



european
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the sittings

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january 1977

The Sittings

LUXEMBOURG, January 10th to 14th, 1977

It was British week here in Luxembourg this week with Roy Jenkins and Anthony Crosland claiming most of the attention. Roy Jenkins introduced his new Commission and Anthony Crosland inaugurated a new presidency of the Council, two events which secured the European Parliament more press and television coverage than it has ever had.

Roy Jenkins, who promised to be a 'European' President told Parliament he would act towards it as if it were already directly elected and that all European Commission proposals would be framed with an eye to its chances of majority support in the House.

Tony Crosland, looking ahead, warned Parliament not to look for slick answers to Europe's problems. The priorities, as he sees it, are 'to improve EC sectoral policies, to define and promote convergence in more meaningful terms, to work out a proper role for a directly elected Parliament, to expand yet further the Community's influence in the world and to encourage enlargement without doing damage to Community ideals'.

Apart from which, it was a fairly quiet week up on the snow-covered Kirchberg. Fishing was put off till February and the farm price debate is still to come too. The big debates were on Southern Africa and unemployment. On Rhodesia, Mr Crosland said the Geneva Conference could not be reconvened on January 17th. On unemployment, Henk Vredeling said doing something to reduce it would be his main priority.

THE FOCAL POINTS

Jenkins will be 'European President'

If our Community cannot be made to work, what can?

Roy Jenkins, who was sworn in on Tuesday morning as President of the Commission, addressed Parliament at 3.00 p.m. that afternoon.

The following are highlights from his 40-minute speech:

On his Presidency: 'I do not intend to be a British President. I intend to be a European President.'

On the Community: 'The Community is not a betting-shop or a lottery stall into which one takes one's stakes and hopes to come away with more than one went in, but knowing always that the pool is fixed, that nothing can be created therein, and that a gain can therefore only be at the expense of another Member's loss.'

On the Commission: 'The Commission should be a political rather than a technocratic body.'

'The Commission must also work most closely with the Parliament. No doubt we shall have disputes, but we are on the same side.'

'We are a coalition Commission, as is wholly right, at least at the present stage of development. I shall therefore need to be a coalition rather than a partisan President. I shall be a partisan only for the unity of Europe.'

On direct elections: 'For the target date to be missed would be a major setback. The responsibility on any country which impeded this development would be heavy and damaging.'

On the Community Funds: 'There has been too great a tendency to see the various Community funds in isolation one from the other. The policy in relation to them should be seen and coordinated as a whole.'

On consumer protection: 'The Community is designed to protect and advance the interests of all its citizens. Policies to safeguard the producer need to be balanced by policies to safeguard the consumer.'

On the CAP: 'In the difficult times which lie ahead, the Commission must work to maintain and improve the Common Agricultural Policy. But I believe we can best do this by showing clearly that it can serve the common good in providing stable supplies of food at reasonable prices as well as stable markets for an efficient European agricultural system.'

On the past: 'The previous Commission under the dedicated leadership of François-Xavier Ortoli, has had to operate for three quarters of its mandate under the pall of the most discouraging economic weather which we have known for a generation. In this climate they have brilliantly defended the citadel.'

On the future: 'I do not yet feel any benign stirring of the breezes of spring. But what I do feel is that there comes a time when you have to break out of the citadel or wither within it. That time is now very close upon us.'

'Yet I believe that our duty today is not to invoke history, but to start once again to make it: not to praise famous men by sitting idly on the scaffolding of the half-finished building and drinking toasts to those who laid the foundations so well. The best tribute we can pay to them is not to praise them but to emulate them, to get on with our job and add at least another storey to the building. We cannot live indefinitely on the triumphs of half a generation ago.'

On economic divergences: 'We must of course endeavour to end the growing divergence of the economies of the Member States. This cannot be done overnight or by simple decree. And it certainly cannot and should not be done by asking the strong to become less strong and less effectively managed. It is no part of our business to promote an equality of weakness. Common disciplines and learning from success are an essential part of the philosophy of convergence.

But on this basis we must, like any civilised community, help the weaker members. This is in the interests of the strong as well as the weak, for if the weak were to fall by the wayside an essential part of the foundation of unity on which the strong have built their prosperity would be destroyed. Nor should we be too surprised that divergencies have arisen. We would have been singularly lucky if they had not. What greater unity in the world, from the Roman Empire to the United States of America, would ever have been created if divergencies were regarded as a recipe for despair? The test is how we face them. Help for the weaker members, provided they are also prepared to help themselves, is one of the distinguishing signs of the existence of a community. It applies to the community of the family. It applies to the community of the state. And it must

apply to our Community of European nations. The larger the Community, the easier it is for the weaker areas to be neglected. We cannot do this without ultimately destroying the Community.'

Mr Jenkins ended by expressing his absolute conviction that the Community was more than a convenience for Europe, it was fundamental and essential for mankind as a whole. 'If our Community cannot be made to work, what can? If we, among the richest and certainly among the most favoured and talented of the populations of the globe, cannot learn to work together, what prospect is there for humanity? Or for a decent civilised life for ordinary men and women?'

Spokesmen for Parliament's six political groups praised Mr Jenkins's statement and promised their support for his efforts. The Socialists, said Ludwig Fellermaier (Ge), would watch the Commission's efforts in the social field – particularly regarding unemployment – with special interest. Alfred Bertrand (Be), for the Christian Democrats, queried Mr Jenkins's assertion that the new Commission was a proper 'coalition' – he referred to one major country whose two Commissioners both came from the Government parties. Liberal leader Jean Durieux (Fr), hoped that Mr Jenkins would help to make Britain more European, rather than vice-versa. For the European Progressive Democrats, Brian Lenihan (Ir) stressed the need for the Commission to devote more attention to an effective information policy – particularly in view of direct elections. Sir Peter Kirk (Br), Conservative chairman, said his group would give its full backing to the new Commission, 'bar the odd censure motion.' He saw the Commission's immediate task in halting the growing economic divergence and getting convergence under way. For the Communists, Carlo Alberto Galluzzi (It) pointed to the large gap between the objectives set down in the Treaty and the reality of Community progress. Winifred Ewing (Br, Ind), speaking as an independent member, praised Mr Jenkins for the consistency of his support for the European ideal, domestic political disadvantages notwithstanding.

Crosland becomes Council President

The second major political address of the week was delivered by British Foreign Secretary and new President of the Council of Ministers, Anthony Crosland, who made what speakers in the subsequent debate described as a 'pragmatic' statement to the House.

The following are excerpts from his speech:

On the Community's achievements: 'I do not for a moment deny a certain loss of direction and a faltering sense of purpose – and I shall discuss later the reasons for this – I yet take a more robust and hopeful view than the pessimists when I consider the Community's achievements.'

'Now the facts are incontrovertible; but the interpretation is not. The apocalyptic view of the extreme pessimists suggests a failure by the Community to achieve realistic and attainable goals. This is not a fair picture.'

'The concentrated battle against recession and unemployment and their attendant social evils – against the worst economic crisis since the 1930s – has in the last three years sapped the energies of Member States : energies which might otherwise have been directed towards solving the Community's internal problems.'

On his hopes: 'Our task is therefore to draw together into a coherent shape the various threads of the Community's development so far; to recognize realistically its set-backs or excessive ambitions, but also its true achievements and the solid foundation that these have laid; and to establish on this basis a sense of priorities and strategic direction that will serve us, not simply in the next six months, but in the years ahead.'

On the 'present state of play' in agriculture, fisheries and energy: 'The Common Agricultural Policy has almost reached an impasse. The review of the Common Fisheries Policy has not even approached the heart of the controversy, on the internal regime. And there is no such thing as a Common Energy Policy.'

On the economic situation: 'Measures of integration are readily possible only between economies where living standards and economic performance are broadly similar. Only on such a basis could a common monetary and exchange-rate policy rest. But the basis was drastically undermined by the cataclysmic events of 1973 and the subsequent years – the oil price rise, followed by an inflation and recession both unprecedented in the post-war period.'

'The essential basis for economic integration is wholly lacking.'

'The Regional and Social Funds, valuable as they are, have not had a significant impact in reducing the disparities in wealth and growth rates between different regions of the Community.'

'We must look further ahead and start to devise new policies that will help us, once we have left recession behind, to counteract the uneven growth in the economies of Member States.'

On the Community's internal development: 'We do not know what shape the Community will finally take; and to seek to define it now will get us nowhere.'

'While we must know where we are going in the medium and short-term and set our priorities accordingly, a simplistic and abstract goal-setting approach for the long term is even less viable than before. What we can do immediately – and in our Presidency we shall do our best – is to make the Community work as effectively as possible, thereby demonstrating that it exists politically as well as economically, even if the emergence of a new political structure is for tomorrow and not for today.'

On the role of the Council: 'I am worried both by the degree of detail which comes to the Council, and by the sometimes higgledy-piggledy nature of its agenda. However that may be, my crucial aim will be the closest possible co-operation with the Parliament and the Commission in the interests of Community cohesion.'

On external affairs: 'I expect the Community in the years ahead to wield a growing influence on world affairs. Certainly the world more and more expects to hear the Community's voice in international affairs. Whatever our internal disappointments, the Community's external potential is enormous, whether we talk of the common commercial policy, political co-operation or other fields of external activity.'

'Speaking politically, a strong and cohesive Community is a major asset on the western side in the overall pattern of East/West relations; the very fact of Soviet coolness towards it testifies to its potential for limiting the spread of Soviet influence in Western Europe.'

On enlargement of the Community: 'Why enlarge? Because, simply, the political benefits of enlargement outweigh all the practical difficulties.'

'Enlargement is an investment in the democratic future of Europe; and in the long run the benefits will far outweigh the costs.'

On what the public wants: 'Yet I feel most strongly the need also to listen with sensitive sympathy to our public opinion. And to our public the priority does not lie amongst the objectives which I have just defined; it is to eliminate the evil of unemployment and the painful consequences of inadequate growth.'

On his plans for the Presidency: 'The need to pull out of recession and so restore the cohesion of the Community will be Britain's immediate concern during our Presidency. Besides this we shall press for progress I have described today. To assist me in this task I want to bring a new approach to some aspects of the Community's business. In particular I want to try and introduce a proper sense of priorities so that the Council focusses its attention on the really important issues. My impression after nine months of attending Community meetings is that we have not yet achieved an adequate selectivity at the political level. Too often we fail to identify priorities and concentrate our efforts accordingly. We cannot devise or implement a coherent strategy if we do not equip ourselves with the means to implement it.'

Political group spokesmen reply

Ludwig Fellermaier (Ge), Socialist Group leader, was the first of the political group spokesmen in the ensuing debate to describe the Council President's statement as 'pragmatic'. It gave grounds for hoping that the Council might become somewhat more efficient. A major area for Council action now lay in external relations – it was vital that the Community speak with one voice on matters such as terrorism (Mr Fellermaier expressed his dismay at the release yesterday in France of the recently arrested PLO leader Abou Daoud), and put up a united front at the Belgrade Conference on the Helsinki agreement.

For the Christian Democrats Erik Blumenfeld (Ge) said Mr Crosland's pragmatic approach was clearly also a British approach. He too referred to the need for more unity on fundamental political issues, and expressed his regret at the French release of Abou Daoud. Other urgent problems awaiting the Council's attention included fishing, monetary compensatory amounts and the milk surplus. Mr Blumenfeld looked forward to a deeper dialogue between Parliament and Council on these and other matters.

Cornelis Berkhouwer (Du), for the Liberals, was glad that Mr Crosland, who had once reportedly described British EC membership as a 'non-event', should now refer to it as an 'historic event.' The speaker welcomed what he called the 'non-insular' approach Mr Crosland had taken.

For the European Progressive Democrats, Brian Lenihan (Ir) said the main issue facing the new Council was the economic situation and unemployment. He supported Mr Crosland's emphasis on a step-by-step approach to building Europe. What was needed now, above all, was a Council which took decisions.

Sir Peter Kirk (Br), Conservative leader, pointed out that the sectoral issues – agriculture, fisheries, energy – referred to by Mr Crosland were all dependent for solution on the overriding problem of economic divergencies within the Community – before that problem had been tackled, nothing else could be. Sir Peter also called for a major Community initiative on Cyprus.

Communist spokesman Renato Sandri (It) said divisions within the EC – he referred to UNCTAD and the North-South dialogue – needed to be ironed out. The Community now had a major role to play in encouraging democratization in Spain. The Euro-Communists, he said, utterly condemned suppression of fundamental freedoms in East Europe, as elsewhere, and would act accordingly at the Belgrade follow-up Conference.

The Community and Southern Africa

Oral question by Mr Henk Waltmans (Du, S) and others to the Conference of Foreign Ministers on Community policy towards southern Africa.

Introducing his question, Henk Waltmans spoke of the danger of an international racial war in South Africa if Rhodesia and Namibia did not soon gain independence, and if South Africa did not put an end to its policy of apartheid. Specifically, he wanted to know what measures the Community had taken to implement UN resolutions on Namibian independence, what the Community was doing to help bring about early independence in Rhodesia and what the Conference of Foreign Ministers felt about the possibility of an economic boycott of South Africa.

Donning his second new hat of the day, Anthony Crosland, as Chairman of the Conference of Foreign Ministers, told the House that the Nine had made it

abundantly clear on several occasions that they fully supported Namibian independence, and wanted to see free elections being held there under UN auspices as soon as possible. The same thinking applied to Rhodesia. Mr Crosland also said that the Nine, both individually and jointly, had frequently expressed their opposition to South African apartheid policies. But he was sceptical as to the value of an economic boycott.

Willie Hamilton (Br), for the Socialist Group, agreed that a trade embargo against South Africa would be unrealistic. However, all Member States should commit themselves to an arms embargo; at present unfortunately weapons were being delivered to South Africa by at least one Member State.

For the Christian Democrats Erik Blumenfeld (Ge) said the Community should be wary about blindly accepting any and all UN resolutions on southern Africa. Independence for black African states should not be taken lightly – the speaker referred to the alarming situations in such countries as Uganda and Mozambique. And Mr Blumenfeld too rejected the idea of economic sanctions.

Liberal Group spokesman Russell Johnston (Br) said he felt that the Community had a responsibility to oppressed peoples everywhere not just in white-dominated African states: what about racial intolerance in Uganda? And if there was an illegal South African presence in Namibia, there was also an illegal Cuban presence in Angola. There were four things the Community could do to help the situation in southern Africa, said Mr Johnston;

- (1) Support the Kissinger initiative on Rhodesia,
- (2) Stress the reality of Soviet imperialism,
- (3) Provide economic and political help where it was needed,
- (4) Embark on an active dialogue with South Africa as regards Namibia and the internal south African situation.

Lord Reay (Br, EC) agreeing that economic sanctions against South Africa would be undesirable, stressed the role that Britain would have to play during the transition period to majority rule in Rhodesia. Lord Walston (Br, S), also referring to Rhodesia, thought it ridiculous that bloodshed should continue simply because various sides could not agree whether the transition period should be of 24 months, 18 months, 12 months or whatever. In fact, the speaker said, the key to a solution in Rhodesia lay in Pretoria – the Prime Minister Vorster must be prevailed upon to bring his influence to bear on Ian Smith.

James Spicer (Br, EC) wanted to know what right SWAPO had to take part in elections in Namibia; they were little more than a terrorist organization. Tam

Dalyell raised the question of Lesotho. Lord St. Oswald (Br, EC) pointed to the importance of orderly transition to independence: the two countries most recently to gain their freedom – Angola and Mozambique – had both become totalitarian states.

At this point Commissioner Claude Cheysson intervened to say that the Community had provided Lesotho (a Lomé signatory) with funds for a road to link up those parts of the country affected by closure of the transit route through Transkei.

Ernest Glinne (Be, S) raised the question of mercenaries destined for Rhodesia – he hoped all Member States would deny these soldiers of fortune any possibility of reaching southern Africa. Mr Michel Cointat (Fr, EPD) – who said he had not intended to intervene in the debate – spoke briefly to protest at attacks from members on his country, France, which were quite inappropriate in a Parliament of this kind. (He was referring to remarks this morning about the release in France of the Palastinian terrorist Abou Daoud, and to Mr Hamilton's references during this debate to a Community country which was supplying arms to South Africa).

Sir Geoffrey de Freitas (Br, S) struck an optimistic note. He had been British High Commissioner in Nairobi when Kenya attained independence in 1963, and he was happy to say that, over the past 13 years, blacks and whites in that country had lived and worked together peacefully. There was no reason why the same could not apply to Rhodesia.

Replying, Mr Crosland, speaking as British Foreign Minister and not President of the Council, made four main points;

- (1) SWAPO, he said, had a right to take part in elections in Namibia because at present we simply had no way of telling how much popular support that organization actually enjoyed,
- (2) He did not feel that there was adequate justification for imposing economic sanctions against South Africa. In any case, a boycott would inevitably cause more suffering to the coloureds and blacks in South Africa than to the whites,
- (3) As regards Lesotho, the British Government was keeping a close eye on the situation; the Nine Community Member States, he pointed out, had all refused to recognize the Transkei as an independent state,
- (4) The British Government wanted a negotiated settlement in Rhodesia, and the UK was willing to play a direct role during the transitional period. However, wide differences of opinion remained and the Geneva Conference could not be reconvened, as he had hoped, on January 17.

Unemployment in the Community

The House debated a motion put down by Ferruccio Pisoni (It, CD) which deplored the lack of coordination on tackling unemployment among the Nine – despite the commitments entered into by the Member States to act together (notably at the Tripartite Conference) – and the deflationary policies being pursued by some of them. It called for a boost to Social Fund and Regional Fund resources and for them to be dovetailed with the work of the European Investment Bank. And it singled out women and young people as the areas where the main attack should be concentrated. Lastly it called for an action programme that would be binding on the Member States especially as regards investment to create new jobs.

Opening the debate, Willem Albers (Du) said the Socialist Group shared the concern expressed in the motion as regards unemployment. Indeed, he feared that the statistics quoted (5,250,000 unemployed in the Community in October 1976) were misleading and under-represented the facts : they did not take into consideration migrant workers who had returned home, for example, nor women who wanted to work but had not in fact registered as unemployed. However, his group would prefer to see the motion referred back to the Social Affairs Committee : as it stood it was unacceptable.

For the Christian-Democrats, Jean-Marie Caro (Fr) felt that an anti-unemployment policy could well be developed along the lines of, say, the anti-inflation policies which had been put into practice with some success. Of prime importance in the short-term was to draw up an overall picture of the Community Labour market.

Like many other speakers Carlo Meintz (Lu), for the Liberals, emphasized the particular plight of young people and women. And he pointed out that most recent statistics showed a continuation of the upward trend in unemployment, specially marked over the past two months.

Alain Terrenoire (Fr), European Progressive Democrat spokesman, said full employment had in the past been a fortunate by-product of economic growth. The one, it was now apparent, was dependent on the other. Among the more realistic alternatives now available to combat unemployment was reducing working time – either by cutting down on hours worked, or by reducing a man's employable life. This could be done if people started to work later (by staying in education longer) or retired earlier. Another possibility was 'unemployment on the job' – on a reduction in work intensity.

For the European Conservatives, Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Br) said we were now at last recognising that sectoral unemployment was giving way to structural unemployment. The most urgent aspect of the situation was the out-of-work young – some 35 per cent of Europe's five and a half million unemployed were young people.

Marie-Thérèse Goutmann (Fr), for the Communists, pointed out that one in twelve Community workers was at present out of work or on short time. But if people were suffering on the dole queues, there was little evidence that the major corporations, or the banks, or the multinationals were. Mrs Goutmann agreed with other speakers that the official statistics gave a false picture of the situation: while the French official figure for unemployment in France was 1,025,000, the ILO put the number at over 1,400,000.

Frank Tomney (Br, S) said we now had a 'candyfloss economy without substance.' We wanted to produce and sell goods, but the markets weren't there to buy them. Michele Cifarelli (It, L) gave his wholehearted support to the motion – it offered real suggestions for tackling the issue.

Replying to the debate, Henk Vredeling said he shared Parliament's deep concern (the debate lasted over three hours which is a fair index of the importance Parliament attaches to getting Europe back to work) about unemployment. Since mid-1975 the Community had had from four and a half to five million out of work and the total would be still higher had not many migrants now returned to their home countries. 'We have exported part of the problem' he said. Then again, there was a lot of 'invisible unemployment' particularly among women and the young who tended to be the most seriously affected anyway. And there were some sectors, like shipbuilding, textiles and aeronautical engineering which were worse hit than others. To deal with this problem would be Mr Vredeling's main concern. His paper, outlining the Commission strategy would be made available to Parliament as soon as it was completed.

Among other speakers in today's debate, Tom Molloy (Br, S), who praised the Christian Democrats for putting down the motion, spoke of the loss of skills to the economy resulting from unemployment and the real threat to democracy that unemployment could ultimately represent. 'If we can make a contribution to solving the problem of unemployment, we shall enrich the whole principle of the European Community' he said.

Erwin Lange (Ge, S), on the other hand, suggested the motion be referred back to committee to be considered in conjunction with the fourth medium-term economic policy programme. This request was endorsed by Mr Albers but the House rejected the idea. It then agreed unanimously to Mr Pisoni's motion.

QUESTION TIME

Questions to the Commission

Commission plans to thwart art treasure thieves says Brunner

Replying to Cornelis Berkhouwer (Du, L), Commissioner Guido Brunner said 1970 – 74 had seen 34,000 art treasure thefts in Italy and 14,000 in France – productivity here was enviable high – which was an intolerable situation. The Commission was looking into Professor Jean Chatelain's report on art thefts and would make this available to Parliament. At the same time, he warned, the Commission could not play Sherlock Holmes.

Commission sympathetic but non-committal on involving regions

Commissioner Antonio Giolitti told Mr Evans (Br, S) that he favoured involving the regions more closely in developing EC regional policy but was wary of committing himself on exactly how this was to be done. And he avoided Elaine Kellett-Bowman's (Br, EC) question about giving local authorities right of disposal over say, twenty per cent of Regional Fund resources.

Antonio Giolitti regards visit to Highlands as priority

In reply to Russell Johnston (Br, L), Mr Giolitti said that the Highlands and Islands Board had done some very useful work. The previous Commission had had two meetings with them and he cited the port work at John O'Groats as one positive result of EDF involvement. He told Mrs Ewing (Br, Ind) that he regarded visiting the Highlands as a matter of priority,

London, Cardiff and Edinburgh offices trying to say how EC helps

President Roy Jenkins said that the Commission's offices in the United Kingdom were trying to tell the general public how the Community relates to them. He was, on the other hand, unwilling to be drawn by Mrs Dunwoody on explaining to the housewife 'why the CAP is in her interests.' There will, he said, be close cooperation between Commission and Parliament in anticipation of European elections in 1978. He did not think the Commission should necessarily open an office in Northern Ireland at present.

Mid-February price review will be too late for EP to comment

Finn Gundelach said the timing of the 1977 farm price review was something he would be discussing with Parliament's Committee on Agriculture, especially bearing in mind that the Council would have to reach its decisions by April 1st. James Scott-Hopkins (Br, EC) had objected that if the farm price proposals were not known until mid-February, this would not leave Parliament sufficient time to give its opinion.

Income erosion needs more radical solution

François-Xavier Ortoli told Mr Dondelinger that, rather than press governments to lok into the predicament of frontier workers whose pensions are hit by currency fluctuations, he would rather press for a more radical solution consisting in paving the way to closer economic and monetary coordination. Mr Ortoli told Mr Albers he would look into Mr Gerlach's proposals on this point.

Member States evading equal pay directive will go to Court

Member States failing to implement the Council directive on equal pay by the prescribed deadline will be taken to the European Communities' Court of Justice said Henk Vredeling in reply to James Gibbons (Ir, EPD). Mrs Dunwoody (Br, S) asked him if he realized that the sympathy he expressed in reply to subsequent supplementaries would seem empty until he and half his colleagues resigned to make way for women? He agreed with Vera Squarcialupi (It, CA) that it needs a cultural revolution really to overcome this problem.

Bill Molloy finds some encouragement in aircraft noise reply

Lorenzo Natali told Mr Molloy that the Commission was acting on aircraft noise both in respect of recreational flying and tourist traffic.

Commission will act if buying and selling of child labour proved

This was the substance of Henk Vredeling's reply to James Scott-Hopkin's (Br, EC) question as to what the Commission was doing to find out about the buying and selling of child labour in Southern Italy. Mr Scott-Hopkins quoted the case of a 14 year old boy who had shot himself because he had been sold into child labour eighteen months earlier. If this were true, said Mr Vredeling, something would be done. Vera Squarcialupi (It, CA) urged Mr Vredeling to treat this as a matter of urgency. There was no doubt about the facts, she said. It was one of the consequences of underdevelopment. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Br, S) said the facts were horrifying. And Feruccio Pisoni (It, CD) agreed the stories were true.

Questions to the Council

Lord Bethell unhappy with vague reply on letter acknowledgement

Lord Bethell (Br, EC) was unhappy with Mr Crosland's very vague and unsatisfactory reply about the time taken by Council to acknowledge parliamentary questions. Mr Crosland had simply said Council endeavoured to reply 'as quickly as possible.' Lord Bethell said he wrote to Council on November 28th and, despite three telex messages, still had not even had any acknowledgement of his letter. Mr Crosland thought his answer had been explicit and to the point, adding that the question had in fact been addressed to the Conference of Foreign Ministers. Mr Crosland doubted whether setting rigid time limits would necessarily be a good idea.

Council will look at proposals for any tunnel anywhere

To some laughter, Mr Crosland said that the Council would study any proposal for any tunnel anywhere but reminded the House that the initiative here rested with the Commission. Referring to the Channel tunnel idea, there were no new moves afoot at British Government level. The dilemma was that the more

economical a tunnel might be, the less beneficial would its effect on the railways. He pointed out, however, in reply to comments about the continent still being cut off that there had been a massive increase in cross-channel traffic, especially in the shape of ferries. Cornelis Berkhouwer (Du, L) was surprised that the EC could help finance a bridge over the Bosphorus and not help bridge the Channel but Mr Pierre Giraud (Fr, S) thought the tunnel the technological equivalent of the Loch Ness monster.

VAT agreement of December 16th now being reduced to a written text

The agreement in principle reached by the Council on December 16th concerning the common base for assessment for Value Added Taxation was now being reduced to writing and Mr Crosland asked the indulgence of the House if he refrained from commenting further. He was, however, able to give Mr Michael Shaw (Br, EC) an absolute and complete assurance that small firms had been taken into account. He was, however, unwilling to reply to Michael Yeats's (Ir, EPD) question as to whether the introduction of any further zero ratings would now be banned. He told Mr Notenboom that the aim was for the directive to come into force on January 1st 1978. He did add that he hoped that the debate on the basic issue would not now be reopened.

Commission rap for UK over wine tax

Commissioner Richard Burke said in reply to a parliamentary question that the Commission will be taking action against the United Kingdom under Article 169 of the Rome Treaty. This is because UK wine taxes contravene Article 95: 'No Member State may impose, directly or indirectly, on the products of other Member States any internal taxation of any kind in excess of that imposed directly or indirectly on similar domestic products.' The 'similar domestic product' here, of course, is beer. Real problem facing wine growers, however, is declining demand in France and Italy, where per capita consumption is normally over 100 litres as compared with only 10 litres per annum in the UK.

The new Commission

The new Commission, with assignments in brackets, is: Mr Jenkins himself (Information and Spokesman's Group, Secretariat and Legal Service), Finn Olav Gundelach (Agriculture), Wilhelm Haferkamp (External Relations), Lorenzo

Natali (Enlargement of EC, Environment, Nuclear Safety, contacts with government and public on European elections), François-Xavier Ortoli (Economic and Monetary Affairs), Henk Vredeling (Social Affairs), Guido Brunner (Energy, Research and Education), Richard Burke (Consumer Affairs, Transport and relations with Parliament), Claude Cheysson (Development and Cooperation), Vicomte Etienne Davignon (Internal Market and Industry), Antonio Giolitti (Coordination of funds: regional and guidance section of EAGGF), Christopher Samuel Tugendhat (Staff, administration, budget, financial control) and Raymond Vouel (Competition).

Abbreviations: Br, British, Ir, Irish, Be, Belgian, Da, Danish, Du, Dutch, Fr, French, Ge, German, It, Italian, Lu, Luxembourg, S, Socialist, CD, Christian Democrat, L, Liberal and Democrat, EC, European Conservative, EPD, European Progressive Democrat, CA, Communist and Allies, EC, European Community.

THE WEEK IN LUXEMBOURG

Monday, January 10th to Friday, January 14th 1977
(Document numbers in brackets)

MONDAY

- Parliament pays tribute to Jean de Broglie who died in Paris recently in tragic circumstances and to René Pêtre who died after a long illness. The House observed one minute's silence
- President announces the names of the members of the Commission
- Petition received from Mr Everhart about the hazards of living near the Euratom centre at Geel
- President informs House that the French Constitutional Court has declared direct elections to the European Parliament compatible with the French Constitution
- Socialist Group appoints John Prescott and Pietro Lezzi as new Vice-Chairmen
- Agenda agreed (fishing debate postponed until February)

TUESDAY

- New Commissioners sworn in at the Court of Justice
- Roy Jenkins presents his new Commission
- Question Time. Eleven questions put to the Commission (509/76)
- Lorenzo Natali tells the EP that the Commission was seeking a full picture of the water situation (330/76)
- Parliament condemns US trade protectionism (468/76)

WEDNESDAY

- President conveys Vladimir Bukovsky's thanks to EP for its help
- Question Time. Anthony Crosland answers eight questions to the Council. Five further questions are put to the Commission
- Anthony Crosland looks ahead. He tells press conference that the next summit will be in Rome on 25th March to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Rome Treaty
- Jet may not be on Energy Council agenda on January 17th-18th (510/76)
- Nine want free elections in Namibia and Rhodesia. All opposed to apartheid but Anthony Crosland sceptical as to the value of an economic boycott (450/76)
- Parliament and Commission still concerned about the predicament of Mr Stanley Adams (499/76)
- James Spicer invokes quorum rule and vote on External Relations motion is deferred because only 53 members are present (380/76)

THURSDAY

- EP urges EC to make more use of its trade muscle in negotiations with third countries: investment guarantees called for after Socialist amendment to delete this is defeated
- Guido Brunner pours oil on troubled water as Franco-British dispute over drilling in western approaches is raised (498/76)
- Etienne Davignon promises proposals on use of 8 m.u.a. for aerospace research in near future (502/76)
- Etienne Davignon promises detailed written reply on its second data-processing programme. 2.835 m.u.a. available thanks to EP (503/76)
- Manuel Fraga visiting EP at invitation of European Conservatives says the Popular Alliance will make an immediate application for Spain to join the EC if returned to power at the May elections
- Henk Vredeling gives top priority to tackling unemployment (439/76)
- Parliament wants stronger measures to fill social security gaps (444/76)
- Commission rap for UK over wine tax (501/76)

FRIDAY

- House welcomes proposals setting up trade cooperation agency with the developing countries, but defers vote pending Budgets Committee opinion
- Unanimous approval given to motion on a technological research programme for the footwear sector (466/76)
- Commissioner Tugendhat agreed to look again at certain aspects of its proposal for a directive on disposing of toxic wastes (446/76)
- All-party motion urging Nine to ratify the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism agreed to unanimously. Sir Peter Kirk says Article 1, whereby Contracting Parties agree not to regard terrorism as a political offence, is the key (513/76)

- House approves Commission proposals on standard quantities for consumer goods. Commissioner Christopher Tugendhat also looks forward to unit pricing.
- House approved Commission proposal on classifying, packaging and labelling dangerous products (463/76)
- House approves directive on water quality standards. Commissioner Tugendhat, who says salmon now to be found in the Thames, points out Nine will be free to attain water quality objectives as they think fit (465/76)
- House approves Commission proposal on list of acceptable plant protection products (455/76)
- Next plenary to be in Luxembourg from February 7th to 11th

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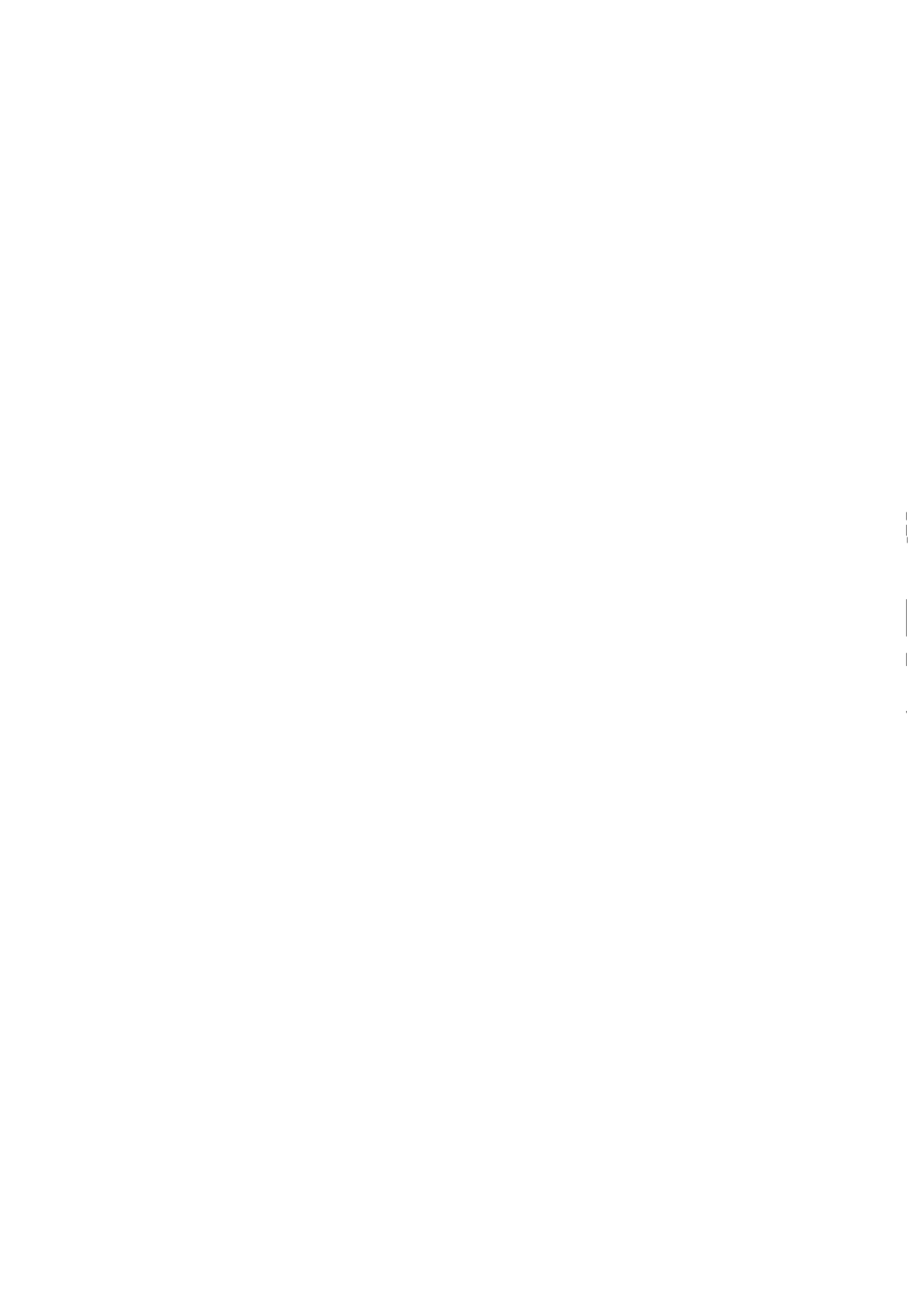
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