

## Elections Bill into committee

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The Bill providing for European Elections in the United Kingdom received a **Second Reading** (for the second time) in the House of Commons on Thursday November 24. There were **381 votes in favour, and 98 against** — a majority **36 votes larger than last time**. On this occasion, moreover, the Bill is going on to the committee stage; it remains to be seen whether it will be through in time for elections in May/June next year.

Although in some ways the debate in the Commons was much like the previous four on the matter (with most of the same speakers), the major issues came into sharper focus.

First, the most crucial, the choice of electoral system; is it to be Proportional Representation with regional lists; or "first-past-the-post" in single-member constituencies?

Here, the position of the Conservatives was crucial (after all, most of the Government's majority consisted of Conservatives); and it was for this reason that the speeches of Willie Whitelaw and Douglas Hurd from the Opposition front bench proved of great significance. Both were primarily intent on pointing out that the choice of "first-past-the-post" would not mean any greater delay in holding the elections than the choice of regional lists. "There is nothing God-given about the boundaries of economic planning areas", Douglas Hurd remarked; and Mr Whitelaw did "not accept for one second the idea of Cumbria being included, for this purpose, or, indeed, for most other purposes, in the North of England".

Moreover, in a curious reversal of roles, both Mrs Thatcher and Mr Hurd gave their support to a procedure which would cut short the time needed to draw up single-member constituency boundaries. Why not set the Boundary Commissions to

work now and attach the constituencies as a schedule to the Bill? Mr. Brynmor John, for the Home Office, appeared horrified: he recalled the charges of "gerrymandering" in 1969 of which "my right Hon Friend" (i.e. Jim Callaghan) bears the scars". Later the Home Secretary Merlyn Rees confirmed that the plan would be (in the event of first-past-the-post) to set the Boundary Commissions to work only after the Royal Assent to the Bill. It would then take a fortnight for the proposals to be published, and another 18 weeks for representations, etc.

The debate also cleared up (though in a somewhat confused way), when the critical vote on system will take place. According to the Bill as drafted, it would not be until the end — *after* the Royal Assent. But the vote will now, it appears, be at the very beginning on Clause 3(1), which provides for the PR system. If this is defeated, the Government will amend Clause 3(2) which would have put off the vote on "first-past-the-post" to the end.

There is, of course, one other critical vote: on a guillotine motion, without which debates could go on for years and the Bill suffer the same fate as the Devolution Bills in 1976. Here, though the Conservative front bench was not to be drawn.

For the rest, the debate went over again the well trodden ground of whether direct elections did or did not mean increased powers for the European Parliament. For Enoch Powell, this was inevitable: with the powers the European Parliament already had (in particular the power over the Budget) they could lead the Community not merely to federalism, but to full "Union".

Both front benches, however, were anxious to make clear that any increased powers would need the assent, in the future, of the House of Commons. And here there was another paradox. The anti-marketeters have been pressing for some time for a clause to be inserted in the direct elections Bill, similar to the provisions made in France, specifically limiting the European Parliament's powers. It was not the Government which responded, however, but Mr Whitelaw. If the European Parliament wanted to increase its powers "at the expense of national governments or parliaments" it was unthinkable that this could happen "without an Act of Parliament in this House". "If that is the case, it may have to be written into the Bill to make sure that it is so".

### It's up to you

Back in Strasbourg, on Tuesday of the previous week, the few British Members there came under fierce pressure on the elections issue. Whether they would be held on time, everyone agreed, was up to the British.

"In this matter," noted President in Office of the Council of Ministers, Belgian Foreign Secretary Henri Simonet, "the British Parliament is stronger than the eight other governments together, and probably stronger than its own government". Only when the Commons had voted could the date be fixed. Moreover, "if the British Parliament chooses majority voting (i.e. "first-past-the-post") ... it is very difficult to see ... how the elections can be in May or June next year". To put off the elections from this date, however, would be a "severe blow" for the European Community.



European Parliament President Emilio Colombo (CD/It) paid an official visit to London on November 17-18. Seen here with Dr David Owen, Foreign Secretary, President Colombo has held talks with the Prime Minister, Opposition Leader Margaret Thatcher, Foreign Office Minister of State Frank Judd, Lord Chancellor Elwyn Jones and the Speaker of the House of Commons, George Thomas. The visit was the seventh in a series to all the Community capitals.

## Firmness with caution on Africa

It is a paradox that the European Community, set up to handle economic policy, is today working much better in the field of foreign affairs. Introducing a major debate on "political co-operation" (as it is called) on Tuesday November 15, Belgian Foreign Secretary Henri Simonet also noted that this was a field in which "the practice is better than the theory on which it is based".

The Nine were successfully co-operating on European Security, in the United Nations, on policy towards Southern Africa and on the Middle East. "Not only is a common policy sought; it is usually found".

The debate itself concentrated largely on South Africa, the subject of a special resolution by the Socialist Group. Mr Simonet noted that the Community, as a unit, had joined the U.N. arms embargo, and on September 20 had published a code of conduct for Community businesses operating in South Africa. It had not recognised the independence of the Transkei, and would not recognise

Bophutatswana when it became "independent" in December.

Socialist Leader Ludwig Fellermaier (Ger) wanted to know how the "code of conduct" was to be enforced, pointing out that 60% of foreign firms operating in South Africa had their *de jure* registered offices in the Community. Only moral pressure, replied Mr Simonet — but a regular report on observance would be published. The Community's policy was one of "firmness with caution": equality between the races had to be achieved, but at the same time it was important to avoid a conflagration which could get out of hand.

## Terrorism and flying coffins

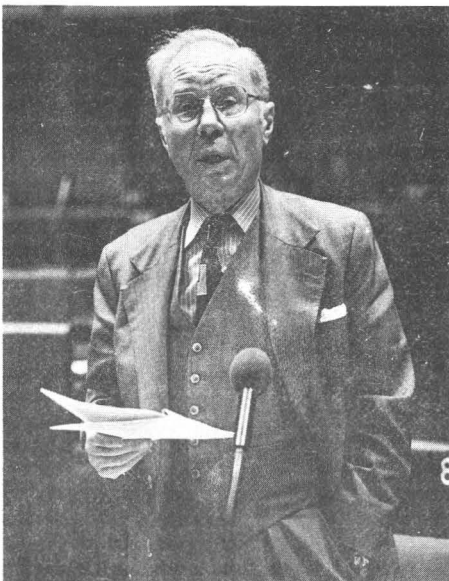
Not surprisingly, the European Parliament was unanimous on Tuesday November 15 in its condemnation of acts of terrorism; and it called on Member States to utilize all available cooperation machinery to protect Community citizens. Rapporteur Charles Fletcher-Cooke (Con/UK) explained that his Committee had been concerned with presenting a motion that would be acceptable to all political groups and was proposing no novel mechanisms for dealing with the problem.

He did not however accept Pierre Lagorce's (Soc/F) view that action should be limited to acts of terrorism initiated within the Community. It would be absurd, he said, to condemn the Schleyer killing but not the hijacking in Majorca.

Cornelis Berkhouwer (Lib/NL) reminded the House that there had been 18 hijackings so far in 1977. Terrorists in certain quarters were being glorified as freedom fighters. The answer, he said, was not to lose faith in the values of our civilisation.

One must, however, not overlook realities — "Every Lufthansa aircraft is now a flying coffin", he warned. Security of aircraft could not be left entirely to the airlines. Governments should ban all flights to countries which give refuge to hijackers.

Commissioner Davignon said that all existing conventions should be ratified though practical measures for dealing with terrorism should be left to the Member States. President Simonet promised to raise the matter.



Charles Fletcher-Cooke

## The rights of illegal immigrants

There are in the Community some 600,000 illegal immigrant workers, plus an unknown number of their dependents. On February 6 last year the Council of Ministers passed a resolution calling for action to be taken; and the Commission has now come up with a draft directive to harmonize the various national laws. It was approved by Parliament on Monday November 14 — though not before rapporteur Ferruccio Pisoni (CD/It) had made an impassioned plea for illegal immigrants' rights.

Those involved, he told the House, lived a hand-to-mouth existence, in the worst jobs and in the worst houses, subjected to exploitation by those who "trafficked in human beings", and often to blackmail as well. The Council of Ministers, he noted, had asked for action to protect the immigrants' social and legal status; but the Commission's proposals did nothing in this field. He himself had proposed a number of amendments — for instance — to guarantee social benefits. But they had been rejected because the Legal Affairs Committee had criticised their legal base.

One aspect of the legal problems came sharply to the fore when Carlo Meintz (Lib/Lux) asked for controls, not *either* at

entry into the Community *or* at place of work (as the proposal reads) but at both. Lord Reay (Con/UK) for the Conservatives immediately announced that he and the Conservatives would abstain precisely because the directive *did* bring in the place of work. There would be created in the U.K., he objected, an entirely new offence of "illegal employment", with grave consequences for race relations in the U.K. And he challenged the Commission to say why legislation was necessary at all.

Commissioner Vredeling accepted the challenge. The Council resolution, he pointed out, was the basis of his proposal. And the British Government had agreed to it.

## More on fishing

It all depends on reciprocity, Commissioner Gundelach told Kai Nyborg (EPD/DK), when it comes to establishing quotas for third countries fishing in Community waters. It was Eastern European countries which presented the greatest problems. He wanted to ascertain whether Russian factory ships were being supplied by Community boats bearing the British flag. He agreed with James Spicer (Con/UK) that mackerel resources off the south-west coast of England were in particular danger. He hoped on the other hand that negotiations with Norway could be continued in a spirit of goodwill. He did not agree with Winifred Ewing (Ind/UK) that the Scottish fleet was being condemned to "a rotten bargain by anyone's terms".

## Now the Green Franc

The difference between agricultural prices expressed in German marks and Italian lire is now 40%, Commissioner Gundelach told

## A new renaissance

"Europe must be reborn in such a manner that she becomes the New World of the 21st century". This was the challenge Lord St. Oswald (Con/UK) made to the Commission on Community research programmes on Thursday November 17. Europe, he said, held a good record in Nobel Prize awards in physics and medicine. However, the USA would overtake us if finance was not made available for research.

Lady Fisher of Rednal (Soc/UK) recommended proposals — an innovation in Community work so far — for coordination of medical research. For the time being the programme concentrated on handicaps facing the very young and the very old. Congenital abnormalities, for example, should be registered, she said.

Raw materials are crucial to the creation of industrial wealth, and for this reason Lord Bessborough (Con/UK) welcomed Commission proposals for a research programme in the field of primary raw materials. The mining industry, he reported, estimated that it needed 60 m. EUA of investment within the next twenty years.

## A constitutional issue

At the request of 1977 Budget rapporteur Lord Bruce (Soc/UK), an important debate affecting Parliament's budgetary powers was brought forward from Friday November 18 to the evening of the previous day. At issue was the release of 45m u.a. which had been entered under Article 930 of the 1977 budget for financing Community financial and technical aid to non-associated developing countries.

Lord Bruce told the House that Commissioner Tugendhat had informed Parliament last October that it had not spent this money because it was awaiting the adoption of the necessary regulation by the Council. But, Lord Bruce stressed, appropriations entered under Article 930 counted as non-compulsory expenditure over which Parliament had the final say. There was no reason, therefore, for the Commission to await a Council decision in the matter; and, he recalled, Commissioner Tugendhat had already stated that he would recommend the Commission to proceed with expenditure of these funds.

In reply, Mr. Burke told Lord Bruce that the Commission would concentrate its efforts on persuading the Council to adopt the necessary legislation.

Parliament on November 16. This was why it would take a period of seven years to eliminate the enormous Monetary Compensatory Amounts which resulted from such currency differences. The Commission had proposed that the "green currencies" should be adjusted by a minimum of one seventh each year; but this did not mean that a larger devaluation — for example, of the "green franc" — could not be made.

### The Euro-car?

Commissioner Richard Burke told Tom Normanton (Con/UK) that the Commission was to have meetings with motor vehicle manufacturers.

### Jenkins in Japan

Commissioner Richard Burke reported to Lord Castle (Soc/UK) that President Jenkins had during his recent visit to Japan warned that the Community could only maintain its liberal trade policy if imports from Japan could be drastically curbed.

### "Your disease is dissent"

"The issue arises as to whether it really should be the business of the European Parliament to lecture Mother Russia on how she should treat her own nationals" was the view Tam Dalyell (Soc/UK) took in the debate on Friday November 18 on the abuse of psychiatric medicine in the USSR. He felt that rapporteur Russell Johnston's accusation of the "use of mental institutions for a concerted political purpose" was based on insufficient evidence. In fact his Group declined to take part in the debate.

For other Members, however, the evidence was overwhelming. Russell Johnston spoke of the testimonies made at the Hawaii Congress of September 1, 1977 and cases documented by Amnesty International. He quoted the case of Viktor Fainberg who was committed to a psychiatric institution and told "your disease is dissent". Lord Bethell (Con/UK) spoke of how Leonid Plyushch was forcibly injected with the drug haloperidol which produced symptoms similar to those of Parkinson's disease. It is the House's duty, he said, to call on the Council to express its views at Belgrade. Winifred Ewing (Ind/UK) felt this would be particularly apposite as, she said, there was evidence that the Soviet Union is sensitive at present to international opinion on the question of human rights.

Two pamphlets on the powers of the European Parliament are out this week, which should do something to clear up some of the wild talk about "instant federalism" on the one hand or "power-less talking shops" on the other.

"Powers of the European Parliament" (38 pages) is published by the London Information Office (20 Kensington Palace Gardens, London W8) and is available from there free. It provides a factual résumé of the Parliament's functions as they stand at the moment, with a short chapter on possible developments in the future.

Available at £1.50 from the Conservative Group for Europe (1a Whitehall Place, London SW1) is "The Powers of the European Parliament" (45 pages) by Robert Jackson, with a foreword by Geoffrey Rippon. Its early chapters are also largely descriptive (with some useful diagrams). Later it moves onto political ground with suggestions as to how the powers should be developed in the future "towards European Union".

## "The world" is not the world' affair

Two questions on the order paper of Question Time, putting diametrically opposed views on a recent article ("Le Monde' ist nicht die Welt") in the German language magazine of the Commission, obliged Commission President Jenkins to walk a parliamentary tight-rope on November 16 — which he did with some skill.

The article in question had attacked the French Newspaper, *Le Monde*, for its apparent anti-German bias; and, according to German Socialist Horst Seefeld, "a Member of the Commission, alleged to be a shareholder of *Le Monde* himself, has pressed for the dismissal of the editor concerned".

At the same time French Socialist André Guerlin wanted to know what precautions had been taken "to prevent further attacks on a French newspaper, noted for its reliability, in an official publication of one of the European Community's information offices?" He also hinted that a German

Commissioner had been trying to prevent the Commission from repudiating the article.

In reply President Jenkins first conceded two points: that the article did not fit "the general and appropriate purpose of a Community magazine"; and second, that the "rules and procedures for consultation and clearance" had not been followed.

On the other hand, he did not believe that "disciplinary measures are necessary or appropriate". The magazine *EG* was a good one, and he wanted to "preserve the liveliness which preserves it from the waste-paper basket".

## That cut-price butter again

Earlier this year a major row broke out in the Community about the sale of cut-price butter to Russia. Now, according to a Dutch newspaper, substantial quantities have found their way back onto the Community market — with a large profit, of course, for someone. What, asked Lord Bruce (Soc/UK) at Question Time on Wednesday November 16th, is the Commission doing about it?

"As a matter of fact," replied Commissioner Gundelach, "the transaction referred to had been known to us quite some time before the appearance of that article". An examination in depth was under way. "What I can confirm is that we have found that, some time ago, certain quantities of butter, having been exported from the Community with export refunds, found their way back into the Community and, via Rotterdam, ended up in Italy, obviously without having paid the levy". This was "a

patent fraud". But the Commission was somewhat hampered "due to lack of cooperation from the Italian authorities".

It was, nevertheless, important to "get to the bottom of this business"; and the Commissioner promised Lord Bruce that the facts, when known, would be laid before Parliament's Budgetary Control Subcommittee. He also assured Lord Bethell (Con/UK) that the kind of special subsidies on butter exports to Eastern Europe in 1973-4 were no longer being paid.

## Plans for European citizenship

There has been a lot of discussion in recent years about creating a "citizen's Europe"; but, so far, the Community countries have yet to seize the most powerful bulls by the horns. These include full rights of entry and residence; and the right to vote and stand in each others' elections.

On Wednesday November 16 Parliament called on the Commission to draw up new proposals in this field. Mario Scelba's (CD/It) report placed the emphasis on fundamental democratic rights, in particular the right to join a trade union and the right to vote; and on this all sides of the House agreed. Commissioner Davignon (perhaps unwittingly) noted the limitations of this approach by remarking that "this is not the beginning of a supranational Europe, it merely provides an extra

guarantee of citizens' rights".

The matter of voting rights, nevertheless, is likely to provide an issue of major importance. As the various Bills providing for direct elections appear (see Page 1), it is clear that chaos threatens. Ireland, for example, is giving votes to other Community nationals resident in Ireland; France is giving voting rights to all Frenchmen resident abroad; the U.K. is giving voting rights to no-one extra — except, of course, Irishmen!

## Acrobatics on the economic stage

"In the days when the English music-hall was a living institution", mused Lord Ardwick (Soc/UK) on Wednesday morning, "the last act on the bill consisted of a rather shabby troupe of acrobats who carried on with their work while everybody else was reaching for his hat and coat and going out to have a meal. I feel myself to be in this situation today".

Indeed, he was: introducing, just before lunch, a portmanteau debate on economic affairs encompassing the Commission's view of the economic situation, a question from the Liberals on inflation and unemployment, and a report on the recent "tripartite conference". It was, said Lord Ardwick, the third such debate in eight months; and he had "the rather tedious job of pointing out that the economic situation has changed only marginally, if at all, since our last debate". Moreover, he was modest enough to dub his own resolution

as "an innocuous consensus" which would "not upset anybody and would not please anybody".

Nevertheless, Lord Ardwick noted that everyone now seemed in favour of economic growth — a change from the "zero growth" fashion which had existed a little while ago. Parliament was therefore interested in the proposals for funding investment from Community borrowing, and in President Jenkins' recent re-launching of monetary union (but was this practicable?)

# Unofficial Journal

Sir Geoffrey de Freitas is the first Member of the House of Commons to announce that he hopes to be selected as a candidate in the European elections. Moreover, he has told his Constituency Labour Party at Kettering (where he has a comfortable majority) that he will not stand again for Westminster. So not only has he thrown his hat into the European ring but has boldly put his whole political career in the balance.

One reason why Sir Geoffrey is definitely giving up Westminster is that he believes the dual mandate — joint membership of both the Westminster and European Parliaments — will become more difficult to maintain after direct elections. Some other British MEPs disagree.

*But the whole delegation had a nasty reminder of days almost forgotten when the November session coincided with crucial devolution debates at Westminster. In the circumstances pairing broke down, and the British delegation was initially represented only by Lord Bruce — for on the Monday the Lords decided they would show their mettle too by having a three-line whip.*

*Subsequently, Members came and went, boxing and coxing their way across Europe.*

*Bob Mitchell was a case in point: a 10 p.m. division on Monday, followed by kipping down at the House before taking the 6.35 a.m. plane to Strasbourg, arriving there at 11.30 local time. The rest of Tuesday was spent in the European Parliament, but Tuesday night's sleep ended with rising at the equivalent of 4 a.m. in order to get a plane back to London. From Heathrow he went to his Southampton home for a few hours' sleep before being back on duty in the Westminster division lobbies on Wednesday evening.*

After direct elections the decision as to how many Westminster MPs are also MEPs will rest with the electorate and not with the "usual channels". Should the current period of knife-edge majorities (and minorities) continue at Westminster then Members trying to maintain a dual mandate will have two choices: formally or informally to abandon one or other Parliament; or to die young, loved by the gods perhaps but not by their parties' leaders or their electorates.

## Another export triumph

*I bet you didn't know that Britain was a major exporter of champagne. We are, though, if Italian Christian Democrat Ferruccio Pisoni is to be believed in a written question to the Commission. "It appears that an English court", he notes "has authorised the sale of cider and perry, that is fermented apple and pear juice with a low alcohol content, under the label 'genuine champagne'. The*

*quantity involved is over 144 million bottles, which are being sold throughout the world by an English firm". This, Mr Pisoni suggests, is "a blatant case of unfair competition".*

*And also, one would have thought, a blatant contravention of the Trade Descriptions Act, especially if the stuff somehow finds its way back onto the British market (as these things do — see butter, p.2). Beware: that £10 bottle of Veuve Cliquot may turn out to be Babycham!*

## Ta-ta-ta-TUM

On 22 and 23 November representatives from the radio networks of all nine Community countries met in Brussels to hear the first programme from "Radio



Europe". It was based on 3½ hours of debates, reports and interviews compiled in Strasbourg during Parliament's November sitting by BBC journalists, aided by Parliament's own audio-visual staff.

"Radio Europe" is the brainchild of Gerard Mansell, Managing Director of the BBC's external services (and whose sister, as it happens, is an interpreter for the Parliament). The idea is to provide the Community with its first multi-lingual news and current affairs station, under joint editorial control.

The "dummy" programme should enable some decisions to be made on content and style. If all goes well, "Radio Europe" will begin test transmissions, using existing transmitters and wavelengths, next spring. The idea is to go on the air at the same time as direct elections — though it looks as though "Radio Europe" has a considerably better chance of being on target than the Community itself.



Lord George Brown, in Strasbourg for the November sitting, meets the President.

## Overweight Tories?

What was it that they were worried about? Was it the inclement weather — almost gale force winds in addition to zero temperatures — with which the delegation had to contend during the November session? Or expanding waistlines, a traditional feature of the

Strasbourg scene? Or was it that, like the Royal Family, the Conservative Group prefer not to travel together? ("I don't want to put all my baskets in one egg" as Winston Churchill is said to have remarked on a similar occasion).

In any case, having chartered a Heron aircraft to take them back to Westminster for the vital Devolution vote, the Conservatives decided to "spread the risk and the load" and send five Members off to Colmar to take the 3.00 p.m. flight to Gatwick. The remaining six cast in their lot with the Heron.

## Up the wall

*While Britain has been in the grip of a do-it-yourself fire service, spare a thought for those who work in the Commission at Luxembourg. In the basement of the brand new Jean Monnet building are the private rooms where high-powered lunches are served; and on the walls are a number of cryptic notices thus:*



*They seem to mean: "in the event of fire, run like hell" — except that in most cases the arrow points to a dead-end steel wall, thoughtfully carpeted to match the floor.*

## Where we left off

It seems that for the second month running football and terrorism vied for local interest during Parliament's session week. On Thursday, two days after the House debated terrorism in the rarefied atmosphere of the Palace of Europe Chamber, the ugly reality of current politics was manifest on the streets of Strasbourg, where a demonstration was organised against the extradition to Germany (via Strasbourg) of Baader-Meinhof lawyer Klaus Croissant. Fortunately, it was a low-key affair. True, a legion of riot police assembled at strategic points in the city centre to a voluble chorus of ironically-sung Nazi songs from demonstrators. Entzheim airport was plunged into darkness as a decoy to confuse sympathisers. However, Friday morning's *Le Nouvel Alsacien* laconically remarked that the militant left-wing groups postponed reacting until Friday — they were preoccupied with watching France qualify for the World Cup. There were apparently some scuffles and broken windows — caused this time by the demonstrations.

## Moriarty strikes again

*As drama mounted in the streets of Strasbourg and sealed helicopters took off from the darkened airport (see above), terror struck in the Palace of Europe. On the notice board in the Press Room hung the Agence France-Presse tapes reporting the European Parliament's debate on terrorism. They told a grisly story.*

*The operator, it seems, got as far as President Simonet's call for united action — and there the t*

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K.P.G.