

Brussels puts pressure on barometers
By Robert Watts, Sunday Telegraph
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Brussels bureaucrats are no strangers to pressured debate, but tempers are expected to fray over European Commission plans to ban barometers.

Next week, the commission will discuss a law to ban the industrial use of mercury, a vital component of barometers for more than 350 years.

Britain's tiny barometer industry has launched a campaign to save the instruments. "This law could destroy us," said Philip Collins, who owns Barometer World, a shop in Okehampton, Devon. "The barometer is something very special, very British. It's a piece of furniture. They really are the antiques of the future.

advertisement" And this law itself is so badly thought through. The commission thinks it is good for the environment but it will actually do more harm than good.

"The banning of mercury barometers will not stop pollution," he added. "In fact, it could become more prevalent as the general public will not know how to dispose of their barometers correctly."

Around 300 tonnes of mercury is used by industry in the EU each year but just 0.2 per cent of this used to make barometers.

Britain's three registered manufacturers of barometers have joined forces with those in Belgium and Holland to create the European Barometer Association, in an attempt to block the proposals.

"We have written to most of the 70-odd MEPS," said Mr Collins. "I've employed friends to translate our letters into Portuguese, Spanish and Italian."

He has also written an amendment to the law, which will be tabled by the Tory MEP Martin Callahan.

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