

## 81 Parliament seats for the UK

British voters will be going to the polls in May or June 1978 to elect directly 81 Members of the European Parliament. This was at last decided when, on July 12, the nine Heads of Government agreed in Brussels that the elected Parliament should have 410 seats with 81 for each of the large countries. European Parliament President Georges Spénale described the decision as "a great victory for parliamentary democracy", and called on voters to ensure that "the first civic act of the European citizen should be, in two years' time, a convincing success".

The final agreement on numbers came relatively quickly, considering the months that have passed when more and more combinations of figures have come spilling out of the calculators. The Heads of Government got the message and came up with a final answer (see map).

So there is equality between the "Big Four", despite the variations in population between France (53.8 million) and Germany (62 million). The differences in population between the Netherlands and Belgium, and between Ireland and Denmark, are nominally recognised. Relative over-representation for the smaller countries is accepted — they will elect 21 per cent of the seats with only 13 per cent of Community population.

Inevitably, therefore, the elected European MPs will represent fairly wide variations in population. At one extreme, each of the six Luxembourg Members will represent 59,000 people, at the other each German Member 765,900. But most will not be far off the Community average of 631,600. The average UK Member, for example, will represent 692,000 people, 501,000 of them voters.

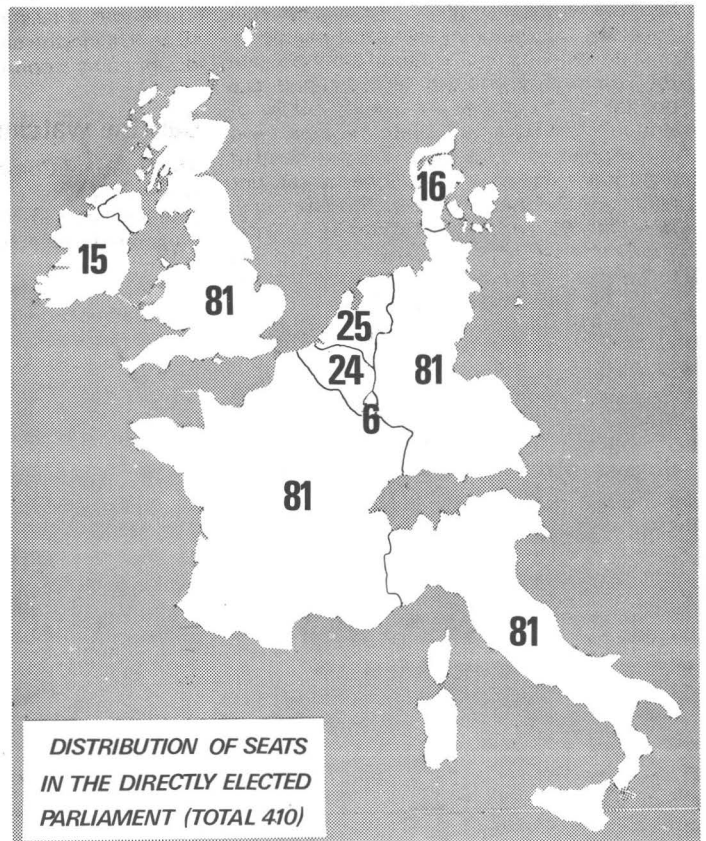
How the seats are distributed within the various countries is up to each of them. In the background of the tortuous negotiations which have been going on since last autumn has been the desire of the British Government to offer adequate representation to "the constituent parts of the United Kingdom". On the basis of electorates, Scotland should have eight of the UK's 81 seats, Wales four and N. Ireland two. However, it is possible that the Government may propose an extra seat each, and even two extra for Scotland.

Then there is the question of electoral systems which is also up to individual countries for at least the 1978 elections. Will it be "first past the post" in single-member constituencies in the UK? If so, should the constituencies be based on groups of House of Commons seats or on local authority boundaries? Alternatively, will some kind of proportional representation be introduced to ensure, for example, some Liberal representation?

Other matters to be sorted out in the next year include whether it will be possible to belong to both the European Parliament and the House of Commons; what formal links, if any, there should be between Westminster and the UK Members of the Parliament; the franchise (should nationals of other Community states resident in the UK be able to

vote?); and the tricky problems of expenses.

There will also have to be a fairly tight timetable if the UK is to be ready for direct elections in May-June 1978. The House of Commons Select Committee on Direct Elections is due to make its final report in October this year. By the end of this year the direct elections Convention and the consequent Treaty amendments should be ratified, and legislation go through Westminster early next year. During 1977 the Boundary Commissions will have to review and report on European Parliament constituencies. Meanwhile, the parties should be selecting their candidates and setting up the necessary organisation.



## Adams case continues

It is not often that Parliament is still sitting at 1 p.m. on Friday; and the fact that it was doing so on July 9, as Commissioner Thomson pointed out, showed the strength of feeling about the matter under debate: the treatment of Mr Stanley Adams by the Swiss authorities. Adams, while an employee of the Swiss firm Hoffman-LaRoche, provided the Commission with evidence of that firm's breach of Community competition regulations. The Commission investigated, found the charge justified, and fined Hoffmann-LaRoche £125,000. But meanwhile Adams had been arrested by the Swiss, imprisoned (during which time his wife committed suicide) and, after he had been bailed,

sentenced to a year's imprisonment. He is now in Italy and his bail has been forfeited. What, John Prescott (Soc/UK) asked, was the Commission doing about it? Since Swiss law seemed to conflict with Community law, should not the trade agreement with Switzerland be abrogated, or at least reviewed?

Though Mr Adams had acted quite voluntarily, replied Mr Thomson, the Commission had stood his bail, and would help him with any appeal. This would be quite independent of what happened in the Hoffmann-LaRoche case itself, which is now before the Court of Justice on the firm's appeal against the fine. He did not announce any move on the trade agreement front, but intimated that the Commission would have more to say later — as Parliament certainly will.

# Treble Dutch depression over EEC

At the Hague summit in 1969 the motto of the Community was "completion, enlargement and strengthening", Dutch Foreign Minister and this half-year's Council President Max van der Stoel told Parliament on July 7. But now it is "stagnation, decline and evasion". There is stagnation in the evolution of the Common Market into a real economic union; decline with regard to the implementation of common rules and the will to common action; evasion of the common approach in increased recourse to national action.

Mr. van der Stoel laid on the gloom, partly perhaps because at the outset of a country's presidency it is necessary to shock one's listeners in the hope of being able six months later to point to an improvement. So cheer up! Direct elections (which were to be agreed on a few days later) would provide a link with the political reality within the member countries, he

said. "Reflection, reconstruction and preparation" would be the Dutch presidency's watchwords.



Max van der Stoel

## 1977 Budget - first blows

"A holding operation" was how Commissioner Cheysson described next year's Community budget when he presented the draft on July 6; "a stagnant budget" retorted Parliament's rapporteur Lord Bruce (Soc/UK). No less than 68 per cent is agriculture; but in the past the CAP had served to produce surpluses, had adversely affected the balance of payments of states which imported food from outside the Community, and had "acted in part as a poll tax on the entire consuming public of Britain". Without adequate regional and social policies — "a mere 7.5 per cent of the total budget" — the richer areas got richer and the poorer poorer. The inference, he concluded, was gloomy: "the economies of member states... are going to remain firmly under the control of the national governments" and "the activities of the EEC are to be viewed purely in peripheral terms".

## Early... and on the nod

In preparation for direct elections Parliament is putting its own house in order. On July 7 it voted two important changes to its Rules of Procedure:

**Rule 27A** — Parliament will be deemed to have given its approval to any Commission proposal on which it has not commented within the space of two months (this allows uncontroversial proposals to go through Parliament 'on the nod').

**Rule 13** — except in cases of urgency, reports will not be taken unless they have been tabled at least twelve days before the sittings (this allows earlier agreement on Parliament's Order Paper — and better advance information to be made available. Press please note!)

Further changes will follow in the Autumn after further consideration by the Rules Committee chaired by Willy Hamilton (Soc/UK).

## Air camel coming

Commission proposals for a common air policy were given qualified approval by Parliament on July 6, but only as interim proposals — a point accepted by Commissioner Simonet when he replied to the debate. Policies for the aircraft industry, air transport and military procurement were all involved, although some Socialists thought the defence aspects the province of NATO, not the Community. The

suggestion of cooperation with the US on aircraft development also brought opposition from the mainly Gaullist 'European-go-it-alone' lobby. Co-operation within Europe, said Silvio Leonardi (Comm/It) was an excellent idea but such an overall policy unrealistic. Start with simple civil projects, he said. Was cooperation best organised by politicians? There was a lesson, said Tom Normanton (Con/UK) in the saying "a camel is a horse designed by a committee".

## Can the watchers watch?

The House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee came away with two conclusions after their visit to the European Parliament on July 6-8: that they had a common interest in trying to control Community legislation, and that they should have more regular contacts with the British European members. Scrutineers on



the trip, included veteran anti-marketeers Neil Marten, Ronald Bell and Bryan Gould; but old referendum battles were generally kept off the agenda. Indeed, former anti-marketeer and MEP Sir Derek Walker-Smith told them that the European Parliament could scrutinise draft legislation much earlier than the House of Commons. Amendments in the Westminster committee were made in "a spirit of confrontation, an atmosphere of confidence in the government, and to the rallying cries of the Whips". In contrast, the Commission did not lose face if it changed its proposals after that examination by European Parliament committees. On the Fifth Directive on company law, 70 per cent of Parliament's amendments had been accepted by the Commission.

## Peace in our time

"The CAP is not negotiable", Commissioner Sir Christopher Soames told the Parliament on Thursday, 8 July — or, rather, told the US Government by proxy. As Hans Edgar Jahn (CD/Ger) noted, Americans often suffer from the illusion, in this election as well as bicentennial year, that the Common Market is somehow directed against them. Many Members saw evidence of protectionism not only in the agricultural field — for example restrictions on Irish beef — but also in industrial sectors — for example on special steels.

Sir Christopher, however, did not take too dim a view of the situation. There was no question, he told Michael Herbert (EPD/Irl) of declaring a trade war; it was remarkable that trade relations had been so good in a severe recession. Beneath the bluff exterior, however, the warning remained: he expressed the hope, for example, that the special steels restrictions would not merely be relaxed — as James Scott-Hopkins (Con/UK) had urged — but abolished, (as soon, understood, as the Presidential elections were over).

## Argentina

As the Community's international economic "clout" (to use one of Commissioner Soames' favourite phrases) grows, Parliament finds itself increasingly debating the political situation in various countries round the world. This time it was Argentina: shouldn't the Community use economic pressure to stop the suppression of human rights there? There was considerable disquiet about the violent deaths of politicians known to Members of the Parliament; but both Prof. Brinkhorst for the Council and Sir Christopher Soames for the Commission argued that General Videla was faced with virtual anarchy after the Peronist collapse, and should be given the benefit of the doubt for the time being.

## CAP hitz Heinz

Now we seem to have a mountain of — wait for it — skinned tomatoes and tomato concentrate: 200,000 tons of the first and 60,000 tons of the latter, according to Albert Liogier (EPD/F) on Thursday, 8 July. The Commission has proposed various measures to step up internal sales and reduce imports, but Mr Liogier (*rapporteur* for the Agriculture Committee) wanted more. Here, however, Parliament came up against the problem of Heinz tomato ketchup. Heinz' production lines, explained Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Con/UK) were "very carefully geared to a certain type of tomato which is grown in Portugal". Commissioner Lardinois, however, couldn't see how cheaper Italian tomatoes would make ketchup dearer; so the Liogier report went through.

## On the bottle

On the bottle? Yes, said Commissioner George Thomson on Friday, explaining that the Commission was anxious to see better labelling of drink as well as food. Horizontal harmonisation for the housewife, reinforcing vertical directives, he called it.

From the land of the Golden Spe: with its "30 distilleries", Winnie Ewing (Ind/UK) ("come to my constituency and I'll show you round") had a suggestion. "No member of the EEC needs directions as to the use of Scotch," she said, "but it might help if the phrase on the bottle was 'drink up as quickly as possible'."



# Explosive dairy market proposals

A major statement by Commissioner Lardinois, dealing both with measures to combat the drought and with policy for reducing butter, skimmed milk and other dairy "mountains", took Parliament by surprise after Question Time on Wednesday, 7 July. In an oblique reference to June's censure motion, Mr. Lardinois said that, this time, MPs would be the first to know of what the Commission had decided the night before. But it was not until some time after a brief debate that most realised how explosive the Commission's proposals really were. "If this goes through," one Irish Member told journalists, "there'll be a revolution."

On the drought, the Commissioner noted that in some places, like Luxembourg, two-thirds of the grain crops were already irretrievably lost. In the beef sector he was taking steps to prevent total collapse: support for fodder storage, prohibition on burning straw, a 40-50% levy on the export of hay and green fodder, etc.

It was his long-term plans for reducing structural dairy surpluses, however, that proved most controversial: in particular the abolition of national dairy support measures, the "co-responsibility" of dairy farmers for getting rid of surpluses, and the imposition of levies on imported fats like margarine. A premium for the non-delivery of milk — equivalent to a slaughter premium — would result in a 1.25 million reduction in the number of cattle.

There were some immediate objections. Mario Vetrone (CD/It) said that there was a milk shortage in Italy, not a surplus; but the Commissioner was having none of it; as far as the CAP was concerned, the Community was a single market. James Gibbons (EPD/Irl) pointed out that dairy farming was his country's principal industry, but got only minimum comfort. It was left to the press later, however, to hint at the opposition that will meet the proposals to tax margarine — from housewives and doctors alike.

## Tindemans President of the EPP

The new European People's Party — a federation of all the Christian Democrat parties within the Community, and hence the "party in the country" of the Parliament's Christian Democrat Group — held its first constituent meeting at Luxembourg on Thursday, 8 July. The main business was the election of a President; and (in what one observer described as "rather a Vietnamese election") victory went to the Belgian Prime Minister, Leo Tindemans by 49 votes out of 50, with one presumed abstention. The new President immediately issued two warnings: first, against "a school of thought that wants to turn the Community into a Free Trade Area"; the second against "the idea of a directorate by the large countries". A truly

European party was needed, "popular, democratic and drawing its inspiration from Christianity", to build unity among the peoples of the Community.

Not long afterwards the Confederation of Socialist Parties of the European Community issued a statement welcoming the formation of the new party: they were prepared to fight it in the coming direct elections. But, in perhaps the first shot of the campaign, they remarked that "it must be confusing to the European public that some of the (Christian Democrat) parties... should at the same time wish to form a federation called the 'European Democratic Union' to which Conservatives from the United Kingdom and Denmark are also to belong".



Voting for Tindemans

## Down with the frontiers!

With the holiday season upon European parliamentarians — except, perhaps, the British, under the threat of House of Commons sittings in both August and early September — freedom to travel was clearly in the air during the July sitting. On Friday the Socialist Group tabled a question denouncing a huge range of bureaucratic obstacles to free movement: identity checks, the stamping of passports, landing cards, "the lack of cooperation on the part of insurance companies following car accidents abroad", and so on. "Long queues of cars at the frontiers are a bad advertisement for Europe," complained Horst Seefeld (Soc/Ger). But British

susceptibilities had to be assuaged by deleting from the list quarantine regulations and security searches — so we are safe from a flood of rabid terrorists!

Earlier, Michael Stewart (Soc/UK) had tabled a motion on the introduction of a European passport. Everyone agreed that having a common document should be easy, but that a passport union — implying common immigration and citizenship rules — would take time. Even a customs union was proving difficult as Dutch Vice-President Cornelis Berkhouwer told the House: "I feel we have less of a customs union than a union of customs officers".

# Question Time

## Professors clash

A full-scale assault on the way in which the Council of Ministers conducts its business — as "a kind of secret society" according to Independent Winnie Ewing (UK) — was fended off with difficulty by the Dutch Minister of State, Prof. L.J. Brinkhorst, taking his first Question Time. Did the Council, Alex Fletcher (Con/UK) began, intend to publish its proceedings when it was acting as a legislature? Unfortunately, replied Prof. Brinkhorst, the Council made no distinction between legislative and non-legislative sittings; and was bound to retain confidentiality as long as it was "an intergovernmental body". Here, however, he incurred the wrath of fellow Dutch Professor Cornelis Berkhouwer (Lib); the Council was not "intergovernmental" but an institution of the Community. Both Alex Fletcher and Winnie Ewing wondered whether it would not be better to publish anyway, rather than oblige MPs to rely on leaks in the press.

## Asbestos poisoning

The fixing of Community Standards for exposure to asbestos is being considered "as a priority action" by the Commission's recently appointed Advisory Committee on Health and Safety, Commissioner Patrick Hillery told Parliament in answer to a question from Lord Bethell (Con/UK). In addition, the Community's action programme for the environment identified asbestos as a "first category pollutant"; and a series of research projects had been initiated to study its environmental and physiological effects. The Commission was also, he told John Evans (Soc/UK), considering retraining and financial assistance to those suffering from asbestiosis.

## Good news on the border

A study of communications problems in the Londonderry—Donegal area is being carried out jointly by the UK and Irish governments, with the Community contributing 50% of the cost. This joint cross-border study, Commissioner Thomson told Parliament, was the first of its kind, and was due to be completed in eight months time at a cost of about £80,000. In his visits to the area, he added, he had been greatly encouraged by the fact that people on both sides of the Border "all agreed that their economic welfare depended on working together".

## A Shrinking Fund

Inflation, it appears, has hit the European Community's Regional Fund like everything else. As Parliament's Regional and Transport Committee Chairman, John Evans (Soc/UK), pointed out, the £210m. fixed in 1974 for disbursement in 1977 would have to be increased to about £315m. to retain its value. Unfortunately, nothing could be done about it, replied Commissioner Thomson, because the figure had been fixed by the 1974 summit; corrections would have to be made for the next stage of the Fund. Payments from the Fund this year, up to the end of June, had been nearly £60m; but "the rate of payments depends, not primarily on the Commission authorities, but on the promptness with which Member States present their claims for payment".

# Unofficial Journal

A year or so ago one would have laid odds against ever seeing those veteran anti-marketeers MPs Neil Marten, Ronald Bell and Bryan Gould sitting in the distinguished strangers' gallery of the European Parliament and nodding vigorously — even, at one point, involuntarily breaking into applause — at what was being said by a Commissioner. It happened at Question Time in July, however: Commissioner Patrick Hillery was resisting Conservative demands to set up Community fire safety standards on the grounds that "the Commission is not interested in taking up responsibilities which are adequately or better or more appropriately done at national level". Eurocrat or no, nothing could be less power-hungry than that!

The three MPs were there as members of the House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee, half of whom (eight members) were on a fact-finding visit led by the chairman, John Davies. (see p,2)

## Top Tories prepare

Also visiting Luxembourg in July were over thirty members of the Conservative Party's National Union Executive (cf. Labour Party NEC, Central Committee of the Communist Party, etc.). These are the men and women whose ultimate responsibility it is to set the Party's guidelines for direct elections: for example, the selection of candidates (could one observe certain aspirants paying them particularly close attention?). In September they are to be followed by the Conservative agents.

And, while on jobs, how significant was it that John Davies sat for some time on his own in the Parliament gallery watching Commissioner Sir Christopher Soames replying to a number of debates? Picking up tips?

## New Radio Lux

The summit decision on direct elections (see page 1) is a giant step forward for the European Parliament. Not quite so giant, but perhaps as significant, was the



opening at the July session of the Parliament's own radio studio in Luxembourg. At present it occupies relatively cramped quarters round the corner from the press gallery; and, as Members assembled on Monday July 5,

technicians were still feverishly making the final connections on the soundproof cabins, to the accompaniment of vacuum cleaners removing debris. Even so, over 30 broadcasts went out during the following four days.

The European Parliament, unlike Westminster, has no hang-ups about the media. If broadcasting companies want to, they can use the studio to send out the proceedings in the Chamber live. And the same is true of television. Parliament's audio-visual chief Stephen Wright (ex-ITN) hopes to have television studios fully operating by the time the directly-elected Parliament starts business. Candidates and selection committees note.

## It's got to be London

As it happened, however, there was one unfortunate blemish on the radio studio's first week of action. Following his speech to the Parliament on Wednesday 7th, Dutch Foreign Minister Max van der Stoep was due to be interviewed by the chief



Brussels correspondent of Westdeutsche Rundfunk, Walter Hahn. All was ready and Hahn popped down to his car to pick up some equipment — only to find that it had been towed away by the Luxembourg police. The Luxembourg city authorities had some time before warned those working in the Parliament offices that parking on the road below was now forbidden; but they had omitted to tell the press — or for that matter Parliament Members. Luxembourg Member and Vice-President of the Parliament Frankie Hansen was one of those threatened with loss of his car (to say nothing of the £8.50 fine and £8.50 towing charge). There were tense moments as he remonstrated with the police: "If you want the Parliament to stay in Luxembourg, you'll have to stop this".

So Luxembourg has blotted its copy-book, as Strasbourg did last year with the arrest and roughing up of Danish Member Knud Hansen. Where will the Parliament finally end up?

## Wales not so dry

Why was Socialist Member Tom Ellis looking so worn out as he arrived at Heathrow airport on Monday morning for the charter flight to Luxembourg? Floods, he said to general disbelief; he had been up until nearly four in the morning catching a train from Crewe because heavy rain had washed away the railway line between Chester and his con-

stituency of Wrexham. Tactfully, he did not bring the matter up again when French Members were later speaking of the ruinous effects of the drought.

On Friday, however, he did embark on an anecdote about a recent visit of his to the village of Llandrillo. Unfortunately those members of the press present were too busy trying to find out how to spell the name to hear what the story actually was.

## Sits. vac.

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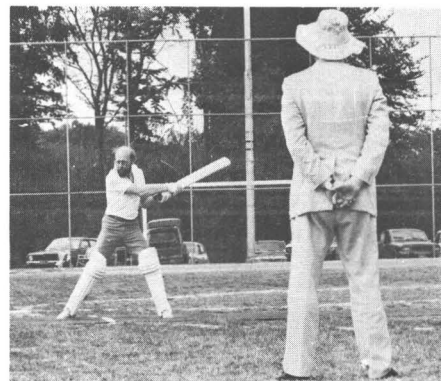
## Benn's bouquet

A backhanded bouquet so to speak came from Tony Benn when commenting on John Prescott's "World in Action" appearance about multinational bribes (see EPR 25, June). The first Benn comment was that the programme was too superficial and told nothing new; Prescott's reaction was, well, it was meant to be a popular programme. The second Benn comment was that it made the EP appear more effective than it ought to be. Prescott's reply is not recorded, but he recounts the anecdote with enthusiasm.

## All tied up

While President Giscard d'Estaing was in Scotland a few weeks ago he spotted European Parliament Member Alex Fletcher wearing an EP tie (dark blue with gold motif "EP/PE"). What was it? Alex Fletcher told him; and later sent him one with the note "please wear this at the summit". Available photographs do not record whether the President complied; but could the successful outcome of direct elections controversy owe anything to an acquired club spirit?

## Mad dogs



Mystified Luxembourgers looked on as a Brussels press corps cricket XI defeat Parliament's secretariat. Revenge in September? See October edition.

K.P.G.