

Elections Bill at last – and it's PR!

On Friday June 24 the British Government at last published the Bill for direct elections to the European Parliament. It follows very closely the White Paper of April – except in one crucial respect: where the White Paper outlined three possible voting systems, the Bill comes down in favour of one: Proportional Representation in regional multi-member constituencies.

Indeed, the "European Assembly Elections Bill" (64 pp. £1.25) handles the problem of voting system ingeniously. There was always the danger that, although a House of Commons majority would exist for the *principle* of elections, no voting system would get through. The Government has found a way of presenting MPs with an "either/or" choice. If PR is defeated, the elections will then automatically be held under the "first past the post" system outlined in Schedule 2 of the Bill.

As in the White Paper, the constituencies for PR are to be the economic planning regions, but with Greater London separate. Each party will put up a list of candidates in each constituency; but electors will put a single cross against the candidate of their choice. Seats will then be distributed between the parties according to the d'Hondt method (taking a vote for a candidate as a vote for that candidate's party). And each party's seats will be filled from the lists according to the number of votes for individuals.

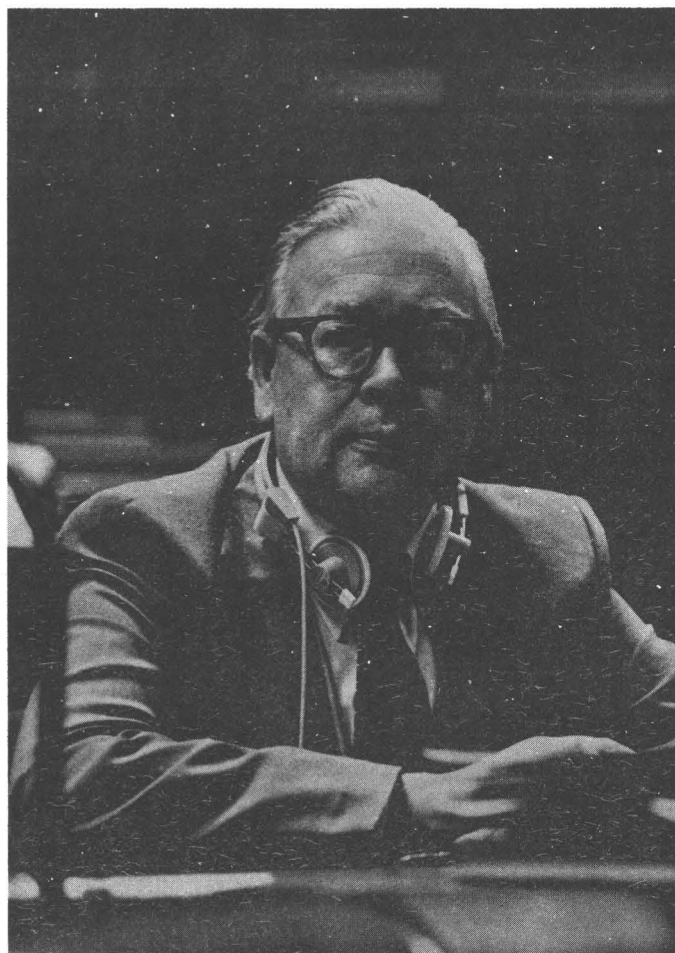
The right to vote

In one field, however, the Bill is disappointing. The franchise is to be exactly the same as for national elections, with the addition of Peers (i.e. much the same as for local government elections). No solution is therefore offered to the problem debated by the European Parliament on June 15: will those not resident in their own countries be able to vote? As Schelto Patijn (Soc/NL) pointed out, millions of people are involved: migrant workers, businessmen and officials of the Community itself.

Charles Fletcher-Cooke (Con/UK) noted, however, that different countries favour diverging solutions. Some, like Ireland and Belgium, favour the "territorial solution", under which all resident Community citizens would be entitled to vote for Irish or Belgian candidates. Others, like France and Germany, intend to give all their own citizens living abroad a vote. He was astonished to hear that the UK did not intend to adopt either (and, indeed, if the situation stays like that, some Community citizens will have a choice of two or more countries to vote in; others will have no vote at all!)

In his maiden speech to Parliament, the new leader of the European Conservative Group, Geoffrey Rippon urged those responsible to treat the matter as more than a technicality. Community actions affected people's lives no matter where they lived. There were some 270,000 UK

nationals living in other Member States, for example, who had a right not to be disenfranchised. Making arrangements would not be difficult: the dates of European Elections were known well in advance, and were the same for all countries. "When we speak of democratic control we imply one fundamental democratic right: the right to vote." And this bore on "one of the supreme objectives for which we stand: the creation of a sense of European identity". *(more election news on p.2)*



The Rt. Hon. Geoffrey Rippon, new leader of the European Conservative Group.

Colombo: searching enquiry

All procedural means available to the European Parliament would be – and had perhaps already been – brought to bear in order to clarify the affair of the 200 tons of uranium oxide which went astray in 1968, President Colombo assured the Parliament on June 14, following comments made by Tam Dalyell (Soc/UK) the previous month. Mr Dalyell thanked the President for the courtesy of the letter he had already received, with its wish for a comprehensive and searching enquiry; and also the assurance that the President had had no secret service information at the time

when a senior Minister in Italy.

Mr Dalyell had raised the matter once more in a question to the Commission, pushing Mr Haferkampf for a reply on how the Commission would provide confidential information to Parliament in the event of a "similar" situation arising. The Commissioner replied that the problem was to find a suitable forum in order to ensure that any such information remained confidential. More positively, he reported that, although uranium oxide was not in itself a fissile material, security had been tightened up since 1968. No comparable incident had since occurred, and he did not think it could now recur.

European Elections news: latest

Scotland

The Scottish National Party conference in Dundee surprisingly voted on Friday May 27 in favour of direct elections to the European Parliament. The original motion on the order paper advocated outright opposition, and was robustly supported (to great applause) by SNP Westminster Leader Donald Stewart. As the debate progressed, however, conference was gradually weaned away from outright opposition; and finally, by a margin of some 60 votes, into actual support. The *coup de grace* was undoubtedly delivered in a great fighting speech by EP Member Winnie Ewing: "I don't like being there as Mr Callaghan's nominee!" Clearly the Party was also strongly influenced by the hope of capturing all eight Scottish seats when direct elections come.

Ireland

In Ireland, however, the recent national elections — which produced a massive swing towards Fianna Fail — have somewhat upset the picture. In European

Parliament terms, the immediate beneficiaries are likely to be the Progressive Democrats, who will gain another Member (together with the additional Dane already nominated, this should put the Group up to 19). This, however, must wait until the Senate elections on August 17.

As far as direct elections go, the Cosgrave Government's Bill is now dead. The new Government is likely to keep STV. But instead of the 4 constituencies announced, there are likely to be 5 in the new Bill, based on the existing provinces.

France

In France, the outlook is good. The French President, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, quite determined that his Government should ratify direct elections to the European Parliament, engaged the responsibility of the Government under Article 49 of the Constitution to push them through the National Assembly on June 16. The effect of this was to ratify direct elections, without a vote, on the Government's responsibility.

Community loans and the 78 budget

On Wednesday the Commissioner responsible for the budget, Mr Christopher Tugendhat, announced a new scheme whereby the Community would be able to raise 1,000 m.u.a. (some £650m) in loans for (a) energy projects (b) industrial innovation or (c) infrastructure.

The announcement came during a highly technical, but politically highly important debate on Parliament's budgetary powers. The good news about the budget this year is that Parliament got the figures first. Last year they had to read them in the Press. The bad news is that the figures look far too ambitious — at least in the Commission's

preliminary draft — to have much chance of getting through Council. Here they are:-

	1978 draft (£m)	1977 (£m)	% +
CAP	5471	4766	14
Social	384	344	12
Regional	493	261	88
Research/energy	323	181	78
Development	323	338	81
Administration	373	319	17
Miscellaneous	576	533	8
Total	8232	6742	22

Fire! Fire!

On May 9 at least 20 people died in a fire in a hotel in Amsterdam and on 15 May 17 people died in a hotel fire in Brussels.

These tragedies prompted Jim Spicer (Con/UK) and his colleagues to urge the Commission to introduce common safety standards. It would cost little to insist on fire instructions being posted in every room; for fire exits to be marked; for fire extinguishers to be in public areas. In a second stage, fire doors could be fitted, secondary escape stairs constructed and smoke detectors and alarms installed. Replying for the Commission Henk Vredeling was not hopeful — being a Dutchman he is always anxious not to

promise what he cannot deliver — because the Treaty gives the Commission no direct power to act. But the directive on safety at the place of work would give the Community one useful opening (the Brussels hotel had not been inspected since 1939!); fire drills can be incorporated in training schemes for young hoteliers; and a proposal requiring fire extinguishers to have common features will be introduced soon. It was, incidentally, in reply to another question, from Italian Communist Aldo Maşullo, that Henk Vredeling told Parliament the Commission will be submitting "a sort of action programme on health and safety at work" this autumn.

Mystery of the marrying girls

The United Kingdom accounts for 22% of Community population, but only 7.17% of Community civil servants and employees are British. Why this disproportion, Mark Hughes (Soc/UK) asked Commission and Council? He pointed out that Belgium, with just 3.8% of population, fills no less than 21.75% of jobs at the Commission, Council, European Parliament and Court of Justice. Ireland and Denmark, the two other "new" Members were also "grossly under-represented in staff".

Commissioner Christopher Tugendhat admitted in reply that there had been something of a paucity of applications from

nationals of the new member countries, despite the lure of high salaries. In the case of Britain, he thought, the referendum had put many candidates off applying. And then there were the human factors; the British and Irish were wary of moving to the Continent, where they would be cut off from family and friends. Language too, was a major problem. And then many English and Irish girls married Continental husbands and so didn't turn up in the British and Irish statistics.

Although it was the Commission's responsibility to recruit on "as broad a basis as possible", there were no actual quotas.

Question Time

Who runs the CAP?

Yet another aspect of the much-attacked CAP came under fire on Tuesday June 14: the composition of the agricultural management committees. Commissioner Gundelach told Ralph Howell (Con/UK) that he was ready and willing to build consultative procedures with farming, marketing and consumer groups into "something much more tight". Wouldn't this, suggested Jim Scott-Hopkins (Con/UK) "be a darn sight better than the existing system of management committees, which are composed entirely of civil servants, of whom we have no knowledge in this House, and over which we have no control?" And Gwyneth Dunwoody (Soc/UK) went further: wouldn't it be even better "if he were to dismiss all civil servants and all farmers from all of his management committees, and put in charge a group of women who actually have to pay the prices for the goods in the shops...?"

Nationality laws

Much the same theme continued in the next question, on women's rights, from Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Con/UK). The laws of two Member States, the UK and Denmark, "still discriminate very substantially and savagely against women". For example, "the child of a British woman married to a Turkish national, and born in Turkey, would be discriminated against in the Community, particularly in regard to jobs; whereas the child of a British man and a Turkish woman, and also born in Turkey, would not". At the suggestion of Legal Committee chairman Sir Derek Walker-Smith (Con/UK), Commissioner Vredeling agreed that the Treaty's definition of nationality in Article 48 deserved study.

Current policy

The Community is continuing to hold consultations of the Duisenberg proposals for harmonised currency policies. This assurance from John Tomlinson did not satisfy Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Con/UK) who felt that the Community should point out that the "snake" was not an appropriate measure to combat instability.

Move on JET

Council President John Tomlinson's statement during Question Time that 25.3 m.u.a. (£10.5m) for the Joint Research Centre (JRC) in Ispra had been blocked, pending agreement on the new multi-annual research programme, led to an emergency debate on the issue on June 15. German Christian Democrat Hanna Walz was supported by speakers from all sides of the House when she condemned "one Member State" for making its agreement to releasing the JRC funds contingent on the JET fusion project going to Culham in Oxfordshire. This was not evidence of European spirit, she said. Moreover, holding back the funds put 1,700 jobs at risk in Ispra.

Commissioner Guido Brunner agreed that linking JET and the JRC was "absolutely wrong". But Mr Tomlinson refused to be pessimistic. There was no lack of recognition in Britain for the urgency of securing long-term energy supplies through research. But the JRC programme did include a number of items linked to fusion, so there certainly was a connection with JET.

Happy in your work?

"Most people", Tom Ellis (Soc/UK) told Parliament during Monday's debate on working conditions, "dislike work". Partly, as Protogene Veronesi (Comm/It) had earlier noted, it was the "malaise, demoralisation and nervous tension" which arose on the factory floor. But physical conditions were not the most important. From his experience, the morale of a Welsh coal-miner was much higher than that of a Dagenham car-worker, because the former enjoyed the satisfaction of making decisions. We should, in fact, take automation to its logical conclusion and replace the operator by the machine. Then everyone might be able to echo the words of the poem which he quoted at the beginning of his speech: "Oh Lord, why did you make the Pen Nant valley so beautiful, and the life of an old shepherd so short"?

There was, in fact, unanimity in the House on the need to make life on the factory floor more tolerable. Carlo Meintz (Lib/Lux) and Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Con/UK), however, noted the danger of duplication between the Commission's research programme and the work of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.



MPs from 61 countries — 52 the African, Caribbean and Pacific States of the Lomé Convention, together with the nine Community countries — met in Luxembourg from 8-10 June. The main item on the agenda was a report from Lord Reay (Con/UK) on current problems connected with Lomé.

Watchful eye on subsidies

On Thursday June 16 Commissioner Vouel assured Tom Normanton (Con/UK) and Durk van der Mei (CD/NL) that the Commission maintains an inventory of Community and national subsidies in order to avoid wasteful duplication. He pointed out that it is up to Member States to supply information for updating, and he stressed that it was futile to keep a region or an industrial sector artificially alive; "this is no way to solve employment problems". The Commission must ensure that measures taken are proportionate to the seriousness of the situation, he said.

Mr Tom Normanton went further: such aids did not create wealth but merely bureaucracy.

Double tax

New Commission proposals to eliminate double taxation were welcomed by Parliament as "a modest step in the right direction" on Tuesday June 14. A new arbitration procedure will be set up to settle problems arising when associated companies in different countries transfer profits between them.

Licences to fish for third countries

Who is to have what share of the fish within the Community's 200-mile limit (50-mile national exclusive or free-for-all) is still a vital unsolved problem. But equally fraught with difficulties, it appears, is the defence of the limits against third countries (Russians, Poles, Norwegians, etc.). Mark Hughes (Soc/UK) pointed out a few of them when skilfully piloting through the House on Friday June 17 his report on the proposed licencing system for third country boats. Egon Klepsch (CD/Ger) had suggested an amendment to the effect that third country ships boarded by fishery protection vessels should be "conducted to the nearest port even if it is outside the national fishing zone of the Member State whose officers have boarded them". Mr Hughes suspected that this might have surprising consequences: under

international law the fishery protection vessel would be arrested for piracy, and the fishing boat allowed to sail away free! This and other amendments were referred back.

The only real divergence between Parliament and Commission on the main proposal was on charges for licences, which Parliament advocated. Commissioner Vouel thought that there would be both budgetary difficulties and problems in negotiating reciprocal agreements. But several Members were disposed to be less accommodating to the Russians, etc., even than the Commission and Mark Hughes: as Winnie Ewing (Ind/UK) put it, "there must be no privileges for third countries while our own men suffer"; and she declined to support licences until it was clear "how many and to whom".

They even shoot mosquitoes

Fifteen species of wild birds are extinct and less than one-third have a natural rate of reproduction.

These were the disturbing facts Hans-Edgar Jahn (CD/Ger) disclosed to the House on Tuesday June 14. His post bag had revealed that millions of EC citizens were concerned about the decimation of the bird population. It was imperative, he said, to restrict several practices used by hunters, particularly the trapping of small song-birds. Pollution of birds' natural habitat, for instance, through excessive use

of pesticides should also be stringently controlled. "This is an area where the European Parliament should make full use of its supervisory powers."

But for Michele Cifarelli (Lib/It) it was a fight against time: "in some parts of the Community they are even shooting mosquitoes". The most macabre call for action, however, came from Aldo Ajello (Soc/It). If the numbers of birds of prey continued to decline, he warned, the Community would soon be infested with snakes.

A bad time up the Brenner

"In two weeks' time the last customs barriers in the Community will be dismantled", Parliament was reminded by Kai Nyborg (EPD/Dk) on Thursday June 16. "Unfortunately", he went on, "there will still not be free movement of goods." He was introducing an interim report on what Michele Cifarelli (Lib/It) later described as "an indecent lack of will in creating a common transport policy".

Mr Nyborg drew specific attention to what happened at the Brenner pass last year. Lorries had been obliged to wait for up to *three days* in order to clear customs into Italy. The weather had been partly to

blame, but the administrative arrangements had "added insult to injury". The root cause was reliance on a system of bilateral agreements between States (in this case Italy and Germany) rather than on the common policy provided for in the Treaties.

A certain defence of the Italian Government, however, came from Mr Andrea Mascagni (Comm/It) who happens to be a member from the Alto Adige, where the Brenner is situated. He drew attention to the fact that many German hauliers had apparently set off for the Brenner without first getting the necessary documents, on the off-chance of getting through.

"Time is running out in southern Africa"

"Time is running out in southern Africa warned the President of Botswana, Sir Seretse Khama, when he addressed an enlarged meeting of European Parliament's Committee of Development and Co-operation in Bruxelles on Monday June 20. This is the first time a European Parliament Committee has been addressed by a Head of State. Also present at the meeting were the Botswanan Minister of External Affairs and Ambassadors from ACP States.

Energy from the sun

Luigi Noé, one of Parliament's leading energy experts told an enthralled House that Europe could get up to 3% to 5% of all its energy from the sun by the year 2000 if its potential is properly harnessed and fully exploited. It is no substitute for the nuclear option but it could be made much more use of, especially in the developing countries. As Tom Ellis (Soc/UK) said, his report (Doc 120/77) will stand as a reference work on solar energy for some time to come.

Baked beans and Christmas trees

Dried white beans are imported into the UK in vast quantities to be turned into baked beans, Albert Liogier (EDP/F) told the House on June 17. Rather than suspend tariff duties on this and several other agricultural products as the Commission is proposing, the Community would do well to grow white beans in converted vineyards in France and Italy.

Rapporteur Cornelis Laban (Soc/NL) also questioned the inclusion of Christmas trees. Surely it was unnecessary to import these into Germany?

European Cooperation Groupings

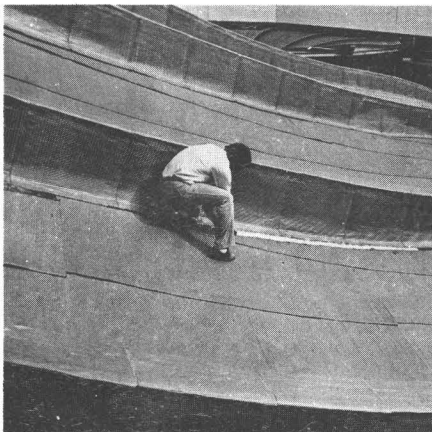
On June 14 Parliament approved a proposal to make life easier for small and medium-sized companies. The idea is to provide a legal umbrella for companies wanting to co-operate with firms in other Member States: European Co-operation Groupings. These will be non-profit making.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Con/UK) welcomed the provisions but urged that the ECG formula be kept simple and flexible.

Unofficial Journal

At the risk of seeming dangerously uncontroversial, we begin this month's *Journal* by talking about the weather. For British Members of the European Parliament in June there was, as the late P.J. Wodehouse might have remarked, a lot of it. London airport at 8.30 a.m. on Monday 13 was cold and wet; a casual observer of the delegation might have concluded that Parliament had at last found a permanent seat at the South Pole. Anyone who fell asleep on the plane, however, might have thought on arrival at Strasbourg that the seat had in fact been shifted to Congo (Brazzaville). Members shed overcoats, waistcoats, woolly sweaters and anoraks on the runway like a porcupine sheds quills. Those carrying umbrellas looked silly.

Changed into tropical gear, the delegation turned up at the Palace of Europe during the afternoon for the opening session; and there it appeared that Parliament was actually meeting in Calcutta (Black Hole). "In April", Jim Spicer (Con/UK) complained, "I raised the question of overheating in this building". Everyone had been looking forward to having the air-conditioning going by June, and working at a sensible temperature. But conditions were still "deplorable". When Elaine Kellett-Bowman came to speak for the Conservatives on, appropriately, "reform of the organisation of work" she began with a plea for the ushers to take off the coats of what "are laughably described as their summer uniform".



Plugging Palace leaks

Outside, though, another metamorphosis was taking place — which became clear to those in the Chamber when streams of water began to fall on Members from the ceiling. Gigantic thunderstorms raged outside, giving those who had unwisely decided to arrive late by the Air France 12-seater *Mystère* the rough ride of a lifetime. When the sitting ended, Members who had brought umbrellas over from London would have looked uncommonly clever after all, if only they had not left them behind at the hotel.

Merry-go-round

According to British Socialist Member of Parliament's Agriculture Committee Mark Hughes, some Brussels wizard has just come up with a new idea for disposing of the Community's powdered milk mountain. An old tramp steamer would be loaded up with the stuff, it would be taken down the Channel and ditched off the coast of Cornwall. No doubt this would please the mackerel no end. On the other hand, it might please them so much that the reproduction rate would soon create a Community mackerel mountain. Not to worry. Surplus mackerel could then be turned into fishmeal and fed to the cows.

Higher temp., lower tone

Members of the European Parliament have always been critical of the bland style which characterised the Parliament, at least until 1973. First the Conservatives congratulated themselves on the impact they had made; now, in a report to the Parliamentary Labour Party on their first 20 months' experience of Europe, the Labour Members have followed suit. As Gwyneth Dunwoody put it to a press conference on June 20, they had "raised the temperature and lowered the tone".

Labour leader John Prescott, who introduced the report, commented also that the Labour MEPs, unlike some of their continental colleagues, were not afraid of open controversy one with another and were certainly not slavish followers of the national government's policy line. Indeed, he observed, some continentals had been shocked that the Labour delegation had included MPs who had bitterly opposed British membership of the Community (such as himself).

Mr Prescott opposes further parliamentary powers in the strict legislative field; rather, he sees an effective assembly emerging through an extended investigatory role for its committees, more like select committees at Westminster and ultimately and ideally on the Washington model.

Toujours la politesse

Commissioner Brunner was startled half way through a recent speech to Parliament's Energy and Research Committee by a sudden point of order from British Socialist Tam Dalyell. "I just wanted to apologise to the Commissioner," went on Tam, "for having fallen asleep".

Greek myth

One of the less well attended debates on Thursday June 16 was that on the Parliament's own budget for 1978; which prompted last year's *rapporteur* on the Community Budget as a whole, Lord Bruce (Soc/UK), to muse thus:

"During your absence this morning, Mr President, due to a regrettable breakdown in the transmission facilities of Parliament, I wandered outside the hemicycle and round into the tearoom, and there I saw out of the window a copy of a statue that, quite gratuitously and perhaps ironically, had been presented by the Greek government. It portrays the charioteer of Delphi, and I believe the original was dedicated some 470 years BC to a dignitary of that state. If you look closely

at the statue, Mr President, you will find that its eyes are fixed firmly into the distance, that it has no chariot and no horses, and then you will find that in its left hand it is grasping reins that go nowhere, and unfortunately its right arm is missing, or has been damaged."

"The position of the statue is exactly the same as the position of Parliament in relation to financial control: it is there, it has the reins, it has half its arms but it has no power. And this is, perhaps, the reason why Parliament does not pay very much attention to its own budget."



Charioteerless charioteer

Royal sit-in

Envious no doubt of French media coverage of the Queen's Jubilee and eager to show that the cause of royalty is not dead in France, the "Committee for the Co-ordination of Royalist Operations" decided to follow the practice of an occupation on June 13. Where? At the Paris information office of the European Parliament, of course, most of the staff of which had left for the plenary session in Strasbourg.

The gesture made, the Captains of the kings soon departed; yet it is gratifying that French royalists (whose predecessors were rather slow in catching up with spirit of the late 18th century), have caught onto the political techniques of the late 20th.

The London office has not been forgotten. It has received a leaflet from the Common Market Safeguards Committee headed "The Queen's Silver Jubilee Celebrations 1977 — God save the Queen and her realm from the Common Market".

Conversion job

Following the dramatic victory of direct elections at the Scottish National Party conference (see p.2), two more SNP members — Iain MacCormick (Argyll) and Andrew Welsh (Angus) — were out in Strasbourg in June to see what their party had voted for. Neither appeared disappointed. Indeed, anti-market campaigner of 1975 Iain MacCormick told a press conference that the visit had actually "been a lesson to me": his conversations with the Irish, in particular, had impressed him. Well done, then, Parliament Vice-President Senator Michael Yeats (the only Irish Member who took time off from the Irish elections to be in Strasbourg).

K.P.G.