



Human Rights: Congress/EP action

Joint action by the European Parliament and the United States Congress on human rights is now very much on the cards. At the meeting in London between delegations from the two assemblies of July 11-13, a formal procedure was established for rapid consultations, leading to measures of four possible kinds:

1. Joint or parallel resolutions condemning systematic violations of human rights;
 2. Interventions by both assemblies on urgent humanitarian grounds: for example, to protect the lives of individuals;
 3. Joint missions of enquiry; and
 4. Participation at each others' public hearings on human rights issues.
- an international parliamentary bulletin on human rights;
 - the development of international rules on political asylum;
 - Joint consultations between the Congress and Parliament on human rights questions discussed in the UN and other international bodies;
 - the possibility of economic and commercial sanctions by the US and the European Community against oppressive regimes.

In addition, the working group responsible for the proposals undertook to examine in depth four further fields of action:



Members of the European Parliament and the United States Congress meet at Church House, London, on July 11-13.

The meeting also gave its support to the work of Amnesty International; and declared that, at the Belgrade Conference, at least as much attention should be given to "basket three" (the principles concerning human rights which were written into the Helsinki agreement) as to the other elements of détente.

Apart from these concrete proposals for action, this eleventh meeting of the Parliament and Congress was the first at which the Congressional delegation of 14 led by Congressman Donald Fraser (Dem., Minnesota) and Congressman Sam Gibbons (Dem., Florida) — was a formal body in its own right, rather than a sub-committee. It is clear that, especially after direct elections to the European Parliament, the links between the two major democratic assemblies will become increasingly important.

The 11th joint meeting also discussed two other problems of mutual interest: a code of conduct for multinational companies and nuclear non-proliferation. On multinationals, further discussion took place on the draft code prepared by Congressman Gibbons and Erwin Lange (Soc/Ger), which, Congressman Gibbons explained to a press conference on July 13, was "pretty stiff compared to the OECD proposals". Eight points of common agreement were identified on helping to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, despite other sharp disagreements on policy: e.g. the export of reprocessing technology and breeder reactors. However, both sides agreed on the inevitability of breeder development in Europe, and some of the US delegation thought that their government would in time follow suit.

Herring ban backing

The British ban on herring fishing in the North Sea — which the Council of Ministers failed to adopt as Community policy — has nevertheless been given full support by the Commission. Without it, Commissioner Finn Gundelach told Parliament on Wednesday July 6, there might be no herring left at all by the year after next. He only regretted that it had been necessary to take national, rather than common action.

The British ban is, of course, legal under Community rules since it is non-discriminatory: it applies equally to British and foreign boats. The objective is to allow the present estimated 150,000 tons of herring stock capable of reproduction to be built up to something nearer 800,000

tons. Commissioner Gundelach explained that even limited herring fishing would be dangerous. The maximum possible catch was from 15 to 20,000 tons a year; but even this would keep fish stocks at a dangerously low level and leave no chance for stock regeneration.

How have we reached this situation? In 1975, Mark Hughes (Soc/UK) told Parliament, 2,460 million one-year-old herrings were extracted from the North Sea. "The sins of that year will be visited on the herring fishermen of Europe for more than a decade", he said. To make life easier for Dutch and Danish skippers affected by the ban, however, Mr Hughes suggested they should be given quotas in herrings or other fish in other waters.

The ban, which could last well into 1979, could make the kipper something of a gourmet treat by then.

UK Elections Bill Second Reading

The House of Commons on July 7 voted by almost three to one — 394 votes to 147 — in favour of the principle of direct elections to the European Parliament. There was a majority in all the major parties (though only a slim one of Labour Members).

Nevertheless, among those who were pro-elections in principle, sharp divisions were also evident. Immediately after the vote six MPs — three Labour and three Conservative (including Geoffrey Rippon, leader of the Conservatives in the European Parliament) — put down amendments aiming at eliminating the regional-list system (which the Government prefers) in favour of "first past the post".

For most of the "ayes" on July 7 the issue was clear: Britain (as the Home Secretary put it) is in the Community to stay; there is a treaty commitment to direct elections; a Community Act implementing that commitment has been signed by all nine governments; and there is a moral, legal and political obligation to ratify that Act and to hold the elections.

Mr Rees stressed that "these direct elections are being conducted on the basis of the present very limited powers of the European Assembly. No increase in these powers is possible without the unanimous consent of all nine member states of the Community, and that would involve the express approval of Parliament".

"Not the end of the world"

Defending the regional list proposal, he argued that a simple majority system would greatly exaggerate the effects of swings in votes. He stressed, too, that a different body justified a different electoral system. The European Parliament "is not a legislature. It does not provide a government. Its members do not have the same constituency responsibilities as Westminster MPs". Under the regional list system, Mr Rees explained: "... one is voting for a party and within that party people can vote for an individual".

For the Opposition John Davies criticised

the Government for the delay in publishing a bill and for the complicated procedural device favouring regional lists. It was during his speech that the Prime Minister intervened with the first open admission that the target date might not be met: "It will not be the end of the world if it is not 1978". Mr Davies commented that "our failure to meet the target date would be regarded with great concern by our partners. There would be even greater concern if there were no firm, fixed alternative date available ...".

A guillotine?

But the date depends on the electoral system chosen. A regional system would be speedily introduced; "first past the post" would require 18 weeks after the passing of the bill. As Neil Marten revealed, its opponents hope to string out the debate until March. If they succeed, then even May/June next year under a regional list system looks unlikely, unless both the Opposition (and the Government's own supporters) agree to a guillotine at some stage.

So it went into the second day, ending at 10 p.m. Interest focussed on the six Cabinet Ministers and two dozen other Ministers who voted against their own Government's bill. Among Labour MPs present, 132 voted for, 126 against, while another 51 were absent or abstained. Conservatives voted 241 for, 15 against, with 23 not voting, and the Liberals voted 12 for and none against. Nine SNP Members voted in favour and none against, and only one Plaid Cymru vote was recorded — against. Only one Ulster Unionist was in favour, with six against. But abstentions and absences were relatively high among the smaller parties.

The State of the Community

On Wednesday Parliament got a chance to take stock of the state of the Community. The occasion: an address by the incoming Council President — in this case Belgian Foreign Minister and former Commissioner Henri Simonet. In a speech delivered in, alternately, French, Flemish, English, German and French, Mr Simonet swept from the general — "we shall be pursuing ... the achievement of European Union" — to the specific — "the European Investment Bank will have to increase its support for investments in the energy sector". But his main thrust was clear: get the Community moving again. And that, in the immediate future, meant "the fight against inflation and unemployment, especially that of young people and women".

Commission President Roy Jenkins, who also addressed the House, listed some of the Commission's achievements since it took office last January: plans to tackle the steel crisis, an anti-inflationary farm-price increase, changes to make the Social and Regional Funds more effective. Speakers in the debate differed in their reactions to the keynote speeches. Points raised included youth unemployment, reform of the CAP, JET, and herring — "must Britannia rule the waves at the expense of Dutch herring fishermen?" asked Cornelis Berkhouwer (Lib/NL). Several speakers, indeed, knocked Britain for its allegedly

unconstructive handling of the presidency and its approach to the Community in general.



Henri Simonet

Wooring Peking

As the House was debating trade relations with China, Commissioner Wilhelm Haferkamp reported, on July 5, a Community delegation was visiting Peking. It was conducting talks with a view to outlining an agreement with the People's Republic of China.

Question Time

Hot seat

An armchair with polyurethane foam in it, Ron Brown (Soc/UK) told Parliament on Tuesday July 5, could, 30 seconds after catching fire, produce a temperature of 650 degrees. Commissioner Davignon took his point, and described a new directive to ensure safety standards and proper labelling.

Against sin

But, in reply to a question from Sir Derek Walker-Smith (Con/UK) about what the *Guardian* called "the more obvious lunacies perpetrated in the name of harmonization". Commission President Roy Jenkins promised to avoid *all* lunacies, and not just the more obvious ones. The Commission did have a responsibility to see, however, that products were what they were said to be on the label.

Pig cycle rides again!

First-year economists learn with fascination about the pig-cycle (the rapid oscillations in pig-meat production caused by the amazing fedundity of sows). Does it still work? asked Horst Haase (Soc/Ger). According to Commissioner Gundelach it does: "we are now coming out of the low". Earlier he had sympathised with Winnie Ewing (Ind/UK) about the "disastrous situation facing British pig-producers".

"Continue a prendere le pillole"

Now that doctors can practice anywhere in the Community, what is being done to ensure that patients are not treated by doctors who don't speak the same language? asked Gwyneth Dunwoody (Soc/UK). Commissioner Davignon was confident a doctor would never set up practice if he couldn't speak the local language, and said that the only country having difficulty in implementing the free-movement directive was Italy.

I can't tell margarine from fish

The crucial difference between fish eaten as fish and fish used in margarine is the taste, stated Bob Mitchell (Soc/UK) when Tam Dalywell asked Mr Simonet to define the difference from the Council's point of view. Mr Simonet had told Winnie Ewing (Ind/UK) that the Council was currently discussing the issue of sovereignty of Member States when dealing with proposals concerning fish stocks.

Soviet Jews

It is unrealistic, Mr Simonet told Winnie Ewing (Ind/UK) to "conduct a crusade to clear up the morals of our partners". The House thought Mr Simonet's approach to external relations too Machiavellian and urged that the Nine take a firm common stand at Belgrade over the right to individuals — in particular Soviet Jews — to leave their country. "We should put freedom first, economic issues afterwards", said Ronald Brown (Soc/UK).

Tyrants need not stay

According to "vague leaks from the Press" certain foreign ministers at the Leeds Castle conference suggested that a Member State should leave the Community if it ceased to be governed in a democratic manner. This eventuality is unlikely at present, Mr Simonet told Michele Cifarelli (Lib/It).

Site for JET

Mr Simonet told Cornelis Berkhouwer (Lib/NL) that a vote has not yet been taken on the siting of the JET project.

Howard mould

When it comes to speculating, tomato concentrates do not have the glamour of Krugerrands or even copper futures: but the Commission has nevertheless had to introduce an emergency regulation (approved by Parliament on Friday July 6) to protect Community tomato-growers from "speculative operations exploiting loopholes in Community regulations". Until the end of the year, tomato concentrates can be brought into the UK, Ireland and Denmark from third countries more cheaply than into the other six Community states. So imports from the Three to the Six have been rocketing.

As Mark Hughes (Soc/UK) pointed out, however, in a speech of great technical virtuosity, it is not even as simple as that. The UK will be unable to switch from third country (e.g. Portuguese) suppliers to Community (e.g. Italian) suppliers, whatever the changed regulations, because of stringent public health rules (based on the Howard mould count). Even after the end of the year, the tomato situation would probably be one of the most sensitive issues of all in negotiations on Mediterranean trade.

Budget latest

When Commissioner Christopher Tugendhat introduced his £8,232m draft Community budget for 1978 the response in the House was muted. Although, as it stands, proposed expenditure for 1978 is up 22% over this year's, the Council is likely to cut a hefty chunk out of the increases being asked for by the Commission; and Members knew it. Another thing that irked a lot of MEPs — as in the past — was the fact that CAP spending accounts for almost 70% of the total (though this is a little down on the 1977 figure of 74%). Pleading for a ceiling on farm price supports, Italian Liberal Michele Cifarelli said it was high time that "some of the taboos surrounding the CAP" were done away with. Still, Members took some satisfaction from increased Regional and Social Funds — the RF, at £493m, is up 88% for 1978, and planned SF spending — £353m — represents no less than a 218% increase over this year.

All the same, as Parliament's budgets rapporteur Michael Shaw (Con/UK) pointed out, the size of the Community's budget remains too small to have any appreciable effect on EC fiscal policy overall (it represents, in fact, a mere 0.69% of total Community GNP). The 1978 budget does, however, contain two interesting innovations: it is the first to be expressed in the new European Units of Account (1 EUA — £0.658), and the first to be financed from what is known in Community jargon as "own resources" — including a percentage of Member States' VAT revenues.

New voting procedure

In the past, whenever the European Parliament has discussed a report or a motion, it has always taken the vote at the end of the debate. Under a new scheme agreed by the enlarged Bureau, votes on *all* resolutions before the House will take place at 5 p.m. — interrupting business in progress — on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, and at the end of proceedings on Monday evenings and Friday mornings. The purpose of the new arrangement is to prevent decisions being taken without forewarning on snap votes, and to make it easier for Members to vote by grouping all votes at a set time. It remains to be seen what this will do for attendance.

Davignon plan for the steel industry

One in seven of the 750,000 jobs in the steel industry could be under threat in the next five years, Commissioner Etienne Davignon told Parliament on Tuesday July 5. He was replying to a debate on his detailed plans for saving the industry.

The main feature is the modernisation of the industry to the point where it will be really competitive in the 1980s; and the

plans include imposing minimum prices, a very close watch on imports, and firm action on dumping.

The Commissioner warned that the 1980 production target of 183 million tons would have to be revised downwards. (In 1976 the industry produced 134 million tons while working at 60% of capacity and not all of this found buyers.) As to the actual new target figure, the Commission was getting together with steel makers and governments to try to come up with the answer by the end of the year.

There was general support in the House for the plan but views on the details differed. Points that kept recurring: avoid protectionism and the possibility of a trade war, but take firm action against dumping; structural measures yes, but save jobs wherever possible; and invoke the "manifest crisis" provisions of the Paris Treaty to make price and production restrictions binding on national governments.

Afterwards it was the opinion of several Members — including Tom Ellis (Soc/UK) — that implementation of the plan could provide the first real test of strength between these governments on one hand, and the Community (including the directly elected Parliament) on the other.



Commissioner Etienne Davignon

Spades, zips and acrylic socks

Although anxious to avoid protectionism, the Community is concerned about dumping by third countries. As Mr. Cousté (EPD/F) explained, many products are involved: acrylic socks from Taiwan and Korea, wood-panels from Brazil, spades from Eastern Europe. However it is Japanese products — zips, data-processing equipment, cameras and films — which are dominating the market.

In reply Commissioner Wilhelm Haferkamp reported that last year nine procedures were devised to deal with the situation. A proposal was in fact that very day submitted by the Commission to the Council concerning measures to deal with the dumping of Japanese ball-bearings. Japanese producers had also entered into an agreement concerning price-fixing. Anti-dumping procedures had, he said, to be very specific and of limited applicability. He went on to stress that it is necessary to prove that dumping is taking place and that it is detrimental to home producers. "We must ensure that we do not protect our

own producers operating a cartel, and that our industries become more competitive."

John Osborn (Con/UK) said that imports of cutlery from third countries had 'almost eliminated' domestic production in his constituency, and hand tools and engineering tools were also feeling the sting of cut-price competition.

Heinrich Aigner (CD/Ger), who cited a recent example of shirts being sold on the German market at DM 1.50 (£0.40), pointed out that any measures the Community took could have a snowball effect on any number of other economies. "We're not building the Community on the moon".

Jutland-Aberdeen Tunnel not on

At the Parliament's June sitting in Strasbourg, several members of the Regional and Transport Committee met a delegation from the National Union of Railwaymen. The subject of their discussions was a possible revival of the Channel Tunnel project — and the same 150-year-old subject inevitably dominated Parliament's debate on transport infrastructure of Monday July 4.

Words of caution from Kai Nyborg (EPD/Dk) — that the only step possible at this stage was to declare the Channel the kind of thing that would qualify for the new infrastructure funds under debate, and from Regional and Transport Committee chairman John Evans (Soc/UK) — that his committee had not yet started examining the new initiative in detail — did not stop that "champion of links between the UK and the Continent", Cornelis Berkhouwer (Lib/NL), from another passionate plea for a tunnel ("It can't be helped that Dover is nearer to Calais than to Aberdeen, and a

Jutland-Aberdeen Tunnel is out"); nor Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Con/UK) from noting that finance for a tunnel would be "a most useful test case" of the Commission's proposals; nor Jean Durieux (Lib/F) from quoting a telegram he had received from the Calais region supporting the project.

The Commission's actual proposals went through without difficulty: a new infrastructure committee, and increased international coordination; what Commissioner Burke described as "a novel method of financing" projects; and precise definitions of what would qualify.

Unofficial Journal

It has not gone unremarked that the House of Commons always seems to hold debates on European Community affairs when its Members with the greatest experience of the Community are away in Luxembourg or Strasbourg at plenary sessions of the European Parliament. Mismanagement on the part of Lord President Michael Foot? Surely not. Malice? Shun the vile suggestion. It must be pure but sad coincidence. But whatever the cause, it does offer the ultimate proof that the dual mandate cannot be maintained indefinitely.

So it happened during the week of July 4-8, when the Commons debated the European elections bill. Back from Luxembourg for the opening of the debate came Geoffrey Rippon, James Scott-Hopkins and Willie Hamilton, followed by several more Members for the second day's debate. But British Airways managed to frustrate the arrival in time for the vote at Westminster for another seven who had planned to leave Luxembourg on the Thursday evening flight. "Nosewheel judder" kept would-be voters in Luxembourg for another five hours. As a result, the Commons majority in favour of European elections was one lower than it would have been, for the seven had declared themselves to be four "ayes" and three "noes". Overall, however, the 26 MPs in the delegation are strongly in favour of European elections. Of those who were at Westminster only John Prescott voted against, with 16 voting in favour.

How many of the ten peers in the delegation favour the European franchise we shall see in due course.

New Euro-candidate



Taxi!

Meanwhile back in Luxembourg three Members — John Evans, Gwyneth Dunwoody and Tam Dalyell — had abandoned their attempt to get back to Westminster and reclaimed their luggage.

In fact it appears that where Parliament eventually ends up may depend on the amenability of Luxembourg taxi-drivers. John Evans began the Friday sitting by expressing frustration about not being able to get away from the place. To make matters worse two taxi-drivers had refused to take them to the — almost adjacent — Aerogolf Hotel. These matters should be taken up with the Luxembourg authorities, he said. Carlo Meintz, a Luxembourg Liberal who was in the Chair, replied that the Luxembourg authorities could hardly do anything about aircraft breaking down or the attitudes of individual taxi drivers. He, himself, had in fact once waited 1½ hours for a taxi in Leicester Square.

Moves on homelessness

More news on a possible permanent site for the European Parliament. Rumours have been rife for some time that a plunge into the deep waters of Brussels is about to be taken — indeed the matter even came up at the joint US Congress/European Parliament press conference on July 13. There is no truth in them. As Belgian Socialist Member Ernest Glinne made clear, the only move made



so far towards Brussels is the replacement of the present Parliament building in the Boulevard de l'Empereur, used only for the holding of committee meetings, with one large enough to accommodate the 410 elected Members for a similar purpose.

Meanwhile, however, things are happening in Luxembourg. The Parliament's enlarged Bureau has "taken note" of the decision by the Luxembourg Government to table a Bill for the construction of a new "conference complex" on the Kirchberg. Where is it to be? Possibly on the present somewhat windswept car-park between the Tower Block and the Schuman building — both now occupied by the European Parliament (see photograph).

Yet, even if a new Chamber is constructed in Luxembourg (or Brussels for that matter) will the national governments allow any change in Parliament's current peripatetic existence? The London summit, after all, was less than encouraging on the subject. But Budgets Committee Chairman Erwin Lange (Soc/Ger) thinks the answer is clear. Though the individual national governments theoretically have the last word on physical location (i.e. the French Government, for example, could prevent

any move away from Strasbourg), the European Parliament has the last word on its own — and now the whole Community — budget. It is merely a question of voting down the removal expenses.



One of the lighter moments of the European Parliament/US Congress meeting in London on July 11-13 was a trip down the Thames, by chartered boat, to Greenwich. Congressman Richard Nolan (Dem., Minnesota) and wife, together with other members of the US delegation, relax while passing Deptford.

Small, beautiful and rare

KPG owes everyone an apology — and particularly those local papers who picked up the story — for not having taken seriously enough the matter of Community social aid to feed ants (see "Unofficial Journal" for June). The matter came up again in the European Parliament on Wednesday July 6 when Elaine Kellett-Bowman again referred to the "downright idiotic" British Government job creation scheme "to pay youngsters £50 a week to feed cheese and sugar to ants because the drought of last year had left them hungry".

But investigations have shown that there is more to it. The lucky recipients of the cheese and sugar were a colony of rare Dorset ants; and of the money, a librarian and a biology graduate, both newly qualified but out of work.

Room for speculation

Even talking shops have power. Shortly before the European Parliament debate on the Channel Tunnel of Monday July 4, LBC noted that Channel Tunnel shares were rising. Now, when Parliament can vote real money (see p. 3)

PS

KPG is always gratified when — preferably with acknowledgement of the source — one of his anecdotes is reprinted by a newspaper (usually a provincial weekly or the *Sunday Express*). But if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, what can one say when the imitated mirrors the imitator? For, on July 5, one of KPG's (down-column) items was recounted — in the lead position — by PHS in *The Times*. Is this the ultimate accolade or just diarists' incest?

K. P. G.