



## Where are we going?

A long-awaited major debate on the political state of the European Community formed the dominant feature of the European Parliament's Strasbourg meeting of April 22-25. There was no mistaking the sense of crisis: 'our present mood,' noted Lord Gladwyn (UK) when speaking for the Liberal Group 'is one of acute, though I think rather exaggerated, depression'.

In particular, the Parliament was unable to get away from the echoes of Mr Callaghan's speech to the Council of Ministers in Luxembourg earlier on in the month. Uncertainty, President of the Commission François-Xavier Ortoli declared at the outset of the debate, was a major factor in the crisis.

It was noticeable, however, that nearly all the major speakers carefully avoided putting all the blame for the prevailing gloom on the British Government. Speaking for the Socialist Group, Ludwig Fellermaier (Germany) pointed out that the results of the British General Election had only brought to a head an already latent crisis that went back further and deeper; and he was powerfully seconded by Peter Kirk (UK) speaking for the Conservatives. 'Whatever charges I have against the Members of the present British Government,' he said, 'I should not put against them the charge of having brought the Community to a dead stop; it was stopped before they came to office. The only charge is that they may try to make it go backwards ...'

### WE ARE STILL HERE

The Conservative leader then went on to give a careful analysis of the British Government's position. '... Contrary to what seems to be a popular impression in my country and in the rest of the Community, we are still Members. The fact that I am standing here today is

\* \* \* \* \*  
\* Five newly elected Members of the British Parliament visited \*  
\* Strasbourg on April 24 and 25 to examine the Parliament of the \*  
\* European Community at work. Previously, they spent a day in \*  
\* Brussels having discussions with the European Commission, inc- \*  
\* luding Sir Christopher Soames. The members of the group were: \*  
\* John MacGregor (Conservative, Norfolk South); Antony Newton (Con- \*  
\* servative, Braintree); Stephen Ross (Liberal, Isle of Wight); \*  
\* John Tomlinson, (Labour, Meriden); and Peter Viggers (Conservative, \*  
\* Gosport). Their programme included a reception by Commissioner \*  
\* George Thomson; a meeting with President of the Commission Ortoli; \*  
\* and four attended a lunch with Members of the European Parliament \*  
\* given by Parliament President Cornelis Berkhouwer. \*  
\* \* \* \* \*

reasonable proof of that. The fact that British Ministers attend meetings of the Council of Ministers and that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, over the last few days, has been discussing financial questions at the Hague and the fact that Mr Callaghan was at Gymnich at the weekend discussing problems of common foreign policy, is proof that we are still here.'

'The British Government,' he went on, 'have said that they are renegotiating in good faith. If so, another consequence follows which has, surprisingly, been overlooked. If the Government ... wish to achieve a solution within the framework of the Treaty of Rome and the Treaty of Accession they are not using the argument that is most popularly used against British membership in my country - the argument of sovereignty. Because, if they are renegotiating in good faith and accepting the Treaty of Rome and the Treaty of Accession they must accept the loss of sovereignty that inevitably goes with them.'

'The policy of the present British Government is in principle in favour of British membership of the European Economic Community and has been ever since, in 1967, by the largest majority ever recorded in the House of Commons, the British Parliament voted in favour of the principle.'

#### ~~WE HAVE NOT GOT THE PLAGUE~~

~~By contrast, the strongest words about the British position came from Socialists - and in particular about the Labour Party's absence from the Parliament. 'Let me ... send a message from the Socialist Group to the Labour Party,' declared Herr Fellermaier. 'We understand many of the British Government's proposals, especially since the economic and social problems in the UK are attributable, not to this Government, but to another. Nevertheless I say: negotiations within the framework of the Treaties, no re-negotiation.'~~

When the British Government had made its proposals, he continued, 'the Social Democrats will be ready to open a dialogue with our friends in the Labour Party here in this Chamber ...'

The same point was given even greater emphasis later in the debate by Dutch Labour MP Schelto Patijn. The Socialists in the European Parliament and the Labour Party are allies in the struggle to achieve their common objectives, he told the Parliament. 'That means that in the difficult months ahead of the Community we shall try to help overcome the difficulties facing the British Government. No one can deny that the British economy is not the strongest in the Community. That is a situation that the British Government inherited ...'

'We have also some questions to put to the Labour Government ... one that I would like to raise is that at present there is no Labour Delegation sitting in the European Parliament.'

'That is in itself an extraordinary situation, for while British Ministers and civil servants of all ranks are buzzing around in Brussels and Luxembourg, the air of an isolation ward hangs over the House of Europe in Strasbourg. We have not got the plague or some other infectious disease, so that people need to keep clear of

this building.'

'So we ask the Labour Government to put an end to this as soon as possible.'

TO HELL?

As regards the outlook for the future, it was Lord Gladwyn who posed the alternatives most starkly. One way out of the crisis would be for the Community to offer the UK Labour Government certain concessions. 'In all justice, there might ... be some modification of the present method of computing national contributions to the central agricultural fund, so as to make them conform more to the several rates of gross national product in the Member States, and an agreement on a substantial regional fund as well.'

All this, however, was 'provided that the Labour Government accept the broad objectives laid down at the Paris Summit ... Otherwise the only conclusion we can draw is that the Labour Government, and possibly the unfortunate British people, will simply have to go to Hell in their own way. Perhaps we shall all go to Hell if they do, but that is scarcely a consolation.'

## EUROPEAN DRIVING LICENCES

Despite a certain confusion as to the timing of the debate - first it was on Monday, then postponed until Thursday, finally back on schedule to Monday - the European Parliament has in general approved the Commission's plans for a 'European Driving Licence'. These would eventually mean that a single standard would be applied in driving tests, etc. throughout the Community.

This is a subject, as Lord Mansfield (UK, European Conservative) pointed out during the debate, which 'is extraordinarily important to ordinary people. At a time when in certain countries within the Community a fundamental rethinking is going on about what the Community ... can do for the people of the Nine, it is simple things like this directive which people can understand and either approve or disapprove of.'

'When people talk about the faceless bureaucrats in Brussels,' he went on, 'they are talking about matters such as ... European driving licences ...'

Controversy on the Regional and Transport Committee's report, presented by Michael Herbert (Ireland, Progressive European Democrat) centred on a number of points.

- i) The Commission had proposed that holders of the driving licence should undergo regular medical examinations - including tests of mental ability - which would increase in frequency with age. The Parliament deleted psychological tests altogether, and wanted much more consultation with medical and other interested bodies before the details of other tests were approved. The Commission accepted these changes.

- ii) The Commission also accepted the Parliament's amendments on minimum lower age limits. The original proposal had been 18 years for most vehicles; the Parliament was for giving those countries with lower limits a five-year breathing-space while research was done into the 'accident-proneness' of various age groups.
- iii) The Parliament also disagreed with the Commission by insisting that the riders of mopeds, etc. with a maximum speed of less than 45 km. per hour (29 m.p.h.) should have licences. On this the disagreement was not resolved: Commission Vice-President Scarascia Mugnozza, replying to the debate, believed that insisting on licences would be 'a grave error' on the grounds that in general these motorised bicycles were mostly used by young workers and students.
- iv) ~~Much of the most serious disagreement, however, was on the issue of who had the right to suspend or withdraw the 'European Driving Licence'. The Commission proposed that the courts of any Member State should be able to take away a licence issued by any other Member State. The Parliament, by contrast, decided that it should be up to the state which issued the licence to decide at the request of the country in which the offence was committed. For Scarascia Mugnozza, however, this amendment was a "unacceptable and absurd".~~

(Commission proposal 161/72-I; European Parliament Working Document 45/74; debate on April 22, 1974)

## **FREING THE PROFESSIONS**

Parliament then turned to the Commission's attempt to undo the knot the six original members of the Community had got into on the mutual recognition of qualifications in order that the practitioners of various professions (medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, architecture, engineering, the law, accountancy, among others) could practice throughout the Community. Forty draft directives had been brought before the Council, in some cases for years, without agreement.

Commissioner Dahrendorf's new approach, as proposed in March, aimed at getting overall acceptance of six guidelines for mutual recognition, and among other measures, setting up for each profession a permanent committee to advise the Commission on the maintenance of training standards and any problems which might arise in the practical implementation of mutual recognition.

Norbert Hougardy (Liberal, Belgium) agreed with the Commission that, within a given profession, there is broad comparability from one member country to another, though he stressed the problems which did exist as the definitions of a profession (he instanced engineers) vary from country to country.

As an aid to obtaining acceptance of foreign qualifications the Parliament's Cultural Affairs and Youth Committee recommended encouraging foreign-qualified professional people to join group practices as a preliminary step, which would be valuable both in

respect of ensuring language proficiency and of adapting to the professional practices of the host country.

Several speakers pointed the contrast between the years of stagnation and the fact that Parliament was being asked for its opinion on the new approach in six weeks so that the Ministers of Education could meet on May 2 (a date subsequently postponed to June 6). Among them was Sir Derek Walker-Smith (European Conservative, UK), a former Minister of Health. He also stressed the three requirements for sustaining adequate professional standards: a proper standard of qualification, a proper code of conduct, and procedures for enforcement of that code. How did the Commission see the last being achieved, he asked. Sir Derek, a lawyer himself, was sceptical about legal objections to the proposal for an adaptation period for migrant professional workers on the grounds of discrimination between Community citizens.

(Commission proposal 23/74; European Parliament Working Document 43/74; debate on April 23, 1974)

## Question Time

### PALESTINE REFUGEES

Replying to a question from Sir Tuffin Beamish (European Conservative, UK) on Community aid to Palestine Refugees, Commissioner Cheysson noted that food supplied to the United Nations Agency through the Community's own budget amounted to 8.6 million units of account (about £4 m.) in 1973, (12 per cent of the UNRWA budget), and in 1974 would be 11.6 million units of account (about £5 m.) - 16-17 per cent of the UNRWA budget. Moreover, in view of the probable deficit in financing UN aid, which could have serious consequences for education programmes for refugees, additional Community finance would be provided. 'The Commission cannot remain deaf to the UN Agency appeal' said Mr Cheysson.

### BEEF

A question on beef imports into Italy sparked off a series of supplementary questions on the more general problems of the Community beef market. In reply to James Scott-Hopkins (European Conservative, UK) Commissioner Lardinois stated that the amount of beef stored in Community 'intervention' came to 60,000 tons - 'that is 1 per cent of the annual consumption of beef'. He was, however, unable to guarantee that none would be sold cheaply to Russia, though this would not take place before Parliament had been consulted.

### AID TO HORTICULTURE

Commissioner Lardinois was pressed by several MPs to explain to what extent member states would be allowed to subsidise green-house horticulture, hit by increased oil prices; and what Community aid would be forthcoming. The Commissioner made it clear that such subsidies could only be allowed as a short-term measure, and that there must be a ceiling on their value.

## MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES

A question by Horst Seefeld (Socialist, Germany) on the activities of multinational companies led to an extensive emergency debate. Various speakers attacked the 'irresponsible behaviour' and 'merciless exploitation' of the multinational oil-companies during the energy crisis, and particular references were made to their '100 per cent increase in profits' and use of loopholes in double-taxation agreements. Professor Burgbacher (Christian Democrat, Germany) pointed out that the reprehensibility or otherwise of '100 per cent increase in profits' depended very much on what it was 100 per cent of. Tom Normanton (European Conservative, UK) suggested three basic principles. First, 'we would be totally irresponsible were we to adopt the view that a company by virtue of being multinational was of itself bad...'. Second, 'we should continually demand that all companies which operate in the Community should come ... under the full effect of the national laws ... and also (those) of the Community'. Third, 'in pursuing the question of multinationals ... we should not lose sight of ... the need to expand trade'. Walter Behrendt (Socialist, Germany), however, made it clear that the Socialists were against neither profits nor multinationals as such; only if 'moral justification' was exceeded.

## SOCIAL ACTION AND BABIES

Those who criticise the Community for being a 'Europe of the big capitalists' are apt to forget the steadily increasing scope of Community social policy. Likewise, those who sneer at the 'mania for harmonisation' ignore the benefits that will accrue to the man-in-the-street in every member country from the principle, particularly applicable in the social field, of 'harmonisation in an upward direction'.

So far, Community social policy has progressed slowly; but, as Commissioner Hillery told the European Parliament on Thursday, April 25, the action programme confirmed by the 1972 Paris Summit is now 'on the way'. Seven 'priority actions' (including protection against mass dismissals) had already been tabled by the Commission. Dr Hillery added that this year we shall have about 20 initiatives from the Commission on social action.

The Parliament spent virtually the whole of Thursday in debating various aspects of social policy. A number of clear demands for action emerged.

First, on the protection of employment - although Dr Hillery was able to say that 'the employment situation ... is not now expected to be so bad as the first shock of the energy crisis led us to believe'.

Second, on aid to the handicapped, physical and mental. 'The numbers are believed to be somewhere in the region of 12 to 15 million people in this category who need help of some kind or another', Lady Elles (European Conservative, UK) told the Parliament when proposing her report on the Social Situation in the Community during 1973. Stage 1 of the Social Action Programme would be a 'modest but practical and realisable step' to give added help.

Third, a general application of the 40 hour week and four weeks' paid holiday in the year - although, as James Hill (European Conservative, UK) noted, collective bargaining rather than legislation has already achieved the former in nearly all member states.

Fourth, greater equality, both in pay and opportunities, between men and women. 'It must be obvious to members of the Commission, as it is to members of the Assembly' declared Lady Elles 'that the introduction of legislation on equal pay which has been enforced in nearly all the member states of the European Community does not achieve the objective which is intended ...'

Only on the apparent decline in the Community birth-rate did the Parliament have any serious disagreements. Lady Elles, presenting her report, thought that 'we are contributing to a form of European genocide'; but, by a narrow majority, the Parliament appeared to think that fewer babies was no bad thing in an era of threatening world overpopulation.

(Commission proposals 2/74, 302/73, 262/73; European Parliament Working Documents 51/74, 47/74, 21/74 rev., 18/74; debate on April 25, 1974)

## **OTHER DEBATES**

### **SEA FISHING**

Presenting a report on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture on Commission proposals on national aids for the sea fishing industry, the rapporteur John Hill (European Conservative, UK) said the proposals were an important stage towards a fully comprehensive Community fishing policy, but only a stage. The Commission had proposed limits to national aids to the sector as a means of ensuring fair competition while safeguarding the living standards of the fishing population and ensuring a supply of fish for human and animal consumption. One problem which should be watched by the Commission, said Mr Hill, was that posed by competition from third country fleets which might receive greater but unmeasurable national help.

(Commission proposal 242/73; European Parliament Working Document 33/74; debate on April 24)

### **SUGAR**

In a debate on the common organisation of the Community market in sugar several speakers stressed the need for ensuring adequate sugar supplies at a time of world shortage and high world prices. Those advocating increasing Community beet production - the raising of domestic production quotas - included the rapporteur of the Committee on Agriculture Lucien Martens (Christian Democrat, Belgium), Albert Liogier (France) on behalf of the group of European Progressive Democrats and Liam Kavanagh (Ireland) for the Socialists. Suggestions that Commonwealth sugar producers might fail to supply contracted amounts to the Community and might direct exports to other markets to take advantage of higher world prices were questioned by James Scott Hopkins, for the European Conservative Group, and Sir Douglas

Dodds-Parker (UK), on behalf of the Committee on Development and Cooperation.

(Commission proposal 30/74; debate on April 24)

### MOUNTAINS OF PAPER

'If you look through the Community's Official Journal,' Herr Linus Memmel (Christian Democrat, Germany) told the Parliament when proposing a report from the Legal Committee on the codification of Community law, 'you will see that the Community manufactured 3613 directives last year.' Nor was this all. 'I can tell you that the mountain of legal instruments grows by a metre every year.'

Finding one's way among all this paper was, moreover, a nightmare. 'If anyone took it into his head to find out the situation with regard, for example, to the export of egg white to third countries, he would find it encoded in 150 volumes. He would look in the 5 volumes concerned with agriculture for a regulation under egg products; he would find the 17th amendment. In Article 7 of the 17th amendment he would find a reference to the 13th amendment. He would discover to his horror that this was only an extension of a previous order and would discover yet another reference back. And while leafing through these volumes he would say to himself: 'I shall never make head nor tail of this European law,' and would drop the whole thing.

In the face of all this, Herr Memmel concluded, the Commission's proposal for codification could only be welcomed -- indeed should be taken even further so that all obsolete acts were completely weeded out.

(Commission proposal 206/73; European Parliament Working Document 46/74; debate on April 25, 1974)

### AGRICULTURAL PRICES AND THE CONSUMER

Asked about the effects of the agricultural price agreement for 1974-5 by James Scott Hopkins (European Conservative, UK); Commissioner Lardinois referred in particular to the derogations which had been made in the interests of consumers such as those in Britain. In the case of the new member states such derogations would be possible within the terms of the Treaty of Accession. In general, whenever the need for such action might arise it was his experience, he said, that provided there was general willingness in the Community, technical means of help could be found.

(European Parliament Working Document 57/74 - oral question - April 24, 1974)

### EDUCATION - THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION

Cooperation, coordination of national measures, teacher, student and pupil exchanges, migrant workers, equivalence of qualifications, the European university, schools and European studies, language teaching, the drop-out problem, and the setting up of an education cooperation committee were the main topics in a debate on education. Greater social equality was advocated by Cornelis Laban (Socialist, the Netherlands), more attention on European history by Ferruccio Pisoni (Christian Democrat, Italy). Agreeing on the importance of the European dimension, John Hill (European Conservative, UK) suggested this be a uniformity of theme rather than uniformity of practice.

(Commission proposal 23/74; European Parliament Working Document 52/74; debated April 23, 1974)