

REPORT

World Cup: Human Rights Enquiry

Pre-kick-off clash on Argentine

After procedural manoeuvres which stretched its Rules of Procedure to the limit, the European Parliament failed to vote on Friday May 12 for a public hearing into human rights in the Argentine. But an enquiry will go ahead anyway. John Prescott (Soc/UK) firmly declared that the Socialists will, if necessary, go it alone in time for the World Cup kick-off on June 1.

The original proposal for an emergency investigation into the mysterious disappearance of, in particular, Community citizens in the Argentine was agreed by Parliament's Political Affairs Committee with cross-party support. But when the matter came up for debate by the full House on Wednesday May 10, there was sharp disagreement between the political groups.

Both Left (supporting the enquiry) and then Right (opposing) tried to exploit the rules providing for a roll-call vote. This is only valid if one third of Parliament Members (66) have taken part. After the House had voted decisively for the enquiry by show of hands,

Christian-Democrats, Conservatives and Progressive Democrats turned the tables on the Socialists (who had originally called for the roll-call) by leaving the Chamber. Only 59 votes were recorded. The same manoeuvre was repeated on the morning of Friday 12.

It is nevertheless clear that a public hearing of some kind, possibly televised, will be held in Brussels on Friday May 26. Among other things, it will consider evidence of abuse of human rights in the Argentine attested by Amnesty International. Both the procedural and legal bases are unclear. But Socialist Members are expressing confidence that other political groups will, in the end, participate; and that finance will somehow be made available.

Meanwhile, those concerned with Parliament's procedure are worried at the precedent established by the manner of the voting. It seems clear that, as the Rules stand today, any ten Members can prevent Parliament voting for anything at all unless at least 66 Members are in support.



The whole European Parliament was profoundly shocked when news reached it on Tuesday May 9 of the murder of Italian Christian Democrat leader Aldo Moro. The House immediately observed a minute's silence; and the first hour of business on Thursday 11 was set aside for tributes to Mr. Moro by parliamentary leaders. Earlier that morning a memorial mass was held in Strasbourg Cathedral, attended by Members and staff of the Parliament.

The great British filibuster

British MEPs staged the first filibuster in the European Parliament's history on Thursday 11 May with Labour, Conservative and SNP ranks uniting in defence of Britain's milk marketing boards.

The debate coincided with the crucial talks of farm ministers in Brussels, where a formula was eventually found guaranteeing the future of the boards. But if the aim of the British MPs was to ensure that Parliament gave no support to the

Commission's original stand against the boards' monopoly powers, then they succeeded.

Dairy farmer Ralph Howell (Con/UK) led the British charge saying it was "total madness" to waste time on the issue. And as speaker followed speaker, an astonished and packed public gallery might have been forgiven for thinking that Britain was a nation of farmers or TB sufferers, saved from extinction by the grace of the MMBs.

Ten British interventions took the debate past the division bell and successfully postponed the vote till the end of the session the following

day.

The British delegation's strategy was then to force through a series of amendments, taking advantage of the fact that most continental MPs have left for home by noon on Friday.

In the event the vote was never held because of the agreement reached in Brussels that night.

But this can have been little comfort to a weary Commissioner Guido Brunner, who had stood in for agriculture Commissioner Finn Gundelach, and found himself defending a position that, as it happened, had already been abandoned.

Calling Council to Account

A call by several MEPs for more "open government" by the Council of Ministers and an improvement in relations with Parliament found little sympathy with Council President, K. B. Andersen, in a debate on Wednesday May 10.

John Corrie (Con/UK) pointed to the constitutional paradox that the Council of Ministers was a legislative body that legislated in secret, and an executive which was collectively responsible to nobody.

Sir Geoffrey de Freitas (Soc/UK) pressed the Council to distinguish between executive and legislative sessions and admit the public to the latter.

But President Andersen's reply was that the Council had been established by Treaty. It was a forum for governments to negotiate and if the proceedings were public, member states would find it even more difficult to make concessions and reach a consensus.

Lord Reay (Con/UK) referred to the current "decision mountain", with some 300 matters outstanding. The Council had tried to improve its efficiency, responded Mr. Andersen, and to take far more items as "A" points (matters agreed in advance by senior national and servants in COREPER).

Let your light . . .

When American money was pouring into Europe under the Marshall Plan, Horst Seefeld (Soc/Ger) recalled on Friday, 12 May, everyone knew where it was being spent. But when Community finance was provided today, hardly anyone seemed to know. If a project were Community financed, he went on, a "hoarding *in situ* should draw attention to this fact" — if only so that Community citizens should see what was happening to their money.

Commissioner Vouel was sympathetic and noted that some countries were better at publicising Community finance than others.

A Community line

'A miasma of ifs and buts'. This is how Lord Bruce (Soc/UK) saw the suggestion, which the Parliament debated on May 10, that the Community should, as a whole, sign the UN Convention on a code of conduct for liner conferences (i.e. cartels). For the Convention to come into force, countries representing at least 25%

of the world's tonnage have to join.

The position with regard to the Treaty of Rome, however, is ambivalent. Indeed, Lord Bruce pointed out, when France and Belgium signed the Convention on their own, the Commission brought them before the Court of Justice for infringing the Treaty.

John Prescott (Soc/UK) thought the Community stood to lose a lot of goodwill in the Third World by signing. But rapporteur Charles McDonald and Commissioner Burke thought that treating merchant shipping of the Nine as one shipping line would be of advantage to all.

On to Madrid

Most Members expressed disappointment about the outcome of the Belgrade conference when the House debated a report on the matter by Lucien Radoux (Soc/B) on May 10. Instead, they looked with hope to the 1980 Madrid conference.

Lord Bethell (Con/UK) felt it was particularly important to provide for mechanisms for checking the implementation of the Act. He warned against exchanging convicted spies for those who had committed no crime. Winnie Ewing (Ind/UK) urged the Nine to see that the abuse of psychiatric medicine and other violations of human rights were put on the agenda at Madrid. But she also saw the Final Act of Helsinki in more domestic terms; on the matter of Scottish independence, "Britannia had waived the rules", too.

Routing Rabies

Community action to control and eventually stamp out rabies was demanded by James Spicer (Con/UK) in an oral question to the Commission on Friday May 12.

Only the UK and Ireland were now free of the disease which had been spreading steadily westwards across Europe, Mr. Spicer said. And while it was hopelessly optimistic to expect to eradicate rabies in the near future, Community co-operation could help bring it under control.

He wanted the Community to back up World Health Organisation control centres, make funds available for research and set up a special Commission veterinary unit. There might also be advantages in standardisation of types of vaccine, rules for control of pet animals in infected areas and payment for vaccination of pets.

Commissioner Raymond Vouel agreed on the need for better co-ordination but said the Commission did not have enough staff to under-

take the sort of programme Mr. Spicer had suggested. However he hoped the Council of Ministers would soon take a decision on a working programme for veterinary matters, including rabies.

Discord on Oil

"Not enough to live on, too much to die on". This was how Commissioner Guido Brunner saw the Community's oil situation when the House debated Tom Normanton's (Con/UK) report on the oil-processing industry and Commission proposals for reducing stocks from 90 days to 54 days supply. Hanna Walz (CD/Ger), speaking on Mr. Normanton's behalf, rejected the proposal, arguing that the oil crisis was not yet over. In reply Commissioner Brunner said that the Community needed to improve its refining industry and that at present storage cost the consumer too much.



Achilles heel

South Africa has almost 20% of the world's uranium stocks and in the 1980s the Community will be dependent on external supplies for 80% of its needs, Commissioner Richard Burke told the House in an emergency debate on Tuesday May 9. The Commission however, could not publish the volume of transactions with third countries for reasons of commercial secrecy. Piet Dankert (Soc/NL) questioned the desirability of being dependent on supplies from South Africa. Other speakers called for a realistic approach. Uranium will be Europe's next Achilles heel after oil said Tom Normanton (Con/UK). Were, he asked, the political philosophies of the USSR, another major source of uranium, any more acceptable to the House than those of South Africa?

ACP in Grenada

St. George's, the capital of the island of Grenada will be host from 29th May to 3rd June to the Joint Committee of the Lomé Convention Consultative Assembly. This will be the first meeting of members of the ACP-EEC Assembly in a Caribbean country.

The Joint Committee under its co-presidents Mr. Kasongo Mukundji (Zaire) and Mr. Giovanni Bersani (CD/It) comprises 53 Delegates from the European Parliament and 53 representatives appointed by the African, Caribbean and Pacific states.

Meeting on the eve of the opening of negotiations for the renewal of the Lomé Convention, the Joint Committee will examine the report on the current operation and future evolution of the Convention, drafted by Mr. André Guillabert (Senegal).

Jobs for the boys

Unemployment among young people has increased six-fold in the UK during the last ten years, Pietro Lezzi (Soc/It) reported on Tuesday May 9. The House was debating measures for creating some 150,000 jobs for the under 25s through the Social Fund.

Study by post

People who undertake correspondence courses are vulnerable and should be protected under Community law, André Guerlin (Soc/F) told the House on Tuesday May 9. Not all members agreed, however, that this was an appropriate area for Community action. Lord Bethell (Con/UK) said that there were strong objections to the proposals in the UK and that the bodies concerned had not been consulted. He was particularly unhappy about the proposal to allow students the right of cancellation after 6 months. This was not an area where the consumer was subjected to high-pressure salesmanship, he said. Commissioner Richard Burke replied that the most important provisions to be made were the inspection of courses and a ban on sales representatives.

Shaping up

Westminster's new gymnasium for MPs looks like an idea the directly-elected European Parliament might well copy. For Euro MPs are not, it seems, in the best of shape. Tam Dalyell (Soc/UK) told the House on Friday May 12 that at last year's

EC-Latin America Interparliamentary conference in Mexico, some of the European party had to "hive off" before the end of the programme. Parliament, he said, should ensure that Members of future delegations were fit enough to see things through.

Good food guide

The way to get voters to the polls for the European elections was for the Community to make real progress over the next year in building Europe, Commission President Roy Jenkins told the House on Wednesday May 10, adding that the Community could be on the verge of making more progress than it had for several years.

A good public information programme for the elections was also important, Mr. Jenkins said. But the information side was rather like the service in a restaurant. Badly done, it could ruin a good meal. But however well done, it could not make an inedible meal agreeable.

Britain 5th

On Friday, May 5, Britain became the fifth country to complete legislation for European elections. The European Elections Act received the Royal Assent at about 4 p.m.

Off course?

Following the voting down in Canada of Britain's blind landing system for aircraft in favour of an American product, the European Parliament considered the control of air traffic on two occasions in May. At Question Time on Thursday Commissioner Roy Jenkins told Lord Bessborough (Con/UK) that the present competition even within the Community between French, British and German blind landing systems was "a classic example of lack of co-operation".

Earlier on Tuesday 9 May Parliament debated Luigi Noé's (CD/It) report on improving air traffic control. Mr. Noé pointed out the growing dangers of the rapid increase in air traffic, aggravated by the division of competences as between upper and lower air space and as between civil and military control.

John Osborn (Con/UK) suggested that flow control systems should be introduced in Europe similar to those developed in the United States. He called attention to a number of recent spectacular mishaps: notably the Korean plane which went a thousand miles off course after leaving Paris.

QUESTION TIME

Eurodog

Commissioner Vouel told Lord Bessborough (Con/UK) that he was looking favourably at the idea of a "European tree year". He was also willing to study the idea of a Euro-Arboritum in Strasbourg. "If we are going to have European trees", commented Michael Shaw (Con/UK) "How long before we get a European dog?"

Learning Japanese

The Commission is proposing to spend nearly £350,000 in 1979 to encourage the learning of Japanese, President Roy Jenkins, told Parliament on May 11. In particular some twenty people will be sent to Japan for 18 months at the Community's expense. Mr. Jenkins was responding to a question from Tom Normanton (Con/UK) which called for the penetration of the Japanese market by Community firms which understand the mores and laws of that country.

Not cricket

From the beginning of the 1978-79 football season first division clubs in all Community countries will no longer discriminate between players on the grounds of nationality. This announcement by Commissioner Vouel on May 11, however, provoked an anxious moment for Mark Hughes (Soc/UK). Such non-discrimination rules, he hoped, would not be applied to cricket; and specifically not to Yorkshire CCC, where having been born in Yorkshire was essential.

Summer Time

Commissioner Richard Burke told Bernard Cousté (EPD/F) that he had tried hard to get the Council to agree to a uniform summertime period for 1978 to run from 1 April to 14 October; but that Denmark and Western Germany were unwilling to introduce summertime. He felt, however, that the Community was too large to have a single time zone.

April legislation

Parliament amended 13 of the 17 Commission proposals debated in April. In three cases — on chocolate, on agriculture, and on Community loans (see EPR No.46) — the Commission has accepted the bulk of the amendments, Commissione Brunner told Parliament on Monday May 8. Only on Mediterranean agriculture (also see EPR 46) were the amendments rejected — which should please British Members, who voted against most of them anyway.

Hôtel complet

Older and wiser Members of the European Parliament often contrive, during the May sitting in Strasbourg, to stay at hotels a little way out of town — to be precise in the heart of the asparagus growing area. During this particular May, however, quite a number of visitors to the Parliament found themselves compelled to do so for a totally different reason.

A party of county-councillors from the East Midlands, for example, found themselves commuting every day by coach from Baden-Baden. The House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities was half-an-hour away at Reeb. And the BBC's Angus McDermid had to travel 125 miles each day from Metz!

The reason was the extreme pressure on Strasbourg hotel space. In addition to the Parliament sitting, there was a major conference of dentists in town and another of repertory theatres. (Perhaps the matter was not unconnected, after all, with asparagus).

But it does give one cause to speculate on what will happen after direct elections.

Book now for '79

First of all — at least until Luxembourg completes its leaning tower — all plenary sessions will have to be held in Strasbourg. The number of MEPs doubles to 410; a good many will need their research assistants or secretaries along; the number of parliamentary staff in attendance — now 600 — will rise to, say, 900; the 100 journalists who cover the session will become more numerous; then there are the Commissioners and their own staff, assorted diplomats, not to mention the growing numbers of lobbyists. So the 1900-odd hotel rooms in Strasbourg and district worthy of inclusion on the *Guide Michelin* can be assumed to be fully booked as of now.

Mere members of the voting public eager to see their elected representatives at work, had therefore better get used to Baden-Baden, Metz and Colmar.

Slave traffic

Families in Berks, Bucks or Golders Green who are uneasy about the way they treat their "au pairs" need no longer feel quite so guilty — English girls are getting as good as they give. A question from Danish Socialist Erling Dinesen reveals that "young English girls who obtain what they believe to be 'au pair' posts through agencies in their own country soon find on arrival in Denmark that they are expected to do fully-fledged jobs which, in addition to being grossly underpaid, are in violation of the terms of the

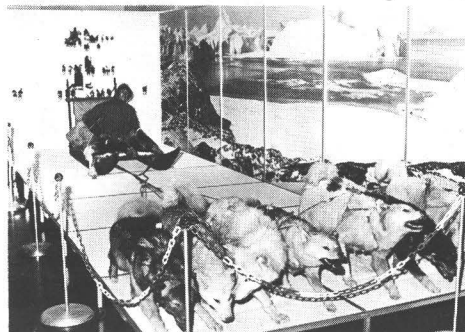
European Convention on 'au pairs'."

Meanwhile back in Ireland, Michael Herbert (EPD) is complaining to the Commission that Irish beef is being "passed off" in British shops as English or Scottish; and Patrick Power (EPD) is calling for Community aid for the reclamation of Irish bogs.

First-past-the-post

The only part of the European Community outside Britain which will be using "first-past-the-post" for direct elections next year will be Greenland — which seems to make the seat an ideal target for the Conservatives. In fact, a European Conservative Conference in Greenland was apparently planned for later in the year, until it was discovered that no hotel large enough existed on the island.

Greenland certainly presents new problems in political organisation. For one thing, though the electorate of 35,000 or so is manageable,



the constituency is one third larger in area than the whole of the rest of the Community put together. Then there is the weather — a special clause had to be written into the electoral treaty under which, if the rest of the Community were to vote in the winter, polling would be postponed in Greenland until the ice had thawed a bit. And there are language problems. Danish is spoken, but most voters speak Eskimo.

So the candidates selection procedure is likely to be somewhat different from usual. Our picture illustrates likely lads undergoing preliminary screening in the main foyer of the Palace of Europe in Strasbourg this May.

1265 and all that!

One virtue claimed for the threatened House of Lords is its ability to take the long view, unpanicked by the immediacy of the next General Election. The House of Lords Select Committee on future contacts between Westminster and the elected European Parliament, in Strasbourg during May, can only have been encouraged when taking evidence from former EP President Professor Cornelis Berhouwer (Lib/NL). As far as Europe was concerned, he told the Committee, things were at an early stage. "You had 700 years to develop

your Parliament".

"In that case", commented Lord Amory in a stage whisper to Chairman Lord Greenwood "I don't think we need rush in producing our report do we?"

List tactics

Following the French elections in March, there are reports of some more than energetic jockeying to become one of France's 36 nominated European Parliament Members during the next year.

Part of the reason seems to lie in France's choice of voting system for direct elections. Each party will field 81 candidates; the voter chooses one of the lists as a whole; and candidates are elected from the list proportionate to the total of votes for the party. The names are taken from the top down.

So far so good. But what happens if a Member duly elected cannot, for some reason, take up his seat? "Rien de plus simple" — the seat goes to the next on the list. But doesn't this mean...?

Yes, it does. A sensible party will pack the top of its list with all the glamour it can muster, irrespective of whether these candidates have any actual intention of becoming EP Members. Once elected the Mitterands, the Chiracs and the Lecanugracefully give way to lesser mortals.

Which is why even 81st on a party list — at first sight the equivalent of being the Conservative candidate for the Rhondda — is still quite a sporting bet; and why actually being a sitting Member when the lists are drawn up appears a blue-chip certainty.



Another step towards European Elections! This pilot tee-shirt was unveiled by a member of the Parliament's London office staff to the Joint Parliament/Commission Consultative Committee for Information at Strasbourg in May.

K.P.G.