

REPORT

Threat to race relations?

British MEP's fail to stop new immigration rules

A proposal from the Commission to introduce uniform controls within the Community on illegal immigration were variously described by British MEP's as "unnecessary", "unworkable", "insensitive" and "racialist" when Parliament debated the matter on Tuesday 10 October. They threatened, Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Con/UK) told the House, to "blow race relations in Britain apart". In spite of this, Parliament eventually voted to introduce the new regulations within a year.

The main bone of contention is the proposed introduction of a new offence of "illegal employment". The Commission has argued that employers in some Community countries often deliberately recruit and employ illegal immigrants because they can be forced to accept lower pay and worse conditions. Hence the need to supplement controls on entry by controls at place of work.

Mrs Kellett-Bowman and others, however, pointed out that this solu-

tion was quite inappropriate in Britain. The new controls could be interpreted to mean "the necessity of police raids on factories, in which dark-skinned or black immigrants would inevitably be the focus of attention". This would "sour relations between employers and workers", and "damage the employment chances of minority groups".



Dave Hill, Oscar James, Antony Brown in *GLOO JOO* at the Criterion Theatre. Photograph by Veronica Bennett

Gwyneth Dunwoody (Soc/UK) went so far as to describe the draft directive as an "unequivocally racist document"; and, while other Labour members did not agree, they thought it absurd to press for implementation in Britain within a year. "Is this a Parliament or is it Disneyland?", asked George Cunningham (Soc/UK).

Elaine Kellett-Bowman also noted one other defect in the proposal. "When we discussed this matter in committee, I was astounded to hear the representative of the Commission admit. . . that no talks of any sort, shape or kind had taken place with any immigrant groups in the United Kingdom. . ."

Speakers from other Community countries, like Commissioner Vredeling, however, emphasised that something had to be done at a Community level to combat illegal immigration. The new proposals, they pointed out, contained detailed measures to protect immigrant workers' rights; and all the British-proposed amendments were voted down.

Modest Budget vote

Parliament gave the Community Budget for 1979 a "first reading" on Wednesday 25 October, after voting on over 300 amendments to the Council's proposals. As it now stands, the Budget will allow £8,737 million of payments in 1979.

The result of the voting was a Budget somewhat smaller than had at first been forecast. It had been expected that Parliament would add some £650 million to the Council draft, bringing the total back to near what the Commission had originally suggested. In the event, commitments for payments were increased by £535 million, the main increases coming in the regional and social funds, and to energy and industrial policy. A special section of the Budget was opened for the Community's fisheries policy: e.g. support for the coast-guard services.

The reasons for Parliament's relative caution became clear in the opening speech by Budgets Committee rapporteur, Martin Bangemann (Lib/Ger). In the past, he pointed out, Parliament had voted sums of money for particular projects; but the money had not been spent, because Council had not adopted in time the legislation authorising the policy. This was a "dishonest situation", which had to be remedied; after all "the Budget itself is a legislative act". Later Budget Commissioner Christopher Tugendhat himself warned against writing specific sums into the Budget if the Commission



Martin Bangemann

was not actually in a position to spend the money. And Charles Fletcher-Cooke (UK), for the Conservatives, pointed out that it was the taxpayers, their constituents, whose money MEP's were proposing to spend. A lot of the figures were just "wild guesses".

One of the more lively parts of the debate took place on the votes for energy policy. Tam Dalyell (Soc/UK) suspected that the amount devoted to coal rather than nuclear energy was a sop to "dotty Danish demonstrators". Ex mine-manager Tom Ellis (Soc/UK) stoutly maintained that "the coal argument stands on its own merit — the Socialist Group supports coal". In this, he received the support of Commissioner Tugendhat on the grounds of import-saving: "what is cheapest today, is not always cheapest tomorrow".

The Budget now goes back to the Council of Ministers, which can accept or reject Parliament's amendments. In December it comes back for the "second reading", at which

Parliament has the power to overrule Council on non-agricultural spending. But with Parliament occupying a half-way position between the "big-spending" Commission and the "small-spending" Council, a satisfactory compromise is on the cards.

Lomé and Human Rights

One of the European Community's greatest successes — the Lomé Convention which links over 50 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries with the Community — comes up for re-negotiation next year. Not surprisingly, the coming negotiations were the main point of debate on 27-29 September, when European Parliament Members and representatives from the ACP countries met in Luxembourg at the ACP/EEC Consultative Assembly.

The presidency of the Assembly is shared by Parliament President Emilio Colombo and Mr Muna of Cameroon. In their opening speeches, both stressed the need for the Assembly to lay down guidelines for the negotiators. The Assembly had before it a detailed report by Mr Guillabert (Senegal) which had been approved earlier by the Assembly's Joint Committee (i.e. Bureau).

It was clear that certain points of disagreement existed. Representatives of ACP countries made it clear that something more would be needed than a mere re-negotiation of the existing Lomé Convention — and indeed, the title of the Guillabert report was changed to speak of "a new agreement" rather than a "renewal" of Lomé.

More contentious still was the issue of "human rights". President of the European Community Council, German Minister Dr Klaus von Dohnanyi, reflected the concern of European countries that the fundamental principles contained in the UN Charter and the Human Rights Convention should be respected. ACP speakers were insistent, however, that they would not accept any provisions in Lomé which interfered in their States' sovereign rights.

UK shows the way

The Community would not be able to move to a system of "own budgetary resources" based on a proportion of VAT until 1980, Vice-President Pierre Deschamps (CD/Belgium) told

the House in opening the first debate on Monday 9 October.

This meant that the Community's financial autonomy would come into effect five years behind schedule. The original Council decision in 1970 provided for a system of Community VAT to replace national contributions in January 1975.

Commissioner Burke admitted that so far only three nations — Belgium, Denmark and the UK — had passed the necessary legislation, and he praised Britain for setting an example in being the first to do so.

The Commissioner said it was still possible for the other governments to come into line by 1 January 1979 and threatened that the Commission would take to the Court of Justice those nations which failed to meet the deadline.

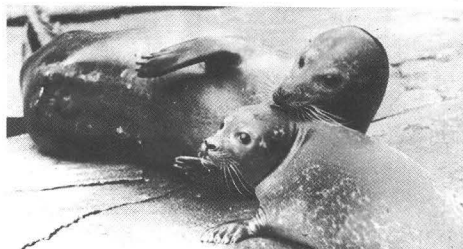
Regional committee chairman Lord Bruce (Soc/UK) conceded there was little Parliament could do except "visit Parliament's contempt and displeasure at the whole proceedings" and convey these feelings to the recalcitrant member governments.

Don't overdo it

"Doorsteps have many qualities but one of them is that they do not cross frontiers". Thus Sir Derek Walker-Smith (Con/UK) recalled British misgivings about recent proposals to curb doorstep trading. On Tuesday October 10 he warned against too liberal an interpretation of Article 100 of the Treaty of Rome which provides for harmonisation of legislation in the interests of the functioning of the common market. President Jenkins agreed that the Community had to establish priorities for action. Proposals, he went on, should justify the time and manpower needed to monitor them.

Saviour of seals?

Commissioner Finn Olav Gundelach told Tam Dalyell (Soc/UK) on Tuesday October 10 that the Community's responsibilities in regard to the living resources of the sea did extend to whales and seals; but that he had no legal basis for making representation to any Member State concerning



Seals for culling

seal-culling. He promised, however, to undertake a neutral investigation of the relationship between the grey seal population and stocks of fish. Mr Dalyell doubted that the seals had the same impact upon fish stocks as Russian factory ships and argued that indeed lobster fishing benefited from the presence of seals. John Corrie (Con/UK) called for a dispassionate approach.

Summertime

It would be much more rational and convenient if the Community could agree to introduce a common summertime, the House declared on Wednesday October 11. President-in-Office Klaus von Dohnanyi reported that there were several practical obstacles. For instance the Swiss had decided by referendum against the introduction of summertime and this would cause problems with train timetables. Commissioner Guido Brunner said that the measure would be particularly appropriate in the year of direct elections, but could not guarantee that a common summertime could be achieved by 1979.

Rules changes

At its third attempt (it needs at least 100 MEP's present and voting) the European Parliament passed a number of changes to its Rules of Procedure on Wednesday 25 October. In some cases, the change merely incorporates into the rules what is already in practice: notably the division of Question Time into three sections, Tuesday and Thursday for Commission questions, Wednesday for Council and Conference of Foreign Ministers. Others tighten up the procedure for fixing the agenda (Parliament has, on occasion, spent over an hour on the Monday of a sitting arguing about the order of business).

Other, more substantial changes are in the pipe-line.

Merchants of death

Arms limitation and disarmament are among the aims of the Community. President-in-Office of the Council, Klaus von Dohnanyi stated on Wednesday 11 October when the House debated Community policy towards the export of arms to areas of tension. Tom Normanton (Con/UK), however, did not feel that limiting the sale of arms served any useful

purpose. Third World countries would merely turn to alternative suppliers. "Influencing events is the name of the game", he went on.

Bob Edwards (Soc/UK) took a different view saying that Parliament's electorate in 1979 would look for more than the "miserable non-policy" which the Council was putting forward. Why was it not trying to curb the four governments of the Nine who were the "New merchants of war"? he asked. In reply Dr von Dohnanyi urged Member States to try to achieve arms limitation at United Nations or at national level.

Change of heart

The Commission have decided to rethink some of the proposals in their controversial defective products legislation.

The move follows the extended public argument over the proposed directive which seeks to establish the strict legal liability of producers of defective products.

Sir Derek Walker-Smith (Con/UK), chairman of the legal affairs committee which had questioned the whole legal basis of the proposals, told the House on Monday 9 October that the Commission was "prepared to undertake amendments". This was the result of informal discussions between Commissioner Davignon and members of the committee.

The committee's report has now been shelved until the Commission's new proposals are known.

The steel crisis

If the British Steel Corporation were a private company the directors would all be in gaol for manifestly trading whilst bankrupt, Tom Ellis (Soc/UK) told the House in a major debate on steel on Thursday 12 October.

His point was that if there was to be an effective plan to revive the Community steel industry, the surgery might have to be fairly drastic. And Mr Ellis questioned whether the Commission had the authority to impose such a plan.

Taking up the point about possible closures Winifred Ewing (Ind/UK) wanted to know which towns would be affected. Which would be Europe's new ghost towns?

But despite reservations about current policy, the House as a whole was behind the Commission's continuing attempts to manage the crisis and voted through a proposal for state aids to the steel industry to be brought

within a Community framework.

Commissioner Vouel said that if Member States took measures independently, the problems could simply be exported from one country to another. He told Tom Ellis that the Commission's aim was not to impose a plan for steel but to ensure a measure of coherence between Member States and the Community.



photo by Faruk Zabei, Hüriyet

Jim Spicer (Con/UK) and Sevin Korum (MP Istanbul) sum up for the press after a meeting in London from 25-28 October of EP members and Turkish parliamentarians. It was the first such meeting for two years to review the working of the association agreement between Turkey and the Community. The Turks left EP members in no doubt that they feel they deserve a "better deal" from the Community and the final communiqué called for a wide-ranging reappraisal of EEC-Turkish relations.

QUESTION TIME

Fish and more fish

Not for the first time, fishing dominated Question Time on Tuesday 10 October. So much so that at the end of the hour only Question Four had been reached and British members were still finding ways of raising the topic of supplementaries to other (non fishing) questions.

To a question about the French plan for "three wise men", Lord Kennet (Soc/UK) suggested that one of their qualifications should be to know one end of a fish from another.

And on the subject of enlargement, Gwyneth Dunwoody (Soc/UK) reminded the House that Spain had one of the biggest fishing fleets in the world.

Tom Dalyell even managed to extend what became a mini-debate on fish to cover the slaughter of the grey seals off Scotland.

But at the end of the hour it was at least British members, led by James Spicer (Con/UK), who called for more brevity in Question Time and more discipline from the chair in ruling members out of order.

And he was supported by that staunch defender of UK fishermen and Labour group leader, John Prescott, who wanted the committee on rules and procedure to suggest ways of giving the President more authority during Question Time.

Air traffic

President-in-Office of the Council Klaus von Dohnanyi told Sir Geoffrey de Freitas (Soc/UK) that an action programme for Community air traffic had been before the Council of Ministers since October 1975. He promised to tell Gwyneth Dunwoody (Soc/UK), when he had sufficient information, what the Council could do when the families of air crash victims failed to get compensation.

Scottish shipbuilding

Klaus von Dohnanyi also told Winnie Ewing (Ind/UK) that Community policy with regard to the shipbuilding industry (which rules that subsidies should be the same for all Member States) is not disadvantageous to Scotland or any other region. He attributed Japanese success in the field to management and planning rather than subsidies, he said.

Commission to report

The Commission will in future submit a written report to the House on action taken on Parliament's opinions on the Friday — or, at the latest, Monday morning — preceding each plenary session. Up to now Commissioners have simply made an oral report.

This new procedure is the result of pressure from members, in particular Lord Bruce (Soc/UK), who rose at the start of the session on Monday 9 October to thank Commission President Roy Jenkins for having taken action on the matter. He did add, however, that the October session was the fourth occasion since the original request was made that members had no written statement in front of them.

Presenting the October oral report, Commissioner Burke said the Commission had been able to accept Parliament's amendments in two out of three of the opinions where Parliament had called for changes during the September session.

The Commission had also taken note of a motion for a resolution concerning flood devastation in the Ossola region of Italy and would be making available emergency aid. There would also be aid for the victims of the earth tremor which struck Baden-Württemberg in September.

Strasbourg Euroville

With both Luxembourg and Brussels having announced plans to extend their 'Eurozones', Strasbourg, it seems, is determined not to be outdone. This month she published her own blueprint for a European future, reaffirming her determination to remain one of Parliament's main meeting places. The plans, unanimously approved by the town council, provide for a new complex linked by a passageway to the existing Palais de l'Europe. In addition to office space for members and staff, there are to be two 180-seat meeting chambers, an 'amphitheatre', restaurant and covered parking. Each of the 410-elected members is promised his or her own office. Work is scheduled to begin next March with completion set for Spring 1980.

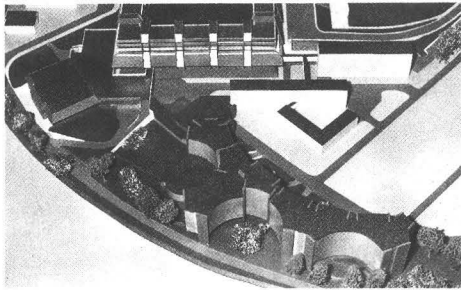


photo by Dernières Nouvelles d'Alsace

And if doubts persist about the capacities of either Luxembourg or Strasbourg to provide the necessary hotel accommodation and communication links, Strasbourg's mayor Pierre Pflimlin has been doing his best to dispel them. Faced with the prospect of a number of British MPs not being able to make the start of the October session because of fully-booked regular flights, Mr Pflimlin laid on a special *Air Alsace* charter. Less fortunate souls, it should be added, had to make the journey to Strasbourg via Basle.

Lingua Franca?

The head-scratching continues for solutions to the Community's 'language problem', which threatens to become even more daunting in the 80's. Three new member countries could mean 9 working languages, giving a total of 72 possible language combinations for the interpreters and translators to wrestle with. But at least there is one group which has no doubts about the answer — the Esperantists. At the start of the October plenary session their Brussels branch presented a petition to the Parliament on "the improvement of communication between the citizens of member states and officials of Community organisations". Just to make sure the message got through, it was written . . . in Dutch.

The real Jenkins

The *Guardian* had a nice little piece on 29 October about an article in *Le Monde* describing Peter Jenkins (who had another article in the *Guardian* on Monetary Union) as "President of the European Commission". But not only foreigners are confused. During a recent opinion survey carried out for the European Parliament in Britain, members of the public were asked to name any Member of the European Parliament. "Clive Jenkins, isn't he one of them?", was one of the few positive responses.

Europunks

There is, it appears, a growing surplus in the Community of actors, musicians and pop-stars. A survey conducted on behalf of the Commission by a Mrs Marie-Madeleine Krust has revealed that "employment in the theatre and in popular and classical music is shrinking at a disquieting rate".

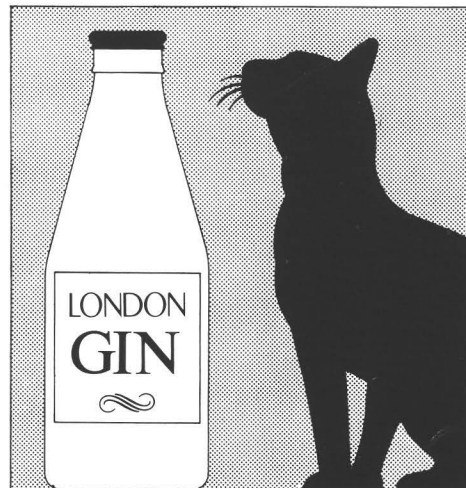
German Liberal MEP Kurt Jung now wants to know what the Commission is going to do about it (otherwise, why conduct a survey?).

Well, they could follow up the European Youth Orchestra with schemes for other age groups, and sponsor a few Euro-rock groups as well. And surely selection committees for European Elections could help out with the actors?

Pinta

Pocheen is one thing; but the latest in booze from Ireland is quite another. Mark Hughes (Soc/UK) ended the agricultural bit of Parliament's Budget debate in October by revealing that a creamery near Cork has come up with a method of making gin out of milk. Was it being subsidised out of the CAP milk vote or out of the CAP alcohol vote?

Subsequent research has revealed that the process is pretty costly and the result pretty lethal. What's more, the Irish are apparently not



drinking it themselves. The rest of us, however, might well have cause for worry, in Mark Hughes' own words, at how small the step seems to be from mother's milk to mother's ruin.

Chairperson

The ranks of would-be front-runners for the post of President of the directly-elected Parliament continue to swell. The latest name to be lined up alongside the likes of Willy Brandt and François Mitterand is that of FIAT boss, Giovanni Agnelli, who has however denied the rumours. There are also suggestions that one or two Commissioners might be thinking of entering the lists. But no one should count his chances before the ballots are hatched. Since the buggins-turn principle between the party groups broke down four years ago the Presidency has been keenly contested.

Heavy

The newly-elected Members of the European Parliament are in for something of a shock when the merry-making has died down next June, if the experiences of Mr R. L. Doble are anything to go by. Mr Doble has just been appointed U.K. local government representative of the Parliament's "sister" body, Economic and Social Committee; and he told a recent local government conference in York how he and other new EcoSoc members had weighed the documents they had each received through the post for their first meeting in Brussels. It came to exactly the same as their total baggage allowance on the plane out!

Jeux sans frontières

The French Centre for Civic Education is awarding a trophy to the European town which achieves the highest percentage poll in next year's European Elections. The competition will be open to any town with over 100,000 inhabitants; and the trophy itself, by the French sculptor Lorjou, will be a gilded bronze 1.80 metres high and weighing 200 kg.

There are clearly one or two problems to be solved: (i) in some countries, like Belgium and Luxembourg, voting is compulsory; while in Italy there are certain pressures that can be put on non-voters. (ii) In other countries, notably the United Kingdom, it will be difficult to determine the percentage poll by town (as opposed to constituency). (iii) What does one do with a 1.80 metre gilded bronze weighing 200 kg?

K.P.G.