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Brussels, 25 September 1987

**THE COMMISSION AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
PARTNERS OR PROTAGONISTS?**

Extracts from the speech given by Commissioner Peter SUTHERLAND
at the conference on "European Institutional
Evolution and the Parliament"
at the Institute of European Studies of the ULB
September 25

"If we look at the conception of the Community which was in the minds of the founding fathers at the time of the drafting of the Treaty of Rome, it is clear that the Commission was conceived of as an embryonic Government and that the body originally called the Assembly was conceived of as an embryonic Parliament. The optimists among us often attempt, therefore, to analyse the relationship between the Commission and the Parliament along lines similar to that existing between a Government and the legislature in Member states. It is not surprising that the analysis rarely stands up to close scrutiny enabling the pessimists - or at least the cynics - to point out that just as the Commission is not yet a real Community Government, the Parliament bears little relationship to national elected Assemblies...."

"It is, however, also true to say that if we had a relationship more closely resembling that of a Government to a Parliament, then an adversarial Government opposition situation would be the norm. This is something which I fear we tend to forget from time to time in the Community. We allow our natural preoccupation with the future development of European integration to distract us from the fact that the interplay of the different institutions is necessarily based more on creative tension and sometimes even conflict rather than on perfect harmony. The rules of politics apply in the Community as much as in any Member state and our purpose should be to keep the art of politics alive and well in the Community and not to see it smothered in some bland Euro-bureaucracy where all problems are reduced to technocratic formulae...

I say this because I think nobody is more aware than the Parliament of the sense of distance from Community decision-making which is felt by the ordinary citizen. Political alienation is a feature of all our countries but the degree of political alienation felt by the average citizen from the Community political process is all the greater precisely because it is one remove farther away. The Parliament should be the bridge across this gulf...."

