



# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

# REPORT

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## Censure threat on milk mountain

By June 18 the nine governments of the European Community could be faced with having to appoint a new 13-man Commission – the present one will be automatically dismissed if the censure motion tabled for the European Parliament's June sitting by the Conservative Group is passed by a two-thirds majority. The move follows mounting anger among all shades of Parliament opinion at the way in which the Commission is handling the Community's skimmed milk "mountain".

The "mountain" itself is steadily growing: stocks are now some 1¼ million tons. So is the cost: and at Question Time on Wednesday, May 12, the matter came to a head with Commissioner Lardinois first affirming, then denying, and finally admitting after probing by Lord Bruce (Soc/UK) that

storage and interest charges amount to over £34½ million a year.

In December last year the Commission proposed a number of solutions including the compulsory incorporation of skimmed milk powder in animal feed. All, except the use of milk powder for food aid, were rejected by both Parliament and Council. Then, in February, the Commission told Parliament that a system of special deposits on imported animal feed was to be adopted instead, to encourage incorporation. Parliament was not consulted.

### Marketing Board rules OK

The European Parliament may be a long way from achieving the investigatory powers of the United States Congress (though there are some ambitions in that direction: see page 2). But it is gradually extending its "fact-finding" activities.



European Parliament Members.....



..... are briefed on the subject of.....

On May 19 and 20 the Regional Policy and Transport Committee held in Brussels a public hearing on new forms of inter-urban transport, with a view to concentrating policy-makers' minds on the problems involved. Three weeks earlier (on April 28–30) members of the Agriculture Committee paid a visit to the United Kingdom to see how Britain's marketing boards work. As statutory bodies to which producers are obliged to belong, the boards have been looked on a little suspiciously on the Continent, both by the Commission as possibly not conforming to market principles, and by farmers to whom they smack of state control and direction.

The specific subject chosen was the Milk Marketing Board and nine members of the Agriculture Committee visited its headquarters at Thames Ditton on April 29, led by Roger Houdet (Lib/F), the Committee's chairman.

They held a day's discussions with MMB chairman Sir Richard Trehane and colleagues, and saw in action the computer-controlled farm payments system, the flow-path of milk supplies across the country, and the artificial insemination service. Later, they also visited the two ends of the milk chain: an Express Dairy in Hillingdon to see how the door-step delivery service operates; and, to conclude the visit, a modern dairy farm near High Wycombe, Bucks. "I'm glad the weather's been fine for you," farmer Kent remarked as they

This scheme soon ran into difficulties. The United States complained that it was resulting in a cut-back in US soya exports, and was probably contrary to GATT anyway. So the Commission came up with a new expedient: the stock-piling of proteins to prevent a fall in imports. This was rejected with derision by the Parliament in April (see EPR 24).

The Conservative motion of censure therefore condemns the Commission on several counts: the failure to consult Parliament; the "bureaucratic monstrosity" of the deposit scheme; the damage to farmers, consumers and taxpayers; and the fact of the skimmed milk mountain itself. In their view, as Document 109/76 puts it under "JUSTIFICATION: 'The text of the motion of censure justifies itself'".

left. "But I hope," he added with an eye on the water situation, "that it pours as soon as you reach the bottom of the drive."

The visitors' verdict was that the marketing board system appeared to meet Britain's needs very well. But Britain is exceptional in being heavily dependent upon imports for butter and cheese and in consuming 60% of milk production in liquid form; so the second conclusion was that there is no single Europe-wide answer to farming problems.

No instant solution to the powdered milk mountain here, then (see above). But their experience impressed the visitors with the need for national farmers' organisations to cooperate more closely.



.....milk

## Bribery and bitterness



John Prescott: "I am a prosecutor".

The European Parliament held one of its most bitter (see p. 4), but possibly one of its more important debates on Tuesday, May 11, when John Prescott (Soc/UK) raised the matter of bribery by multinational companies. Was this or was it not a matter for the Community?

Commissioner Borschette, in an initial judicious reply, stressed that the bribery of officials or politicians was in the first instance a matter for the penal codes of Member States. There could be occasions, however, when there were implications for Community law, and the Commission was continuing its examination of the allegations.

For John Prescott, the matter was clear. "Individual acts of corruption are the legitimate concern of the nation state, but within these acts there are actions which, if they prejudice the Treaty, clearly come within the competence of the Commission," he argued. On the available evidence, some of which was openly admitted, "the oil companies abused their dominant position, distorted competition, withheld supplies, and possibly committed a breach of the Euratom Treaty".

He commended to the Parliament six proposals to tighten up Community control over the multinational "freebooters" including — most interestingly — the setting up by the Par-

liament of an enquiry similar to that by the Church Committee in the United States. "Let us take those first steps towards making these huge corporations accountable to us," he concluded.

Commissioner Borschette's reply satisfied Harry Notenboom (NL) for the Christian Democrats and Norbert Hougardy (Bel) for the Liberals; but not Socialist leader Ludwig Fellermaier (Ger) who outdid his colleague John Prescott in his concern for the achievement of healthy competition. One might have expected the Conservatives to be happy about the Socialist conversion to market principles. But instead, Tom Normanton (Con/UK) launched into an impassioned swipe at other alleged forms of corruption, pointing to dubious business practices behind the Iron Curtain and to free holidays on the Black Sea.

From the Socialist benches came Michael Stewart's strictures on the Commission: "What was lacking in the Commissioner's speech was a realisation that we are up against a breach of the principles enshrined in the Treaty of Rome". He urged the Commission to take the matter more seriously than it appeared to.

So it went back and forth, mainly between the British Members, like Pavlovian reactions to a Westminster division bell. "An unhelpful debate on a serious matter," commented Sir Brandon Rhys Williams.



Tom Normanton: "a damnable insult!"

## Spain - how soon?

In recent months the European Parliament has held several debates on Spain, for the most part reflecting only the varying political attitudes to that country across the political spectrum. By comparison, the debate of May 12 had an air of precision, following as it did the tour of European capitals by the Spanish foreign minister, Mr de Areilza, a few weeks before. Former French Minister Maurice Faure (Soc) gave what Conservative leader Sir Peter Kirk (UK) described as "a brilliant and balanced expose" of the political situation inside Spain, outlining the Navarro government's programme of reform: a referendum on the constitution this autumn, local elections at the end of the year, parliamentary elections in spring 1977. At the end of the debate, Commissioner Sir Christopher Soames also outlined a possible timetable for Spanish membership of the Community: a trade agreement by July 1977, a Spanish application "in a year or two", with membership in six or seven years.

Such precision, however, was viewed with some suspicion on the left: Socialist leader Ludwig Fellermaier (Ger) among others emphasised that there could be no Community membership without genuine democracy in Spain. On present plans, for example, the elected parliament would be overshadowed by a nominated Senate; and the Communist party would have to be legalised. Sir Peter pointed out that other Community countries, notably Germany, had themselves banned the Communists in the past. But a move by Lord St Oswald (Con/UK) to call for the legalising on only "democratic" parties was defeated.

## Nips, knots and pecks

It was just as well that Tom Ellis (Soc/UK) began his speech on metrication (Monday, May 10) with the warning: "Perhaps for the sake of the interpreters I ought to say this will be a difficult speech to interpret", because, within a paragraph, the English translation channel was strictly on its own. Mrs Dunwoody (Soc/UK), said Mr Ellis, "was absolutely right with her passionate call to arms to defend our rods, poles and

perches; our stones, bushels and pecks; our broad acres; our deep fathoms; our sea-blown knots; our opulent troy ounces, and our sharp wee nips". As far as Alfred Lord Tennyson was concerned, "half a kilometre to death" was an inadequate rendering of "Half a league, half a league, half a league onwards . . . etc.". "Cricketers of the world unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains!" he added.

After all this, it was not surprising (though the Welsh might object) that metrication was described as "a purely Anglo-Saxon problem". Commissioner Borschette promised that the Community was not out to deprive the British of their pint — at least until 1979. "Harmonisation will only go as far as is absolutely necessary."

## The lion and the lamb

A whole new era in which the great Communist bloc would co-exist peacefully with its capitalist neighbours and the developed industrial world might forge common interests vis-a-vis the underdeveloped world; the danger of conflict avoided; the lion eventually lying down with the lamb. Such was the idea behind the Helsinki Conference, "it was a noble vision; it was also a sad illusion" said Lord Gladwyn (Lib/UK) on Wednesday, May 12. Other Members agreed, giving examples of the suppression of Helsinki agreement freedoms. Hugh Dykes and Lord Bethell (Con/UK) cited the plight of Soviet Jews, Marcel Vandewiele (CD/Bel) of Soviet intellectuals, and Hanna Walz (CD/Ger) of Ukrainians and human rights in general. To Council President Gaston Thorn, however, the problem was that the Helsinki accord was not an agreement admissible in international law and could not therefore either be enforced or violated; nor could there be sanctions.

The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were not the only places condemned for denial of human rights during the week, however. On Wednesday, during Question Time, Marie-Therese Goutmann (Comm/F) spoke of the impropriety of Community member states (Britain and France) welcoming Brazilian President General Geisel when his government was practising political oppression; and the following day both the Chilean and Uruguayan governments were criticised for the torture and imprisonment of political prisoners.



## Question Time

### Purge coming?

From excessive diplomatic staff in Community capitals (see EPR 24), Alex Fletcher (Con/UK) turned his attention in Question Time this month to the multitude of consultative committees which surround the Council and Commission in Brussels. There were civil servants giving advice in a hundred or so of these, others giving advice in COREPER working parties, others in embassies, others in national capitals. "Does this not mean that the Council now has so much advice that it is incapable of making any decisions at all?" And shouldn't all these bodies be reviewed, added Ralph Howell (Con/UK), "to see if they are serving any useful purpose?" "That," replied the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, Gaston Thorn, on behalf of the Council of Ministers, "is a good idea."

### Brussels jobs

Why do the British (especially the girls) shun Brussels? An intriguing matter, which arises from the Commission's written reply to a Parliamentary question from Mark Hughes (Soc/UK). The reply (published on April 29), according to the Economist (May 15), "casually revealed an extraordinary fact": that although the UK has 21.9% of the Community's population, its proportion of Commission staff is only 7.4%.

In Category A (senior staff) the UK accounts for 12.4%, and linguistic staff (LA), 14.5%. But in categories B and C (where most female staff are to be found) the proportions are only 4.9% and 3.2%.

Several explanations have been advanced. The first — that there hasn't been time to recruit the UK's proper quota — won't wash, because Ireland and Denmark have a *higher* proportion of staff than of population. Nor will bad salaries: a secretary with the Commission in Brussels can earn over £5,000 net. As far as the girls are concerned the *Guardian* hit on the most convincing explanation: that Brussels has more single girls than single men. But general explanations are more disturbing: the inability to speak languages or pass exams by the British; or naked discrimination by the other eight?

Commission employees by nationality

	A/LA	B/C/D		A/LA	B/C/D
Bel	497	1727	It	709	1027
Dk	172	114	Lux	78	329
Ger	717	867	NL	267	316
F	578	805	UK	462	212
Irl	67	71	Other	40	39

### Common porn policy

Many films, plays, books and magazines of artistic merit will run the risk of never being shown or read again. This said Willy Calewaert (Soc/Bel) could happen as a result of moves in countries such as France and Belgium to tax material classed as "pornographic or perverse". This amounted, said Mr. Calewaert in a written question, to "a striking confusion between ethics and aesthetics"; could pose "a serious threat to a large number of artistic works"; and "could actually inhibit the creation of new works of art". Freedom of expression, he said, should take precedence over vague one-sided moral concepts. Calling on the experience of Denmark, why not a common European policy? The Commission declined, noting "the widely differing conception of morality in the Community".

## Direct elections - latest proposals

Although the April summit failed to reach any conclusion on how direct elections to the European Parliament are to be held — in particular on the number and distribution of seats — the Council of Foreign Ministers now seems to have been working hard to reach an outline agreement by July. Their first discussion on the subject, on May 3 and 4, was somewhat ruined by the recall of UK Minister Roy Hattersley to vote at Westminster on the Delargy affair. An information meeting at the Chateau de Senningen, however, was held over the weekend of May 15 and 16; and further formal discussions are taking place on May 31 and June 1.

The Foreign Ministers' first task is to cut down the ever-proliferating alternative seat distributions into a manageable short-list. The Parliament's own proposal — the Patijn convention (355 seats) — remains a strong runner. The early French (284), Irish (384) and Italian (361) suggestions are fading. Now leading the field, it appears, are the three most recent suggestions: Giscard's *coup de foudre* of April 1 (to keep everything as it is at present: i.e., 198

seats); and schemes from the Germans and the Belgians, both of which envisage doubling the Parliament's size.

The German proposal would simply give everyone twice what they have now (except Luxembourg). The more ingenious Belgian scheme, devised by the Viscomte Davignon, would distribute 198 as present, and would add 203 distributed according to population.

	a	b	c	d
Belgium	14	23	28	22
Denmark	10	17	20	14
Germany	36	71	72	84
France	36	65	72	78
Ireland	10	13	20	13
Italy	36	66	72	79
Luxembourg	6	6	6	7
Netherlands	14	27	28	25
UK	36	67	72	79
TOTAL	198	355	390	401

a: present and Giscard  
b: Patijn  
c: German  
d: Davignon

### Sting in the tail

Judging by the European Parliament's debate of Thursday, May 13, one of the Community's more complicated problems is bee-keeping. The Commission has proposed direct aid to associations of bee-keepers. The Parliament's Agriculture Committee, however, rejected the scheme, on the grounds that Member States were better placed to give aid. But here the matter became sucked into the long-running dispute about budgetary powers. Parliament inserted into the 1976 Budget a sum of just over £1 million precisely for aid to bee-keepers; so, in turn, Parliament rejected the Agriculture Committee report. The whole matter has now gone back, as it were, into the honey pot.

### Eurojelly out!

Harmonisation — should it be optional or compulsory? Some two years ago Commissioner Gundelach received wide acclaim when, after pressure from Parliament and Member States he publicly reversed a long-standing Commission policy of making harmonisation compulsorily applicable in Member States.

On Friday morning the roles were reversed. Parliament's Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection Committee was caught calling for compulsory harmonisation in the fields of "fruit jams, jellies and marmalades and chestnut puree"; and "diesel engines for use in wheeled agricultural and forestry tractors". "Quite offensive," said Bob Mitchell (Soc/UK). Commissioner George Thomson went further. The Committee, he said, were simply "asking for a veto by Member States"; and it would increase the costs falling on people like small businessmen and small farmers.

### Getting behind Concorde

Despite President Giscard d'Estaing's complaint-free arrival in Washington by Concorde, BA and Air France have still not got the landing rights they want in the United States. On Friday, May 14, Tom Normanton (Con/UK) called on the Commission to conduct an enquiry into the opposition to Concorde, and "to take the necessary steps to put an end to it". Xavier

Hunault (EPD/F) was more explicit: the Community should "get tough" with the US — which prompted Socialist leader Ludwig Fellermaier (Ger) to deplore "anti-Americanism". Commissioner George Thomson expressed concern at the ban on landing rights, but didn't believe the Commission could do much at this stage. The Community first needed to agree on a common policy for the aircraft industry as a whole.

### Italian earthquake aid

Emergency financial aid to Northern Italy was sent immediately by the Commission following the recent earthquake. At its May session Parliament requested the Commission and Council to look also at longer-term needs and make a contribution towards economic reconstruction. President Spedale, unable to visit the scene of the disaster himself, sent Vice-President Lord Bessborough to Friuli on May 16 and 17.

### We want it now

"Ever since Adam rather reluctantly gave up one of his ribs to the good Lord to create Eve, there seems to have been an astonishing amount of misunderstanding between the sexes," particularly over equal pay, said Gwyneth Dunwoody (Soc/UK) on Wednesday, May 12. Women, she said, "have too long been patronised", adding after a glance at her fellow British delegates that in the House of Commons women are "either patted on the head or patted on the bottom by their male colleagues". After 50 years of campaigning by women, said Lady Fisher (Soc/UK), now that the Court of Justice had — as advocated by the Parliament in 1971 — confirmed the legal right to equality, the Council and Commission should act. But they had no competence to force Member States to make Court rulings applicable, said Council President Gaston Thorn. Moreover, he added, women who felt they were discriminated against did have a right to appeal themselves to their own national judges. Not good enough, said Jan Broeks (Soc/NL). The house agreed, reflecting on the words of Gwyneth Dunwoody. "We want justice. We want it now."

# Unofficial Journal

Strasbourg in May is quite a pleasant place to be. Spring well established, but not the sticky heat of June or July . . . mountains of fresh asparagus in the restaurants . . . Why was it, then, that there seemed to be an unusual amount of aggro in the Parliament chamber this month? To begin with — and quite properly, of course — members were unusually rough with the Commission. At Question Time Commissioner Scarascia Mugnozza, who happens to have special responsibility for relations with Parliament, was taken to task for an article he had written in the periodical "Euroforum"; Agriculture Commissioner Lardinois got into trouble with his sums, to the anger of Socialist Peers Bruce and Walston; and President of the Commission Ortolì was goaded into an impassioned defence of his personal honour, when asked by Tam Dalyell whether he had accepted his instructions from President Giscard d'Estaing (he first refused to answer the question at all). The week ended with the Conservative Group tabling a motion of censure on the whole Commission, which could send them all packing in June.

It wasn't just the Commission, however. Tuesday's debate on bribery by the multi-nationals (see p.2) had Conservative Tom Normanton complaining of a "damnable insult" by Socialist John Prescott (who had accused him of "defending corruption"); Michael Stewart reprimanding Mr. Normanton for being "no gentleman" after the latter had apparently accused Mr. Prescott of soliciting bribes (he later withdrew the imputation); and the whole Gaullist group eventually losing patience and shouting down Mr. Stewart with cries of "c'est un débat entre anglais!"

Then at about a quarter to five on the Wednesday, the Parliament was shaken by a head-on clash between Politics and Sport. They were only on item 2 of the agenda, noted French Gaullist Hector Rivierez (who had a mammoth report to present). Would there be an evening sitting? Impossible! said Socialist Leader Ludwig Fellermaier. Didn't he know



Football 1, Parliament 0

Bayern Munich were playing St. Etienne in the European Cup Final that night? Ridiculous! absurd! remonstrated Sir Peter Kirk; "we are not sent here to watch football on television". "I've been sitting here for five hours waiting to answer your questions," interjected Luxembourg

Prime Minister Gaston Thorn. "Next time I'll send a Secretary of State to wait in the corridors!" But it was an unequal struggle. The House adjourned in time for the match. And, to add injury to insult, St. Etienne lost (unfairly), and next day all the buses went on strike.

## Eyes on '77

Those with sharp eyes on Wednesday, May 11 will have spotted that the number of British MPs taking their seats on the floor of the European Parliament was not 36 — the size of the UK delegation — but 37. Behind Luxembourg Prime Minister Gaston Thorn on the Council of Ministers benches sat John Tomlinson, MP for Meriden and recently-appointed British Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office. Although there are only 23 Council of Ministers seats in the Strasbourg hemicycle, any relevant minister from the nine Community countries is entitled to sit there; and John Tomlinson was indeed establishing a precedent in being the first member of the British Government to do so. It is unlikely to be until next year, when the UK takes over the Council presidency, that British ministers will participate in Parliament's debates. And no doubt hopes of establishing that precedent were being entertained across the chamber in the VIP gallery, where sat visiting Shadow Minister for Europe, Mid-Oxon MP Douglas Hurd.



Ortolì defends his honour

## Maypoles and lederhosen

Charting the progress towards a new European centre-right party (see last and previous "Unofficial Journals") is becoming complicated. One major step appeared to have been taken at the end of April, when a European *Volkspartei* was formally brought into being, with its HQ in Brussels; but it turns out that this is really no more than the existing Christian Democrat Group in the European Parliament. As far as the Conservatives' joining this is concerned, EP Member Sir Brandon Rhys Williams is reported to have objected that anything called a Folk Party would probably involve dancing round a maypole wearing lederhosen, which he refused to do.

Then there is the looser proposal for a European Democrat Union. Various discussions have been held; but since the proposed membership covers some twenty countries, it does not at present seem the ideal organisation to fight direct elections. And a final bizarre twist: Dr. Heinrich Böx, international secretary of the German Christian Democrats and coordinator of the EDU has recently been accused of being an East German agent!

## New face

Labour's delegation to the European Parliament has undergone its first change since the 18 Members arrived last summer. Guy Barnett (Greenwich) has left for a government post as Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, leaving two gaps in the External Economic Relations Committee and the Development and Cooperation



Committee. To replace him in the Socialist ranks is William Malloy, MP for Ealing North.

## Costa del Tyne

The European Parliament's Socialist Group held a policy seminar in 1974 in Bastia in Corsica, and last year in Perpignan. The choice of Newcastle for this year's meeting is not only in recognition of the entry of British Labour members into the group but is also an earnest of serious business afoot as we advance towards direct elections. From May 24 to 27 about 50 of the 66 Socialists, plus staff, met in the Civic Centre to try to thrash out a common policy on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and to hear statements by Prices and Consumer Protection Secretary and Paymaster General Shirley Williams and Foreign Office Minister of State Roy Hattersley. Brussels Commissioner George Thomson stressed the economic problems of Britain's peripheral areas.

Tyneside is not the Med; but there was plenty of scope for the North-East to feel proud. The 12 year old Civic Centre is itself a building of grand conception (however much the ratepayers may have grumbled at the time); and though both Corsica and Languedoc contribute substantially to the Common Market's surplus of red plonk, no one has suggested that there will ever be a lake of unwanted Newcastle Brown.

## Questions . . . questions

In a written question tabled on July 11, 1975, German Christian Democrat Hans Jahn asked the Commission why their answers to his previous five questions had been late and inadequate. The Commission responded . . . by doing nothing for seven months. Then, on February 19, 1976, a detailed reply to Mr. Jahn's question — and his previous five — was released by the Spokesman's Group in Brussels. Unfortunately the impression of amazing efficiency thus given was somewhat spoiled by the mysterious inclusion in the text of an entirely unrelated written question about industrial medical care.

K. P. G.