



## Direct elections: climax coming

The target date of 1978 for the first direct elections to the European Parliament was entirely realistic, Italian Under-secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Adolfo Battaglia told the Parliament on Wednesday, November 12. As President-in-Office of the Council of Ministers, he was specifically refuting the suggestion made in the House of Commons on October 29 by British Minister Roy Hattersley that 1978 was "optimistic". "I hope that the European Parliament will stick to that date," he concluded.

The move towards direct elections, which began formally in January this year with the Parliament's adoption of a new draft convention (the Patijn proposals), is now reaching a climax. A Council of Ministers working party reported on the convention at the end of October, and the Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers held discussions with a Parliamentary delegation — including Mr Patijn — on November 5. Now the summit conference in Rome at the beginning of December is to consider the working party report, and could well make a decision, at least of principle, as to how direct elections are to be held.

The main points of the Parliament's convention are:

1. Initially, each country should decide its own method of election — though work should begin on devising a common system;
2. Parliament should be elected, for a 5-year term, at the same time throughout the whole Community: namely on May 6, 7, and 8, 1978;
3. the size of the Parliament should be increased from 198 to 355 Members, of whom the United Kingdom would have 67;
4. each country should decide for itself whether or not the elected Members should retain a "dual mandate": i.e., also be Members of their national parliaments.

It is generally admitted that strict proportionality between population and seats is impossible, if only because the Parliament would have to be over 700 strong to give Luxembourg even one seat. The draft convention therefore allocates a minimum of six seats to each Member State. The method proposed, however, is further weighted in favour of all the smaller countries: Ireland, for example, with 1.2% of the Community's population, would have 3.7% of the seats; the UK, with 21% of the population, 18.9% of the seats.

French and British official opinion, it is reported, favours a more strictly proportional distribution (the European Parliament's Political Affairs Committee initially proposed a Parliament of 550 Members, based on 6 seats plus one per half million population for each Member State). The Irish, on the other hand, have objected to a reduction from the 5% of seats in the present Parliament.

There would appear to be more serious disagreement on the election date. The UK, as Mr Callaghan reported to the House of Commons on November 10, does not believe that the necessary arrangements can be made by 1978; while the Danes have formally questioned whether it is necessary to have Community-wide elections at the same time. They and others have argued that it would be sensible to elect each country's delegation to the European Parliament at the same time as a national general election, thereby avoiding the risk of a low poll and the possibility that a country's Members in the European Parliament might be of a markedly different political composition from the national parliament. Mr Callaghan told the House of Commons that the election date should be one of the matters decided nationally.

There are, however, formidable technical objections to having the election in each country on different dates — probably in different years. The membership of the Parliament would be disrupted at least every six months by an election somewhere.

Moreover, how would such a system be phased in? There could develop a situation in which, for example, Germany would have 71 directly elected Members, while the UK would only have 36 nominated Members. Support both for the single election date and for the 1978 target is in any case very strong: the strength of German feeling, in particular, could well prove decisive.

## America

A warning to the United States Government to resist protectionist pressures, especially tempting in a pre-election year, was implicit in the debate on November 12. Commissioner Gundelach agreed with the concern expressed by Gabriel Kaspereit (EPD/F), though stressing that the same pressures for protection were felt in the Community as well — as Question Time had recently illustrated in respect of textiles (see above) and steel.

Mr Gundelach emphasised the difference between protectionist pressures and protectionist measures. So far, with the exception of cheese, the US Administration had not surrendered to such demands. Nonetheless, the Commissioner said that "we have been given some reason to fear that, in the United States at present, the road that leads from the exercise of pressure to the implementation of protectionist measures is dangerously open . . ."

Until the recent US decision on rolled steel, \$4.5 billion worth of Community exports to that country — one quarter of the total — were under threat. Even now \$3 billion was potentially at risk, and at a time when the USA enjoyed a trade surplus with the Community of over \$3 billion in the first half of this year.

Lord Castle (Soc/UK) saw the situation as arising from a new type of government in the USA "subjected to the most diabolical of pressures, that of the well-heeled lobby". But Willen Scholten (CD/NL) took a less dramatic view, arguing that lobbies were part of the American way of government. What had changed, he said, was the relative power of Congress vis-à-vis the Administration.

## Israel

The United Nations' General Assembly's vote comparing Zionism with racialism was widely condemned in Parliament on November 13. Shock both at the vote and at the self-inflicted damage to UNO's reputation were the main sentiments together with fears that it would aggravate the situation in the Middle East.

All groups except the Communists supported a resolution criticising the vote. For that group Renato Sandri (It) said that although it did not agree with the UN resolution, it thought that Parliament should not criticise UNO for this one vote alone. Much better it would be, he said, if Parliament, in order to help resolve the Middle East problem, had stressed the right of the Palestinian people to have their own state and country.

## Russia

The Communists again spoke against the general tide during the following debate on a resolution expressing satisfaction at the Nobel Prize award to Andrei Sakharov and hoping that he would be able to accept it in person. William Hamilton (Soc/UK) accurately defined the difference between West and East: "This European Parliament is an exciting experiment in the practice of international co-operation, tolerance and, above all, freedom of speech. The Soviet Union, by its action, has spat in the face of all that we stand for here."

That won applause. Gérard Bordu (Comm/F) won himself ironical laughter when he described Communists as being free and said that freedom of expression, movement and opinion were indivisible. On the vote the Communists were joined by a few Socialists. Tam Dalyell (Soc/UK) thought Sakharov not a good enough scientist to merit the Nobel Prize anyway.



The first petition from the United Kingdom to the European Parliament was presented on November 12 by the Women's Rights Committee of Wales and the Cardiff Women's Action Group. It called for changes in the European Commission's draft directive on equal treatment for men and women workers to stress the maintenance of working conditions and standards and for changes in the Community countries' own legislation to equalise family responsibilities between the sexes. In this photo the group's leader Oonagh Hartnett presents the petition to Parliament's Director for Petitions and Questions, Wolfgang von Padberg, with (centre) Sir Geoffrey de Freitas (Soc/UK), a Vice-President of the Parliament.

# PARLIAMENT 'NO' TO THE PUNY POLITICAL MOUSE

A packed sitting of the Parliament voted unanimously to reinstate about £200 million of regional, social, research, energy and overseas aid expenditure which the Council of Ministers had sought to cut from the 1976 budget. A resolution dismissing the Council's draft of the budget as "an accounting record intended for cashiers rather than for politicians" and challenging the Council "to make the budget a political instrument fundamental to Community life" was passed with an overwhelming majority.

The budget draft now returns to the Council which is expected to discuss Parliament's amendments and modifications on December 3. The budget will then return to Parliament for approval and final adoption during the plenary sitting in mid-December. In the meantime delicate discussions are to be held between the institutions in order to reach agreement both on the extent of Parliament's margin of manoeuvre in amending expenditure and future budgetary procedure.

Calling for "a genuine power of co-decision" Parliament has proposed an end to the present 'artificial' practice of classifying all spending as either compulsory (treaty based expenditure for which Parliament can only propose changes — 'modifications') or non-compulsory (all other expenditure, which Parliament can change — 'amendments' — within an agreed ceiling).

Parliament has also requested a review of the treaties, to be completed before the end of 1976 in time for consideration of the 1978 budget, "in order to give the European Parliament elected by direct universal suffrage clear and comprehensive budgetary powers from the outset".

The rapporteur for the Committee on Budgets Michel Cointat (EPD/F), speaking during the main budget debate on Tuesday, November 11, said the Council had been obsessed with saving and austerity. While this was praiseworthy, the Council had acted with neither a precise programme nor a political aim.

With agriculture — the only common policy as yet — accounting for as much as 74% of the budget, and administration 5%, little room remained for other sectors. Indeed, with the exception of the regional fund, other expenditure — be it the social fund, research, energy or aid — was shrinking. Unbalanced, incomplete and truncated, the budget did not meet what Parliament had the right to expect.

Commissioner Claude Cheysson noted that the Commission had wanted a more balanced budget. Both Heinrich Aigner (CD/Ger) and Lord Bessborough (Con/UK) reminded Parliament that it had the power to reject the budget. But to Fazio Fabbrini (Comm/It) this year it was still a case of

"celebrating an ancient rite". Parliament was trying to put back into the budget what the Council had taken out. Lord Bruce (Soc/UK) — who joined the



Lord Bruce of Donington.

Communists in voting against the budget resolution — thought the budget was too small to have any effect on the economies of Europe; it was, he said, "a puny political mouse".

1976 Budget — Expenditure proposed by:			
(millions of units of account)	Commission	Council	Parliament
	8,071	7,472	7,912

## Tactical victory

Parliament scored a tactical victory over the Council on Tuesday night (November 11) when it agreed to extra agricultural spending for 1975 only on certain conditions. The Council should make a statement to Parliament setting out progress towards final adoption of the VAT element of the own resources system of Community finance, and declare itself opposed to the principle of supplementary budgets and in favour of Parliament having a "real say" in drawing up the budget. The Council promised an early discussion.

## Textiles: unfair competition?

In 1970 the Commission had found that the woollen textiles industry in Prato, Italy, was extremely competitive and employed no abnormal practices, Commissioner Spinelli told Lord Gladwyn (Lib/UK) at Question Time on November 12. But following a complaint from the Bradford industry a new enquiry is being made to check whether the British complaints of unfair competition are justified or not.

Tom Normanton (Con/UK) won Mr Spinelli's assent when he commented that the textile industry as a whole was more concerned with unfair competition from outside the Community.

Two days later, on November 14, the problems of the textile industry again surfaced. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Soc/UK) noted the increase in UK imports of knitted garments from 110 million in 1970 to 170 million four years later, while employment steadily declined. The GATT multi-fibre agreement would help, she believed, though a quarter of the firms in the industry expected to make a loss this year. In conclusion, Mrs Dunwoody contrasted the level of Community expenditure on agriculture and the derisory spending on industrial and social rehabilitation. Much more would need to be done.

## Middlemen

The high cost of packaging rather than of the CAP provided common ground to almost all members when Parliament debated consumers' needs on November 12. Opening, Betty Boothroyd (Soc/UK) said that "we would be foolish indeed to devote our resources and our energies to seeing that the producer gets what he deserves, but no more than he deserves, only to find that inordinate profits were made by middlemen".

## Better Luxembourg than Lisbon

Five members from the Constituent Assembly in Portugal had the good fortune to be visiting (from November 10-14) the European Parliament in Luxembourg — their colleagues were "locked up" in the Assembly building in Lisbon. The visit came at the invitation of the Parliament's President, Georges Spénale. At a press conference on Wednesday, November 12, he expressed Parliament's support for their fight for democracy in Portugal and their ultimate wish to see Portugal join the Community.

The delegates surprised the press by answering questions fluently in both English and French. Portuguese Socialist Party member Nuro Matos argued that after forty years of dictatorship there could be no "instant democracy". He foresaw a period of transition with elections in April/May 1976. The Government that would then emerge would probably have one or two ministries, such as defence and planning retained by the armed forces. The President would be elected by simple majority by an "electoral college" including both the Assembly and the Armed Forces Council. Popular Democratic Member Alfredo Sousa foresaw undogmatic Marxism with pluralism allowing both socialist ideas and opposition: "no socialism without democracy and no democracy without socialism".

## Sittings 1976

Jan 12-16: Luxembourg	Jul 5-9: Luxembourg
Feb 9-13: Strasbourg	Sep 13-17: Strasbourg
Mar 8-12: Strasbourg	Oct 11-15: Strasbourg
Apr 5-9: Luxembourg	Nov 15-19: Luxembourg
May 10-14: Strasbourg	(Nov 29-Dec 1: Luxembourg)
Jun 14-18: Strasbourg	Dec 13-17: Luxembourg

The imminence of a decision on direct elections to the European Parliament (see front page) has already produced a burst of activity among the European activists, now battle-ready again after the referendum campaign. First off the mark was the more academically-inclined Federal Trust, which held a two-day seminar on the European Parliament on October 31 and November 1. A paper from Professor Michael Steed of Manchester University raised the critical matter of the political line-up in an elected Parliament. Principal focus of interest is France. What will the Gaullists do? Will the Giscardiens be in the proposed Federation of Liberal Parties (they sit with the Liberals in the European Parliament); or will they be excluded — the British Liberal Party conference voted for just that — and join a centre-right grouping instead?

The annual Congress of the European Movement on Saturday, November 15 also devoted a morning to direct elections. A lively debate broke out between those — led by retiring Deputy Chairman and European Parliament Vice-President Sir Geoffrey de Freitas — who argued for combining direct elections of the UK delegation with a General Election, and the majority of the Congress which wished to stick to a single date in 1978 for the whole Community.

Finally, on the week-end of November 29 and 30, the Conservative Group for Europe and the Conservative Political Centre are holding a joint conference at Coventry to discuss, among other things, direct elections and the formation of a centre-right alliance to fight them. Both the German Christian Democrats and the French Gaullists are represented.

*Not only did fog oblige most British MPs to travel by bus to Brussels to catch a plane back to England on November 14, but the plane took them to Stansted rather than to Heathrow, as expected. They were not the only MPs inconvenienced, or so it seemed. Earlier Abbé Laudrin (EPD/F), explaining his speaking for his group in the consumers' debate, claimed that the Luxembourg fog had cost Pierre Krieg his voice. "Parisians are less used to this sort of climate than Bretons."*

Certain alarms and excursions took place on the first day of the Parliament's November sitting in Luxembourg when the four independent Members who normally sit behind the Socialists found that they had been moved to behind the Conservatives and the European Progressive Democrats. Scottish National Member Winifred Ewing was particularly irate; eventually she was allocated a place behind the juncture of the Socialists and the Christian Democrats. The two Walloon/francophone Belgian Members, Pierre Bertrand and Lucien Outers, and the French ex-Socialist Henri Caillavet continued, at least for November, behind the EPD.

Recent changes in committee membership:

<b>Economic, Monetary</b>	<b>Social, Employment</b>
Joined:	Joined:
Hugh Dykes (Con)	Gwyneth Dunwoody (Soc)
Left:	Tom Normanton (Con)
Tom Normanton (Con)	Left:
<b>Procedure, Petitions</b>	Hugh Dykes (Con)
Joined:	Michael Stewart (Soc)
William Hamilton (Soc)	<b>Regional, Transport</b>
Sir G. de Freitas (Soc)	Joined:
	Winifred Ewing (Ind)