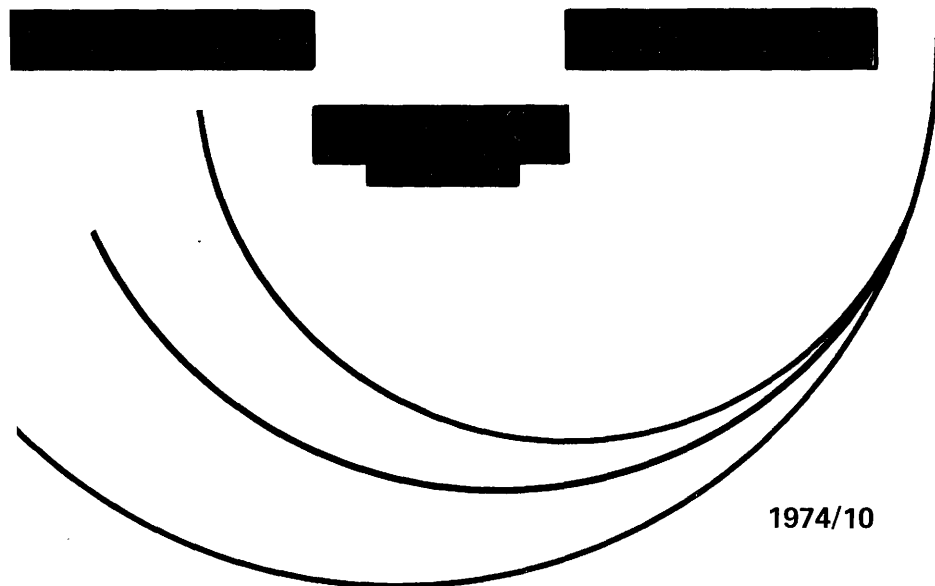


european parliament

information

PARLIAMENT IN SESSION



1974/10

Parliament in session is a summary of the sittings of the European Parliament.

A complete record of the proceedings of the House is given in the 'Debates of the European Parliament' which is published as an Annex to the Official Journal of the European Communities.

The 'Debates' and other documents may be obtained either from the Secretariat of the European Parliament (P.O. Box 1601, Luxembourg) or from the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, (P.O. Box 1003, Luxembourg).

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Introduction

The European Parliament met in plenary session in Strasbourg from Monday, 11 November to Friday, 15 November 1975. Its main business was the draft budget of the European Communities for 1975 to which it is empowered to make certain changes before referring it back to the Council.

Parliament's main intentions in making changes to the draft budget are to make 300 m u.a. available for a regional fund, 200 m u.a. to cover next year's increases in farm prices, 100 m u.a. for improving agricultural structures, 53 m u.a. for food aid for the developing countries, 50 m u.a. for helping farmers in hilly or other poor agricultural areas, a further 35 m u.a. for the Social Fund and 10 m u.a. for industrial development. The draft budget will now be considered again by the Council.

The bill will be given its third and final reading in the House in December.

The budget of the European Communities for 1975

Introduction

The budget of the European Communities was taken a stage further in Strasbourg this week when the European Parliament gave it a second reading. In its preliminary draft form submitted by Commission to Council in September, it had amounted to 6,955,659,809 units of account. But Council cut this back to 5,775,335,773 u.a. in the draft it presented to Parliament in October, when the bill was given its first reading. The House expressed disappointment, particularly at the deletion of such items as the regional fund. The draft budget was then referred to Parliament's standing committees to draft amendments and propose modifications for consideration by the whole House in November. Some three score draft amendments were tabled and some two dozen proposed modifications, the underlying intention of which was to make the budget into something more than the sum of commitments the EC has already entered into anyway. In a motion tabled by Mr Heinrich Aigner (Ge, CD) who was reporting to the House for the Committee on Budgets, it was argued that a budget should be a statement of political will. It was on this point that Parliament's whole attitude turned. When the amendments were put to the vote most of them were carried by 120 or 130 votes. The budget thus amended now goes back to the Council for consideration before getting its third and final reading in Parliament in December.

Parliament's budgetary powers are still under discussion so that the procedure now being followed is that of Article 203 of the Treaty of Rome. This article lays down deadlines for each stage and assigns authority over two different areas of the budget to two different institutions. These two areas are compulsory expenditure i.e. that to which the EC is already committed because of the Treaties or acts adopted in accordance therewith. The distinction is important because Council has the last word over compulsory expenditure and Parliament over non-compulsory expenditure. This power is, however, subject to an important limitation as far as Parliament is concerned: increases in non-compulsory expenditure are subject to a ceiling known as the 'maximum rate'. This was computed by the Commission in May on the basis of the trend of the gross national product in the EC, the average variation in the Member States' budgets and cost of living trends in the preceding financial year. The figure arrived at was 14.6 o/o. Parliament's point on this rate (made in the motion tabled) is that it is not applicable to new expenditure entered as a new item or when, from one year to another, the policy on which non-compulsory

expenditure is based does not remain constant from year to year but grows in scope and objectives. In procedural terms what Parliament may do is to propose a new 'maximum rate' (permitted 'in exceptional cases' under Article 203, paragraph 8, sub-paragraph 4) to be fixed 'by agreement between the Council and the Assembly' (Parliament). Lastly in items of actual cash, the 14.6 % maximum rate in fact gave Parliament the last word over some 53 million u.a. Although the amendments proposed totalled some 367 m u.a. they included some 300 m u.a. for a regional fund leaving a rate of increase of only slightly over 14.6 % for all other non-compulsory items. With Parliament and Council differing as to what expenditure the maximum rate should cover, the outcome is still uncertain.

The debate

Opening the debate as rapporteur for the Committee on Budgets Mr Heinrich Aigner (Ge, CD) made it perfectly clear from the outset that he intended to take a moderate line. He wished to avoid any clash with the Council if it could be avoided. It was for this reason that his committee had taken account of the Council's desire for an economy budget. At the same time it was hard to see the budget presented by the Council as more than an inventory of standing commitments and he made it quite clear that his committee could not accept a policy of supplementary budgets, the reason for which was a failure on the part of the Council to reach agreement. He was particularly disappointed, he said, that the Council had not thought fit to endorse the Commission's proposals for helping the developing countries worst affected by the oil crisis by means of a contribution to the United Nations' Emergency Fund. He thought too that the budget ought to include some provision for helping the less prosperous areas of the Community. Once a decision had been taken it would simply be a question of making the necessary appropriations and money could be used for this purpose. Mr Aigner concluded by saying that the Commission's preliminary draft budget had expressed a new solidarity which the Community needed and that the Council had reduced it to little more than an inventory of standing commitments.

Speaking in reply Mr Christian Poncelet, President of the Council, disagreed that the budget would act as a brake on Community activities. Council's policy was to make funds available for the EC to continue on its present basis. The disagreements that had emerged only concerned new policies. He conceded that there was a risk to the operation of the Community in having a succession of

supplementary budgets. He undertook to represent Parliament's concern on this to the Council. He emphasised the importance of an agreement being reached between the Council and Parliament. He hoped that as regards the maximum rate of increase in the budget the two institutions could agree and also as regards the distinction between compulsory and non-compulsory expenditure. The Council's attitude regarding expenditure that was new in respect of its scope and objectives, however, was more guarded but he agreed that the principle of the maximum rate of increase should not be an obstacle to the introduction of new policies. He concluded by saying that on the 28th November the Council would be happy to receive a delegation of the European Parliament to discuss the budget further.

Speaking for the European Commission Mr Claude Cheysson, Commissioner, said that the European Parliament was now beginning to take its place in the unification of Europe. He too stressed the harmony which had prevailed in the budgetary discussions between the institutions so far. He conceded that Article 203 of the Treaty was both strange and ambiguous but the point at issue was the expenditure over which the European Parliament had the last word. His view was that this concept should gradually be widened to include all expenditure except that going back to long-term decisions taken in previous budgetary years. But he pointed out how Article 203 para. 8 would introduce the principle of co-decision for which Parliament had pressed so strongly in its budgetary powers debate of October 1973 for this stipulated that if a new maximum rate of increase were proposed for non-compulsory expenditure by any institution it would depend in the last instance on an agreement between Parliament and Council.

Mr Cheysson said that the Commission had proposed a budget of 7,000 m u.a. compared with 5,000 m u.a. in 1974. This actually involved a real increase of only 9.5 % in current measures, the new expenditure deriving from such new items as the regional fund. The Commission had been frugal and would continue to exercise economy. On the other hand Council decisions had been taken on points of principle and the Commission had made proposals accordingly. In any case it became clearer each year that every act of Community policy had implications for other sectors. How could there be a balanced policy for agriculture without one for regional development? How could there be progress in industry if there was no headway with social policy? 'How can anyone fail to see that our policy of cooperation with the third world has become fundamental to the future of our Community?', Mr Cheysson asked.

Looking at the actual figures he pointed out that expenditure on agriculture had been cut back from 74 0/0 to 62 0/0 in the Commission's preliminary draft, regional policy had been increased from zero to 9.3 0/0 of the total and social expenditure remained at 6 0/0. Expenditure on behalf of the third world went up from 5.2 0/0 to 8 0/0. This was the new balance the Commission had sought to strike. It had been criticised but Parliament's reaction had been favourable, he noted. 'This proves that we understand one another'.

Mr Cheysson agreed that the supplementary budgets procedure would limit Parliament's powers and was unsatisfactory because no one knew what they were committed to and a budget should be a political commitment. For it to be a simple inventory took away its whole value. Mr Cheysson said he was ready to accept an idea of an economy budget but conceded that many of the European Parliament's amendments to increase expenditure were sensible. He could not, however, accept any which would increase expenditure over the amount proposed by the Commission itself. At the same time he stressed that the Commission could not accept the Council's rejection of its own budgetary proposals regarding food aid and the social fund. Summing up Mr Cheysson said that it was best to discuss a new rate of increase in the budget. He concluded by saying that the ideas and policies of Commission and Parliament were the same, both being committed, willy-nilly, to Europe's progress.

Speaking as chairman of the Committee on Budgets and as chairman of the Socialist Group, Mr Georges Spénale also drew attention to the positive spirit of cooperation that had prevailed in discussions between the institutions. Mr Spénale had, however, one important reservation to make. The question of Parliament's budgetary powers had not yet been resolved and the time taken for the Council to reach its decision had exceeded even the most pessimistic forecasts and if he did not comment on this subject it was because there were no Council proposals on which he could yet say anything. Mr Spénale said that his committee was not opposed to supplementary budgets but he too made the point that the budget is a statement of aims which should be reflected in a series of budget entries. It was deceiving the public to talk of a 37 0/0 cut in the budget when this would be more than offset by supplementary budgets passed later in the year. He said that the distinction being made between compulsory and non-compulsory was almost satisfactory. The problem was to determine which non-compulsory expenditure came within the maximum rate of increase. For example, if there were a 0 0/0 increase in the regional policy fund multiplying this by 14.6 0/0 would still mean 0 0/0 hence no new policies could be initiated. He argued, therefore, that all new expenditure should come under

the concertation procedure. Mr Spénale agreed that these were hard times but the rate of increase proposed was rather less than the average rate of inflation in the Member States. He agreed with the principle of economy to contain inflation but this had to be balanced by dynamism to retain a spirit of hope in the idea of uniting Europe.

Speaking for the Liberal and Allies Group, Mr Jean Durieux, Chairman, said 'for a parliament like ours which has no legislative powers and whose opinions are not always taken into account by the decision-taking body, the consideration of the budget is the most concrete political act within our terms of reference'. Any discussion Parliament might have on say, food aid, would be platonic if there was no provision for budgetary back-up. Mr Aigner had described the budget as a 'general anaesthetic'. He saw it as one of lost opportunities, for two reasons. It had an element of hypocrisy in it because it did not give viable estimates. There would be supplementary budgets (probably amounting to 1,200 m u.a.) and this would hurt the Community's image. The EC taxpayer would get the impression there was no end to financing the running of the Community. The second lost opportunity concerned receipts. The common customs tariff and the agricultural levies had brought some 4,000 m u.a. into the EC treasury (some 70 o/o of the total or 10 o/o more than 1974) but the failure to harmonise the basis of assessment for VAT had meant calculating the remaining 30 o/o in relation to the gross national products of the Member States. Mr Durieux praised the Commission for its courage and regretted the Council had not shown the same determination. He concluded by saying that Parliament had substantially less influence over compulsory expenditure and argued that its main concern in future should be to obtain greater influence in this sphere through legislative prerogatives.

Speaking for the European Conservative Group, Mr Peter Kirk, chairman, said 'what I find lacking in this budget is any kind of strategy'. It was not, indeed, a budget but an estimate of expenditure but even as such it was important and deserved far more time that Parliament had been able to devote to it. He suggested that the budget should be submitted in June rather than September. He also suggested that a Commissioner should be appointed with responsibility for financial affairs in addition to the member responsible for economic affairs. Mr Kirk concluded with the hope that Council and Commission would join Parliament in seeking a common solution to a common problem: 'how an international or supranational parliament, part-time — as we are bound to be — can effectively control the expenditure of this House and how a supranational executive can present a budget strategy rather than present a series of estimates for public expenditure.'

Speaking for the Christian Democrat Group, Mr Hans—August Lücker said: ‘We are still a long way from exercising control over the budgets in the way our national parliaments exercise this control in our Member States’. He pointed out that the debate was not an audit but would only come to life ‘if we can show what these figures are going to mean in terms of Community policy. We are still a long way from having budgetary debates like those in our Member States’. He said that the debating conditions were unacceptable. In the Bundestag at least three days would be devoted to such a subject. As to the political issues involved, he said that the European Parliament had sought a compromise and would be disappointed if the Council did not recognise it as such. But this was not to disregard Parliament’s standing political aims and he hoped the Council would bear this in mind. He expressed particular concern about the lot of 1,000 million people living under conditions which demanded a special effort from the Community. His Group fully sympathised with Mr Cheysson’s deploring the lack of response to his appeal. He concluded by saying that his Group was demonstrating great confidence in the Council and trusting that this positive attitude would yield results.

Speaking for the European Progressive Democrat Group, Mr Albert Liogier said that this was the first real budgetary debate like that held in the Member States that the European Parliament had had. He too trusted that the cooperation between the institutions would yield the results hoped for. His Group shared the concern with the Committee on Budgets about the distinction between compulsory and non—compulsory expenditure and he shared the general resolve that the regional policy fund should go through. ‘How else can we explain our efforts to help developing countries in the Third World when we were doing nothing to help the less prosperous areas of the Community?’ Mr Liogier pointed out that agriculture remained his Group’s main concern especially at a time of worldwide food shortages. He concluded by saying the European Parliament must define its aims and find the means for these policies. This was only the first step.

Speaking for the Communist and Allies Group, Mr Fazio Fabbrini said that three plans for the European Community budget for 1975 had so far been put forward: the Commission’s preliminary draft, the Council’s draft and what would be the Parliament’s amended draft budget. Of the three he preferred the Commission’s version because the middle course of moderation chosen by Mr Aigner and involving small scale compromises reflected a false sense of realism. The experience of recent years had shown that the Council took its own decisions. One example was regional policy where the resolutions passed in the

House had often been unanimously approved. These were particularly important at a time when there was such a major threat of unemployment. The same applied to the intended appropriation for a European Vocational Training Centre. Mr Aigner had spoken of a general anaesthetic in budgetary form for the whole Community, if that was what he really felt he should ask for more.

Mr Poncelet replied to the various speakers and then the various sections of the budget were debated separately. They were considered at length and in detail in speeches by some thirty Members.

The vote

There were before the House some 75 draft amendments and 29 proposed modifications to the budget of the European Communities for 1975. Of the amendments, 18 were withdrawn in the course of the vote and 4 were set aside. Of the remaining 53, 45 were passed by a majority of the Members and 8 rejected. The effect of the amendments is to add some 367 million units of account to the draft budget. Of the proposed modifications, 5 were withdrawn and 3 were set aside. Of the remaining 21 proposed modifications 11 were accepted and 10 rejected. Their effect is to add some 397 million units of account to the draft budget. As a result of the vote, there is an increase of 367,705,708 u.a. in the form of amendments and 380,900,000 u.a. in the form of modifications. 9,286,292 u.a. is also to be added to cover increased collection costs.

Thus, 763,650,413 u.a. is added bringing the total to 6,538,986,186 u.a. (as compared with the figure of 5,775,335,773 u.a. in the draft budget presented to the House by the Council in October).

The resolution

Mr Aigner then tabled a motion on the draft budget as a whole. He noted the EC is now completely self-financing except for the VAT element where alternative arrangements have had to be made for the time being. This is because the Council has not taken a decision on the Sixth Directive on Turnover Taxes. He found this regrettable. Mr Aigner welcomed the cooperation between Council

and Parliament in considering the budget but was seriously critical of the budget itself. Points 6 to 10 of his motion read (the European Parliament):

'Expresses its deep disappointment with the Council's draft budget for 1975, which in its view represents no progress and is seriously lacking in dynamism;

Notes that this draft is characterized by a total lack of political decision by the Council – whether in regional policy, social policy, research and energy policy, information policy or youth policy.

Supports in principle the Council's efforts to economize, but rejects its idea of cutting down in the budget of the Communities to help in the fight against inflation, and considers that action undertaken at Community level which is financed from funds withdrawn from the national exchequers has no inflationary effect;

Firmly opposes the Council's intention to submit a number of supplementary budgets during the 1975 financial year, and reminds the Council of its earlier attitude to supplementary budgets;

Points out that, according to the spirit and the letter of the financial regulation, the budget is an act making provision for all expected revenue and expenditure, and that, by reducing the budget to an inventory of commitments already entered into, it is deprived of its specific character as a statement of political will.'

As regards compulsory and non-compulsory expenditure, the motion recognised the provisional validity of the classification proposed but found it regrettable that some expenditure was not classified at all. This meant Parliament could not properly exercise its right to amend and modify the budget. Finally the motion considered the maximum rate of increase in non-compulsory expenditure is not applicable to new expenditure entered as a new item or when, from one year to another, the policy on which non-compulsory expenditure is based does not remain constant but grows in scope and objectives.

The resolution was agreed to.

Budgetary affairs

Parliament's budget for 1975

As rapporteur for the Committee on Budgets, Mr Horst Gerlach (Ge, S) presented a report on modifications to Section I (Parliament) of the draft

general budget for 1975. The modifications stemmed from a harmonisation between EC institutions of the way salary adjustments are calculated and are a matter left to Parliament's discretion. The budget amounts to 41.5 m u.a. It was adopted.

Draft supplementary budget No 1 for 1974 (UN Fund)

As rapporteur for the Committee on Budgets Mr Michael Shaw (Br, EC) asked the House to approve a first supplementary and amending budget for financial year 1974, subject to certain reservations. The purpose of the amending budget is to update estimates of the EC's own resources for 1974 and that of the supplementary budget is to appropriate 150 m dollars (124,5 m u.a.) to finance the EC contribution to the UN scheme for helping developing countries worst hit by the present crisis. The relative contributions of the Nine will be: Belgium 8.8 m u.a., Denmark 1.7, Germany 35.5, France 30.2, Ireland 0.4, Italy 22.7, Luxembourg 0.2, Netherlands 11.3 and United Kingdom 13.7 m u.a. It was adopted.

Giving effect to the financial regulation of 25 April 1973

As rapporteur for the Committee on Budgets, Miss Colette Flesch (Lu, LA) asked the House to give qualified approval to the draft of a regulation (to be issued by the Commission) giving effect to the Financial Regulation of 25 April 1973. A resolution approving the draft regulation subject to certain amendments was agreed to.

Consumer affairs

Materials in contact with foodstuffs

Mrs Elisabeth Orth (Ge, S) presented a report for the Committee on Public Health and the Environment welcoming Commission proposals for a directive to approximate the laws of the Nine on materials and articles intended to come into contact with foodstuffs. Mrs Orth argued that all materials coming into contact with the human body should be covered by general EC legislation. National regulations on piping drinking water need harmonising too and she called for a directive to this effect soon. Manufacturers, she said, must be obliged

to label articles and packing in the language of the country the goods go to and goods for third countries must be so marked to ensure that this is not used as a legal loophole. Lastly Mrs Orth called for sampling and methods of checking to be worked out before the directive comes into effect. In reply Dr Patrick Hillery, Vice-President of the Commission, said that this was simply a general directive and that the European Parliament would be consulted again on the directives for giving it effect. A motion summing up Parliament's opinion was then put to the vote and the resolution was agreed to.

External relations

EC and Spain: quota for sherry, figs, raisins and other wines

As rapporteur for the Committee on External Economic Relations, Mr Jan Baas (Du, LA) asked the House to approve Commission proposals for an EC quota for figs, raisins, sherry, Malaga wines and wines from Jumilla, Priorato, Rioja and Valdepenas. For sherry there will be a duty reduction of 60 0/o on 40,000 hectolitres in containers of two litres or less and 50 0/o on 210,000 hectolitres in containers of more than two litres. There will be a duty reduction of 50 0/o on 15,000 hectolitres of Malaga wines in containers of two litres or less and a 30 0/o reduction on 15,000 hectolitres of Jumilla, Priorato, Rioja and Valdepenas wines in containers of two litres or less. The duty reductions will be 30 0/o for figs and 100 0/o for raisins. These reductions will apply for 1975 and are to be made pursuant to the Agreement signed between the EC and Spain on 29 June 1970. A new Agreement may be signed in 1975. A resolution approving the Commission proposals was agreed to.

Congratulations to the military junta in Chile

Mr Gérard Bordu (Fr, CA) and Mr Renato Sandri (It, CA) put the following oral question to the Commission

'At a time when, a year after the fascist coup d'état, democrats in Chile continue to be subjected to repression, imprisonment and torture, when the peoples of the Community countries condemn in the strongest terms the illegal government in Chile and manifest their solidarity with the victims of fascism,

does the Commission consider the telegram of 'warmest congratulations' sent by its President on 17 September 1974 to the military junta in Chile to be compatible with the democratic conscience of the peoples of our countries and with the positions adopted by the European Parliament since the military coup in Chile?'

In reply Dr Patrick Hillery, Vice-President of the Commission, pointed out that the telegram in question was not sent on the occasion of the junta's accession to power but on the 17 September in anticipation of Chile's national day on September 18th. Dr Hillery reminded the House that Chile had achieved independence on the 18 September 1818 and it was for this occasion that the telegram had been sent. He pointed out that the Commission had always sent telegrams of this kind as a matter of diplomatic courtesy but stressed that these had no political significance whatsoever. At the same time he pointed out the Commission could only repeat its abhorrence of any violation of human rights and he restated the point the Commission had made in June that all information available indicated that democracy had collapsed in Chile and individual freedoms were not being respected.

Cyprus sherry

The House agreed to a resolution approving a Commission proposal to extend the validity of an existing regulation.

Products from Malta

The House agreed to a resolution approving a Commission proposal to suspend Common Customs Tariff duties on products from Malta.

New potatoes from Cyprus

The House agreed to a resolution approving a Commission proposal to introduce a tariff quota of 110,000 long tons of new potatoes from Cyprus.

The first Interparliamentary Conference between the EC and Latin America

As rapporteur for the Committee on External Economic Relations, Mr Giovanni Boano (It, CD) tabled a motion on the results of the first

Interparliamentary Conference between the EC and Latin America. This welcomed the positive results achieved, noted with pleasure that delegates from Mexico attended as observers, welcomed Chilean parliamentarians, who were freely elected but are today unable to take their seats in Parliament and stressed the value of recommendations on economic relations, cooperation and promoting development. The motion invited a delegation of the Latin–American Parliament to a second conference to take place in the EC in the second half of 1975. The resolution was agreed to.

Development and cooperation

Emergency aid for Somalia

In an oral question put down for debate Mr Horst Seefeld (Ge, S) asked the Commission how and when it intended to meet Somalia's request for aid in the form of food and pharmaceutical products for victims of the drought. In reply Mr George Thomson, Commissioner, said that Somalia's request had been considered by the Commission with care, sympathy and an acute sense of urgency and planned to adopt proposals to the Council in reply to this request by the most urgent procedure available. This would cover two kinds of measures: to change the 7,000 tons of cereal food aid into emergency aid so that the cereals could then be distributed free and shipped at once and to include Somalia in proposals for an interim EC food aid programme for 1975 for the Sahel countries and Ethiopia. This was to cover the grants needed in milk products – 900 tons of milk and 700 tons of butter oil – with transport paid by the Community.

An emergency motion was then tabled regarding the 100,000 nomads and farmers living in eight provinces in north–east Somalia. This resolution was agreed to.

Food aid for the Sahel and Ethiopia

The House agreed to a resolution approving a Commission proposal to supply 9,000 metric tons of skimmed milk powder to the Sahel area and Ethiopia.

Classical swine fever and African swine fever

The House agreed to a resolution approving a Commission proposal to expand Community research into classical swine fever and African swine fever.

Regional Policy

On regional policy one oral question was addressed to the Commission and one was put down for debate with Commission and Council. Mr Hans-Edgar Jahn, Mr Karl Artzinger, Mr Kurt Härzschel, Mr Egon Klepsch, Mr Heinz Mursch and Mr Gerd Springorum (German, Christian Democrats) asked the Council and the Commission what possibilities they saw 'for eliminating the contrasts between two Member States of the Community (United Kingdom and Ireland) by means of a practical development programme for the region concerned.' In reply Mr Bernard Destrebeau, President of the Council, took up two points made by Mr Jahn in speaking to the first question: that the Community should not forget its own problems and indeed that decisions to resolve them must be taken soon. Clearly close coordination was needed between the states if border problems were to be dealt with even if these were no more complex than water or power supplies, communication or social matters. 'For this reason, in Article 5 of its proposal for a Regulation setting up a Regional Development Fund, which is currently being examined by the Council, the Commission includes amongst the criteria for qualifying for aid from the Fund that of the trans-border character of the investment. It would therefore be possible, under this proposal, to draw up programmes containing practical development projects for areas adjoining the border between the United Kingdom and Ireland'.

Mr Michael Herbert (Ir, EPD) put the following question to the Commission

'In his reply to the Oral Question with Debate (Doc. 142/74) put by Mr Creed on behalf of the Christian Democratic Group (European Parliament Strasbourg, July 1974) Mr Thomson, Commissioner for Regional Policy, stated that he had instructed his Department to prepare a report on cross-border within the Communities.

In view of this statement:

1. What instructions did the Commissioner give his department?
2. What fields of cross-border co-operation are to be covered by the report?
3. What border areas within the Communities will be covered by the report?
4. Will the report deal with cross-border co-operation with non-Member States of the Communities?
5. When is the report expected to be completed?
6. Does the Commission intend to present the report to Parliament? '

Mr George Thomson, Commissioner, said in reply that the Commission was making a general study of the problems of frontier areas in the Community. 'I have asked my staff to prepare as a matter of urgency a comprehensive study on the Community's frontier regions and the measures being taken by Member States Governments to ease the problems for those who live there which result from the Community's borders'. In reply Mr Jahn, Mr Thomson said that in its proposal for a regulation on the Regional Development Fund, the Commission proposed that special consideration should be given to projects of a trans-border nature. The Commission had proposed that the fund should be discussed at the summit meeting and that two decisions be taken, the first on the size of the fund, which the Commission recommended should be at the figure of 1,400 m u.a. over a three-year period, and the second on the principle of distribution which, following suggestions made continually in the House, 'should ensure that the Fund is substantially concentrated on those Community regions with the most serious imbalances'.

Political affairs

Setting up a political secretariat

In an oral question put down for debate with the Council, Mr Yvon Bourges asked:

'In a statement made on 23 June 1974 the Group of Progressive European Democrats stressed that preparation for European union pre-supposed the organization of political co-operation between the Member States in affirmation of their joint resolve. Such co-operation can only effectively bring out Europe's identity in the international context if there is some guarantee of continuity in the pursuit of the goals to be achieved, and the necessary co-ordination between the Member States and liaison with the Community Institutions. In view of the recent meetings of the Heads of State or Government the Council is therefore asked whether it feels there is some likelihood of adoption of the EPD Group's proposal that a political secretariat should be placed at the disposal of the Government filling the office of President of the Communities, based on the Embassies of the Nine in the country concerned?'

Mr Bernard Destremau, President of the Council, replied: 'The question put by the Honourable Member falls within the context of the institutional problems involved in European integration which are currently being examined by the relevant bodies, in particular given the prospects of a Summit Conference. The results of this examination will of course be communicated to the European Parliament.'

Extending the EC headquarters in Brussels

In an oral question put down for debate with the Council on behalf of the Communist and Allies Group, Mr Giorgio Amendola and Mr Gustave Ansart asked:

'The news that the Council of Foreign Ministers, at its meeting of 5 February 1974, had decided to enlarge the Community headquarters in Brussels caused alarm and concern among the people living in Maelbeek Valley, who have taken various steps (round table conferences, petitions, etc.) to draw attention to the serious damage and other disadvantages this project would involve. Can the Council state to what extent it has taken account of the opposition to this project and what precisely it intends to do about the suggestions and concerns of the inhabitants of Maelbeek Valley?'

Mr Bernard Destremau, President of the Council replied: 'As was indicated in the reply given to written question No. 745/73 put by Lord O'Hagan, at the Council's meeting on 4 and 5 February 1974, the Council merely took out an option on the plot of land proposed by the Belgian Government. This option applies only to the requirements of the Council. The plot of land, covering approximately 6 hectares, is situated in the vicinity of Rond-Point Schuman and runs along both sides of the Chaussee d'Etterbeek. This road, which is currently being widened, follows the old course of the Maelbeek stream. It is too early to talk of a precise project. The aim of the studies being made at present is to collect information which may serve as a basis for the architects who are asked to present plans. Concern with the quality of life and the integration of office blocks into the urban network is no novelty in the discussions held within the Council bodies. These bodies feel, however, that relations with Belgian private interest groups are a matter for the Belgian state. The Council is prepared to take full account of any observations and suggestions which the Belgian Government might make in this connection.'

Economic and monetary affairs

Community loans

In an oral question put down for debate with the Council on behalf of the Group of European Progressive Democrats on the issue of a Community loan, Mr Yvon Bourges asked:

'On 9 July, in a debate on the Community situation, I expressed on behalf of my Group 'the wish that a large scale European loan might be floated quickly, this seeming to me likely to

help our Community to cope with the balance of payments difficulties by making constructive use of the floating erratic capital which contributes to a great extent to the disorderly state of the international system". The President of the Council gave our comments a favourable reception and we are glad to learn today of the proposals by the French Finance Minister to float a Community loan for two thousand million units of account, made up of all the Community currencies. The loan would make it possible to attract and bring under control the abundance of currency in the possession of the Arab countries and thus to finance our adverse external balances.

In view of the urgency of these measures:

Does the Council intend to adopt these proposals quickly and following what technical procedure, particularly as regards canvassing the loan, the nature and the terms and conditions of the guarantee and the wording thereof?

Insofar as this loan would make it possible to organize a concerted currency system within a reasonably short period of time could not administration of the loan be entrusted to the European Monetary Co-operation Fund, the specific vocation of which would at last be recognized?

Would this not offer a possibility of making a start on the pooling of monetary reserves, and this of breaking down certain areas of reluctance with regard to Community solidarity, the European unit of account serving as a basis for the system of reserves? '

Mr Bernard Destremau, President of the Council, replied: 'At its meeting on 21 October 1974 the Council, acting on a proposal from the Commission, adopted the draft Regulation on Community loans. Under the terms of this Regulation the Community will be able to carry out successive operations to raise funds either directly from third countries or financial institutions or on capital markets, with the sole aim of re-lending these funds to one or more Member States experiencing balance-of-payments difficulties due to the rise in price of petroleum products. The borrowing operations authorised under this Regulation are restricted to the equivalent in European monetary units of account of 3,000 million dollars in principal and interest. The guarantees to ensure that the borrowings and loans are serviced under all circumstances may not exceed, for each Member State, twice its contribution to this Community short-term monetary support device expressed as a percentage and applied to the total amount of the loan in principal and interest.

The opening of the negotiations necessary for each loan operation shall be authorised by the Council at the request of one or more Member States. The decision to open negotiations shall at the same time lay down the details for them. In the light of the outcome of these negotiations, the Council shall decide on the terms on which each loan agreement will be concluded. The average term

for the borrowed funds may not be less than five years. The Council shall rule on the principle and the terms of the loan to be granted to one or more Member States and on the economic policy conditions to be met by the recipient Member State or States to ensure that the balance of payments is rectified. The associated borrowing and loan operations shall be expressed in the same monetary unit and take place on the same conditions for repayment of the principal and payment of the interest. Expenses incurred by the Community in concluding and carrying out each operation will be borne by the recipient Member State or States. The Council also expressed its intention of adopting at its next meeting, one or more regulations implementing the basic Regulation adopted on 21 October 1974.

As for other points raised by the Honourable Member, particularly those concerning the pooling of monetary reserves by the Member States and the organization of a concerted currency system, I would point out that these matters are currently under review in the relevant advisory committee and the Commission.'

In an oral question put down for debate on behalf of the European Conservative Group, Sir Brandon Rhys-Williams then asked the Commission if they would make a statement on the progress of the proposal for Community loans.

Mr Wilhelm Haferkamp, Vice-President of the Commission, replied that the details he wished to add to what he had told Parliament's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs concerned the capital market and here the Commission's concern had been to prevent any conflict of interest between Member States on the world capital market. It was most satisfactory that an instrument was now available to serve the Community interest.

The crisis of the Economic Community

Sir Brandon Rhys-Williams (Br, EC) tabled a motion on the crisis of the economic Community insisting that progress towards economic and monetary union must remain a firm commitment for all Member States, that dealing with inflation should be the main aim of the national governments and that the Community institutions be given greater authority on monetary affairs. The

motion stressed the importance of maintaining a high rate of economic activity and deplored the continued failure of Member Governments and central banks to develop the European Fund for Monetary Cooperation with an effective institution of the EC. It considered that measures to reduce deficits should be directed at those with whom they were in deficit and not at limiting imports generally. It urged help for workers to transfer their labour and adapt their skills to rapidly changing economic conditions. It pointed to the need for an effective regional policy. It considered it a political responsibility of the EC to safeguard energy supplies and stressed that unrestricted trade and freedom of movement for both labour and capital remained the essential aims of economic policy.

In reply Mr Wilhelm Haferkamp, Vice-President of the Commission, said the Commission had made several practical proposals for dealing with fluctuations in balances of payments, including EC loans. But there were still great disparities as between the economies of the Member States. He anticipated less real growth and said the EC would have to come to terms with a zero growth in consumption; indeed it would have to be cut to pay for oil imports and new investment. He thought this would absorb some 4 0/o of the EC's gross national product. The EC was likely to have to face serious unemployment and the Commission would soon be making proposals to apply selective stimulants to labour-intensive sectors with low dependence on imports. The resolution was agreed to.

Tobacco taxes

As rapporteur for the Committee on Budgets, Mr Helmut Artzinger (Ge, CD) reported to the House on the Commission's proposal for a second directive on taxes other than turnover taxes affecting the consumption of manufactured tobacco. The first directive, passed by the Council on 19 December 1972, dealt with excise duties, its aim being to harmonise consumer taxes so as to promote the free movement of manufactured tobaccos throughout the EC. The second directive brings this goal a stage nearer by splitting tobacco up into identifiable groups: cigars, cigarettes, smoking tobacco, snuff and chewing tobacco. Cigars are sub-divided into those weighing 2.3g and those weighing less. Mr Artzinger moved various amendments to the Commission's proposals, the main one of which was to introduce a new weight category for cigars of a unit weight not

exceeding 1.15 grams. A resolution requesting the Commission to incorporate these amendments was agreed to.

Agriculture

Debate on sugar

The order paper included two reports on sugar and one oral question which had been put down for debate by the Communists. But there was some doubt as to whether the House would take them. It was felt that by adopting decisions on the new common organisation of the sugar market at its meeting of 22 October 1974, the Council had infringed Parliament's right to deliver an Opinion which the Council itself had asked for. Indeed this point was made in the motion tabled which added (the European Parliament): 'objects strongly to such practices which help to undermine the institutional foundations of the Community'. However a motion to strike these three items off the order paper was defeated and they were taken together.

The Commission's proposals referred to Parliament are designed to ensure the EC obtains adequate supplies of sugar. They seek to do this by making various changes in the organisation of the sugar market as it stands. The production quotas, to which beet growers are subject, will be increased and sugar released for export will be subject to a levy. Manufacturers will be required to hold 10 % of their production as buffer stocks and subsidies will be paid on sugar imported into the Community. As rapporteur for the Committee on Agriculture, Mr Lucien Martens (Be, S) asked the House to approve the Commission proposals. But he had reservations. He wanted prices for the 1975/76 marketing year to be set as soon as possible to enable beet growers to plan accordingly. He had doubts whether a 10 % level of buffer stocks could be attained. Would it be desirable to plan larger buffer stocks in deficit areas and smaller ones in surplus ones? Could these stocks be financed through the EAGGF and managed by the Commission? Mr Martens trusted that EC production would help reduce or eliminate the world sugar shortage. He looked for a substantial increase in basic quotas for 1975/76 to 1979/80 and considered that the undertaking given in Protocol 22 ('The Community will have as its firm purpose the safeguarding of the interests of all the countries referred to in this Protocol whose economies depend to a considerable extent on the export of primary products, and particularly of sugar') must be respected. Mr Martens thought such sugar should

be imported at a price ensuring the producing countries reasonable export revenue. These various points were summed up in a motion to which the House agreed. An amendment was made, however, to this last point to the effect that these prices should be reviewable annually, taking into account developments in production costs, the prices paid to European producers and world market prices for sugar; the guaranteed minimum price in times of low world market prices should correspond to the Community intervention price.

As rapporteur for the Committee on Agriculture, Mr Cornelis Laban (Du, S) reported to the House on Commission proposals for dealing with the shortfall in sugar for the 1974/75 farm year and which is estimated to total at least 500,000 tons. The shortages will particularly affect the United Kingdom and Italy. The proposals are to subsidise sugar imports and to subsidise Community sugar produced over and above the normal quotas. It is perhaps worth noting that there are three kinds of production quotas in operation in the EC. A basic quota 'sugar A', with a guaranteed minimum price, a maximum quota 'sugar B' fixed at 135 % of the basic quota and for which the price received by producers is lower than that of 'sugar A' because of a levy charged to cover marketing costs and then there is 'sugar C'. This sugar cannot be placed on the EC market (except in times of scarcity), it attracts no export rebates and is grown entirely at the farmer's own risk. But now, with 'C' sugar finding high prices on the world market, the Commission proposes paying a subsidy on 20 % of this sugar to encourage its disposal on the Community market. Mr Laban said he accepted the need for proper measures to secure sugar supplies. He noted the measures proposed were intended only to cover the period up until 1 July 1973 and that the new organisation on which Mr Martens reported would be better tailored to the actual market situation. He did make the point however that the subsidies on 'C' sugar should be comparable, after taking transport, insurance and warehousing into account. Mr Laban tabled a motion summing up these points and this was agreed to.

Mr Nicola Cipolla and Mr Marcel Lemoine addressed the following question to the Commission on behalf of the Communist and Allies Group:

'In the Commission's proposals for the organisation of the sugar market and the allocation of production quotas which led to the Council's recent decisions, what account has been taken of the results of the investigations into the conduct of sugar manufacturers and of the decisions subsequently taken by the Commission in respect of them?

What steps can the Commission take and does it propose to take in order to prevent the continuation of these irregular situations while the longstanding appeal lodged with the Court of Justice by the manufacturers accused by the Commission of irregularities remain pending?

Does the Commission know whether these groups have concluded new agreements among themselves and whether this is the reason for the hiding and hoarding of sugar which has been so prejudicial of late both to consumers and to the sugar-beet farmers of the various Member States of the Community?

Does the Commission consider it normal that the Council should have taken a decision on the above proposals while Parliament has not had the opportunity to express its own opinion on the matter?

In reply, Mr Peterus Lardinois, Commissioner, said that when proposals were being drawn up for the new organisation of the sugar market the relevant findings were taken into account as much as possible. 'If you have production quotas you do not have competition problems', although, he added, the Commission proposals were designed to secure as much free competition as possible. As to the matter before the Court, he would give no further details, although this did not mean Commission services were not keeping a close watch on competition in the EC sugar market. The facts mentioned by Mr Cipolla in his third question were not known to the Commission but he thought it worth pointing out that the agreements under attack were concluded at a time of surpluses. As for the final point, Mr Lardinois said he had little to add to what Mr Cheysson had said earlier in the day, Mr Cheysson's point being it was not a matter for the Commission to comment on but that the whole matter should be seen in a wider context of the whole series of debates that had been going on between the institutions since July 1973.

Survey of farm holdings

As rapporteur for the Committee on Agriculture, Mr Cornelis Laban (Du, S) asked the House to approve a Commission proposal changing the financial arrangements for a survey of farm holdings. The random sample to be used in the survey is to be between 30,000 and 40,000 holdings in Ireland and 27,000 to 33,000 holdings in the UK. The EAGGF (Guidance Section) will pay Member States 12 u.a. per holding. The total cost is expected to be 7,920,000 u.a. A resolution approving the Commission's proposal was agreed to.

Industrial affairs

Producing gas from coal

As rapporteur for the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology, Mr Friedrich Burgbacher (Ge, CD) reported to the House on the need for an EC

policy for promoting the production of gas from coal. He argued that the EC could reduce its dependence on imported energy by making better use of resources here in the Community, particularly coal. Demand for energy, he said, increased with living standards. Hence the increasing importance of new technologies in the use of coal and lignite. He pointed out that the production of gas from coal has many advantages because gas can be burned without the emission of sulphur or dust, because the formation of nitric oxides in combustion chambers can be controlled and because gas can be stored and converted relatively efficiently into energy. Mr Burgbacher tabled a motion calling on the Commission to draw up a coal gasification programme, to provide funds for pilot plants, to promote cooperation between national authorities and gasification plant and reactor engineering industries and to report to Parliament on action taken within two years. 'The most expensive energy, he said, is that which you have not got'. The resolution was agreed to.

Customs union

Duty-free fuel imports

The House agreed to a resolution requesting the Commission to amend its proposal on fuel imports to ensure all the fuel contained in the normal fuel tanks of commercial motor vehicles is admitted duty-free by 1 January 1976. The proposal is also that 100 litres of motor fuel shall be admitted duty-free by 1 January 1975.

QUESTION TIME

Questions to the Council

1. Iraqi military action against the Kurdish people by Mr Luigi Noè (It, CD)

'Does not the Council propose to make representations to the Government of Iraq with a view to ending all military action against the Kurdish people, granting them political autonomy and allowing the Red Cross to step in to supply the stricken population with food and medical supplies?'

Mr Bernard Destremeau President of the Council, replied: 'This question does not come within the frame of reference of the Council of the European Communities.'

2. Action taken by France, the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany in infringement of the EEC Treaty by Mr Schelto Patijn (Du, S)

'Does the Council not consider that the agreements made on 28 and 29 September in Washington by France, the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany with the US and Japan concerning export credits (which should be covered by Community trade policy) without prior consultation with, and in the absence of, the other Member States and the Commission constitutes an infringement of the EEC Treaty, and is the Council prepared to take steps to prevent similar occurrences in future? If not, why not?'

Mr Bernard Destremau, President of the Council, replied: 'The Honourable Member is no doubt aware of the negotiations which have been under way for the past few months for the conclusion of a gentlemen's agreement between the Nine and the USA and Japan on certain conditions for commercial export credits. These negotiations, which should be seen in the light of current balance of payment difficulties on the international scene, aim at avoiding an export credit race. Whilst the technical details of this gentlemen's agreement will necessarily take some time to finalize, an opportunity arose at the recent meeting of the IMF in Washington to reach an interim agreement on certain measures to be taken immediately in particular with regard to interest rates. This agreement reached in Washington, which was discussed amongst the representatives of the nine Community countries on that occasion, was therefore concluded in the spirit and in the expectation of the conclusion of a wider gentlemen's agreement and at this stage should be regarded as an urgent stop-gap measure. In view of the obvious advantages of adopting measures rapidly it was thought desirable to grasp the opportunity which presented itself on this occasion. While perhaps these measures were not adapted in accordance with Community procedures, and while this emergency procedure should not be regarded as a precedent it is nevertheless true that the results achieved are in the Community interest.'

Questions to the Commission

1. Harmonization of the public medical services throughout the Community by Mr Tom Normanton (Br, EC)

'The Commission is asked what steps it proposes to take to harmonise the public medical services throughout the Community to enable all residents of Member States to enjoy the same facilities?'

Mr George Thomson, Vice-President of the Commission, replied: 'While the Commission is not seeking to impose uniformity on the social welfare systems of

the different Member States, it welcomes the growing pattern of reciprocal arrangements between their various public medical services and the Commission's practice every year to remind Community citizens through the press of the existing reciprocal arrangements available to them when they travel in other Community countries.'

2. *Commission's proposals to reduce the overall balance-of-trade deficits in the member states* by Sir Brandon Rhys-Williams (Br, EC)

'What proposals will the Commission now make for action by member countries or by Community institutions to prevent a decline in exchange of goods and services between member states as well as falls in employment and investment in 1975, resulting from initiatives by national governments intended to reduce their overall balance-of-trade deficits?'

Mr Wilhelm Haferkamp replied that the Commission had made proposals for dealing with balance of payments difficulties caused by the oil crisis and for reversing trends in external trade, investment and employment. Loans had been raised to help Italy and further standby arrangements were being considered. The Council had agreed on the use of gold reserves as security for credit operations between central banks and that the basis for these transactions should be a market-related price for gold. The Council had approved Community loans at a level of 3,000 m dollars over a five year period and the Commission was insistent that 'surplus' Member States must help 'deficit' Member States redress their balances-of-payments. Mr Haferkamp reminded the House of the commitment entered into on the Council that Member States with oil deficits would not respond by restricting trade or devaluing. Obviously more long-term measures would be needed to adapt economic structures to deal with the energy crisis and the Commission was giving priority to drafting appropriate proposals. Meanwhile selective stimulants could be given to labour-intensive industries with low dependence on imports. This would help to keep up employment levels in the Community.

3. *Food prices in the E.E.C.* by Lord O'Hagan (Br, Ind)

'To what extent has the Community been able to stabilise food prices in the member states?'

Mr George Thomson, Commissioner, replied: 'The Community's achievement in protecting its consumers from the full impact of the fluctuation in world food

prices is a considerable one. The consumer price of food is made up of three elements — the agricultural element has long since been declining proportionately and now amounts to little more than one third of the total. This agricultural element — the only one influenced by the Community's Common Agricultural Policy — has been strikingly stable in the Community compared with elsewhere. Community farm prices have risen only modestly at a time of unprecedented increases in world prices, notably those of cereals and sugar. While the CAP has thus assisted consumer interests, it is fair to say that certain Community measures, taken in the consumer's interest, have prevented farmers from taking advantage of high world prices.

There are additional factors which concern the United Kingdom in particular and in which the noble Lord may be specially interested. I mention three: the Community budget subsidy of 5 units of account per 100 kg for domestic butter consumption; the Council's suspension in October of the ceiling on compensatory monetary amounts to the advantage of those Member States which are substantial food importers and depreciated currencies; and, not least, the Council's agreement to the Commission's proposal that the Community should guarantee supplies of sugar and subsidize them to bring them down to the Community price level.'

Lord O'Hagan then asked: 'May I take it that the Commissioner now confirms that the EEC shelters the British housewife and British consumer from some higher food prices which they would have to pay if Britain was not a member of the EEC?'

Mr Thomson replied: 'Yes, sir. The Commission has indicated in an earlier answer to the noble Lord its agreement with the British Government's estimates earlier this year that less than 1 per cent of the rise in British food prices has been attributable to membership of the Community. Latest developments make it clear that even that small adverse effect is now outweighed by the beneficial effects. British food is now, on balance, cheaper than it would have been if the United Kingdom had not been in the Community. If I may put it the other way round, it has now become cheaper, from the point of view of food, for Britain to remain a member of the Community.'

4. Free access to environmental protection technology by Mr Hans-Edgar Jahn (Ge, CD)

Mr 'Is the Commission prepared to ensure free access to environmental protection technology with the Community by establishing appropriate licensing procedures on the lines of the provisions contained in the Euratom Treaty?'

Mr George Thomson, Commissioner, replied: 'I am afraid that I must give Mr Jahn a negative answer. At the moment the Commission does not judge it propitious to adopt the proposal. Mr Jahn mentions the grants by arbitration or under compulsory powers provided for in Articles 17 to 23 of the Euratom Treaty. That was an exceptional arrangement which was justified at the time the treaty was negotiated because of delays in Community nuclear research and the diversity of the legislation covering industrial property. Despite that, the truth remains that up to now these provisions of the Euratom Treaty have not been exploited.'

5. *Closer relations between the Community and Canada* by Mr Pierre Bernard Cousté (Fr, EPD)

Following the visit by Mr Pierre Elliot Trudeau, does the Commission intend strengthening and developing relations between the European Community and Canada, in particular *by concluding a cooperation agreement*, and by setting up, from the beginning of 1975, an external Office in Ottawa with adequate means at its disposal?'

Mr George Thomson, Commissioner, replied: 'I will certainly draw the attention of my colleague, Sir Christopher Soames, whose direct responsibility these relationships are, to the positive remarks Mr Cousté has just made. Following the meeting with the Canadian Prime Minister who, as I say, met a very large number of Members of the Commission, there was general agreement on the importance of finding effective ways of strengthening and deepening the relations between Canada and the Community at a number of different levels. This is why, if I may say so, we particularly welcome the presence of the distinguished delegation from the Canadian Parliament who are visiting the European Parliament today. On behalf of the Commission, may I say how much we are looking forward to welcoming them in Brussels this week.'

As to the substance of the agreement, careful thought must be given to this. One of the ideas raised by the Canadians was the possibility of concluding a traditional trade agreement confined mainly to a restatement of GATT principles, plus a consultation clause. The relationship which the Commission would like to develop with Canada – and Mr Trudeau has made it clear that the Canadians see things in the same light – should seek to embody the concept of cooperation across a wide range of economic and commercial endeavour. By common agreement between the Canadians and the Commission, it is these rather more far-reaching ideas which we are exploring now as opposed to the rather more conventional ideas with which the dialogue began.'

6. *Increase in price of fertilizers in Italy* by Mr Libero Della Briotta (It, S)

'What does the Commission of the Communities think will be the effect on agricultural costs in Italy of the recent decision by the Italian government to authorise a substantial increase in the price of chemical fertilizers?'

Mr George Thomson, Commissioner, replied: 'The Commission was informed of the Italian Government's decision to authorise a substantial increase in the price of chemical fertilizers. It is clearly very difficult to assess at present the impact of this increase with any degree of accuracy. This is particularly so because the increase was not across the board but varied according to the sort of fertilizer. The best reckoning or estimate that the Commission can make is that the average increase in chemical fertilizer prices in Italy will be about 15 per cent. Given the important place of fertilizer prices, the total cost of farm production can be expected to rise by approximately 1.5 per cent solely as a result of the fertilizer price increase.'

Statement made by Dr Patrick Hillery, Vice-President of the Commission on action taken on Parliament's advice

'I am glad, Mr President, that it has fallen to me to make this declaration on behalf of the Commission. Although there are in fact relatively few matters to report, two of the items are of particular interest to me as the member of the Commission responsible for Social Affairs.

First, however, arising from your recent debate on Mr Schmidt's report on Agriculture and the temporary widening of margins of fluctuation for Community currencies, Parliament asked for six-monthly progress reports on the application of the regulation concerned. The Commission will be modifying its proposal accordingly.

The Commission will also be modifying its proposal for a regulation on the establishment of a European Vocational Training Centre, presented to the Council on 2 April 1974, so as to take account to the opinion adopted by Parliament last September following Mr Pisoni's report. It will incorporate all but one of the amendments suggested by Parliament. The exception is the proposal that qualified educationalists and representatives of organizations dealing with young people and their problems should sit on the administrative board of the centre. As regards this point, the Commission recalls that these

groups would be represented on the expert committee providing technical and scientific advice. There seems no good reason for involving them in administration as well.

The opinions of Parliament have again been taken into account in the revised proposal for a Council recommendation on the 40-hour week and four weeks' annual holidays. The modified text was sent to the Council last week.

Having reported on these items, Mr President I should like to assure of the Commission's interest in the work of Parliament and its committees. I know from my own experience that many worthwhile suggestions emerge from Parliament's examination of Commission proposals. '

Notes

New members

The President welcomed Mr Ole Espersen (Du, S) who takes the seat left vacant by Mr Poul Dalsager

Election to the Bureau

Mr Ivar Norgaard was elected Vice-President. He takes the seat left vacant by Mr Poul Dalsager;

Petition

A petition was received from Mr Jean Fatre and 31 other signatories calling for the abolition of military service. This was referred to the Legal Affairs Committee.

Delegation from the Canadian Parliament

The President welcomed a delegation from the Senate and House of Commons of Canada which had come to Strasbourg for talks with a delegation of the European Parliament.

Summing up

At its sittings of 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 November Members put down 7 questions for debate with the Council and 11 questions for debate with the Commission. At Question Time 2 were addressed to the Council and 6 to the Commission. 20 reports were considered and the European Parliament delivered 21 Opinions.

The African Association

The Joint Committee of the Euro–African Parliament met at Morne in Mauritius from 23 to 25 October this year under the chairmanship of Mr Kasongo Mukundji and Mr Pierre Deschamps.

After their talks the parliamentarians issued a joint statement in which the emphasis was on meeting the deadlines for the new Convention and on possible

interim arrangements should ratification be delayed. Other points made were that the institutions held the Association together and should remain, that there should be an annual conference representing the ACP and EC and that the new European Development Fund should be geared to the needs of today and be more of a joint operation. Measures to give ACP cane sugar producers a fair market for 1,400,000 tons of sugar and the drive to win back old markets for the Somalia banana trade were also referred to.

The parliamentarians issued a second statement concerning Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. Their hope is that these countries will enjoy a greater measure of economic independence when negotiations are completed. The African Association must remain open to countries like these that have regained or are about to regain their independence.



The Joint Committee of the African Association meets in Mauritius

REFERENCES

Subject	European Parliament document number	Commission document number	Date of debate
The budget of the EEC for 1975	350/74	288/74	12/11
Parliament's budget for 1975	345/74	—	12/11
Draft supplementary budget no.1 for 1974 (UN Fund)	337/74	336/74	12/11
Financial regulation	338/74	151/74	14/11
Materials in contact with foodstuffs	321/74	226/74	11/11
EC and Spain: quota for sherry, figs, raisins and other wines	318/74	303/74	11/11
Congratulations to the military junta in Chile	282/74	—	11/11
Cyprus sherry	348/74	316/74	15/11
Products from Malta	347/74	333/74	15/11
New potatoes from Cyprus	346/74	322/74	15/11
Classical swine fever and African swine fever	341/74	277/74	15/11
EEC/Latin America Interparliamentary Con- ference	351/74	—	15/11
Emergency aid for Somalia	355/74	—	13/11
Food aid for the Sahel and Ethiopia	349/74	331/74	15/11
Development programme for the border	272/74	—	13/11
Areas between the UK and Ireland	273/74	—	13/11
Setting up a political secretariat	309/74	—	13/11
Extending the EC headquarters in Brussels	206/74	—	13/11
Community loans	326/74	—	13/11
Issue of a Community loan	310/74	—	13/11

Crisis of the Economic Community	354/74	—	13/11
Tobacco Taxes	312/74	49/74	15/11
Regulations in the sugar sector	339/73	313/74	14/11
	340/74	303/74	14/11
Competition policy in the sugar sector . . .	327/74	—	14/11
Survey of farm holdings	324/74	229/74	14/11
Producing gas from coal	325/74	—	15/11
Duty-free imports	344/74	223/74	15/11

Abbreviations

CD	Christian Democratic Group
S	Socialist Group
LA	Liberal and Allies Group
EC	European Conservative Group
EPD	European Progressive Democrat Group
CA	Communist and Allies Group
Ind	Non—attached, Independent Members
EC	European Community

Be	Belgian
Br	British
Da	Danish
Du	Dutch
Fr	French
Ge	German
Ir	Irish
It	Italian
Lu	Luxembourg

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