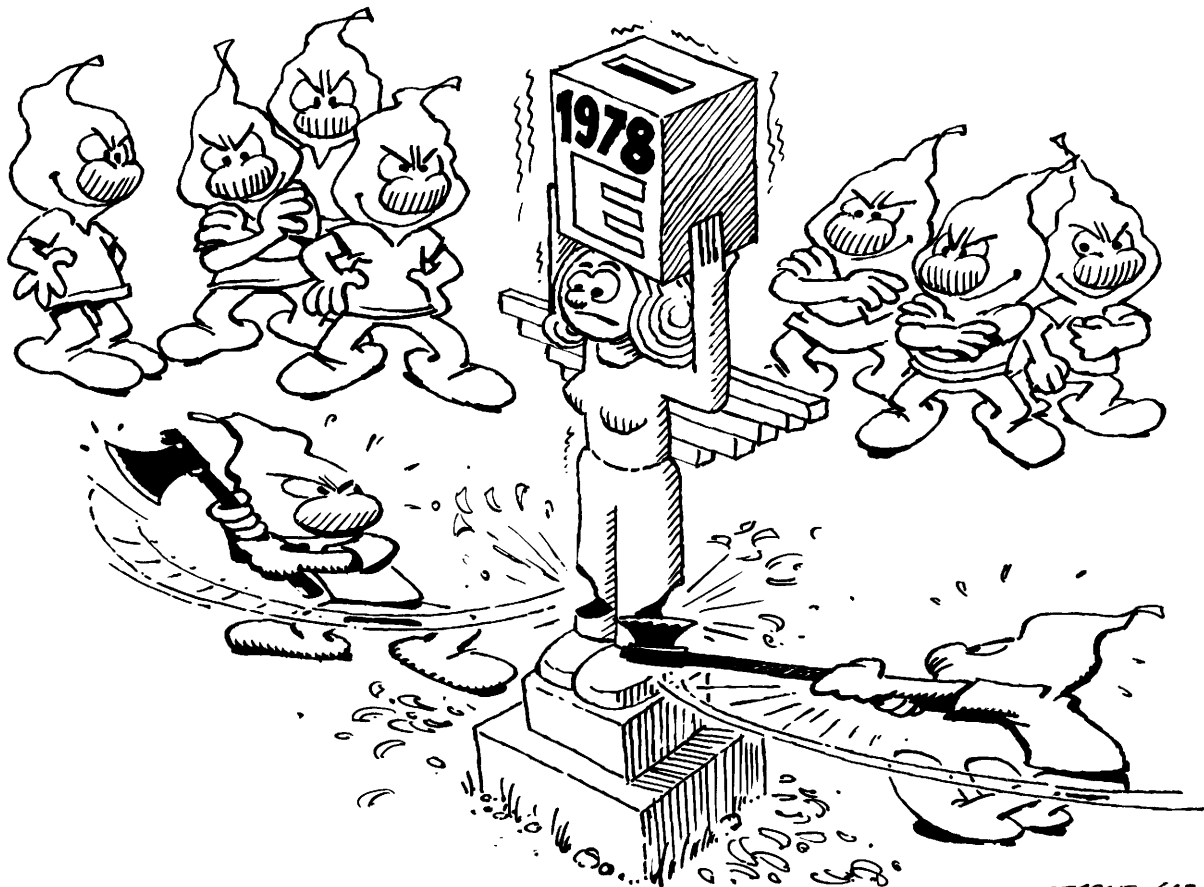


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MATARNE / 13

EURO-WHITE AND THE NINE DWARFS

Episode Twelve: Remember how happy they were when the goddess promised to open her Sacred European Ballot Box in 1978? Will she keep her promise? How would they react to another postponement?

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The information published in this bulletin covers, very freely, different aspects of the European Communities' activity. It is, therefore, not limited to recording official Commission decisions or opinions.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- * Parliament echoes public disappointment (p. 3)
- * Consumer price index (p. 3)
- * Justice for women (p. 3)
- * Europe at sixes and sevens (p. 4)
- * A consumer "Summit" (p. 4)
- * Beer: there's many a slip ... (p. 4)
- * External relations (p. 5)
- * Chemical pollution of the Rhine (p. 5)
- * Sea transport: the storm gathers (p. 5)
- * Just out (p. 6)

**** PARLIAMENT ECHOES PUBLIC DISAPPOINTMENT**

There were few smiling faces to be seen in the corridors and conference rooms of the European Parliament the other week. In a stormy session Members echoed the disappointment of the general public at the outcome of the European Council of Heads of State and of Government of the Nine held in Luxembourg.

In ANNEX 1, Euroforum describes the highlights of the session.

**** CONSUMER PRICE INDEX**

The latest figures from the Statistical Office of the European Communities show that the consumer price index (1970 = 100) stood as follows at the end of February 1976:

| | <u>February 1976</u> | <u>January 1976</u> | <u>Increase January/ February 1976</u> | <u>Increase February 1975/ February 1976</u> |
|----------------|----------------------|---------------------|--|--|
| Belgium | 158.5 | 158.0 | 0.3% | 10.0% |
| Denmark | 160.0 | 158.9 | 0.7% | 5.2% |
| France | 161.0 | 159.9 | 0.7% | 9.5% |
| Germany | 139.2 | 138.2 | 0.7% | 5.5% |
| Ireland | 206.2 | | 7.3% ¹ | 16.0% ² |
| Italy | 185.1 | 181.1 | 2.2% | 11.8% |
| Luxembourg | 151.3 | 150.5 | 0.5% | 10.8% |
| Netherlands | 159.4 | 158.0 | 0.9% | 9.5% |
| United Kingdom | 204.8 | 202.4 | 1.2% | 22.8% |

¹Change between 15 November 1975 and 15 February 1976.

²Change between 15 February 1975 and 15 February 1976.

**** JUSTICE FOR WOMEN**

Women throughout Europe will welcome a recent judgment given by the Court of Justice of the European Communities. A Miss Defrenne had invoked Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome - which enshrines the principle that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work - to claim the same severance grant from her employer as that which would have been paid to a male employee with similar qualifications and the same number of years' service. The Labour Court of Brussels referred the matter to the Court of Justice which has found in favour of Miss Defrenne. If readers are to appreciate the full significance of this ruling, it should perhaps be explained that, in theory, Article 119 has been applicable in the six original Member States of the Community since 1962 and in the three new Member States since 1973. In practice, however, it has been paid little more than lip-service by most Member States. The necessary legislation has not been passed and it was only in February 1975 that the Community's Council of Ministers adopted a directive in the matter.

Now it seems that even this may cause problems since Ireland has already asked the Commission for an additional period of grace.

In its ruling the Court of Justice points out that Article 119 should have been applied from 1962 onwards and that the various arrangements agreed between Member Governments have no legal foundation. Three conclusions can be drawn from the Court's decision: firstly, Article 119 can be invoked directly by individuals in national courts which must uphold it; secondly, the directive adopted in 1975 in no way releases Member States from obligations which date from 1962 for the Six and from 1973 for the Three; thirdly, Article 119 can only be cited in appeals or complaints lodged before 8 April 1976. This last stipulation is designed to prevent an avalanche of claims from women who feel that the negligence of national authorities or employers give them grounds for complaint.

**** EUROPE AT SIXES AND SEVENS**

The change-over to summer time in France has caused a lot of trouble in Belgium. For the first few days, Belgians were still setting their watches by French commercial radio stations with disastrous results and the French who travel to or work in Belgium were annoyed to find that they had to wait an extra hour for restaurants and cafés to open. But this confusion does strengthen the case of those - and they are growing in number - who would like to see the European Commission's proposal on summer time adopted. Agreement may well be on the way. It will not be easy for Mr Callaghan's Government to persuade the British to accept any major change in the summer time pattern: the tradition goes back to 1916 after all! But time is running out: the railways must get to work on their 1977 timetables by May at the latest.

**** A CONSUMER "SUMMIT"**

Something like a hundred representatives of consumer associations in the nine Community countries are expected to attend a conference on consumer protection problems which the European Commission will be organizing towards the end of 1976.

**** BEER: THERE'S MANY A SLIP ...**

The European Commission may well put forward a proposal for a directive on beer before the end of 1976. The directive would be designed to approximate national legislation and remove technical barriers to the free movement of beer. Although beer has been on the Community agenda since 1969, the accession of Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom raised a number of new problems and delayed presentation of a proposal. The Commission is proceeding very cautiously in this sensitive area: Europe is unlikely to be popular with beer-drinkers deprived of their favourite beer! For this reason the Commission feels that its motto here must be "slowly but surely".

**** EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

The European Community commands 30% of international financial resources and provides 40% of international aid to developing countries. These figures were given by Sir Christopher Soames, Vice-President of the European Commission, at a recent meeting of the Community's Economic and Social Committee. He emphasized that the Community's external policy should not be viewed as a mere extension of the foreign policies of the nine Member States: it had a life of its own. The Community had an advantage in that it was a relative newcomer on the international diplomatic scene; unlike the Member States, the Community was not bound by a reputation - good or bad - or a long tradition in the field of diplomacy.

Sir Christopher told the meeting that relations with the United States, Japan, Canada and Mexico had been stabilized. As to relations with communist countries, he said that China had shown considerable interest in the prospect of a united Europe and that the European Commission hoped to present proposals for a trade agreement with it in the near future. He reminded the meeting that a draft agreement proposed by COMECON in February was still being examined by senior officials.

**** CHEMICAL POLLUTION OF THE RHINE**

The Convention for the Protection of the Rhine against Chemical Pollution, on which broad agreement was reached at a recent ministerial conference in Paris, may well be signed by the European Community as such. This is a particularly encouraging development for the European Commission and the Community since it comes in the wake of a decision by the Community's Council of Ministers to adopt the outlines of a directive to reduce pollution caused by dangerous substances discharged into the aquatic environment. Indeed it can be said that prior agreement at Community level made adoption of the Convention possible: the text approved in Paris is in fact virtually identical with that of the Community directive.

**** SEA TRANSPORT: THE STORM GATHERS**

The European Commission is seriously concerned about the current sea transport crisis. Since 90% of the Community's external trade is carried by sea this is hardly surprising. It seems that steps being taken by foreign governments are tending to restrict freedom to provide shipping services - so much so in fact that the Community's interests are being adversely affected. Because an increasingly high proportion of freight is being reserved to national shipping lines, Community shipping companies are being faced with a loss (actual and potential) of earnings: in fact their share of world shipping has already dropped from 40% in 1958 to 24% in 1975. Between them the Community's shipping companies have a turnover of something like 13 000 million u.a. units of account (1 u.a. = approx. US \$1.2) and a work force of 300 000. It is obviously vital to the Community economy that they should survive and compete on a market where competition is unrestrained.

**** JUST OUT**

The LIST OF RAILWAY STATIONS in the European Community fills more than 130 pages of a recent SOEC publication. The transport region code, and the national code if any, is given for each station. The list is available from the Publications Office of the European Communities, Boite Postale 1003, Luxembourg.

The health problems posed by the toxicity of VINYL CHLORIDE MONOMERS were discussed at a seminar organized by the European Commission in Brussels in September 1974. The proceedings of this meeting have now been published and can be obtained from the European Commission, Health Protection Directorate, 23, avenue Monterey, Centre Louvigny, Luxembourg.

The European Community has just published a study on the PRODUCTION OF STEAM AND ELECTRICITY by nuclear power stations - No 8 in its "Industry Series". There has been a tendency to think of nuclear power stations purely in terms of electricity generation. But if they could be geared to produce steam and hot water for industry and district heating the Community could be saving 10 to 30 million tonnes of oil a year by the end of the next decade. The study can be obtained from the Publications Office of the European Communities, Boite Postale 1003, Luxembourg.

PARLIAMENT ECHOES PUBLIC DISAPPOINTMENT

Despite the spring flowers and burgeoning trees which were clearly visible from the Kirchberg there were few smiling faces in the corridors and conference rooms when the European Parliament met in Luxembourg from 5 to 9 April. The atmosphere was decidedly chilly from the very outset when Parliament asked that a deputation, composed of chairmen of the political groups and led by its President, Mr Spénale, be sent to the Community's Council of Ministers to express Parliament's disappointment at the outcome of the European Council of Heads of State and of Government of the Nine held in Luxembourg a few days previously - on 1 and 2 April to be precise.

Mr Spénale read a declaration in which Parliament stated that, logically, the heads of government should have made a statement on the forthcoming European elections; the subject had been well-aired, the principle had been accepted and silence could only damage the European Council's credibility. The Members of the European Parliament felt that failure to reach a decision on a political issue of this kind shed doubts on the ability of the heads of government to solve other, equally difficult problems in the economic and social fields.

The deputation and the ministers

On the Tuesday morning the deputation, led by Mr Spénale, presented this declaration to Mr Gaston Thorn, Prime Minister of Luxembourg and President-in-Office of the Council of Ministers. The deputation expressed the view that elections would not be held in May/June 1978 unless an early decision was taken. The "promise made to the people of Europe" had to be kept. Mr Thorn told the deputation that the European Council would definitely take a decision in July.

Mr Bertrand, Chairman of the Christian Democrat Group, felt that there was no need to wait for a "Summit". There was nothing in the Treaties to stop the Council of Foreign Ministers taking a decision on direct elections to the European Parliament. He only hoped the decision would be taken as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, back in the House, it was "business as usual". The European Parliament heard Dr Hillery, Vice-President of the Commission, present its report on the social situation in the Community in 1975.

Mr Thorn to the fore

But Parliament's discontent flared up again on the Wednesday when Mr Gaston Thorn reported on the European Council which he himself had attended as Prime Minister of Luxembourg. He said that three positive decisions had been taken on the economic and monetary front: firstly, the nine heads of government had recognized the need to push ahead with economic and monetary union while accepting that the process would necessarily be a long and arduous one;

secondly, they had recognized that there was a need for greater Community discipline as regards money supply, prices, balance of payments and so on, if their economies were to converge; thirdly, the European Council had decided to step up the fight against unemployment in general and unemployment in certain industries in particular.

Mr Thorn had some comments of his own to make on the European Council. He felt that it had yet to develop into the driving force the Community badly needed. He hoped that the nine heads of government realized that, if they met, the public was bound to expect spectacular decisions. They should not be surprised at the public disappointment which greeted the latest European Council. Mr Thorn stressed that European Councils should not cause the other institutions to neglect their duties. He urged the Ministers of the Nine to accept their responsibilities and to refrain from "passing the buck" to the European Council.

There was some movement on the benches when Mr Thorn turned to direct elections to the European Parliament. Mr Thorn made a point of stressing that the Nine had confirmed their earlier decision, taken in Rome in December 1975, to organize direct elections in May or June of 1978 and to reach a final decision in the matter by July 1976 at the latest.

He also pointed out that the Nine were unanimously agreed that the elections should be spread over a number of days to accommodate the British, who vote on Thursdays, and voters in other countries who prefer Sundays. The results would not be published before the polling stations closed on the Sunday evening so that the countries voting early would not influence the others.

Mr Haferkamp, who with Mr Ortoli had attended the European Council on behalf of the Commission, commented on the determined approach adopted by the Nine on economic policy and the favourable reception the Commission's economic policy document had received. This had proposed the coordination of economic and monetary policies enforced by sanctions. Sanctions could include the withdrawal of Community aid from countries which tried to opt out.

Irritation in Parliament

The keynotes of the debate which followed were bitterness and disappointment. Indeed Members got to the point of questioning the usefulness of the European Council. Mr Bertrand, for the Christian Democrats, wondered how the general public could be expected to believe in the construction of Europe or a European identity when the European Council, a supreme body over and above the Treaty of Rome, could not produce better results.

Mr Berkhouwer, for the Liberals, wondered whether Parliament itself should not try to become the motive force behind European union now that the European Council had failed.

Mr de la Malène, spokesman of the Progressive European Democrats, felt that the European Council should be convened as the need arose, not at regular intervals.

Mr Stewart (Labour) raised an even more basic question: if no progress had been made, was this solely the fault of the heads of government? Could it be that the people of Europe were not ready to become full Europeans? Mr Fabbrini (Communist) regretted the failure of the European Council, but was not in the least surprised. Protectionist tendencies could kill what remained of Europe. On the question of direct elections he was opposed to any system which worked to the disadvantage of smaller parties.

In a resolution voted that same evening, the European Parliament regretted that the Heads of Government of the Nine had failed to reach a final decision on direct elections when they met on 1 and 2 April. The resolution, which was adopted by a majority of those present, only the French Communists voting against, confirmed that the European Parliament is still committed to its initial proposal for the distribution of seats: the future assembly would have 355 members and guarantee a minimum representation for the smaller countries. Mr Thorn wondered, in this context, if the best solution might not be to concentrate on early elections. The elected parliament could then meet as a constituent assembly and devise a procedure for future elections.

Until 3 May

Direct elections appear on the agenda for the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers on 3 May. The Tindemans report is to be discussed at the same meeting. Time alone will tell whether Parliament's protests have fallen on deaf ears and whether Mr Thorn's optimism is justified.

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