

EEUU SSO

Socialist Group
European Parliament
N° 2/1979

European elections



European elections : a new opportunity for women ?

For Socialist women, the European elections constitute an opportunity and a challenge.

An opportunity, because they will enable women to make themselves heard and finally influence the destiny of Europe.

A challenge, because they will make it possible for women to raise problems, make clear the type of Europe and type of society they want and rally the support of those for whom they vote.

This is not an official programme of the Socialist parties of the European Community; at the special conference on women organized by the Confederation and the Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party we intend to make a contribution to the great democratic debate opened by these elections.

I wish to thank the following for their assistance in drawing up this text:

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European elections:
a new opportunity for women?

In June the men and women of our countries will be going to the polls to elect, for the first time, the Members of the European Parliament. A total electorate of 170 million, 52% of them women, will in this way select their representatives to this Parliament. We, women, will have the opportunity of making our voices heard on a European scale. We must make sure that the candidates we vote for — whether they be men or women — are committed to fight for the solution of the problems which concern women in our society.

We must have no illusions. Europe of today is the Common Market. It exists whether we like it or not, whatever its structure, its policies or its lack of policies. As women, we see it for what it is — a place for acting together in solidarity on those grave problems, facing all our societies, but which cannot be solved by national action alone.

This applies especially to the issues which are important to us as women, issues which reflect problems of society as a whole. In the long struggle for more justice, more humanity and more solidarity in the fabric of society — as in the making of Europe — we must seek a radical change in mentality and break out of the arrogant confines of national frontiers.

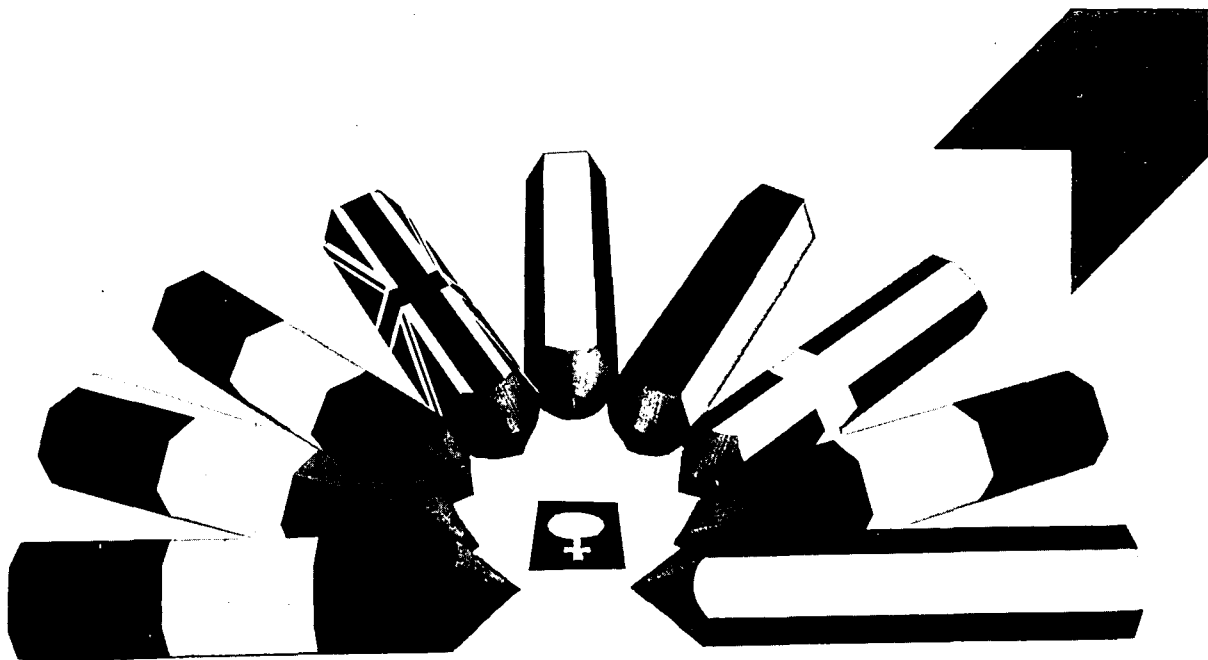
This society, to which both men and women aspire, cannot be achieved overnight. These European elections are just a moment in the history of this continent. But they provide a privileged opportunity for women to use their vote, in demonstrating their awareness of their electoral power and in protest against the injustice of their situation in society. Women can

and must take part on an equal footing in the emergence of a Europe which cannot reckon without them.

As women socialists, we are deeply committed to the struggle for a Socialist Europe, a Europe for the workers, a Europe which will cease to be the sum of expediency, self-interest and injustice stemming from the quest for money and power.

We, as women, subscribe fully to the objectives of the Socialist parties and maintain that the fight against man's exploitation of man implies necessarily the struggle of women for equality, for dignity and freedom, to be realised not only in words but also in deeds.

We seek to get away from easy rhetoric and empty ideology. As **women socialists**, we want to express our demands in a manner which is clear and comprehensible to all. Women are confronted in daily life with problems which are concrete and precise. We feel that solutions can be found at a European level. In these elections, we want our candidates both male and female to be committed to working towards these solutions. If we women vote selectively for those who make a serious commitment, we can play a vital role in determining both the composition of the forthcoming Parliament and the priorities of our Parties whether they be in power or in opposition. We must insist that those we elect account for their actions on behalf of their voters — us women. Women must cease to be second class, in the world of work and politics and must become equal and full partners in the making of policy.



The role of the European Parliament

The European Parliament will represent all the peoples of the European Community. It is the forum for discussion of problems of common interest to all the Member States, the solution of which goes beyond national frontiers and can only be found on a broader level and by common accord.

Using the powers of deliberation and control conferred on it by the Treaty of Rome, the European Parliament should ensure the democratic participation and control by the citizens of the Community in the decision-making and legislative procedures of the Community.

Up to now the Parliament has been composed of members delegated by the national parliaments. Its members have never before faced an electorate and campaigned for the vote of the citizens of the European Community.

Nevertheless the Parliament has shown it has guts and a talent for publicity and contact with public opinion in the Member States, giving the European Parliament an authority and impact going well beyond the largely consultative powers allotted to it.

The direct link that the European elec-

tions will establish between the voters and their elected representatives and the increased responsibility of the parliamentarians towards the electorate on European issues, will mean greater influence and prestige for the Parliament — this emphasises the importance of what is at stake in June.

Why vote? and for whom?

Why not stay at home on polling day?

The answer is simple: if the European elections are an important political opportunity — as we are convinced is the case — women must be present.

But women must not only vote, they must take part in politics, in the conduct of political affairs. That means that they must make the effort to be present wherever important decisions are taken (whether within the political parties, the trade unions, local councils or in the parliaments, national or European). They must struggle for a continual increase in the number of women candidates.

Parliamentary elections continue to produce a ridiculously small proportion of women MPs.

If more women were elected, there is

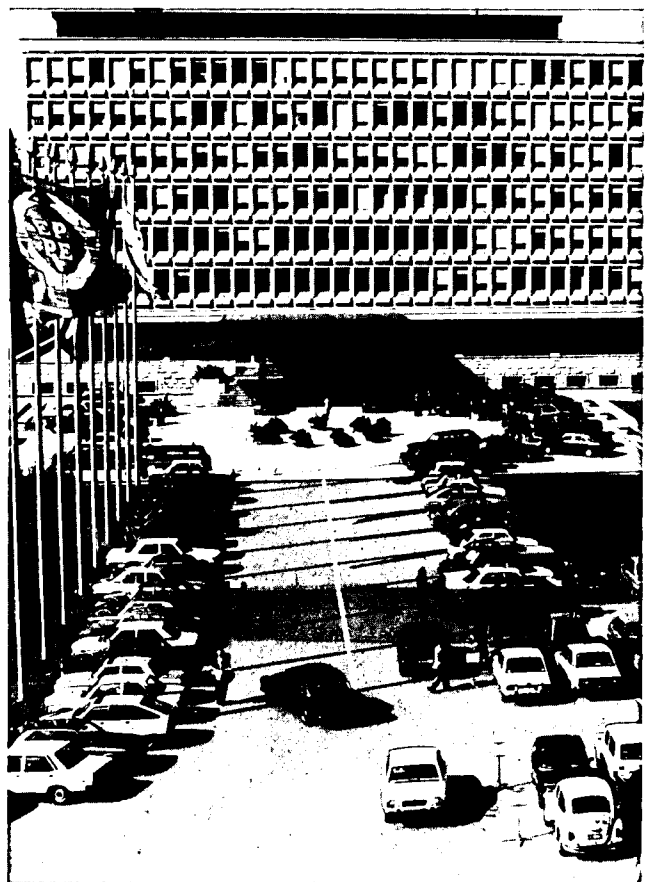
no doubt that issues of particular interest to women would not be shelved so often.

This must change. But women must also oppose the prevailing elitist concept of politics. Politics ought not be a dirty word, a profession which ensures power for one class, race, group or sex rather than any other; politics is a right and an obligation for all individuals to take part in the direction of affairs which concern them and their relationship with others.

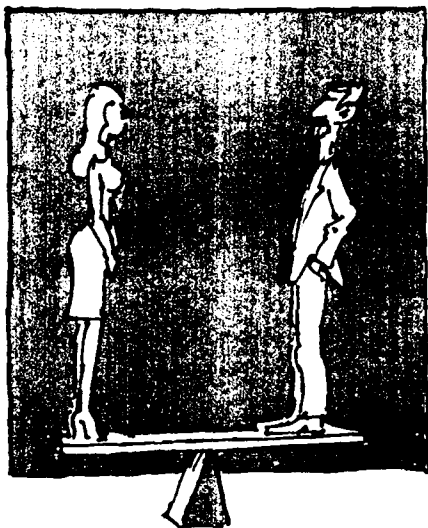
Politics is the sharing of responsibilities with others for the progress of society towards greater justice and humanity.

Only in this way will basic changes be possible, for women and for society as a whole.

We believe that these ideas are in the mainstream of socialist action and for this reason we call on women to vote socialist.



Objectives at European level



In Europe, as indeed in the rest of the world, the fundamental struggle of women is for equality; *as human beings, citizens, workers, women must be on an equal footing with their male comrades.* Equality has been enshrined in our constitutions and legislation for many years.

Recognition of equality on a European level brings no further satisfaction. What is needed now are tangible guarantees of effective action. Our candidates, men and women, must commit themselves seriously to this task.

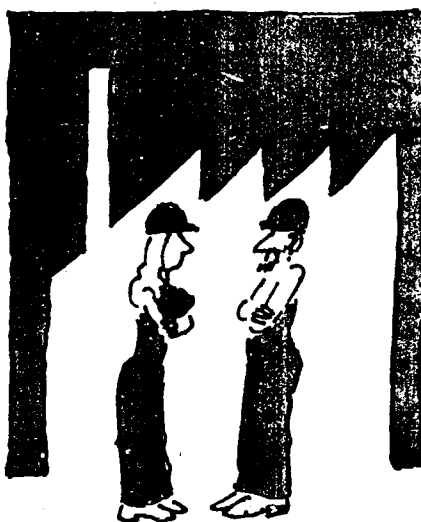
There are, it is true, many aspects of equality, several of which imply fundamental change in mentalities, a transformation of society which cannot be achieved overnight. It will take time, for instance, to abolish effectively the sexual apartheid which reserves segregated roles for men and for women in political, economic and social life. We believe that the

1. Called directives, decided by the Council of Ministers on proposals of the Commission and after consultations with the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee. The principles set out in these directives are mandatory on member States who are obliged to amend, when necessary, national legislation to give effect to them. Three directives at present in force are of particular interest to women:

- a) Directive 75/117/EEC of 10 February 1975 on the approximation of laws of the Member States relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women;
- b) Directive 76/207/EEC of 9 February 1976 on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions;
- c) Directive 79/7/EEC of 19 December 1978, concerning the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women on social security.

European Parliament elected in June must make an energetic and original contribution to the solution of these longer term issues.

Equality as an objective has immediate implications too. For example, the creation of a legal framework guaranteeing the principle of non-discrimination and the right to take a case to court. There exists already a first set of Community laws on this subject¹. The Parliament must insist that these are scrupulously applied. This is a first essential step and a simple one at that: that laws that exist be duly observed — that written words be translated into deeds!



The right to work

Let us remember that the right to work is a fundamental right recognised by *the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights* way back in 1948.

But in 1977, women represented 36,8% of the working population of the Community, 41,3% of the unemployed and 62% of the unemployed under 25 years of age.

These figures speak for themselves. They cannot be explained away by blaming the economic crisis today and another day saying it is the fault of the growing numbers of women who want to go out to work. What is so serious and increasingly clear is that for men, as well as women, the right to work is becoming more and more an illusion. How can we accept that women, who are already the most underpaid, most exploited category of workers, should shoulder the greater part of the cost of the crisis?

We must fight unemployment as such. We must restore the right to work. We want concrete action, coordinated at *European level* to establish a more equitable distribution of the employment available. Together with the European TUC, we demand the following:

- Reduction of working time without loss of earnings for the lower-paid

workers.

On the contrary, this should be an opportunity for social progress for all the adult population, moving towards a better reconciliation of family and job responsibilities and a better use of leisure time. This means all possible forms of reducing working time should be considered — longer holidays, paternity and maternity leave, shorter working hours, sabbatical leave etc.

- A massive increase in training and retraining programmes backed up with substantial resources under the *European Social Fund*.

- Job creation and the promotion of cooperative ventures to fulfill urgent and longstanding needs of the local community, especially in the most disadvantaged regions. This would enable everybody — from the long term unemployed to women doing the unpaid work of housewife — to find their vocation and their right to paid employment.

We also demand:

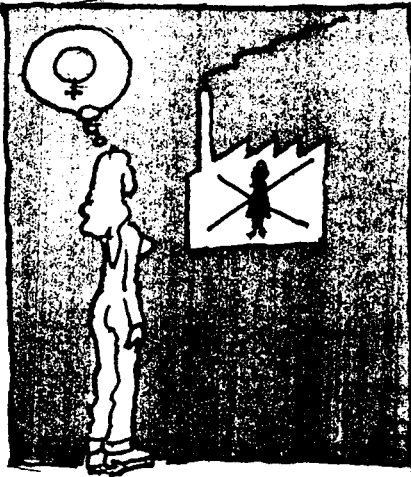
- the general extension of voluntary early retirement schemes with the same conditions for men and women;
- voluntary retirement at 55 for workers of both sexes engaged in onerous jobs;
- the introduction of a guaranteed minimum pension, which must not be less than the minimum industrial wage fixed by collective agreements.

These demands point the way towards a new conception of the function of work in society, of the way work is organised, and the purpose of economic growth.

Women must be involved in this new debate, since it directly concerns the shaping of our future as women in society.







Non-discrimination in employment

We note that the principle of equal treatment is established at Community level by virtue of *article 119 of the Rome Treaty* as regards equal pay and by virtue of various Community laws concerning pay, recruitment, working conditions, vocational training and social security, passed successively in 1975, 1976 and 1978 (see footnote on page 5). Though there has been some progress, the picture is still not encouraging.

Wage differences remain substantial and increase with age; there are innumerable ways of circumventing the anti-discrimination laws; methods of intimidation against possible legal action are numerous; instruments of dissuasion and control are derisory or non-existent.

It is clear that women at work start from a disadvantage. They are placed in the lowest grades, paid accordingly, kept out of management jobs, considered unreliable because of the children they already have or are likely to have in the future; treated as dispensable workers in industry as in political parties and in the trade unions.

Women are not on an equal footing with men in any field. They are used as alibis or in the lowest paid jobs refused by men.

All observations lead to the same conclusion; **the common lot of women at work is inadequate qualification, inadequate promotion, inadequate pay.** The absence or insufficiency of public facilities (creches, transport), the failure to adapt working hours of the parents to school hours, insufficient training and re-training, the lack of a global medium-term policy, all these factors contribute to maintaining the status quo in terms of people and institutions.

To analyse the causes and solutions for all these problems, we demand the setting-up in all member States, at European and at national level, of bodies to take initiatives, to supervise and to carry out research. These bodies, where women elected and responsible to their electors would be represented, would have their

own powers to carry out surveys and the necessary funds. They would also have the right at the national level to plead in Court in the name of individuals presenting a case. *At the European level*, the power to carry out enquiries in member States should be recognized. The European Parliament should be closely associated with the functioning of the body to be set up at European level. All workers and those looking for jobs, both women and men, will have to be regularly informed of the activity of these bodies.

Non-discrimination in social security regimes

The Community directive of 1978 represents a step forward in this area, but it is not enough. On the one hand, its field of application is very limited; on the other, a period of six years is foreseen to allow member States to adapt their national legislation to the restricted sector covered by the directive.

The European Parliament should ensure that the commitments made by the governments in the Council of Ministers are respected on widows' pensions (equality of rights for men and women) and on non-statutory social security schemes (these schemes are for employers an important means of discrimination against working women).

At the same time, we should ask the **European members of Parliament** to tackle a crucial problem which can only be solved at the European level; that periods devoted by parents, mothers or fathers, to bringing up small children should be taken into account in terms of social security benefits.

This is one example of the fact that adapting social security systems to the require-

ments of a more modern and fairer society is a lengthy task.

The role of educational systems

The achievement of equality of opportunity for access to all forms of education has been recognized¹ as an essential aim of *education policy* in all member states and its importance has been stressed to achieve equality of opportunity in society.

For equality between the sexes, the fundamental importance of education is clear. Women are strictly conditioned by the type of education they have received, in terms of their personal way of life, choice of jobs, careers, economic situation, equal pay, participation in decisions, civil and political involvement.

Education must be interpreted here in the widest sense, not only as the sum of ideas learned at school, but also as a result of *traditions, stereotypes, prejudices, mentalities* which the family, the school, the social and cultural environment have formed and maintained.

However, at school level **the ministers must respect their commitment.** All discrimination between the sexes — open or concealed — and still apparent in the educational systems must be banished. **In this sense, the organisation and structure of schools, the contents of programmes and textbooks, teaching methods should create no distinction between the needs of boys and girls and should allow for the maximum attention to be given to the needs of each, regardless of sex.**

Above all, our candidates, both men and

1. Resolution of the Council and Ministers of Education of 9.2.76 (O.J. C. 78 of 19.2.76).

women, must commit themselves at the *European level* to ensure that educational systems work positively for equality as in the socialist tradition. They should not be satisfied merely with a policy of equality of opportunity which always comes up against social conditioning and economic constraints. The school level is, even according to the Commission, an important field of action to offset rather than reinforce models of behaviour resulting from clichés imposed by society about the role of the sexes:

- **positive discrimination** — e.g. in the field of technical subjects, careers guidance, the promotion of women teachers to senior positions — must be at least temporarily integrated into educational policy;

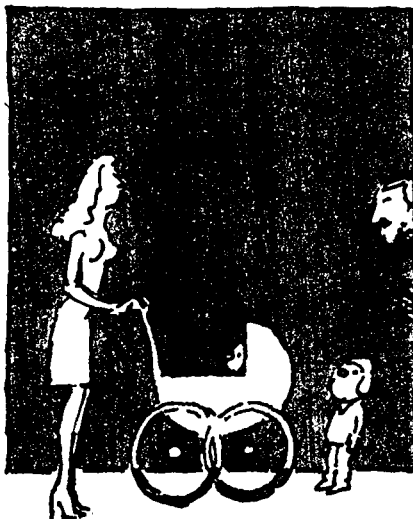
- **secondary education must be adapted** to allow for a better combination of general and vocational education and thus to prepare for working life. To this end, the setting-up of a compulsory broad based curriculum, for boys and girls, should ensure a preparation for young people to survive in the face of rapid economic and social changes in the world.

- **an equal and universal right must be established for paid educational leave from employment**, and this should include the setting-up on a systematic basis of training and re-training programmes without loss of salary.

- **systematic further education schemes** should become generalised for women and men who want to take up a job again after a period devoted to bringing up young children.

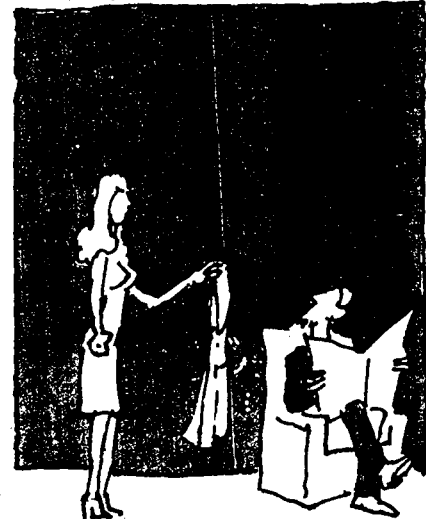
Special emphasis should be placed on the need to ensure that the institutions where these courses are given are equipped with reception centres and crèches.

These, then, are our immediate objectives. *Of course, our aspirations as socialist women do not end there. The problems facing the society in which we live are so enormous, at the national level, the European level, and beyond, that one day we shall have to make up our minds to look them in the face. For these elections to the European Parliament, we shall bring out some of these problems which are worth looking at from the European angle, either because they are partly behind the roadblocks, or because — like the problems of employment — they are socially and politically unacceptable to women and men who care for justice and progress.*



Family life

We believe that the preservation of family life depends on harmonious and balanced relationships within the family. The evolution of the family and of the stereotyped separation of roles — a source of frustration — towards a fairer and more conscious sharing of responsibilities, can only be a positive factor, giving both women and men greater possibilities for fulfilling their aspirations, while accepting their responsibilities as individuals. This positive development is bound to imply a **transformation of mentalities and behaviour** and is conditional on the genuine recognition of the social nature of motherhood, or indeed fatherhood, for which full responsibility should be taken by the parents together.



We therefore demand:

- the setting up of social structures and social services (crèches, family help...) necessary if men and women are to play their parental role while carrying out their professional duties if they wish;
- the possibilities for couples with young children to work a reduced number of hours per day so that they can either together or in turn look after their children's upbringing;
- free access for women to information and means for all types of birth control, so that they can take on the responsibility of motherhood in full awareness of its implications.

The elderly

If there is one class of people who are given by our society no right to equality, it is the elderly. Put aside by society when they become unproductive, they are too often left in unacceptable conditions of solitude and poverty.

For all who care for social justice and humanity, the elderly who are left to themselves are the victims of an intolerably materialist society which exploits the working capacities of a person and rejects him when he is no longer of use to the requirements of production and consumption.

We demand, as a first initiative at European level, that there should be an immediate study of effective ways of showing our solidarity with the elderly, whether or not they are pensioners, so that they have the means to live their life in dignity.

They should have an allowance not less than the guaranteed minimum wage.



Consumer protection



The European elections can give a real push to consumer policy which is still in its infancy. This Europe, which is still a Europe of producers and shopkeepers, can become a Europe for consumers.

Consumption does not just concern women, as some like it to be thought. Women do not consume more than others. But for centuries they are the ones who have been going to the market to do the family shopping. This means they are qualified to talk about the goods they are offered.

The consumer's traditional rights have been gradually eroded by our society dominated by big business in production, sales and advertising. This change in scale must be recognised and the chal-

lenge taken up at European level to reestablish:

- **the right to information**, pure and simple, on the contents of goods and protection against misleading advertising;
- **the right to safe and hygienic goods**, a right by which the consumer will only have to prove the damage suffered and not the manufacturer's responsibility;
- **the right to prices related to production costs**, without the distortion caused by the expenses of all-pervasive advertising, or by the interests of cartels and monopolies.

The consumer in the consumer society of to-day must fight for his right to be represented. This battle, waged largely by women, is only another of the workers' struggle against the excesses of capitalism.

We want our candidates, women and men, to undertake to insist on consumer rights and see that the voice of the consumer is clearly heard especially in the hundreds of technical debates at European level which conceal the presence of the industrial lobbies.

In a world in which raw materials are getting scarcer all the time, and where more and more children, men and women are dying every day, women protest against waste of all kinds and affirm their opposition to a policy of superfluous consumption. They will never believe that this ridiculous consumption is the basis of our economy and helps to maintain employment.

Peace	The future European Parliament	
<p>Our commitment to peace and disarmament is a concluding theme we put before the electors. In this regard we must speak of the immense work still to be done to pave the way for the economic and social changes without which there can be no decisive socialist contribution to peace.</p> <p>We cannot accept that our society, through failing to make a clear and unequivocal choice, should be condemned, by decisions which are outside the control of its citizens, to thrive by exporting deadly weapons to the less prosperous areas of the world. Real change depends on the renunciation of the arms race.</p> <p>Even if for some of our countries the sale of arms is an important part of their income, a political lever and the symbol of technological progress, we women cannot accept that the (relative) prosperity of our economies should partially rely on the manufacture and export of arms.</p> <p>We must therefore insist, at the European no less than the national level, on an open and democratic debate on the problems of peace. Let us not forget that, together with justice and democracy, peace was at the very heart of the inception and development of the idea of socialism in Europe and in the world.</p>	<p>The European Parliament to be directly elected in June 1979 by universal suffrage by the citizens of the Community will consist of 410 members.</p> <p>The division of seats per Member State will be as follows: 81 for Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom 25 for the Netherlands 24 for Belgium 16 for Denmark 15 for Ireland 6 for Luxembourg.</p> <p>The term of office of members is five years and it is possible, though not compulsory, to be a member of a national parliament and the European Parliament.</p> <p>The electoral system in the different countries is as follows:</p> <p>In Germany: proportional representation parties can choose between a national list and a Land list; a minimum of 5% of votes cast necessary 81 German MPs: 78 elected in Germany and 3 chosen by the Berlin Parliament.</p> <p>In France: proportional representation national list with no preferential voting minimum of 5% of votes cast necessary national Parliament's parties only allowed.</p> <p>In Italy: proportional representation redistribution of votes at national level, favouring smaller parties. 5 large regional constituencies.</p> <p>In the United Kingdom: 78 constituencies, each voting for a single member 1 body electing 3 representatives by proportional representation in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>In the Netherlands: proportional representation based on a single national constituency.</p>	<p>In Belgium: proportional representation. 2 constituencies: 1 body with 13 Flemish candidates, 1 body with 11 Walloon candidates the people of Brussels can vote for either electoral body; preferential voting: voter can change order of list.</p> <p>In Denmark: national constituency with list system non traditional parties will present lists of candidates provision for one single seat for Greenland.</p> <p>In Ireland: proportional representation 4 constituencies based on the 4 provinces, with 3, 4 or 5 members. Strong tendency towards preferential voting.</p> <p>In Luxembourg: proportional representation a single national constituency.</p> <p>Polling day between 7 and 10 June 1979.</p> <p>Counting of votes will not begin until voting is finished in all Member States.</p>

Present distribution of seats in the European Parliament
(as on 12 February 1979)

Political groups (and allies)	Total no.	No. of Women	France	Germany	Italy	Belgium	Neths.	Luxemb.	U.K.	Denmark	Ireland
S — Socialists	66	4	10	15	5	5	6 (1 W)	2	18 (2 W)	4 (1 W)	1
COM — Communists	18	2	5	—	12 (2 W)	—	—	—	—	1	—
CD — Christ. democrats	53	2	3	18 (1 W)	15 (1 W)	7	5	2	—	—	3
L — Liberals	23	1	9	3	2	2	3	2 (1 W)	1	1	—
DEP — Europ. Progr. Democrats	17	1	9 (1 W)	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	6
C — Europ. Conserv.	18	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	16 (1 W)	2	—
NI — Others	3	1	—	—	2	—	—	—	1 (1 W)	—	—
Total by country Total of WOMEN	198	12	36 (1 W)	36 (1 W)	36 (3 W)	14	14 (1 W)	6 (1 W)	36 (4 W)	10 (1 W)	10

Appeal to the electorate

Summary

Ending discrimination, in particular against women

Socialism stands for equality and rejects all discrimination based on sex, race, religion and political and philosophical opinions. This means that we reject exclusion from government service solely on the grounds of political beliefs.

Equality also means special protection for the old, the handicapped and social outcasts. Men and women should be in a position to make their mark to the same extent on the development of society at all levels, at work and at home, in public and private life.

Similar conditions for men and women should be required for access to

education, to the labour market, to social benefits, to public life, etc.

In order to reach these goals we particularly stress that:
— the content of education should be modified in order to meet the needs of women;
— institutions taking care of children should be accessible to all;
— a general spirit of tolerance and comradeship should be actively promoted throughout the European Community.

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Monthly review

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