

Labour to take Parliament seats

Two and a half years of boycott will come to an end on July 7 when 18 Labour Members will take their seats in the European Parliament.

European Parliament President Georges Spenale (Soc/F) on June 19 welcomed the Labour decision to name a delegation and to join the Socialist Group. The strengthening of the Parliament to its full complement of 198 Members would lead to its enrichment as had happened in 1973 when the first British, Irish and Danish MPs had arrived.

Socialist Group leader Ludwig Fellermaier (Germany) said of the referendum result: "The British have demonstrated their proverbial commonsense". With its Labour friends, the Socialist Group will continue its work towards the democratic development of the Community through the European Parliament, he added.

Italian Communist Giorgio Amendola, leader of the Parliament's Communist Group, expressed his pleasure at the decision, stating that the arrival of Labour Members would reinforce the Left for the "battle for the future of Europe".

Leaders of other groups were more reticent, perhaps torn between satisfaction that the British referendum and the Labour decision had ended the long uncertainty about Britain in the Community, but aware also that the ending of the boycott would indeed strengthen the Left, making the Socialist Group by far the largest with 67 Members, or just over one third of the total.

At present it is speculative whether the enlargement of the Socialist group will have repercussions on the general political line-up in the Parliament. Will, for example, the European Conservatives (17) formally link up with the Christian Democrats (now 51) to have a slight edge over the Socialists? If so, will the Socialist-Christian Democrat predominance in the Parliament be accentuated, at the expense of the Liberals (25), the

European Progressive Democrats (17) and the Communists (15)? Will other realignments take place?

But at Westminster the nomination of the Labour Members did not come about smoothly. Within the Parliamentary Labour Party there was a dispute as to whether its representatives should be nominated by the Government Whip or elected by the Labour MPs as a whole. In the event, a compromise was reached: a list was prepared from among the volunteers which was put to a vote of the PLP. And in the Lords the method of selecting peers was questioned by some members, particularly because the choice of six Labour and four Conservatives agreed between those parties meant that two peers, Lord Gladwyn (Liberal) and Lord O'Hagan (Independent), who have served in the European Parliament since January 1973, would be dropped.

The 18 Labour members themselves provide the largest single national party representation in the Parliament, outnumbering the German Social Democrats (SPD) by one. Other large national representation is that of the British Conservatives (16), German Christian Democrats (16) and Italian Christian Democrats (14). Among other groups only the 10 French UDR Members (Gaullists) reach double figures.

Aid for Portugal

"We must support Portugal, but only democratic Portugal." So the leader of the European Progressive Democrats, Christian de la Malene (F), encapsulated the dilemma facing the Community which was the subject of an emergency debate in the European Parliament on Wednesday, June 18.

It was clearly the Community's duty, as Conservative leader Peter Kirk pointed out, to give aid to Portugal "in the catastrophic economic conditions in which she finds herself". It was equally clearly right "that we should not interfere in the internal affairs of another country". But a point might come at which there would have to be conditions. For almost all speakers, including Commissioner Sir Christopher Soames, those conditions were "the establishment in Portugal of a pluralist democracy".

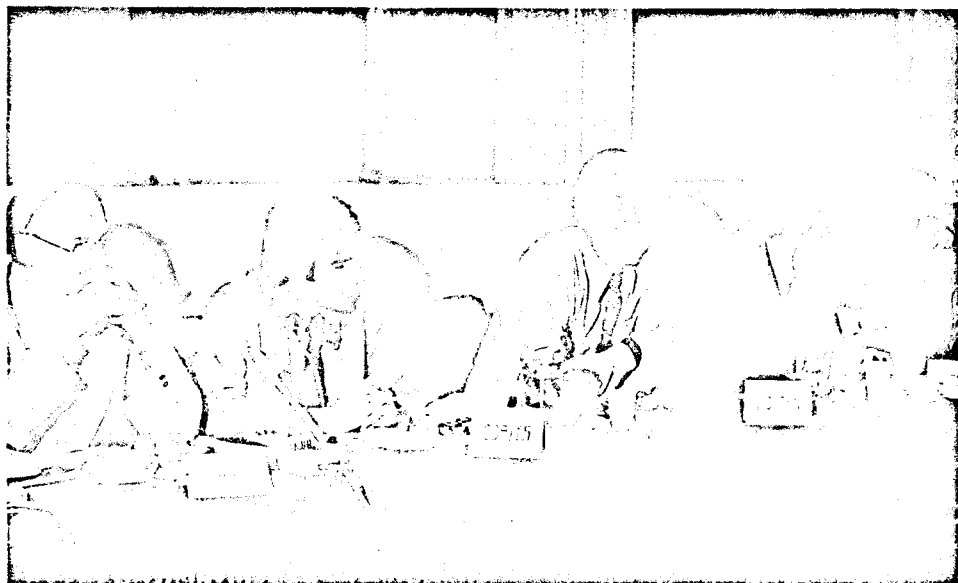
Though everyone, however, was agreed on the gravity of economic conditions in Portugal — 270,000 unemployed, 30% inflation and zero investment — there were differences on the political situation. Giovanni Bersani (CD/It) noted that it was, in any case, very difficult to be sure what was really going on. Peter Kirk pointed out that the Christian Democratic Party had been banned, and the Centre Democratic Party "so harassed that it can hold no meeting in public. Its annual congress was broken up . . . with the connivance of the authorities in the area". The leader of the Socialist Group, Ludwig Fellermaier (Ger), likewise drew attention to the closure of the Socialist paper *Republica*. For another Socialist, Francis Leenhardt (F), however, the concern of Parliament for pluralist democracy was "excessive". "It is no good offering aid to Portugal if we attach conditions." But ex-President of the Parliament, Cornelis Berkhouwer (NL), who spoke for the Liberals, emphasised that events in Portugal were an internal affair for the whole of Europe.

In his summing up of the debate, Sir Christopher Soames made it clear that he sided, at that moment, with the optimists: "it is too soon to despair". The Community was already engaged in negotiations to "extend and expand Portugal's existing trade agreements with the Community". But, in addition, there was need for immediate, special financial aid. This would not "just be money that would be handed over". Certain projects "would be seen through by a form of coordinating committee of member states, of the Commission and of Portuguese authorities . . ." Such aid was justified because "the continuing deterioration of the economic situation is itself more and more jeopardising the evolution of political events in that country".

The British Members of the European Parliament:

Labour	Conservative
Lord Ardwick	Lord Bessborough
Guy Barnett (Greenwich)	Lord Bethell
Miss Betty Boothfroyd (West Bromwich W.)	John Corrie (Ayrshire N. & Bute)
Lord Bruce of Donington	Hugh Dykes (Harrow E.)
Lord Castle	Ralph Howell (Norfolk N.)
Tam Dalyell (West Lothian)	Mrs Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster)
Sir Geoffrey de Freitas (Kettering)	Peter Kirk (Saffron Walden)
Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe)	John Osborn (Sheffield, Hallam)
Tom Ellis (Wrexham)	Lord Reay
John Evans (Newton)	Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington)
Lady Fisher of Rednal	Lord St Oswald
Lord Gordon-Walker	James Scott-Hopkins (Derbyshire W.)
Willie Hamilton (Fife Central)	Michael Shaw (Scarborough)
Mark Hughes (Durham)	Jim Spicer (Dorset W.)
Bob Mitchell (Southampton, Itchin)	Sir Derek Walker-Smith (Hertfordshire E.)
John Prescott (Kingston-upon-Hull E.)	Tom Normanton (Cheshire)
Michael Stewart (Fulham)	
Lord Walston	

Liberal	Scottish National Party
Russell Johnston (Inverness)	Mrs Winifred Ewing (Moray & Nairn)



Among the visitors to the European Parliament during its session of June 16-20 was a delegation from the Australian Parliament. At a press conference following talks between Members of the two Parliaments, Senator Bryant (Lab/Canberra) declared that it was "exciting to see Europe coming together after two world wars. The unity of Europe is the hope for world peace." But on Political Union he gave a warning. "Federalism is a form of frustration. In our experience, you only get ulcers out of a federal system."

PARLIAMENT CALLS FOR 5-YEAR PLANS

The Common Agricultural Policy stood up remarkably well to a whole day's "stocktaking" by the Parliament on Tuesday, June 18. Was it because the CAP was already — as rapporteur James Scott-Hopkins (Con/UK) put it — "on the right lines"? Was it because the changing world economic situation had shown the policy to be in the interests of consumers? Was it because the policy — as many Members stressed — was "the cornerstone of European integration" and therefore inviolable? Or was it because — as other Members pointed out — monetary compensatory amounts meant that there was in practice no common policy at all? Would it — as one gallery onlooker remarked — have been a very different debate if British Labour Members had been participating and heard calls from all sides of the house for European economic and monetary union?

The CAP had been marked by both successes and failures, said Mr Scott-Hopkins, but its main principles remained constant. Its main failing was still inadequate income in rural areas but care needed to be taken to ensure that regional, social and agricultural policy spending did not overlap. There was also a lack of long-term planning: basic guidelines should be laid down every five years and reviewed annually. This could prevent the frequent plunging from surplus to deficit. The problems posed by fluctuating currencies — the use of 'green currencies' and monetary compensatory amounts — could only be solved by progress towards economic and monetary union. Another area where progress was needed was in marketing. European farmers were "excellent at producing food but very bad at selling it". The increase in cost from farm gate to consumer was in many cases "miles too high".

In general, when agricultural surpluses were produced they should go to the most needy categories of consumers — who should have "first bite at the cherry"; the stockpiled remainder should be sold on a commercial basis. These stockpiles should, however, be seen in perspective. "At the moment, in the world in general, there is perhaps five days' supply of food available. In the Community . . . overall I should not have thought that there was much more," said Mr Scott-Hopkins. He suggested a programme of expansion of production to ensure not just sufficient surplus for

food aid but two-way commercial trade — in effect to get "an ebb and flow of supplies in and out of the Community". Jean Durieux (Lib/F) also advocated longer-term planning ("it takes three years to produce a cow") and increased production because "in the long term the world agricultural shortage is likely to be catastrophic".

"We must be grateful to the taxpayer," said Commissioner Lardinois, agreeing that the three-quarters of the Community budget which had been spent on agriculture was disproportionate. Economic and monetary union — balanced policies in all fields — "was a prior condition for the further continuation of the CAP," he said, echoing the words of Roger Houdet (Lib/F). The CAP moreover had in the past been an "emergency bandages" system and he conceded that Parliament was right about the need for longer-term planning. Expenditure on agriculture was not excessive, according to Lucien Martens (CD/Bel), "for an insurance premium for guaranteeing stable supplies at reasonable prices"; but Heinz Frehsee (Soc/Ger) said the situation would be "alarming" if expenditure continued "to rocket".

A parting warning was sounded by the outgoing Irish Council Minister Clinton who said the supply position was moving once more into surpluses and exchange rate difficulties and monetary compensatory amounts raised "very serious problems".

Mr Thomsen's trousers

"When I hear it being explained . . . that tariffs are no longer of such importance," Commissioner Sir Christopher Soames told Parliament on Wednesday, June 18 when summing up a debate on the Community's position in the GATT negotiations, "from now on I will think of Mr Thomsen's trousers." He was recalling the earlier remark by Danish Conservative Knud Thomsen that even a 5 per cent tariff was useful, if only as a bargaining position. "If you only have trousers on, you hold on to them as long as you can."

Sir Christopher went on to point out, however, that the lowering of tariff barriers was only part of the Community's objective in the GATT negotiations. 850 non-tariff barriers — valuation and customs nomenclature regulations, technical barriers, quantitative restrictions, etc — had been notified to the GATT, and these were now the subject of detailed examination. A code of standards had been proposed which would prevent, for example, new safety regulations from producing new trade barriers — the Community's own harmonised standards would be in accordance with this code.

In answer to a proposed amendment from Dutch Socialist Schelto Patijn on preferences for developing countries, Sir Christopher made a revealing and flattering appeal to Parliament: "I ask that the House leave my hands free at this point of time in the negotiations". Even if short on formal powers, Parliament seems to be acquiring increasing influence where it really matters.

Social programme "irrelevant"

Parliament was treated to a rare public skirmish between the Council and the Commission on Thursday, June 19 — an all-Irish one, too, between Council Minister O'Leary and Commissioner Hillery. Minister O'Leary said the Community's Social Action Programme was "no longer relevant". Since it was drawn up in 1973 the world had changed — perhaps forever. The problems could not be solved by member states alone. They required a "transnational response" and needed en-

larging and rethinking. Instead of waiting until 1976 the Commission should come forward with new proposals now. Finance Ministers should also participate in Council discussions. "I believe that the test by which ordinary people in each Community country will judge whether the Community exists will depend on the manner in which we respond to the greatest single problem facing ordinary people in the Community — unemployment. Foreign Ministers may say that the Community exists. Finance Ministers may occasionally say that the Community exists and members of this Parliament may say that the Community exists, but ordinary people will conclude and decide on its existence only if Community policies seem to be relevant to their needs."

In reply Commissioner Hillery found himself "committed to protecting the institutions of the Community to some extent". It was, he said, the Council's and not the Commission's fault if the social action programme had the wrong priorities. Ordinary people "may equally feel that governments do not exist if they do not produce policies to meet their problems".

A rhetorical fresco

A communication from the Commission on the establishment of a fund (of about £40 million in 1976 rising to £80 million in 1980) for non-associated developing countries was scathingly described as a "rhetorical fresco" by Lord Reay (Con/UK) in a debate on Thursday, June 19. The document, said Lord Reay, "reads very well as an appreciation of the seriousness, urgency and extent of the problem in developing countries and as an expression of our interest in doing something . . . but it has the danger of creating a situation in which our policy towards developing countries looks hollow, because what we are claiming that we intend to do is too much in

An urgent resolution, tabled by the Christian Democrat, Socialist, Liberal and Communist Groups containing an appeal to the President of Uganda, General Amin, to reprieve British citizen Denis Hills, was carried by the Parliament on June 20.

excess of what in practice we turn out to do". The Council of Ministers also came in for criticism: "It was always understood that something would be done for the non-associated developing countries after the Lome Convention had been signed. The Lome Convention was signed in February and still the Council has not reached a decision," said Lord Reay and challenged "it will not be believed that the Community can afford to take a decision to give 3000 million u.a. in aid for the ACP countries and do nothing for the non-associated developing countries".

An office in Peking?

China maintains its long-standing support for the European Community and is to establish official relations and send an ambassador, Commissioner Sir Christopher Soames reported to Parliament on June 18 following discussions in Peking. Chinese ministers, he said, had told him "once we recognise the political existence of the Community, and we applaud it, it is natural that we should follow its rules and be prepared to trade with it in the way it expects us to trade with it". As two Chinese observers looked on from the Press Gallery Lord Gladwyn (Lib/UK) said he hoped that "the Commission will some day be able to establish some kind of office in Peking or Shanghai".

VAT to the rescue?

The Community's budget was supposed to be financed from "own resources", including a VAT element, from the beginning of 1975. Because of a failure to decide on the uniform basis of assessment of VAT ("6th Directive") the budget is still being part-financed from national contributions based on GNP. "The time has come," said Commissioner Simonet in a debate on Friday, June 20, "for the Council to take that decision."

From German Socialist Erwin Lange and rapporteur Helmut Artzinger (CD/Ger) came a novel argument for harmonising VAT: to prevent supplementary budgets. In several Member States these were reducing budgetary procedures to a state of havoc. Replacing national Community budget contributions by a VAT element would necessarily lead to effective financial planning.

Anti-Babel

One major practical impediment to the smooth running of the European Parliament is language. At present six are officially spoken — with Gaelic making an occasional appearance, and with Greek now waiting in the wings; and simultaneous translation through headphones is a solution which kills the wit and spontaneity of debate.

A better answer, of course, is that every European MP should understand, if not speak, all the Community languages. A shining example was set on Wednesday, June 18 when the President of Ireland, Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh, addressed a special "solemn session" of the Parliament.

Beginning his speech in French, he recalled that "ici, a Strasbourg, en l'an 843 . . . ni Charles le Chauve — à qui je ressemble un peu — ni Louis le Germanique n'ont parlé leur propre langue". He had (he continued in English) "an unfulfilled ambition to be a parliamentarian"; but — recalling (in Italian) "la storia del giovane Correggio, che, trovandosi a Bologna, davanti al magnifico quadro di Raffaello, la Santa Cecilia, disse timidamente, ma con una piccola sfumatura di orgoglio: 'Anch'io son pittore' — he pointed out that the Irish Parliament, according to the constitution, consisted of "the President and two chambers". "Quindi . . . mi presento come uno di loro."

He continued by affirming, in French, his belief in European Union. Moreover, he noted in German, "können vielleicht unsere deutschen Freunde aus ihrer Erfahrung eines zweistufigen Regierungssystems einen wichtigen Beitrag zu dieser Zusammenarbeit leisten". And, he concluded, in what must be the first time that Labiche has been quoted in the European — or indeed any other — Parliament, with the words of Mr. Perrichon: "C'est le départ qui est laborieux; une fois que nous serons cases . . ."