

EUROPEAN BACKGROUND INFORMATION COMMUNITY

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY INFORMATION SERVICE

2100 M Street NW, Washington DC 20037 Telephone (202) 872-8350

New York Office: 1 Dag Hammerskjöld Plaza, New York NY 10017 Telephone (212) 371-3804

BACKGROUND NOTE

No. 31/1976

July 15, 1976

AN ELECTED PARLIAMENT FOR EUROPE

The European Council met in Brussels on July 12 - 13 and cleared the way for an elected Parliament for Europe.

The Council meets three times a year and consists of the nine EC members' heads of state or government and foreign ministers. At this meeting, they reached a final decision upon the size and the distribution of seats in a directly elected Parliament.

The decision on the Parliament had been held up because the small member countries had refused to relinquish the current distribution of seats in the present, appointed Parliament. This favors them if compared with the size of their populations. The large member countries, on the other hand, held out for proportional distribution of seats.

In the compromise, both sides finally gave. The directly elected Parliament will have 410 members distributed as follows: Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and Italy, 81 members each; the Netherlands, 25 seats; Belgium, 24 seats; Denmark, 16 seats; Ireland, 15 seats, and Luxembourg, 6 seats.

At a news conference after the meeting, German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt said these decisions had given the Community "a new political quality."

At the moment, the Parliament has limited, but increasing, power over the Community budget.

It can also remove the Commission, the policy-proposing branch of the Community's executive, from office by a motion of censure. Two motions of censure have been brought, but neither succeeded. The extent of the powers of an elected European Parliament and its position in relation to the Commission, the Council, and the member governments is still a subject for constitutional speculation.

Anti-Terrorism Convention Proposed

In a separate declaration after the meeting, the European Council invited the nine ministers of justice to draft an anti-terrorism convention by which kid-nappers, hijackers, or terrorists would either have to stand trial in the state where they are apprehended or be extradited. The Council said that nine EC members would cooperate with other countries throughout the world to develop an anti-terrorist strategy.

Fishing Rights

The European Council noted the continuing discussions within the United Nations Law of the Sea Conference, but said that since more and more countries were extending their fishing limits to 200 miles before the end of the conference, the Community had to protect its own fishing industry by following suit. It therefore asked the EC Council of Ministers to make a declaration of intent to this effect at its next meeting, July 20 in Brussels.

Economic and Monetary Situation

The Council also reviewed the state of European Community monetary and economic policy and discussed the replacement of the current 13 member EC Commission when its term of office expires at the end of 1976.

In all, as the outgoing EC President, Francois-Xavier Ortoli, remarked, this European Council was "short, effective, and substantial."