

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

REPORT

Action on "the coasts of Europe"

The European Parliament's Regional and Transport Committee is to hold a full public inquiry into the prevention of accidents at sea.

The announcement was made by the committee's new chairman, Lord Bruce (Soc/UK) on Thursday April 13, during an emergency debate on the *Amoco Cadiz* disaster.

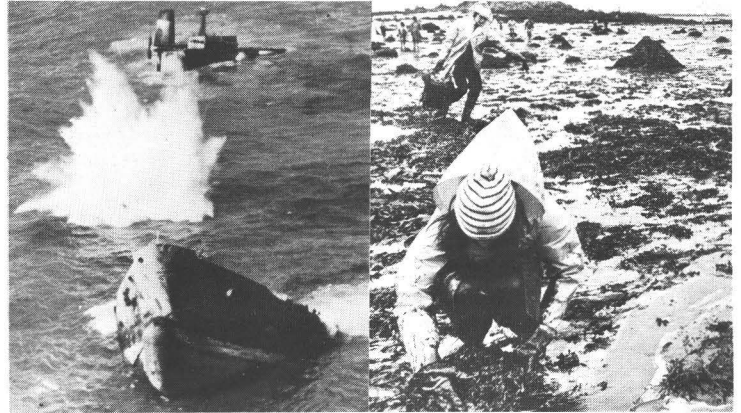
The inquiry will deal, not so much with the accident off the Brittany coast itself, as with the measures needed to prevent such a thing happening again. The terms of reference, Lord Bruce made clear, will cover all the questions raised by Members during the debate: routing and shipping lanes, ship design, ship's manning and crew training, salvage conditions, communications between different authorities, the ratification by Community countries of existing conventions and treaties and "most of all, with the enforcement of decisions already arrived at".

Already employers, unions and various international bodies have agreed to give evidence to the inquiry, which will be held in Paris.

Lord Bruce's announcement came as Member after Member expressed dissatisfaction with both national and international authorities. Former French Minister Michel Santat (EPD) opened with an impassioned description of Brittany's "black spring" — and noted that exactly the same thing had happened with the *Torrey Canyon* eleven years before. Yet nothing appeared to have been learned.

The Community is sending £300,000 of emergency aid to Brittany following the 'Amoco Cadiz' disaster, Commissioner Vredeling told Parliament on Monday April 10.

Commissioner Natali explained at some length that a large number of international agreements already existed on the matter. But Jim Spicer (Con/UK) pointed out that the list of international conventions "gets longer year after year". What was needed was *Community* action. Indeed, the Commissioner only escaped from the mounting wrath of Members by announcing at the end of his speech a proposed action programme on measures to deal with any future disasters.



Parliament was not just interested in clearing up the mess, however. It wanted to stop the mess ever occurring; and John Prescott (Soc/UK) pointed to some of the areas where action might be needed. "These incidents are not necessarily due to the malfunctioning of a modern ship. Rather they are due to the inefficiency and incompetence of those who are in charge of that craft. . . In part the countries offering "flags of convenience" were to blame; in part "the guilty men are the ship-owners of Europe". There would be no solution until Community ports were closed to ships which did not follow Community standards.

Some 500 million tons of crude oil go up the Channel each year, André Colin (CD/F) pointed out. "If it is Brittany's turn today, it could be the south-west of England tomorrow", added Jim Spicer. Indeed, the whole debate was remarkable for the virtually total agreement that national action was not enough. "This is a Community matter", said Lord Bruce. "The coasts of Brittany are the coasts of Europe".

June polling days "definite"

The Copenhagen meeting of Community heads of state and government on April 7-8 removed the last obstacles to the direct election of the European Parliament, Danish Foreign Minister K. B. Andersen told Parliament four days later. The dates of June 7-10, 1979, were now "definite".

But there was still some way to go. Although the European Council had spoken, the Council of Foreign Ministers have to take a formal

decision, and before that happens Parliament has to be consulted. Even before that, however, all the nine member states must both ratify the Community Act on European elections and pass their domestic electoral laws, Mr. Andersen said.

So far, eight countries have ratified the Act and seven have formally notified the Council. Four have also — Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland — completed their own legislation and in another four the form of the bills is known. Only in Italy has no bill been published. Although Britain was long a laggard she is now catching up fast: the bill has gone to the Lords and the

Government hopes that the Royal Assent can be given during the summer.

All the group leaders welcomed the election decision, but past disappointments had bred some caution. Socialist leader Ludwig Fellermaier, argued that the present Parliament, in the coming months, should provide more colour so that the electorate would better understand the differences between the various groups. To judge from the number of interruptions to his speech, whether of disagreement or approval, he at least will make his own contribution to that colour.

(Copenhagen summit: see also page 3)

To protect or not to protect?

A debate on "dumping and the threat to Europe of uncontrolled competition" on Tuesday, April 11 again found the House in two minds on the subject of protection. Introducing his report, Lord Brimelow (Soc/UK) called for action by the Commission to protect industries like steel, shipbuilding and textiles. At the same time, he warned of the dangers of touching off a world-wide trade war, even with "temporary" measures. Other Members, though giving general support to freedom of trade, also took a tougher line when it came to specifics. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Con/UK), for example, wanted a much more critical appraisal of imports from countries like Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea and Brazil, which were in a position to smash Community industries.

Some kind of synthesis was reached in the end by Commissioner Haferkamp, who made a distinction between "protectionism" and "protection". The Community had every right to protect itself from unfair trade practices, dumping or violations of international trade rules.

Japan: "a poor bargain"

Later in the day, the Commissioner received a thorough grilling from Members over his recent talks in Tokyo aimed at getting Japan to reduce its trade surplus with the Community. Mr. Haferkamp said some progress had been made.

But Lord Castle (Soc/UK) said the Commissioner was simply "putting a pretty good face on a pretty poor bargain". His Socialist colleagues Willie Hamilton (Soc/UK) and Tam Dalyell (Soc/UK) were also sceptical about Japanese intentions and their sincerity.

COMECON: debt and guns

Trading problems of a different kind are affecting the Community's relations with the East European trading bloc, COMECON. Opening a separate debate on the subject, Hans-Edgar Jahn (CD/Ger) drew attention to what he saw as the alarming degree of COMECON's indebtedness vis-à-vis the Community.

Commissioner Haferkamp said a draft report on relations between the EEC and COMECON was being drawn up and he agreed on the need to establish guidelines for export credits.

The Socialist Group felt the level of COMECON's indebtedness should not be exaggerated. But, for the Conservatives, Tom Normanton (UK) said that in providing economic help

for Eastern Europe we were "financing our political and economic executioners". Community money was being used to finance Russia's armaments programme.

China: 900m. market

More optimistic views were expressed in a debate on trade with China, now linked to the Community by a trade agreement that opens up a potential market of 900 million people.

Lord Bessborough (Con/UK) looked also to the military strengthening of China and Yugoslavia (the only other state-trading nation which has an agreement with the Community) as a balance against the USSR.

But Lord Kennet (Soc/UK), making his maiden speech, felt that the Community would do better to concentrate on economic issues and work to increase its share of the Chinese market which at present accounts for only one per cent of its trade.

Metal Box boycott

Can the Community prevent companies "being subject to blackmail and boycott on the grounds of their dealings with Israel?" Though no names were named, it was quite apparent in the exchanges that followed Tom Normanton's (Con/UK) question on the matter that both Commission and individual MPs had evidence of such boycotts by Arab states.

In order to act, however, the Community had to be sure of two things, replied Commissioner Vouel: first, that Treaty of Rome rules really had been breached; and secondly, that sufficient documentary evidence was provided.

Gwyneth Dunwoody (Soc/UK), however, found it "exceedingly difficult to believe that he had not had one case notified to him... with sufficient evidence to take action". Yes, replied the Commissioner, he knew of the case, notified to him by Mrs. Dunwoody herself. But the information she had herself supplied was not sufficient; the Commission was now trying to obtain it from "the interested parties".

Who are these? Certainly one of them is the British company Metal Box, which recently pulled out of Israel. But apparently the Commission has been having some difficulty in getting the information needed from the Company — or alternatively, not trying very hard.

Women: Your Parliament needs you



The European Parliament needs "more awkward women members", Gwyneth Dunwoody (Soc/UK) told the House on Monday, April 10 in a debate on equal pay for women.

There had been too many "ritual debates" on the subject. What was needed now from the Commission was a little less goodwill and a little more action.

Mrs. Dunwoody expressed concern at delays by member states in implementing directives on equal pay. But, on the plus side, she was glad to hear that Social Affairs Commissioner, Henk Vredeling, had a *chef de cabinet* who was active in women's organisations. She hoped he was "young and virile".

Commissioner Vredeling accepted many of the criticisms made and promised his department would not hesitate to take action if it was shown that Council directives were not being complied with. But he had to correct Mrs. Dunwoody on one point — his *chef de cabinet* was "not a he, but a she".

Bankers or Bureaucrats?

A Commission proposal to raise a £650 million loan on the open capital market, to be used for the finance of Community investment projects, produced a tense debate and some close voting in the European Parliament on 11 and 12 April.

A report by ex-Commissioner Aliero Spinelli (Comm/It) was outspokenly critical of how the whole project had been handled by the present Commission. Not only had the Parliament (after all one of the Community's budgetary authorities) been by-passed altogether in the preparation of the scheme; but "having proposed the abolition of

some of Parliament's rights, the Commission goes on to abolish its own. . .” Under the offending clause, the Commission's intention is to hand the money, once raised, over to the European Investment Bank to rest within general guidelines.

Thus the main lines of division were broadly whether the Bureaucrats of Brussels or the Bankers of Luxembourg were more to be trusted. Spinelli, backed by his own Communist Group and the Socialists, together with the Progressive Democrats, wanted responsibility for selecting projects to rest firmly with the Commission. Christian Democrats, Conservatives and Liberals were more inclined to back the Bank. Spinelli won (though the vote was disputed); and it will now be interesting to see which side the Council of Ministers eventually prefers.

New Marshall Plan call

A European “Marshall Plan” between the present Community Nine and the three applicant countries and Turkey was the key point in a sceptical comment by European Conservative leader Geoffrey Rippon on the economic discussions at the Copenhagen summit. Action on that scale — led by Germany, the main beneficiary of the original Marshall Plan — could alone give the necessary injection of demand to the industries of the Nine and also help the applicants adapt to the economic obligations of membership.

More forcefully than most speakers, Mr. Rippon made clear that he had to be shown concrete results from the Copenhagen European Council, the succeeding meeting planned for Bremen and the wider economic conference also due in the summer. For the Nine to give each other aid “at the end of the day will only mean holding each other's hands while we are dying”. There was a glimmer of hope from the April 7-8 meeting, but, so far, no more.

Farm Prices: Consumers Win Again

The alliance between Socialists and European Conservatives which won through in the controversial vote on farm prices in March has held good again.

In the vote on Thursday, April 12, on the second part of the Commission's farm price proposals for

next year, the alliance again saw to it that the consumer viewpoint prevailed, and gave the Commission Parliament's support.

So much so that an angry Gaullist member, Michel Cointat, warned that if there were any “further attacks” on the CAP, the European Progressive Democrats (mainly representing French and Irish farming interests) would submit a censure motion.

The most contentious issue was the proposal to cut down intervention-buying in order to reduce surpluses. The Commission want to suspend intervention altogether on skimmed milk for six months next winter.

The Commission won much broader support in the House for proposals aimed at helping Mediterranean agricultural regions which will inevitably face even more problems as a result of enlargement.

But there was no joy for the British delegation in the vote (so close it had to be taken three times) on what has become known as the “baked beans” row.

The House decided in the end to continue with minimum prices for imports of tomato concentrate from outside The Community — despite British protests that this could endanger health standards, (see EPR Aug. 1977).

Question Time???

World Cup

President Andersen told John Prescott (Soc/UK) in reply to a question put by Willy Dondelinger (Soc/Lux) — that the Nine had sent a joint protest to Argentina concerning the violation of human rights there. He told Mr. Prescott that he was not in a position to guarantee the safety of Community citizens visiting Argentina for the World Cup. Nor, he told Tam Dalyell (Soc/UK) could he do anything to assist young Scots who hoped to leave at this time for South America and could not yet obtain World Cup tickets which would enable them to apply for the necessary visas.

Tough on cows

Some 15 per cent of current milk production can't be sold, according to Commissioner Gundelach. Does this mean, asked Ralph Howell (Con/UK) that there is “an excess of at least 3 million cows”? And added, in a somewhat sinister suffix, whether the Commissioner was satisfied “that adequate steps are being taken to deal with this situation”?

But fortunately for at least some of the cows, the Commissioner

was unwilling to hazard a guess as to how many of them would have to go.

Chocolates charged

Parliament struck another blow for the consumer on Monday, April 10 in a debate on chocolate.

Apparently children's calcium-phosphate ratio can be disturbed by eating chocplates containing large quantities of a substance called P_2O_5 — a neutralising agent used for making chocolate in Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom. The other Six use citric acid and tartaric acid.

Commissioner Henk Vredeling said he had “learnt many a lesson” from the highly technical report on the subject by Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection.

And he accepted that a Commission proposal be amended to allow for a review of the legislation on additives to be completed by July next year.

Pigeons in Peril

Each Member State must decide which areas are to receive aid from the Regional Development Fund, Commissioner Antonio Giolitti told the House on Friday April 14. Specifically, he told Guillaume Schyns (CD/Bel), who asked why Friuli had received no Community aid, that it was up to the Italian Government to allocate the funds. Tam Dalyell (Soc/UK) suggested the Commission be more forceful in publicising how it had helped Scotland. Could the Commissioner, he went on to ask, come to the aid of the pigeon-racing community in his own constituency? Pigeons were regularly arriving in North-Western France to begin the 500-mile race back to Scotland only to be shot down by the locals. The Commissioner replied that he indeed intended to visit Scotland in June but as to the pigeon question, it was, well, difficult to keep them in one region.

Still 100 per cent

In March Parliament passed 11 “Bills” (i.e. reports on Commission proposals). In only one case (an action programme on scientific documentation) were there any amendments; and all these have been accepted by the Commission.

MR NEJ

Voting in the European Parliament on all but touchy subjects like agricultural prices is usually *nem con.* — it is difficult, after all to disagree much on (e.g.) the laws of Member States or hot-water meters or statistical surveys on lemons.

No longer. In an arrangement made after the last Danish elections in September Progress Party Member Uve Jensen (who sat with the Progressive Democrats) has been replaced by Ib Christensen of the Land Reform Party, who sits as an independent. Precisely what land reforms he stands for has not so far become apparent in Parliament — but it has become clear that he is against almost everything else. In his maiden speech on Wednesday, he was opposed to direct elections; and throughout the rest of the session, whatever the vote was about, Mr. Christensen's arm was raised with the Noes — mostly alone.

And one day he might actually win. Parliament has got so used to unanimity that the burden of hand raising for the 'Ayes' is often left to dangerously few enthusiasts.



POPULAR VICTORY

How many people are there in the *Europäische Volkspartei* (which is what the Christian Democrats now call themselves)? The question is not about voting strength (that's roughly 40 million), but about spelling. In the German version, there's no problem, nor in the French, Italian, Danish or Dutch. Only in English is there a choice: between "European People's Party" (= the European party of the people) and "European Peoples' Party" (= the party of the European peoples).

For some time now, spellers have been divided into two factions, who might roughly be described as the Populists and the Federalists. Some Members of the Irish Fine Gael Party (the only English-speaking members of the Christian Democrat group, and therefore the only ones with more than an academic interest) were inclined to favour "s". But, whether by *fiat* of the translators or of some higher powers, the Populists have won: it's the "People's Party".

Maybe, however, it would have been better not to start there (i.e. in German) in the first place. A translation from the French or Italian might have produced the "European Popular Party". Just how popular would that prove?

270 PER CENT MARK-UP

More power to President Jenkins' elbow in his campaign for Monetary Union is provided by the recent experiences of one Member of the European public who tried to get hold of an official Community document. The price was 48 Belgian francs (81p.); it cost him £2.67. In addition to the price of the document, he had to pay some 93p. for sending the money across the exchanges, 53p. in bank charges and 40p. in other charges.

The fact that he was German (the experience is revealed in a written question from Socialist MP Hans Seefeld) makes it that much worse — he was starting off in a strong currency. What it would have cost a Briton or an Italian does not bear thinking about.

LIBS NEW LEADER

Although the Giscardien Centre increased the number of its seats in the French National Assembly in March, the elections were not an unalloyed triumph for them. Seats were gained, but some were lost, among them that in the Nord department of Jean Durieux, the leader of the European Parliament's hitherto 23-strong Liberal and Democrat Group.

Eight of the Liberals were French (though drawn from four separate parties) and the group have chosen another Frenchman to replace its departing leader. He is 54-year-old Senator Jean-François Pintat, who represents the Gironde region and who is also national secretary of the Republican Party — formerly the Independent Republicans. In French fashion Mr. Pintat maintains deep roots with his Bordeaux birthplace: apart from his European and national offices, he is also a member of the Aquitaine regional council and mayor of Soulac-sur-Mer.



POSTER COMPETITION



The winning design by Eric Moss of King James's Grammar School, Knaresborough, in North Yorkshire. The competition, organised by the Harrogate and district branch of the European Movement, was for a poster advertising the coming direct elections to the European Parliament.

STILL ON THE SEAT

While children get in some last-minute skateboarding on the site of the proposed new Parliament building in Luxembourg (see picture), opponents of the project have come with a new, ingenious attack. Danish Member of the Communist Group, Gert Petersen, is asking the Com-



mission whether "the construction of a 160m. high building about 800 metres from the approach path to an airport" would conform to international rules on "the building of skyscrapers near airports".

On the other hand, the lobby which favours the Luxembourg skyscraper has been drawing some comfort from the decision of the Copenhagen summit to site the new European Foundation in Paris. It's being suggested that, in exchange, the French have agreed not to insist on retaining Strasbourg as one of the Parliament's meeting places. Some MPs were even saying privately that the choice of a French architect for the new Luxembourg building may also have been a factor in the equation.

K.P.G.