

Help for Britain's fishermen

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The European Community is coming to the aid of Britain's hard-pressed fishermen. This was the clear message from Commissioner Lardinois to the European Parliament's British Members, after Scottish Conservative John Corrie had raised the subject for emergency debate on Wednesday, April 30.

Mr Corrie told Parliament that there were "frightening figures of what is happening on the West Coast of Scotland". Cheap imports from non-Community countries were undermining British fishermen's incomes; and at the same time stocks in the sea were being depleted with alarming speed. "At this rate, herring will become a luxury. Unless action is taken, there will soon be no fish left to protect."

James Spicer (Con/UK) drew Commissioner Lardinois' attention to the possibility of failure at the international law of the sea conference to solve the problem of fishing limits. In that case, both Norway and Iceland had threatened to increase their territorial waters unilaterally — in direct contravention of the trade agreement they had signed with the Community. What would happen then?

The Commissioner's reply, in the words of Michael Shaw (Con/UK), "should go a long way to reassure our fishermen about the Common Market". He promised four specific short term aids to meet the present crisis:

1. Oil subsidies, paid by member states, to be prolonged from July this year to next January.
2. Export subsidies to encourage the sales of certain fish to third countries like the United States.
3. Community funds totalling £1.25 million to store frozen fish.
4. Extension of the minimum import price system to frozen fish.

As far as possible action by Iceland and Norway was concerned, the Commissioner was unequivocal. If they extended their fishing limits unilaterally, the Community would review its free trade agreements with those countries — especially since the agreements included special concessions on their exports of fish products. "We shall act for our own people."

Commissioner Lardinois was also positive on the conservation of fish in the North Sea. This could not be solved, he said, by individual nation states. Community action was needed; and the Commission recognised that it had a special responsibility in the field.

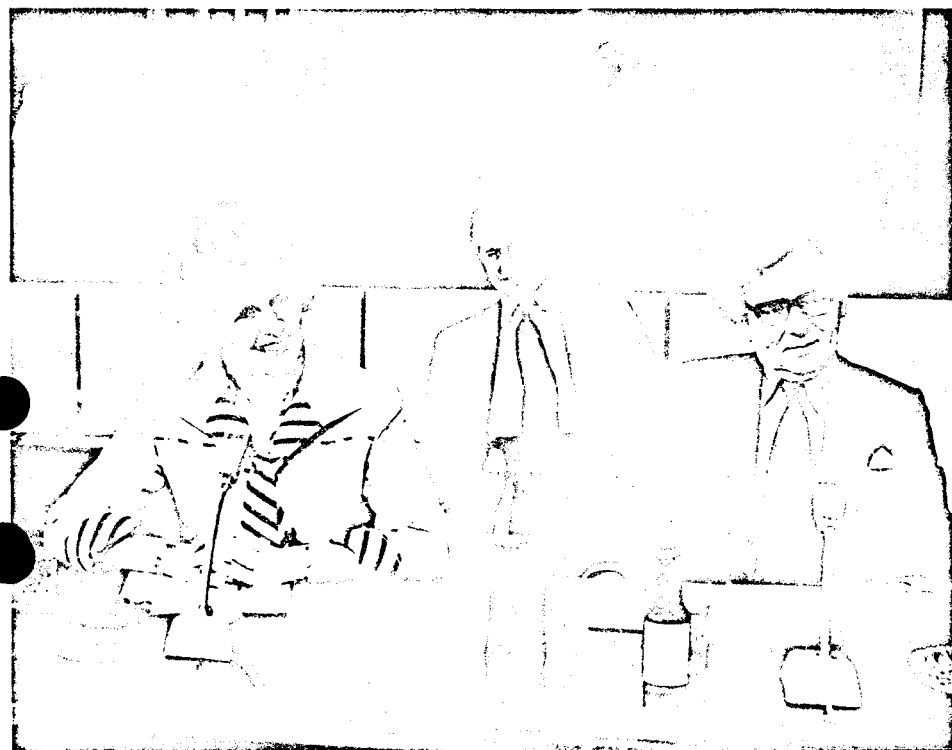
Margaret Thatcher in Luxembourg

British MPs voting in the European Parliament on the Community regional fund budget did not constitute "a loss of sovereignty, but a use of it", Opposition Leader Margaret Thatcher said in Luxembourg on April 30.

Replying to questions at a press conference at the end of her 24-hour visit to the Parliament, Mrs Thatcher dismissed fears that British membership

of the Community diminished democratic control. As far as the parliamentary process was concerned, she said, the national parliaments (as well as the European Parliament) scrutinised delegated Community legislation before it came into effect, whereas, in the United Kingdom at least, the individual laws made by the government under powers previously granted by Parliament only came before the House of Commons after they had come into effect.

Mrs Thatcher declared that she had "always been



Leader of the Conservative Party Margaret Thatcher addressing a press conference at the European Parliament on Wednesday, April 30.

an enthusiastic European". She went on to stress, however, that in her view the development of the Community should take place only with the full agreement of all the member countries. She very much hoped that Europe would draw closer together, but added that "the Community has to grow organically through discussions between the nine member countries". A European monetary union was not possible in a fixed period of time, for example, but only as the situation developed.

Mrs Thatcher also reaffirmed her belief that no referendum in the United Kingdom could be anything but advisory. "It cannot fetter Members of Parliament. How they should vote after the referendum campaign is a matter for each of them to decide."

In Luxembourg, Mrs Thatcher held talks with European Parliament Georges Spénale and Secretary-General Hans Nord; Luxembourg Premier Gaston Thorn; Commission President François-Xavier Ortoli and other Commission Members; and the European Conservative Group and other Members of the European Parliament.

Food for the third world

"The Cheysson Fund has already made nonsense of the claim that the Community has done nothing for developing countries with whom it does not have special relationships," Lord Reay (Con/UK) told the Parliament on Monday, April 28. The debate was on a supplementary budget to make available another 100 million dollars for emergency aid to developing countries through the Fund, on top of the 150 million already provided. Of this original sum, 30 million dollars had been paid into the UN special fund; and of the remainder, as Lord Reay pointed out, 80 million "was dispensed directly to non-associated developing countries who were also members of the Commonwealth".

Later, on Wednesday, a more extensive debate took place on the European Community's overall development cooperation policy. Among the recommendations made by Parliament were that particular attention should be paid to improving the generalised preference system, encouraging the conclusion of international agreements on raw materials, and the "rapid establishment of the Community food aid programme for 1975 and its intensification according to needs".

During this debate Lord Reay again noted how absurd were the claims of certain anti-marketters that the Community was "inward-looking". The food aid programme, for example, had risen steadily over the years: from 20 million units of account in 1969 to 121 million in 1973 and 212 million in 1974. In the current year, moreover, 80% of the food would go to non-Lomé (associated) countries, and 50% to the Indian sub-continent alone. This was the truth about the so-called "food mountains".

"I want particularly," Lord Reay continued, "to draw attention to a curious statement by six United Kingdom ministers, including Mrs Judith Hart, the Minister of Overseas Development: that Commonwealth non-associated states would gain from Britain leaving the Community. What on earth could they possibly gain? We need only contrast what the Community is already doing through an increasing aid programme with the fact that the UK aid programme has been declining ever since 1969. And this year the Ministers' own Government has yet again cut the projected programme!"

SOCIAL SECURITY - HOW DOES BRITAIN COMPARE?

British social security benefits compare unfavourably with those of most other member states of the European Community. This emerges from figures just released by the Commission in answer

to a written question (No. 719/74) by Lord O'Hagan (Ind/UK). Continued Community membership could not mean any reduction in British benefits, the Commission states.

| | Social Security % of GNP spent in 1972 | Pensions % of annual earnings (40 years contri- butions or flat rate), 1974 | Family allowances % of average earnings (family with 3 children), 1972 | Paid holidays 1973 (days fixed by law and national agreements) |
|-------------|--|---|---|---|
| BELGIUM | 19.2 | 60 | 18 | 20-22 |
| GERMANY | 22.1 | 60 | 6 | 18-24 |
| FRANCE | 18.7 | 40 | 30 | 24 |
| ITALY | 22.4 | 74 | 11 | 14-20 |
| LUXEMBOURG | 20.0 | 64+ | 15 | 18-24 |
| NETHERLANDS | 22.7 | 48 | 16 | 17-20 |
| UK | 17.1 | 30 | 6 | 15-18 |
| IRELAND | 13.4 | 32 | 4 | 18 |
| DENMARK | 20.8 | 34 | 7 | 24 |

For unemployment and sickness benefits, whilst exact comparisons are difficult, figures given by the Commission suggest that of Community coun-

tries, only Ireland has a lower rate of benefits than Britain.

Sovereignty and energy

The recently-formed International Energy Agency, which exercises considerable control over Britain's oil supplies, was contrasted unfavourably with the European Community during a short debate on April 29. Tom Normanton (Con/UK) roundly declared "I do not believe that the International Energy Agency has in itself the capability of solving the problems facing the industrialised western world". The Agency was, he said, too loose an organisation. The real solution to the energy crisis "could only be discussed within the framework of the Community, where policy formulation is institutionalised in the Commission and the Council and . . . the Parliamentary framework".

Much the most dangerous aspect of the matter for Tom Normanton concerned democratic control, particularly overspending. "There is a deep-seated anxiety amongst European Parliamentarians at the inadequacy of machinery for regulating and controlling expenditure of Community funds. But . . . how much greater are the anxieties and the grounds for anxiety in this context about wider international agencies! These are so loose, so non-institutionalised, that they are, in my opinion, totally unsuited for formulating proposals involving large sums of public investment and more particularly large sums to be monitored, checked and controlled."

Regional fund: a compromise

The European Parliament on April 29 asserted the principle of its right to control the budget for the new European Regional Development Fund; but it avoided a direct constitutional clash with the Council of Ministers so that the activation of the Fund should not be further delayed.

Parliament on April 8 had voted to raise the appropriation for the first year of the European Regional Fund from the 150 million units of account proposed by the Commission and the Council to 300 million, insisting also that because the Fund represented a new field of policy not provided for in the Community Treaties, its budget came fully under the control of Parliament and not of the Council of Ministers. Parliament, moreover, accused the Council of trying to go back on its original acceptance of Parliament's constitutional right in this matter. But during April the

Council claimed that an agreement between the Heads of Government was tantamount to a treaty commitment within the Community framework.

The dilemma facing Parliament was whether to abandon its principles, or provoke a constitutional crisis and risk delaying the coming into effect of the Fund yet further. After all, the year's delay already incurred arose because of differences between the Governments.

In the event, Parliament on April 29 agreed not to vote for an increase in the sum of 1300 million u.a. agreed by the governments for the first three years of operation of the fund, including the provisional sum of 150 million for 1975. In effect Parliament thus imposed a limit on its own powers in return for an assurance from the Council that from 1978 Regional Fund money would come under Parliamentary control. However, a further potential conflict could arise when deciding on the 1976 general budget for the Community. For the increase in overall expenditure through the establishment of the Fund gives Parliament additional power to increase expenditure in other fields also.

The story, however, does not end there. The Community's 1976 budget will shortly be considered by all the institutions and the degree by which Parliament can amend proposed expenditure will depend upon the outcome of further delicate negotiations between the Commission and Parliament on the one side and the Council on the other. If the Council accepts for "accounting purposes" that the 1975 Regional Fund spending should be regarded as expenditure which would normally be under Parliamentary control - a view supported by the Commission - all will be well. If not, there will again be the possibility of a clash over Parliamentary powers between the Parliament and the Council. As Budget Committee rapporteur Heinrich Aigner (CD/Ger) said in the budget debate on April 29 "we suspect that the cohorts of national and Council civil servants want to grab back the powers of the European Parliament: we must stand up to them".

Voting power

The UK Members of the European Parliament's reputation for indefatigability was further strengthened on Wednesday, April 30, when, yet again, the Conservative Group found itself in a position of overall majority. Two rather technical regulations on alpine and mountain cattle were up for voting by the Parliament; but, in contravention of the Parliament's standing orders, neither the official rapporteur nor his substitute were there to present the External Economic Relations Committee report. So, after an official protest by chief whip James Scott-Hopkins, the Conservative Group used its voting power to return the report to Committee.

Equal pay

"Opinion, feeling, prejudice, language and possibly . . . the fact that about 90 per cent of the members of all our national parliaments are men have hitherto prevented women from playing a full role in the economic, social and political life of our countries", said Social Affairs and Employment rapporteur Lady Elles (Con/UK). Her report welcomed a Commission draft directive on employment equality, but said what was really needed were tough sanctions against those who perpetuated discrimination.

Equal pay acts, like that in force in the United Kingdom are "inadequate" means of ending employment discrimination between men and women, she said. "In the United Kingdom, according to figures of February 1975, the non-manual male worker earns £1.38 an hour, while a woman non-manual worker earns 76p an hour - just over half; and in Germany, the skilled male worker at the end of 1973 was earning 7.74 marks an hour while the equivalent woman worker was earning 5.48 marks an hour. Administrative measures will therefore be necessary as well as sanctions for failing to implement the measures envisaged."

Hugh Dykes (Con/UK), speaking he said "as a mere male" thought Europe had a lesson to learn from "collectivist societies" like China: "the country that has done most to eliminate, or at least, substantially reduce, real on-going discrimination against women in all aspects of society". We should, he said, aim at a society which gave a wife a "formal domestic wage" paid by her husband, where women would work most of the time, where there was a compulsory provision of nursery facilities, an equal age of retirement and equal access to work. That, he said, "includes women being miners or even Presidents of the European Parliament if they so wish".

Apply for money

Women's organisations are urged by the Commission to ensure that applications for vocational and training grants for women under the Social Fund are stepped up. This follows a written question tabled by three Communist women Members, Mrs Caretoni Romagnoli (It), Mrs Goutmann (F) and Mrs Lotti (It). The three Members had called on the Commission to launch an information campaign because "so far applications from Member States for the benefit of women are practically non-existent, in spite of the fact that the latest unemployment figures show that women are the first to suffer from an economic crisis".

View from the Commonwealth

In a recent speech the Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam said that Australia hoped "that British membership will encourage the Community to adopt a more outward-looking approach to the international economic scene . . . the last thing Australia is seeking is a restoration of her old-style preferential relationship with Britain". The importance of the Community (pop. 253 million) as a trading market for Commonwealth countries and their exports to the United Kingdom (pop. 55 million) are illustrated by the Commission in answer to a written question (No.667/74) by Lord O'Hagan (Ind/UK). The table shows, for each of the larger Commonwealth countries and Hong Kong, exports to the Community of Nine, the United Kingdom and the other Eight Members as a percentage of the countries' total exports. The figures are for the first year of British membership (1973) or the most recent year available.

| FROM: | % OF TOTAL EXPORTS | | THE OTHER EIGHT |
|-------------|--------------------|------|-----------------|
| | TO: | UK | |
| | THE NINE | | |
| CANADA | 12.5 | 6.3 | 6.2 |
| AUSTRALIA | 18.1 | 8.2 | 9.9 |
| NEW ZEALAND | 43.5 | 32.1 | 11.5 |
| INDIA | 21.0 | 9.8 | 11.2 |
| PAKISTAN | 21.2 | 7.5 | 13.8 |
| NIGERIA | 62.1 | 21.6 | 40.5 |
| HONG KONG | 23.6 | 11.2 | 12.5 |

% OF TOTAL UK EXPORTS

| | | |
|-----|---------------|------|
| To: | COMMONWEALTH | 17.1 |
| | THE COMMUNITY | 32.8 |
| | EFTA | 15.0 |
| | UNITED STATES | 12.1 |
| | OTHER AREAS | 23.0 |