

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

REPORT

First Meeting – Unruly but for Real

Both ceremony and acrimony marked the opening sitting of the elected European Parliament at its meeting in Strasbourg on 17–20 July. Ceremony was represented by inaugural speeches by the new President, Simone Veil, followed by those of Irish Premier Jack Lynch, President-in-Office of the Council of Ministers, of European Commission President Roy Jenkins and of the political group leaders. The acrimony arose from procedural wrangles which were interpreted on the one hand as the defence of the rights of independent Members and on the other as deliberate wrecking tactics. One thing was clear: the old, consensual, sometimes too cosy Parliament was of the past. A new, lusty, perhaps wayward infant had taken its place.

The new Parliament reflects the political choice of the 100 million Europeans who went to the polls on 7–10 June. The Socialists, though still the largest single group, now have only a narrow margin over the Christian Democrats – now known as the European People's Party. (Yet, notwithstanding proportional representation throughout the Community except in Great Britain, EPP candidates actually obtained more votes than Socialists.)

Third in size is the European Democratic Group, the newly renamed European Conservatives, whose 63 members have a handsome lead over both the Communists



First President of the elected European Parliament is Simone Veil (Liberal, France). Narrowly missing outright election in the first ballot on a field of five candidates, she succeeded in a runoff against two other candidates.

Born in Nice in 1927, Mrs Veil survived a Nazi concentration camp in her youth before graduating in law and political science. After a legal career she became French Minister of Public Health and Family Affairs, a post from which she resigned on election to the European Parliament.

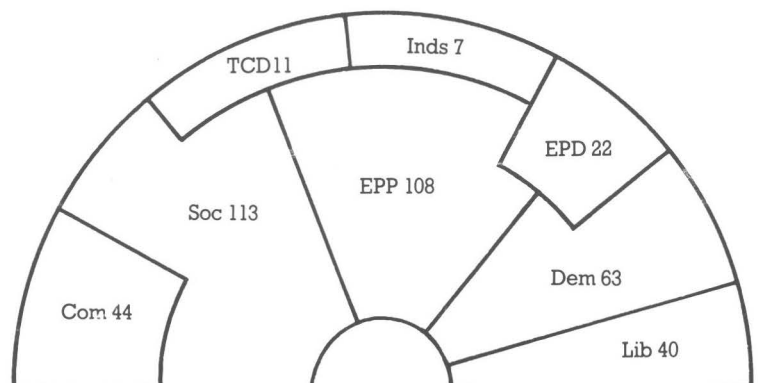
and Allies and the Liberal and Democrat Group. Smallest of the old groups is the European Progressive Democrats, drawn from France, Ireland, Denmark – and now also the United Kingdom, for Scottish National Member Winnie Ewing has surrendered her non-attached status.

But other non-attached Members were there in abundance: 23 at the beginning of the July plenary session against three in the old Parliament. And it was their role which contributed so much to the nature of the session. Under the existing rules of procedure a minimum of ten Members drawn from at least two countries can be recognised as a group with the right to a seat on the "enlarged Bureau" – the executive committee of the Parliament – and to a group secretariat financed from parliamentary funds. Before the house on 18 July was a motion to raise this minimum to 21, and it was to forestall this that eleven of the independents, including five Italian Radicals and other left-wingers and four Danes elected on an anti-Common Market ticket, formed the Group for the Technical Coordination and Defence of Groups and Non-Attached Members. It was an argument over their status, characterised by procedural delaying tactics, which emphasised the contrast with the old Parliament's normally decorous behaviour. But, irritated as many were by the disruption of the proceedings of what had promised to be a sitting consisting mainly of ceremony, there was a more philosophical view expressed that the events marked the emergence of a "real" parliament which would contribute actively to the resolution of serious issues relevant to the lives of the 260 million citizens of the Community and the millions more beyond its borders. It was recognised by more than one speaker that the relatively low turnout in the European elections (with the UK taking "the wooden spoon" in the words of Commission President Jenkins) reflected poorly on the policies the Community implemented and how it presented them to the public. The parliament, said European Democrat leader James Scott-Hopkins, will have to demonstrate that it "is something which is worth the electorate voting for and continuing to support."

Work begins

Having elected its officers, Parliament now looks beyond the Summer recess to the commencement of committee work at the beginning of September. The provisional dates for 1979 plenary sessions (all in Strasbourg) are: 24 – 28 September, 22 – 26 October, 12 – 16 November and 10 – 14 December. The major autumn task facing Parliament will be examination and amendment of the Community budget for 1980. This, of course, will cover agriculture and food expenditure, the regional and social funds, research and technology, overseas aid etc.

The Autumn may well see a by-election in the UK constituency of South-West London which is normally regarded as marginal by the parties. Although the group affiliation of some Members is provisional, and with two vacancies, the current strength of European political groups is as follows:



(2 Seats vacant. For Group Titles see page 2).

The Parliament: what now?

President Veil (Lib/F) "... It is for us, with a view to future elections, to draw up a single electoral system ... A responsible Parliament should not limit itself, in the drawing up of the budget, to fixing the amount of expenditure, but should also concern itself with how taxes are raised ... We know that historically it was through the control of supply that the first parliaments in the world evolved."

Ernest Glinne (Soc/Bel) "... The wish that the Council Presidency from now on take part in all the major debates in the Assembly ... the decision to hold direct elections was concomittant and coupled with the creation of the European Council, an institution which was not foreseen in the Rome Treaty, and whose intervention is only acceptable if the Assembly, after its election, becomes a real counterweight."

Leo Tindemans (EPP/Bel) "... This Parliament, in co-operation with the Commission and the Council, must find a new equilibrium, and must make proposals and take initiatives which can be discussed with the other bodies of the Community and we also hope, be implemented."

James Scott-Hopkins (Dem/UK) "... It is wrong to assume that any extension of our powers would automatically be at the expense of national parliaments ... In matters relating to external agreements there is inadequate provision for any form of democratic control either in the drawing up of the Commission's negotiating mandate or at the conclusion of these negotiations. National parliaments have little, if any, power in this area ...

"... Individually, Ministers are responsible to their national parliaments, and they should remain so, of course. But the Council itself is responsible to no one."

Enrico Berlinguer (Com/It) "... None of the groups in this Assembly attempts to hide its internal differences ... the Italian Communist Party is in favour of greater powers (for the Parliament), but the French Communist Party is against."

Martin Bangemann (Lib/Ger) "... When complaints are made about bureaucracy in this Community, it is not only about bureaucracy at the level of the Commission, or at the legislative level, but it is a problem within the Council itself ..."

Michel Debré (EPD/F) "... The role of an Assembly like ours is not primarily to support an administration, be it that of the Commission, against the national governments ... Our role is first of all to watch over intergovernmental action in its European capacity ..."

Else Hammerich (TCD/Dk) "... We

have not come here to sabotage this Assembly's work ... We want to alter Denmark's complete relationship with the European Community into a general trading arrangement."

Willy Brandt (Soc/Ger) said the Parliament now had to prove its usefulness. It should be a forum where views can be expressed on matters closely affecting the voters of Europe. He proposed that the Parliament should hold more open hearings, and suggested that the first opportunity could be taken this autumn, prior to the Madrid East-West Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Paddy Lalor (EPD/Irl) "... This Assembly must be accorded its rightful place in the legislative process."

Colette Flesch (Lib/Lux) complained that the new European Development Fund for overseas aid was not included in the Community budget and that the Parliament had no control over it.

Roy Jenkins, Commission President: "... We believe that it is important from the outset that there should be the opportunity for wider and earlier discussion of major proposals which we take to the Council. Here it seems to us essential that there should be a greater understanding of important issues at a Community level, and we would be willing to prepare, where appropriate, discussion documents as a basis of parliamentary debate of broad policy issues in advance of formulating proposals for the Council."

The Political Groups

Socialist Group (Soc)

Chairman:
Ernest Glinne (Bel)

Vice-chairmen:
Ludwig Felbermaier (Ger)
Claude Estue (F)
Barbara Castle (UK)
Pietro Lezzi (I)
Jen van den Heuvel (NL)

Group of the European People's Party (EPP)

Chairman:
Egon Alfred Klepsch (Ger)

Vice-chairmen:
Maria Louisa Cassarmanago
Gerrotti (I)
Willem Vergeer (NL)

European Democratic Group (Dem)

Chairman:
James Scott-Hopkins (UK)

Vice-chairmen:
Poul Møller (DK)
Basil de Ferrant (UK)
Lady Elies (UK)

Communist and Allies Group (Com)

Chairman:
Giorgio Amendola (It)
Vice-chairmen:
Gustave Aisart (F)

Liberal and Democratic Group (Lib)

Chairman:
Martin Bangemann (Ger)

Vice-chairmen:
Jean-François Pintat (F)
Vincenzo Battista (I)
Cornelis Berkhouwer (NL)
André Damsseaux (Bel)
Tove Nielsen (DK)
Colette Flesch (Lux)

Group of European Progressive Democrats (EPD)

Chairman:
Christian de la Malène (F)

Vice-chairmen:
Patric Lalor (Irl)
Kai Nyborg (DK)
Winifred Ewing (UK)

Group for the Technical Coordination and Defence of Groups and Non-Attached members (TCD)

Bureau:
Marco Pannella (It)
Sven Skovmand (DK)



Barbara Castle

James Scott-Hopkins

Dinosaurs

Energy was the dominant theme of Thursday's debate on the result of the

European Council meeting in Strasbourg and the Irish turn as President of the Council of Ministers. The energy problem, said Commission President Roy Jenkins "could not merely damage our economies, but bring them into a state of dislocation or collapse within the next decade". Countries which failed to "break the link between economic growth and the consumption of oil" would become the "dinosaurs of the industrial world" of the 1990s.

The need for a common energy policy was underlined by Willi Brandt (Soc/Ger), Egon Klepsch (EPP/Ger), James Scott-Hopkins (Dem/UK), Giorgio Amendola (Com/It) and Jean-François Pintat (Lib/F) and Paddy Lalor (EPD/Irl). The solidarity shown in Strasbourg should be translated into concerted Community action. Among the most frequently cited measures were energy conservation schemes and a reduction in consumption, development of alternative energy sources, diversification of supplies and more meetings between producers and consumers, including those from the Third World, and control over multinational oil companies. Economic growth was needed to cure unemployment. This was impossible until energy problems were solved.

The excessive cost of the common agricultural policy — currently some three quarters of the Community budget — also figured largely in the debate. As James Scott-Hopkins put it, "we cannot go on as we are ...". The present arrangements for spending taxpayers' money on storage and disposal of surpluses were "lunacy". The Council had not done well: the Commission had done even worse. And the Irish Foreign Minister Michael O'Kennedy was reminded by Mr Pintat that this problem had been left to his presidency for a solution.

Identity, natality and legality

The role of the oldest member is traditionally a formal one — chairing the presidential election and delivering a short speech suitable to the occasion. Despite her years, however, 86 year old French Gaullist suffragette Mme Louise Weiss was firm, energetic and outspoken. Following a long day which included her own hour-long speech and many hours of elections, chairing the credentials committee and umpiring procedural squabbles, she justly earned the title of "une vraie présidente". After describing the leading promoters of the European idea across many countries she brought laughter when she quoted "that true European" Count Hermann von Kayserling's "broadside" caricature of European nationalism: "the Briton, half lion,

half wolf, but an inoffensive gentleman once his aims were secured; the German, for whom things were more important than people, and who could not thus resist a certain collective nostalgia; the Italian who looked on the theatre and the stage as an end in itself; the Frenchman, incapable of understanding that others might wish to be different from himself, and wedded to his definitions like a scourge to his fetishes". And so to the present, and the role of Parliament. Europe, she acknowledged faced real problems such as energy.

"A handful of sons of the desert can, from the outside, destroy a civilisation to which they owe their wealth, while Europe, even impoverished, increasingly proclaims her solidarity with the underprivileged of our common Vale of Tears."



Dame Louise Weiss

Members, however, should look beyond money and energy and the Treaties of Paris and Rome. "Community institutions", she added, "have produced European sugarbeet, butter, cheese, wines, calves and even pigs. They have not produced Europeans." There should be European education, an orchestra, sports teams — "a ball travels further than a shell", she said. The low European birthrate, too, was frightening. Could there not be more European children and a revival of family values? The third area of concern should be Parliamentary advocacy of Human Rights. In short, "identity, natality and legality" should be the themes, Members held the tinders to rekindle "the flames of conscience, life and law".

An unruly House

Changes to the European Parliament's rule book, though weighty enough to need a quorum vote, usually provoke debates esoteric in nature and speedily wound up. On Thursday 19 July the newly-formed Group for Technical Coordination and Defence of Groups and Independent Members saw as a fight for survival their attempt to defeat a move to increase the minimum size of a group from 10 to 21 Members, thus retaining the principle of a minimum 5% membership. For the Group Italian Radical Marco Pannella managed to secure three time-consuming roll-call votes on the

position of the report in question on the day's agenda.

Rapporteur Rudolf Luster (EPP/Ger) opened the debate which took place in the early hours of Friday morning to defend the motion. Winifred Ewing (EPD/UK), however, spoke in defence of smaller groups. She could see no inherent merits in size, she said. Faced with the prospect of voting on the hundred-odd amendments tabled by Mr Pannella the House agreed on Friday 20 July to send the report back to the Rules Committee.

Was the filibuster just a Pyrrhic victory? No, Mr Pannella and his colleague Italian Radical Emma Bonino affirmed at a press conference on Friday morning. They had succeeded in defending democracy, they said. Asked about an attempt by several larger groups to secure for them more generous facilities, they could not be bought, they replied.

UK Members on Committees

1. Political Affairs Committee (41 Members)

Lord Bethell (Con/Dem)
The Baroness Elies (Con/Dem)
Adam Fergusson (Con/Dem)
Christopher Jackson (Con/Dem)
Alf Lomas (Lab/Soc)
James Scott-Hopkins (Con/Dem)

2. Committee on Agriculture (39)

Robert Battersby (Con/Dem)
Barbara Castle (Lab/Soc)
David Curry (Con/Dem)
Paul Howell (Con/Dem)
Sir Henry Plumb (Con/Dem)
James Provan (Con/Dem)
Joyce Quin (Lab/Soc)

3. Committee on Budgets (37)

Richard Balfe (Lab/Soc)
Eric Forth (Con/Dem)
Brian Hord (Con/Dem)
Robert Jackson (Con/Dem)
Lord O'Hagan (Con/Dem)
John M. Taylor (Con/Dem)
Fred Tuckman (Con/Dem)

4. Committee on Economic & Monetary Affairs (37)

Neil Ballou (Con/Dem)
Richard Caborn (Lab/Soc)
Basil de Ferranti (Con/Dem)
Narvela Forster (Con/Dem)
William Hopper (Con/Dem)
Sir David Nicolson (Con/Dem)
Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Con/Dem)
Allan Rogers (Lab/Soc)

5. Committee on Energy & Research (34)

Geordan Adams (Lab/Soc)
Peter Beazley (Con/Dem)
The Marquess of Douro (Con/Dem)
Michael Gallagher (Lab/Soc)
Tom Norman (Con/Dem)
Rev. Ian Paisley (DUP Ind)
John Purvis (Con/Dem)
Mark Seelman (Con/Dem)
Sir Peter Varneck (Con/Dem)

6. Committee on External Economic Relations (36)

Sir Fred Catherwood (Con/Dem)
John de Courcy Ling (Con/Dem)
Edward Kellert-Bowman (Con/Dem)
Barry Seal (Lab/Soc)
Sir John Stewart-Clark (Con/Dem)
Michael Welsh (Con/Dem)

7. Legal Affairs Committee (25)

Ian Dalziel (Con/Dem)
Thomas Megahy (Lab/Soc)
Dr. Christopher Prosser (Con/Dem)
Aredede Turner (Con/Dem)
Alan Tyrrell (Con/Dem)

8. Committee on Social Affairs & Employment (27)

Roland Boyes (Lab/Soc)
Beata Brookes (Con/Dem)
Ann Clwyd (Lab/Soc)
Derek Prag (Con/Dem)
Tom Spencer (Con/Dem)
James Spicer (Con/Dem)

9. Committee on Regional Policy & Regional Planning (29)

Winifred Ewing (SNP/EPD)
Winston Griffiths (Lab/Soc)
David Harris (Con/Dem)
John Hume (SDLP Soc)
Alasdair Hutton (Con/Dem)
Elaine Kellert-Bowman (Con/Dem)
John D. Taylor (OUP Dem)

10. Committee on Transport (25)

Richard Cottrell (Con/Dem)
Lord Harmer Nicholas (Con/Dem)
Brian Key (Lab/Soc)
James Moorhouse (Con/Dem)
Robert Moreland (Con/Dem)

11. Committee on the Environment, Public Health & Consumer Protection (27)

Ken Collins (Lab/Soc)
Cloria Hooper (Con/Dem)
Stanley Johnson (Con/Dem)
William Newson Dunn (Con/Dem)
Dr Alexander Sherlock (Con/Dem)

12. Committee on Youth Affairs, Culture, Education, Information & Sport (27)

Janey Buchanan (Lab/Soc)
Ben Patterson (Con/Dem)
Peter Price (Con/Dem)
Anthony Simpson (Con/Dem)

13. Committee on Development & Cooperation (27)

Detlef Enright (Lab/Soc)
John Marshall (Con/Dem)
Andrew Pearce (Con/Dem)
Richard Simmonds (Con/Dem)
Sir Fred Warner (Con/Dem)

14. Committee on Budgetary Control (27)

Robert Battersby (Con/Dem)
Edward Kellert-Bowman (Con/Dem)
Brian Key (Lab/Soc)
Peter Price (Con/Dem)
John M. Taylor (Con/Dem)

15. Committee on the Rules of Procedure & Petitions (27)

Ben Patterson (Con/Dem)
Dr Christopher Prosser (Con/Dem)
Allan Rogers (Lab/Soc)
Aredede Turner (Con/Dem)
Alan Tyrrell (Con/Dem)

refugees. Lord Bethell (Dem/UK) reported that in June about 100,000 boat people had perished and urged that Community food aid to Vietnam be diverted to refugees. Alf Lomas (Soc/UK) said that his group insisted that food aid to Vietnam should continue.

STOP PRESS: As a result of Parliament's resolution, President Veil sent a cheque for US\$1,368,430 to the UN Commissioner for Refugees.

The Bureau

The President, Vice-Presidents and Group leaders (see page 2) constitute the "enlarged Bureau" — the executive committee — of the Parliament. Politically, it now comprises six Socialists, five EPP, three Democrats, two Liberals, two Communists, one Progressive Democrat and one independent. By nationality, five are French, four German, four Italian, three British, two Belgian, one Dutch and one Danish.

The President and Vice-Presidents were elected as follows:

President: Bruno Fredrich (Soc/Ger)

Simone Veil (Lab/F)

Gerard Jaquet (Soc/F)

Anne Vondeling (Soc/NL)

Mario Zagari (Soc/It)

Poul Møller (Dem/Dk)

Allan Rogers (Soc/UK)

Pierre Pflimlin (EPP/F)

Danielle Demarch (Com/F)



Allan Rogers

Basil de Ferranti

Money for 1980

"The annual budget debates reflect the central political judgements on which the Community is based." It was in this spirit that Commissioner Christopher Tugendhat presented the Commission's preliminary proposals for the 1980 Budget on Friday 20 July. Reminding Members that the Budget was financed by their electors he expressed the hope that action in spheres such as regional development and aid to the underprivileged should receive finance exclusively from Community funds. This year the VAT rate was 0.74%, below the 1% limit set by the "Own Resources" decision of April 1970.

"It is better to give than to receive", conceded John M. Taylor (Dem/UK); but, he went on, there was a serious imbalance in the contributions made by Member States. There should be seen to be fairness, he said.

Q and non-A

An indication of the Council's "openness" to Parliament was given in a written answer during the election campaign. Asked what national aids existed in the potato sector the Commission replied "The Member States have requested that the information sought remain confidential. The Commission therefore regrets..." So does the questioner, Maurice Dewulf (Past Member, CD/Bel).

Boat People

The Community had prompted the UN Conference in Geneva on 20 and 21 July, Council President Michael O'Kennedy told the House late in the evening of 19 July. Commissioner Claude Cheysson said the Community was ready to meet half the cost of food aid for refugees, and that Member States had taken in 60,000

Informal sitting

10 seats in the Parliament chamber were occupied for a few minutes during the lunch recess on Wednesday 18 July by a delegation from the British Liberal Party led by MP Russell Johnston. This symbolic protest, said the former European Member, was to "claim the ten seats which the Liberals could have won if proportional representation had been used for the European Elections in the UK. The Chairman of the European Liberal and Democratic Group Martin Bangemann (Ger) called for a unified system of proportional representation to be used throughout the Community for the next European elections in 1984. But could it be an STV system as in Ireland or national or regional lists as used elsewhere? As yet, however, there are no European Parliament proposals to break either the 5% Rule of minimum votes for party representation (e.g. Germany, France) or, what Mr Johnston described as the "undemocratic two party dominance of British politics".

Die Grünen ausgesperrt

900,000 votes yet the Green Parties are excluded. This was the protest on the banners of the German ecologists who managed to secure places at the front of the public gallery on Tuesday 17 July and caught the attention of television crews in the nearby press gallery filming the inaugural session.

Roundhead or Cavalier?

Is the Parliament's role to criticise and try to control the Commission or the Council of Ministers? Views differ. In a BBC television interview Barbara Castle (Soc/UK) argued that it was to go for the Commission, which was not elected, whereas the Council was composed of Ministers responsible to national parliaments. Altiero Spinelli (Com/It) disagreed. He likened the position to 17th century England with the Council of Ministers as a king which made executive and legislative decisions and the European Parliament as a rather weak parliament. In championing the Council he told Barbara Castle: you are of the King's party; I am of the Parliamentary party.

Mesdames et Messieurs

17 July was very much Ladies' Day anyway, with Madame Weiss presiding over the eventual election of Madame Veil. Having called Emma

Bonino (TCD/It) as the first speaker, Madame Weiss can perhaps be forgiven for aberrantly addressing several of the ensuing — male — speakers as 'Madame'. "You can tell what a feminist I am", she explained. And as one of the Members pointed out more than half the voters were women.

Stay awhile!

Flags and flowers everywhere, a concert of Beethoven's 9th Symphony, banquets, special charter planes, taxis, canal boat trips in and out of town and what Willi Brandt called "the fresh air of Strasbourg" were just some of the elements of the Alsatian welcome for the new Parliament. The local tourist office found three thousand rooms for Members, staff, journalists, and guests and visitors. The security police frequently in evidence were even seen disguised in old Renaults. The telephones worked, the weather held and even sales notices in shops appeared in several languages. Many Members were suggesting that such facilities and lavish food if repeated throughout the Autumn sessions would bode ill for Luxembourg whose new European Parliament chamber is not due for completion until the New Year. With five French Members including the Mayor of Strasbourg but no Luxembourgier elected to Parliament's twenty-strong controlling Bureau, it looks as though the Alsatian capital's bid for the seat is now stronger.

Interrogation by TV



In summer Parliament's cavernous chamber is normally a cool refuge from the sun. But with Europe watching the proceedings, suited Members spent much of the week sweltering under television lights. One Member, Lord Bethell (Dem/

UK) brought loud applause when he called for some respite from being subjected all day to this "police interrogation".

Déjà les vices...

The reaction to Parliament's opening session was mixed. Some 716 journalists and many television vans and units had made the journey to Strasbourg. But with the closely fought elections taking up much of the week and with parliamentary manoeuvring taking precedence over formal ceremony it was to the rumours in the lobbies that many turned for copy. And with hours to wait between votes Members were happy to discuss political 'deals' and even expenses with the press. The previous Friday's headline in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* "Fehlstart in Strasbourg" proved somewhat prophetic. Few, however, would agree totally with *Le Républicain Lorrain* "Les neuf ont raté leur première." As "the Euro-MP's take their seats to change history" (*The Guardian*) perhaps *L'Aurore* captured the spirit of the week with "Déjà les vices d'un vrai parlement ..."

H & C to Lux

Latest suggestion for solving Members' travel problems comes from Southampton. An expert in operating expeditions to Mexico and Guatemala offers a 12-passenger Mercedes which comes complete



with airline seats, cooker, fridge, hand basin, H & C, and WC. The 81 members, their staff and families and "unlimited baggage" are offered a door-to-door service in air-conditioned and cosy comfort (run, presumably, on military lines as he stresses his Marine officer background).

Coming of age

For five years we have endeavoured in European Parliament Report to generate interest, particularly in plenary sessions. Parliament is now larger and better known: media coverage has increased. We hope in future publications to answer the growing need for more specific information on its many activities.

K.P.G.