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WEATHER

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EC frowns on dried milk's baby smiles

By Boris Johnson, EC Correspondent, in Strasbourg

PICTURES of smiling babies can no longer be used on the packaging of powdered milk for infants after the European Parliament voted yesterday for measures to encourage mothers to breast-feed their children.

The vote means that manufacturers of infant formula produced within the EC are also obliged to use labels which advise mothers that breast milk is safer.

The European Commission proposed a directive on baby feeds last year. Since then lobbyists, including the British-based National Council of Baby Milk Action, have mounted a campaign to warn mothers in Europe and developing countries of the risks of powdered milk.

Large European companies such as Nestlé and Nutricia have the major share of the £3 billion world-wide market, with most of the milk for their

products coming from the EC's 25 million cows.

With 300,000 tons of skimmed milk powder in Common Market stores already, dried milk for babies is a highly lucrative means of reducing EC surpluses.

According to UNICEF, about a million babies a year die because their mothers stop breast feeding too soon and switch to dried milk substitutes — without access to clean water for mixing.

An EC ruling announced yesterday and supported by the European Parliament, will require manufacturers to print easy-to-understand instructions and graphics on their product labels. Manufacturers must also warn mothers that the powdered milk must be mixed with boiled water.

There will also be restric-

tions on advertising in Europe and companies will no longer be able to send free samples to maternity wards.

A spokesman for Nestlé UK said yesterday that the company does not manufacture or sell infant formula in Britain.

He said the policy of Nestlé in the rest of the EC is in line with the 10-year-old World Health Organisation code on the marketing and sale of infant formula.

This specifies that packaging should not carry pictures of smiling babies, no free samples should be distributed and there should be no advertising directly to mothers.

A spokesman for Oxfam, which has also lobbied for measures to prevent mothers in developing countries being encouraged to feed their babies on infant formula,

said: "These are good measures and will benefit mothers and their babies everywhere."

● Peter Pallot, Health Services Staff, writes: The most compelling argument against selling artificial milk feed in the Third World is that it may be mixed with contaminated water.

Breast milk gives nutrients, also provided in formula feeds, in a perfect blend as well as antibodies and white blood cells which protect against disease. Allergies are less common in breast-fed babies.

The most recent research suggests that children who were breast fed have higher intelligence than those bottle-fed from birth, after allowing for the extra time breast-feeding mothers might spend with their babies or extra effort they might put into mothering.

Noriega hitch

The jury weighing the drug and racketeering charges against the ousted Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega hinted yesterday it may be deadlocked on at least one of the 10 counts. It has spent three days in deliberations.

£1,250,000 bail

By Our City Staff

Nazmu Virani, who stepped down as chairman of the pubs and property group Control Securities after his arrest on charges connected with the failed Bank of Credit & Commerce International, was released on £1,250,000 bail by London magistrates yesterday.

Plaice limit

The first restrictions on North Sea plaice catches have been imposed by the Government.

A B C D E F *

FRONT PAGE - DAILY TELEGRAPH, APR 18, 1922.