit proposals for amendments. The internal market is still not operating perfectly and Parliament's text contains a clause to that effect. We hope that the Commission will be vigilant, ensuring that no unjustified steps are taken to block the workings of the free market. All sides need to work together in pre-empting legislative changes or new practices which would violate the standstill clause.

Sierra González (GUE/NGL). – (ES) Mr President, the framework directive dealt with in this report was intended to guarantee fair competition, to benefit consumers in particular. Has this been achieved? After nearly a year of conciliation, not only have Parliament's initial proposals not been taken up, but the agreement does not contain the repairs clause, and the inclusion of that clause was fundamental to being able to establish a framework for fair competition between spare parts manufacturers and motor vehicle manufacturers.

The agreement expressing the wish to prevent the legal position of the spare parts manufacturers worsening does not resolve the basic problem. Nor does leaving the solution of this conflict of interests to voluntary self-regulation by the spare parts and vehicle manufacturers, because they are not all in the same position and they do not all have the same influence. This attitude goes against the interests of consumers, and the approval of Article 10 of the directive, providing up to 25 years' protection for designs and models, does little to help.

All I can do from here is express our disagreement with a stance which benefits the great motor industry, but does not take account of the interests of the Community's citizens, whom we were elected to defend them.

Oddy (PSE). – (EN) Mr President, I would like to thank the rapporteur and Mrs Fontaine in particular for their hard work in concluding this difficult negotiation, and also my colleagues on the Conciliation Committee, who adopted a very pragmatic approach.

It is a particular pleasure for me that the agreement was reached during the first UK Labour presidency. A member of the House of Lords, Lord Simon, could see at first hand how hard and diligently we work in the European Parliament.

This agreement is a victory for common sense. I represent a very large car manufacturing area in my constituency. This covers companies like Peugeot, Rover and Jaguar, to name just some. I also have even more components firms. So I was particularly anxious that a compromise would be reached which saved jobs and this compromise does exactly that.

Casini, C (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, all the previous speakers have stressed the torment that has accompanied this directive. That torment has been caused primarily by the problem of taking a balanced decision on the so-called repairs clause for spare parts for complex products, such as motor cars. The proof of that torment is provided not just by the length of time which has elapsed between the Commission's proposal, which dates from 1993, and the first common position in 1997; not just by the delay in bringing it to the Conciliation Committee; not just by the contrast between Parliament's amendments and the Council's position; but also by the simple fact that a proposal for a regulation was presented jointly with the directive. That regulation still has to be considered, but the Committee on Legal Affairs specifically decided to wait until the directive relating to harmonisation was con-
Casini, C

cluded. The regulation to decide on a Community design and model would then be examined.

There is nothing surprising about these difficulties, because the economic and legal problems have not been simple. There were legal problems of establishing the criteria, the conditions for assessing innovation or originality in the design or model and defining its visibility, but over and above all that, there is the problem of determining whether, in legal terms, it is right to evaluate the aesthetic aspect in relation to an individual element or only as part of a unit. This is a legal question which has wea -

ried courts of appeal in the Member States and the Court of Justice itself, in a ruling from 1995. I leave aside the seriousness of the economic issues, involving the risk of closure for some companies, or the link between accident studies and the choice of which parts should or should not be covered by legal protection, and so on. Ultimately, we have reached a compromise which I consider acceptable because it does actually lead to greater cooperation and hence greater commercial freedom, even if, for the time being, things can stay as they are, without any harmonisation, and each state can do what it pleases.

So I think we should vote in favour, in the hope that the Commission will bring forward valid proposals as regards the regulation. We can also take that path, and that is why, as rapporteur on that regulation, I take a particular interest in the matter.

Gasóliva i Böhm (ELDR). – (ES) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, first – like my colleague, Mrs Thors – I wish to express our support for this report and our agreement with the position taken in the Conciliation Committee by both Mr Medina Ortega and Mrs Fontaine.

I had the opportunity to analyse this issue in some depth as draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy, and I should like to point out that, from an economic angle, the directive sought to respond to two objectives: on the one hand, completion of the internal market and facilitating the free movement of goods with equal protection for products in the area concerned; and, on the other hand, protection against copies or products which might arrive from third countries and damage our industry.

Five years have gone by, and we cannot feel particularly satisfied at our failure, in all that time, to resolve two issues which have a considerable effect on European industry, in terms of both the internal market and international competition. And what we have achieved, as has already been said, is not at all satisfactory either. We have stopped things getting worse, and we have reached agreement on a minimum, but we have clearly not succeeded in fulfilling the initial aims of the directive.

It does give me some satisfaction that it was possible to take up one of the points proposed by the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy in my own document: the commitment to analyse the position and review it within a fixed period. Although the slow pace of progress is quite inappropriate to protecting our industry in a highly competitive international context, we hope the matter can finally be brought to a conclusion.

Sindal (PSE). – (DA) Mr President, I would also like to congratulate Mr Medina and Mrs Fontaine on a good result. As Mr Medina tells us in his report, it is certainly not the best conceivable result, but perhaps it is the best that could be achieved in the circumstances. I think the standstill decision is a good thing. The conflict between spare parts manufacturers and motor vehicle manufacturers will certainly continue for a long time to come. The consultation exercise and voluntary agreements may perhaps lead to a new and final directive and put an end to the antagonism. In my opinion, we should not be as disappointed at the outcome as the previous speaker suggested. Especially not when we consider the scope of the directive and the multiplicity of industries to be covered. I think it may prove to be a sensible way forward, covering the internal market and the many divergent views the Member States may take.

Cassidy (PPE). – (EN) Mr President, I should like to add my voice to the chorus of praise that there has been for the efforts of the rapporteur, Mr Medina Ortega, and the chairman of our Conciliation Committee, Mrs Fontaine. I congratulate both of them on their patience over a very long time in dealing with this; after all, it is not a new proposal. It has been on our agenda since as long ago as 1993. A lot of people outside this House have been expecting us to arrive at a decision long before this, particularly representatives of consumer groups, of the replacement spare part manufacturers; even, indeed, of people like motorcyle enthusiasts.

Of course no compromise – and this is a compromise – ever succeeds in satisfying all the interested parties one hundred per cent. But then the European Parliament is about compromise and the European Community operates on compromise. I have no difficulty at all in supporting this particular compromise because it allows the development of the single market in such things as vehicle spare parts but at the same time it does not inhibit the development of design protection in those areas which need it.

One of the things that has rather worried me about the long delay in bringing this particular directive into force has been the harmful effects it might have had on other industries which depend on design: the fashion industry, the textile industry and so on, whose interests at some stage appeared to be subordinated to that of the car industry. I hope that everyone outside will be pleased with the work that has been done. I hope that we will be able to depend upon the House tomorrow to endorse the Conciliation Committee’s recommendations overwhelmingly.

Pirker (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, I have not understood the negative undertone which has come from the far left wing. We have achieved progress and something positive here. The fact is that 180 million car drivers and motorbike riders can breathe a sigh of relief, since the Conciliation Committee of the European Parliament has been able to prevent expensive times for
them for the immediate future. Thanks are due above all to the negotiators in this Conciliation Committee. All independent garages and the market in spare parts with all its employees, the many small and medium-sized enterprises, can also breathe a sigh of relief, however.

Through the clear position it has adopted – not least in our plenary discussions – the European Parliament has prevented big car companies from dictating prices, which would have been the consequence if we had agreed to this proposal. The monopoly which would have been created indirectly will therefore not come about, so the high insurance premiums which would also have arisen will not take effect. Businesses will not go bankrupt and jobs will not be destroyed.

I sympathise with producers, because design costs money. We must therefore find a solution which also takes into account the protection of designs and a commensurate payment for the designer. In future there must be a free market, however, with replication under specific conditions. Three years now remain in which to find a suitable solution. I believe that what we have achieved is a success for our citizens, consumers and the many small and medium-sized enterprises, because in future there will be original and after-market parts and independent garages and dealerships side by side, in the interest of consumers, employees and many ordinary people. This is a successful outcome, due to the persistence of Parliament’s representatives.

Oomen-Ruijten (PPE). – (NL) Mr President, I should like to begin by thanking the rapporteur, Mr Medina Ortega, the chairman of the Conciliation Committee, Mrs Fontaine, and everyone else involved for all their dedication and hard work on this extremely difficult and intrac- table dossier.

The second point I should like to make is this: if you listen to the debate on this issue and read what has been written about it, you would almost think that there was nothing else in the designs directive apart from the repairs clause. This has certainly been its most striking feature, because of all the important groups involved – the motor industry, the entire repairs sector and consumer groups – but there is more to the directive than that, which was also why the final conclusions of the conciliation procedure turned out as they did.

Parliament had already delivered a most carefully considered opinion on this infamous repairs clause, which was that there should be liberalisation but also compensation for the design holders, but unfortunately these proposals were not accepted. Following the theory that 'half a loaf is better than no bread', I think we would be wise to try to find a compromise here.

I have every confidence that if the European Commission brought all the relevant parties to the table and tried to reach some sort of agreement on self-regulation with them, we could achieve the compromise we are looking for. I think that it is up to us as Members of the European Parliament to make it clear to any critics in the Member States that it was the Council, not Parliament, which blocked the solution that we proposed.

If we work with the organisations involved to bring pressure to bear, I think a successful agreement can be reached. Now is the time to give the issue as much publicity as possible. My thanks once again to all those who worked on this difficult dossier.

Kinnock, Neil, Member of the Commission. – (EN) Mr President, the Commission is very pleased that, after five years of intensive and complex discussions, agreement has been reached on the design directive within the context of the conciliation procedure. I am sure that honourable Members will share that pleasure, particularly Mrs Fontaine and Mr Medina Ortega who, in different capacities, have been deeply involved in the issue. Indeed, I heard Mrs Fontaine describing Mr Medina’s patience as angelic, and I could only reflect as I listened to the debate that between Lord Simon and the angel Medina the conciliation procedure must have been a particularly ethereal experience on this occasion. I am almost jealous that I was not present. But I then reflect on my own experience in conciliation and surrender the experience to everybody else.

The agreement on the design directive obviously marks an important step towards the completion of the internal market in industrial design, and we can be confident that it is likely to encourage investment in the manufacturing industries and, consequently, to help to strengthen competitiveness and, I hope, employment.

As honourable Members will know, during the five-year discussions on the directive proposal the repairs clause has, as several Members said in the debate, been the subject of extensive debate between all the institutions involved, and during the conciliation procedure it became clear that, in spite of all efforts, agreement on that clause is still, for the moment, beyond reach. All the parties involved, however, recognised that the importance of the directive overall for European industrial design meant that adoption should not be prevented because of the problems relating to that single repairs clause.

The Commission, therefore, welcomes the reaching of agreement to freeze the existing legal provisions relating to the protection of the design and the use of spare parts and, meanwhile, to review the consequences of the directive in the foreseeable future. The so-called ‘freeze plus’ clause ensures that each Member State must maintain in force the provisions of its design law in relation to both the criteria for the protection of the design of spare parts and the free use of spare parts for repair purposes. Furthermore, Member States may only introduce new provisions on the use of spare parts insofar as their objective is to liberalise the market in spare parts. In addition, the Commission will fulfil its undertaking to launch a consultation, particularly with car manufacturers and spare-part producers in order to examine the possibilities of finding a voluntary agreement on the spare-parts issue.

Finally, in accordance with the agreement, three years after the implementation of the directive, the Commission
Kinnock, Neil

will submit an analysis of the consequences of the directive for the motor vehicles sector in particular. We will uphold those undertakings, and those honourable Members who have sought reassurance on that point, I am certain, will accept what I say on behalf of my colleague, Mario Monti, and my other colleagues in the Commission. This is a necessarily pragmatic approach which allows significant progress.

I conclude, therefore, by thanking the rapporteur on the design directive, Mr Medina Ortega, who has grown older through the experience or, at least, through the years, although his appearance belies the advance of those years, and the chairman of the Conciliation Committee, about whom it can be said in the words of Shakespeare: 'Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety' – in the manner of Cleopatra, of course – for the decisive role that both have played, together with their colleagues, in achieving a workable agreement on this important directive.

President. – Thank you, Commissioner. Perhaps for once the President of the sitting could add his congratulations to all those who have enabled this difficult report to come to fruition, in particular Lord Simon, Commissioner Monti and our rapporteur Mr Medina Ortega, as well as Mrs Fontaine, who chaired our delegation. It did indeed require a whole company of angels and archangels to work this minor miracle.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow at 12 noon.

6. Coffee and chicory extracts

President. – The next item is the recommendation for second reading (A4-0278/98), on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection, on the common position adopted by the Council (C4-0306/98-96/0117(COD)) with a view to adopting a European Parliament and Council Directive relating to coffee extracts and chicory extracts (Rapporteur: Mr Lannoye).

Lannoye (V), rapporteur. – (FR) Mr President, we are dealing here with a breakfast product and perhaps this is not the best time of day to talk about it, especially since the political ramifications are not particularly significant. I doubt if I shall use all my five minutes of speaking time.

I would like to remind the House, however, that this involves one of the seven vertical directives relating to food products, and that the question of coffee and chicory extracts has been dealt with on a par with that of chocolate, which has proved more controversial for other reasons.

The overall purpose of the proposal is to achieve a simplification so as to facilitate the free movement of products. The concern of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection is that such a simplification should not be achieved at the expense of the consumer and of the quality of products. That is why we submitted three amendments in first reading, which were rejected by the Commission and the Council.

One amendment is a very technical one and I do not think it is worth discussing here. The other two, however, involve a matter that may be important for the consumer, since they relate to the restriction of the range of weights which can be offered by the retailer to the consumer. When the range is entirely open, and particularly when it involves weights that are relatively close to one another, the risk of confusion for the consumer is not inconsiderable. And it is for this reason that we wish to maintain what was in the original directive, where a range of weights was laid down which were sufficiently different from each other to avoid confusion.

We consider, therefore, following the discussion in second reading, that it is appropriate to retable these three amendments, including the technical one. This the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection has done, by an overwhelming majority. Indeed, I think I am correct in saying that it was unanimous, which is not something that occurs very often.

I should like to add a brief comment regarding two amendments which I have tabled, on behalf of the Green Group, without a prior debate in the Committee on the Environment, because our time there was severely limited by a number of other matters which we considered to be of greater relative importance. I have retabled two comitology amendments seeking to restore the powers conferred on the Commission in the area of adaptation to technical progress and not, as unfortunately appears in the text of the amendments, to confer powers on the Commission in the area of adaptation to Community legislation and to general Community provisions applicable to food products, since this was rejected by Parliament in first reading. I would therefore request that this be clarified when we vote, in order to correct a mistake for which I am entirely responsible, and for which I apologise to the House.

Thyssen (PPE). – (NL) Mr President, the common position with a view to the adoption of a directive on coffee and chicory may appear to be a purely technical issue, but if you scrutinise the dossier in conjunction with others on foodstuffs, you will see that there are also many political aspects involved.

The rapporteur has already discussed a number of points that we still hope to settle through amendments. We maintain the position adopted by our group in the Committee on the Environment, and we therefore wholeheartedly support the views expressed by the rapporteur here.

However, one point that I would just like to raise is the use of the comitology procedure. At first reading, Parliament voted to accept the comitology procedure for adaptations to technical progress, but not for adaptations to the general horizontal foodstuffs directives, and we think we should keep to this line here. We tabled an amendment to this effect which was adopted at the time, but the system adopted in the common position is the exact opposite. The common position says no to comitology for adaptations to