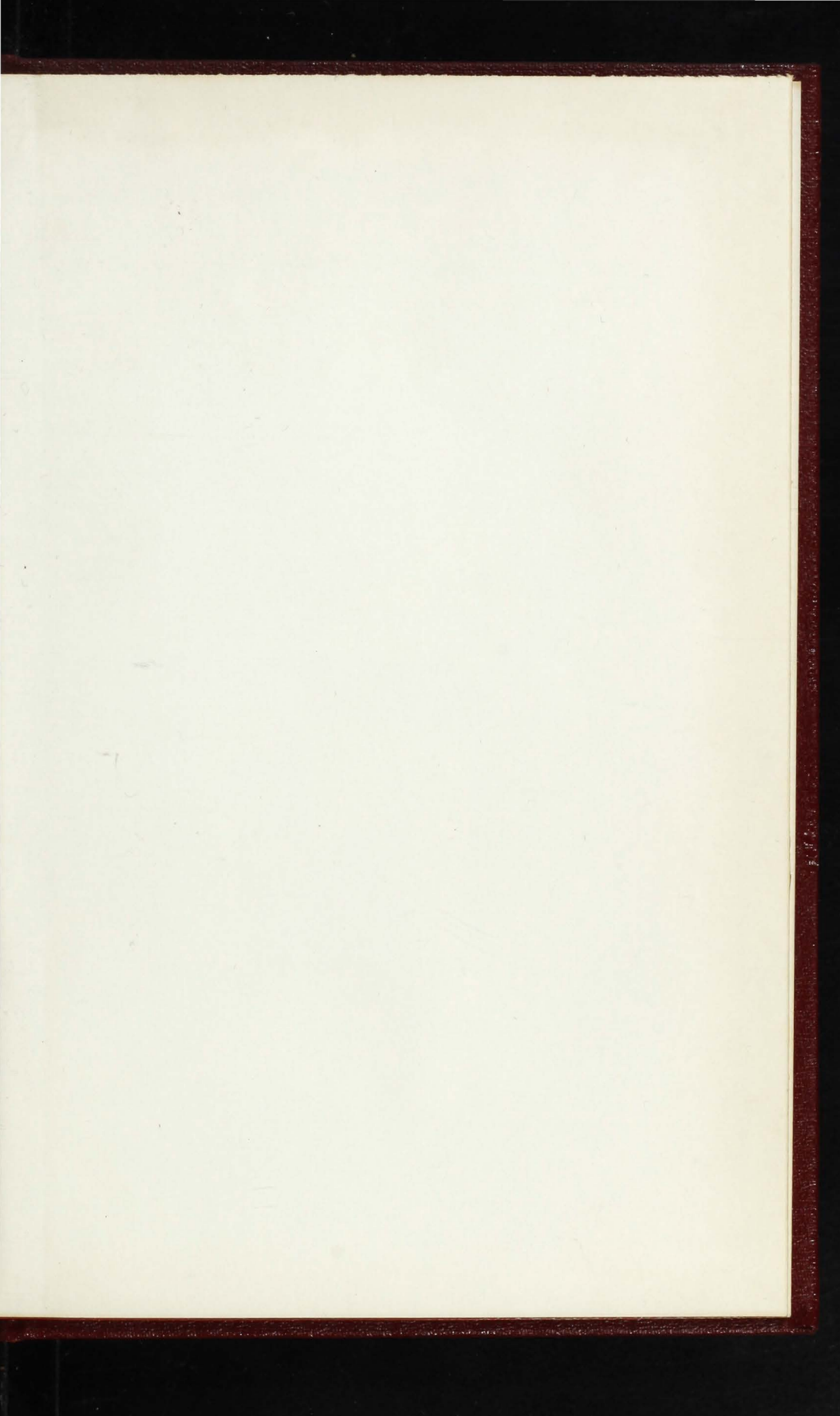
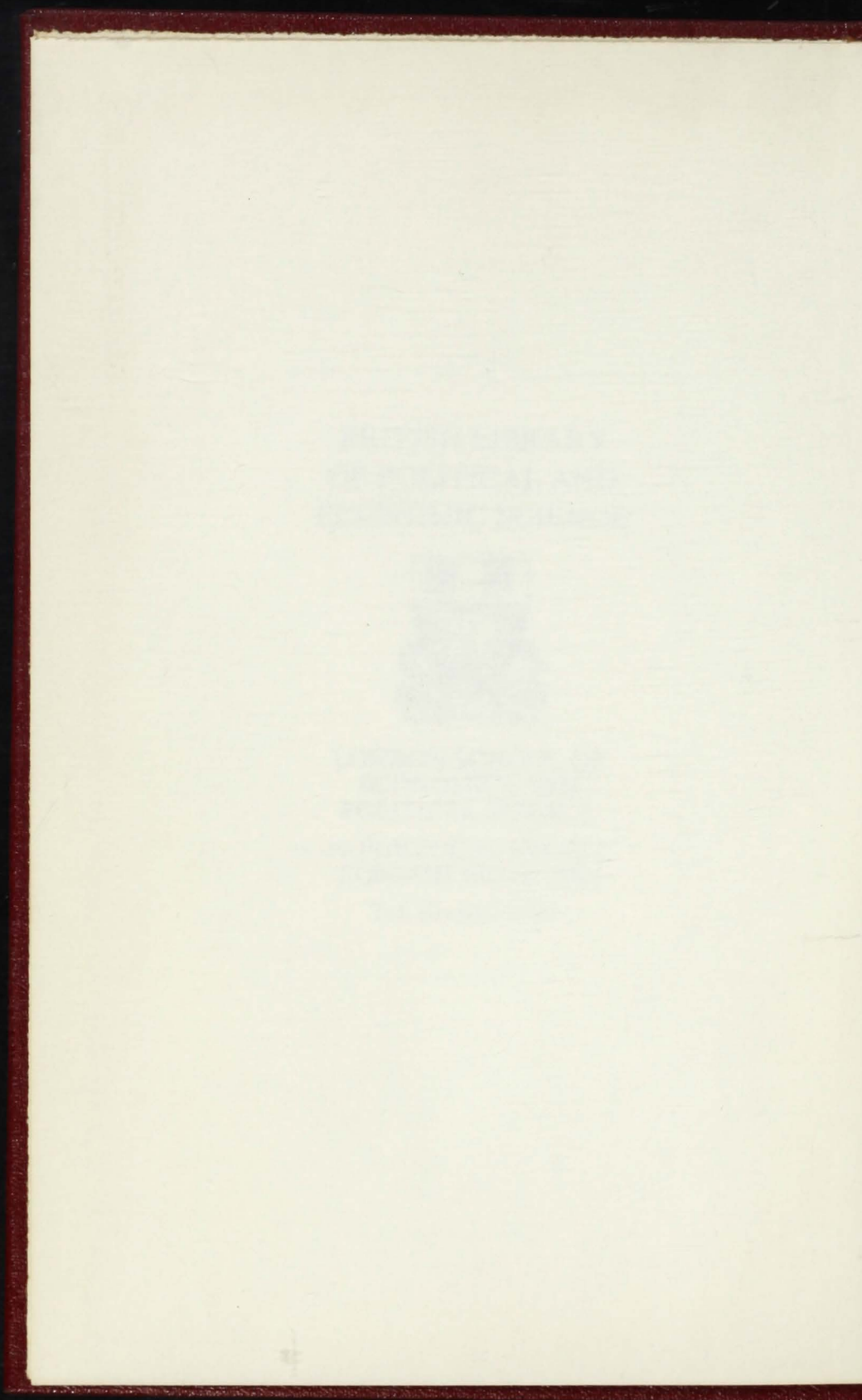


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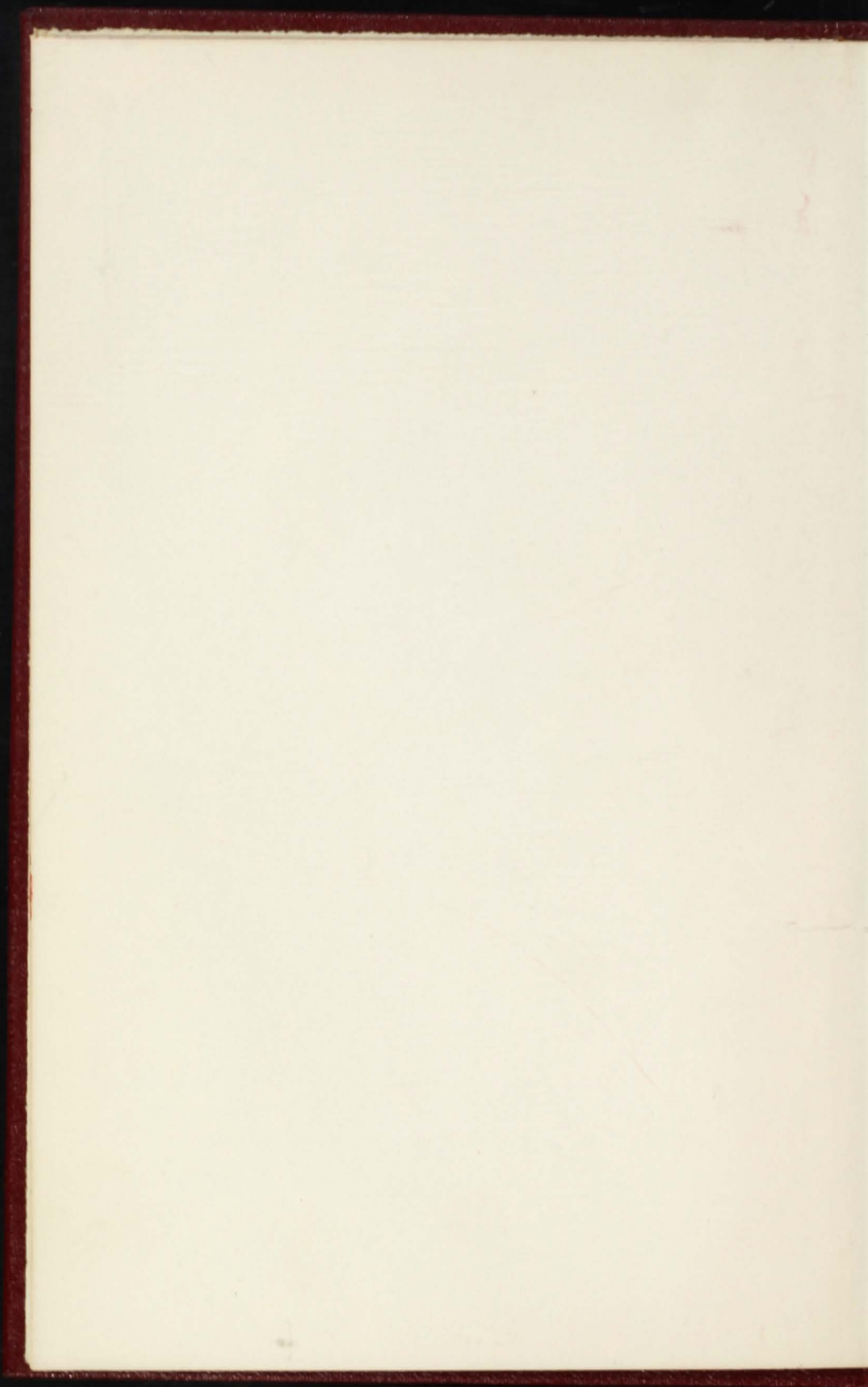
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electing Europe's first parliament

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Rod Northawl, Richard Corbett
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electing Europe's first parliament

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direct elections

Jenny Jeger

series editor

On 20 September 1976, Britain signed the convention to elect the European Parliament. Two days later, the Labour Party Conference rejected the principle of direct elections, but by less than the necessary majority to become formal party policy. Since that date the arguments have been never-ending and threatened to assume the proportions of the old pro and anti Common Market debates.

The Government is committed to using its "best endeavours" to meet the 1978 deadline and until very recently this did not seem possible. It does, however, look increasingly likely that the new mood of reluctant acquiescence adopted by Labour opponents and the wind of political change, culminating in the attraction of proportional representation will both lead to progress in the near future. We must have the necessary legislation passed through parliament as soon as possible in order for the campaigning to begin.

The one element lacking in all the debate so far has been the electorate. A recent poll showed that 66 per cent of the UK electorate believe the elections to be of "great significance". If this is indeed the case, there is more than ever a need to clear the misunderstandings and prejudices which have arisen since the issue gained importance. In this second Fabian pamphlet on the European Community, Rod Northawl and Richard Corbett explain the purpose and structure of the parliament and set out for the first time both the consequences and possible methods for direct elections.

It is very clear that if we are to fulfil our domestic commitments within the European Community there is no time to be lost in putting across the argument. When direct elections take place, let us make sure that the Labour party plays its full part. Above all let us not turn our backs on our community colleagues and Labour's chance to build a socialist Europe.

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1. the European assembly

The origins of the European Assembly date back to the days of the "Common Assembly" set up by the European Coal and Steel Community Treaty of 1951. It became the Assembly it is now with the setting up of the EEC and Euratom in 1958. Its self-proclaimed title of European Parliament is exaggerated, for although it has certain real powers, which make it more than a mere "Assembly", its main functions have remained those of an essentially consultative body, and one whose claims to legitimately represent anyone except backbenchers are nil. The world's first international elections will inevitably alter the situation, allowing it to speak with far greater authority and influence, both in its "advisory" capacity and in the exercise of those powers it does have. The title "Parliament" will be fully justified for the first time.

The implications of such a change cannot be ignored. Since the referendum, there has been a tendency in the Labour movement to look the other way when the European issue looms on the horizon.

This pamphlet is an attempt to fill the gap and look at the implications of European elections. These are many and varied, including the change in emphasis, style, and methods of the parliament itself; the impact it could have on the European Community's structure and policies; and the problems of the elections themselves. It is new and unfamiliar territory with which the Labour movement must acquaint itself better.

the existing assembly

The Assembly as it is now is composed of 198 members nominated by the nine national parliaments from among their own members, as provided by article 138 (1) of the Treaty of Rome. The UK, Italy, West Germany and France each have 36 seats; the Netherlands and Belgium 14; Denmark and Ireland 10; and Luxembourg 6. The UK delegation, of whom 26 are from the House of Commons and 10 from the House of Lords, is composed of 18 Labour party

members, 16 Conservatives, 1 Liberal and 1 Scottish National Party (SNP).

The Assembly does not work in terms of national delegations, however. Instead, members sit in the political Groups. The Socialist Group is by far the largest Group (and has been since Labour's arrival) with 63 members. It is followed by the Christian Democrats with 52, the Liberals with 26, the Communists with 17, the Progressive Democrats (mainly Irish Fianna Fail and French Gaullists) with 17, and the Conservatives also with 17. In addition, there are 5 independents which include Winnie Ewing of the SNP.

The functions of the Assembly are to deliver opinions to the Council of Ministers on proposed Community legislation; to hammer out the Community budget with the Council; and to exert some political control over the Commission and the Council. It is a legal requirement for most Community legislation that the Assembly be consulted, and in practice it is consulted on all matters of any importance, even when this is not expressly stipulated in the Treaties. The consultation takes place when the Commission submits its draft legislation to the Council. Council requests an opinion from the Assembly and takes it into consideration before making its final decision. As the only Community institution which makes its decisions in public and in which representatives from both governing and opposition parties in all Member States sit, the Assembly and its opinions cannot be ignored, but the views of a directly elected parliament would carry more weight.

Budgetary powers is the field in which the Assembly's fight for more powers has met with some success. The Community's financial resources are now largely "its own" (through import duties of the common external tariff, agricultural levies, a percentage of VAT, and various other sources) rather than contributions from national exchequers. Community expenditure has somewhat arbitrarily been divided into two categories: "obligatory" expenditure (necessarily arising from the Treaties) and

"non-obligatory" expenditure. The Council has the final say over details of the former category which amounts to some 70 per cent of the budget and is largely CAP (Common Agricultural Policy). In this area, it can overrule the Assembly's amendments. In the latter category, however, the Assembly has the final say within a maximum ceiling. Furthermore, the Assembly may reject the budget in its entirety, a power which naturally strengthens its hand in discussions with the Council.

A "conciliation procedure" has been evolved whereby a delegation from the Assembly meets the Council and tries to reach a compromise in matters on which they disagree. This procedure has become important in increasing the Assembly's powers of legislative control, as much Community legislation has budgetary implications.

The Assembly's third main function, that of political control, is enshrined in its ultimate power to sack the Commission (by a two thirds majority). This power has never been used although it has been threatened on a number of occasions. The existence of this power has been enough to establish the principle of Commission accountability to the Assembly. This accountability manifests itself in a number of ways. The Commission submits an annual report on the activities of the Communities to the Assembly, as well as its programme for the coming year. Commissioners and their civil servants often take part in meetings of the Assembly's specialised committees to discuss their plans and programmes of action, and to submit to cross examination. Commissioners take part in the Assembly's debates. The Commission is also accountable to the Assembly for the position it adopts at the meetings of the Council. Lastly, the Assembly may address written and oral questions to the Commission, which can be followed by a debate on the issue. All this provides for close scrutiny over the Commission and its work, and has resulted in close co-operation between the two bodies, with the Commission consulting the Assembly at an early stage in the

formation of its policies, and often taking up the "own initiatives" of the Assembly. More recently, Commission President Roy Jenkins undertook in his inaugural speech to the Assembly to treat it as though it were already directly elected and to submit "no proposal to Council without seriously and systematically considering whether it is likely to receive the support of a majority" in the Assembly—an important step forward.

The Assembly has also increased its powers of control over the Council, which were formerly negligible. Besides the new budgetary powers and opportunity for concertation referred to above, it can question Council in much the same way as it can the Commission, with oral and written questions. In addition, the President-in-office of the Council reports periodically to the Assembly on the Council's work, and takes part in important debates. It is customary for him to give the appropriate Committee of the Assembly a confidential account of the state reached in negotiations on trade and association agreements with third countries.

Members have recently won the right to put questions to the Conference of Foreign Ministers within which the Nine co-operate on matters not directly specified in the Treaties. It is hoped that similar rights will be won soon *vis-à-vis* the European Council (the "summit" meetings of Heads of Government).

The Assembly also participates in the running of the EEC's Association Agreements with third countries, through its delegations to the Joint Parliamentary Committees of each agreement. These are made up of equal numbers of members from the European Assembly and the national parliament concerned (or two delegates from each country in the case of the Lomé Convention). The most important of these Joint Committees are those with Greece (especially in view of Greece's application for full membership of the Community), with Turkey and with the Lomé Agreement countries (52 developing countries in Africa, the

Caribbean and the Pacific, known as ACP countries).

The bulk of the Assembly's work is carried out in the 12 specialised Committees, which meet in private and to which Commissioners, experts, pressure groups, or trade unionists are often invited to give evidence and submit to cross examination. Committees work by appointing Rapporteurs on each item (in fact agreed by the political Groups beforehand). The Rapporteur prepares his report, taking into account the views expressed when the Committee initially discussed the matter. Amendments to his report are frequently submitted by individuals or political Groups, and the report may be substantially modified as a result. The final report, as agreed by the Committee is then presented to the plenary. If the matter is non-controversial, it may be adopted without debate. If of wider interest or controversial it is debated in the plenary session and may be accepted in its original form, accepted after minor or major amendments, referred back, or rejected.

Before this final debate in the plenary, reports will have been considered by each political Group in a Group meeting. Everything of importance is digested by the Groups before it reaches the plenary, and many of the most interesting and important debates are those taking place at Group meetings. The Groups have a good record of voting discipline, considering that there is no proper "whipping" system. The fact that members are not tied in the way they are in national parliaments by the need to prop up a Government is in many ways a source of strength for the Assembly.

the members' work

Members of the Assembly have a very busy time. In the average month, the typical member is required to spend one week at the plenary session of the Assembly in Luxembourg or Strasbourg; to sit on two committees, each of which meets for a minimum of two days in Brussels; to attend the monthly meeting

of his political Group that takes place outside of sessions to discuss longer term issues (the Groups also meet during sessions for more immediate matters); and occasionally to be part of the Assembly's delegations to Joint Committees with associated countries. In addition they are members of their own national parliaments, with all the duties that implies, including having to rush back for crucial votes at inconvenient moments.

Work on the Committees requires that some time be spent reading documents and background material, and preparing papers. This is particularly time consuming when the member is appointed Rapporteur on a topic. The extreme case is that of Lord Bruce who was appointed Rapporteur on the 1977 Community budget—the most important rapporteurship of the year. He calculated that he spent a total of 132 days work on the budget, including committee and plenary discussion on the matter. This is, of course, more than is usual for the average rapporteurship, but the burden is still heavy, particularly for members from the Commons who also have constituency duties to which to attend. In practice, members find it impossible to do both jobs properly. The "dual mandate" is a Herculean task, attempted ultimately at the expense of the constituents. The Assembly only works properly, in fact, because the members rely on the staff of the committees and of their political Groups to help them, and indeed to do part of their jobs for them. Many speeches, written questions, reports and even policy documents are the work of the staff of a political Group, nominally in the name of a member who is only too pleased to have something done in his name even if he knows nothing about it. This state of affairs, imposed by the work load, is unhealthy for democracy and for a proper functioning of the Assembly in its tasks. Direct elections, in producing mainly full time members, will at least do much to rectify this situation.

The political Groups are of fundamental importance to the Parliament. Their

position is institutionalised and they receive finance for staff, meetings and publications from the Assembly budget. Each Group has offices in the Assembly's main building in Luxembourg. The Chairmen of the Groups sit with the President and Vice Presidents of the Assembly in the "Enlarged Bureau"—the equivalent of the "usual channels" in the House of Commons, which also prepares the Parliament's agenda. Official spokesmen for the Groups are the first to speak in debates and Groups have special rights in, for instance, the tabling of oral questions with debate. The chairmanships of Committees and most rapporteurships are distributed by deals between Groups.

the socialist group

The Socialist Group, the largest, faces a divided opposition and is usually only beaten when all four of the "centre right" parties vote against it. It is the only Group with members from all nine member states, including 18 from the UK; 15 from West Germany (SPD); 8 from France (6 Socialist Party, 2 Left Radicals); 6 from the Netherlands (5 Labour, 1 Radical); 5 from Italy (4 PSI, 1 Social Democrat); 4 Belgians (Socialist Party); 3 Danes (Social Democratic Party); 2 Irish (Labour Party); and 2 Luxembourgers (Socialist Workers Party). All Members of the Assembly belonging to a party that is a member of the Socialist International sit in the Socialist Group by right. In addition, the Group, by majority decision, may admit other members, and has done so in several cases.

The Group meets several times during each part-session to decide what line to take on forthcoming items. It also meets outside of sessions each month to discuss longer term policy matters. These meetings take place by rotation in each national capital and provide an opportunity for contact with national parties. This will be of particular importance after direct elections, when the contact could be weaker with the ending, in almost all cases, of the dual mandate.

The Group elects a Chairman, currently Ludwig Fellermaier of the SPD, and an 11 member Bureau to prepare its work and to appoint the staff. John Prescott took over from Michael Stewart in 1976 as Vice Chairman of the Group and leader of the Labour delegation.

The staff of the Group totals about 15, excluding secretaries, and organises its work by placing someone to follow the work of each of the parliamentary Committees to act as an advisor to the socialist members. In addition, there is a Secretary General and a press officer.

The Group's policies are necessarily a compromise, but over the years a wide range of policy has been evolved covering most aspects of the EEC. The Group has working parties on specific issues which draw up documents for discussion in Group meetings. The Group's policies on agriculture and on regional policy were overhauled in this way last Autumn. Inevitably, the Group splits on particular issues from time to time. There is no proper whipping system, but members who wish to vote against Group policy are requested to inform the Group beforehand. Occasionally, the Group splits wide open on national lines as in some of the fishing policy debates, but in general the cement of a common socialist outlook holds the Group together quite well. The gulf between pro and anti-marketisers in the Labour delegation virtually disappeared as they got down to work on the practical issues at stake.

Direct elections will bring a sudden influx of new members having no experience of working in a transnational grouping, and who will be responsible to quite different electorates. If the Socialist Group can hold together in spite of this, it will dominate the new parliament in the same way as it dominated the old Assembly, provided there are again enough British Labour members to tip the balance.

2. direct elections – why and how?

From as early as the days of the setting up of the Coal and Steel Community, it was provided that its "Common Assembly" be elected. Article 138 (3) of the EEC Treaty subsequently confirmed this, requiring the Assembly itself to "draw up proposals for elections by direct universal suffrage in accordance with a uniform procedure in all member states". It is then up to the Council, acting unanimously, "to lay down the appropriate provisions, which it shall recommend to member states for adoption in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements". A main purpose of these elections was to balance what might otherwise become a remote and bureaucratic Community. It was hoped that European elections, as well as being a bond between people of different countries, would enable public opinion to express itself on the issues being decided at the European level, and thereby have a greater influence than is possible through the smoke filled and often deadlocked room of the Council of Ministers.

The Assembly promptly took up its duty and produced proposals for European elections by 1960. These were based on a report of a working party chaired by Fernand Dehousse, proposing a 426 member parliament composed of 284 directly elected members and the other third (142 members) nominated by national parliaments. These proposals were never acted upon by the Council, in spite of the repeated appeals from the Assembly which even considered bringing an action against the Council in the Court of Justice under article 175 of the EEC Treaty. Over the years, some 15 bills were introduced in national parliaments proposing unilateral direct elections pending a Community decision.

With the enlargement of the Community in 1973, the Assembly decided to revise the Dehousse proposals. With Dutch Socialist Schelto Patijn as Rapporteur, the Political Affairs Committee of the Assembly set to work. The Legal Affairs Committee considered the legal aspects of the question, with German Socialist Hans Lautenschlager as Rapporteur.

After extensive consultations in the nine member states, Patijn proposed that for the first elections each member state be allowed to adopt the electoral system of its choice. It was hoped that this would avoid some of the political difficulties of European elections. The report was adopted by the Assembly on 14 January 1975 by 106 votes to 2, with support from all the political Groups except the Communists (who abstained on the grounds that the report did not provide for a single electoral system for all countries), and the Progressive Democrats who were split on the issue (the Gaullists abstaining).

Meanwhile the summit meeting of Heads of Government had already indicated that they were prepared to move towards European elections, though the British Government reserved its position pending the result of the referendum. With the finalising of the Assembly's proposals and the conclusion of the British referendum, the way was clear for the Council to lay down the appropriate provisions. The December 1975 Rome summit meeting confirmed this and set the Council to work. It took several Council and summit meetings to resolve the controversial matters, however, and it was only in September 1976 that the final Council decision was taken. The controversial issues were the number and allocation of seats, the timing of the elections and the dual mandate.

the convention

The final Act agreed by the Council provides for a 410 member parliament, with 81 members each from the UK, Italy, West Germany and France; 25 from the Netherlands; 24 from Belgium; 16 from Denmark; 15 from Ireland; and 6 from Luxembourg. An element of weighting in favour of small countries has thus continued.

The Act provides for each state to poll on a day which "falls within the same period starting on a Thursday morning and ending on a Sunday". The counting of votes "may not begin until after the

close of polling in the member state whose electors are the last to vote". This means if any one member state is not able to hold the elections on time, they are postponed in all countries. The main reason for this decision, apart from the desire to bind each member state equally, was that it would be extremely difficult for a country not holding elections to fill the larger number of seats by nomination from its national parliament. In the case of the UK, it would be extremely difficult to send 81 members from the House of Commons (and having 81 Peers in an otherwise elected Parliament would be out of the question).

The Act provides for a number of positions to be incompatible with membership of the European Parliament, including membership of the Commission, of national governments, of the Court of Justice and of the Community's civil service. It allows member states to declare additional incompatibilities for their own nationals. Membership of national parliaments was held to be compatible, thus making the much discussed "dual mandate" optional. It is generally felt that few members will be willing to take on what amounts to two full time jobs. If national parliaments feel they want a stronger link with the European Parliament, an alternative method will have to be found.

The Act itself does not refer to the target date of May/June 1978. The final decision will be made by the Council in conjunction with the Assembly. The Act does provide for five year parliaments, with by-election procedures to be decided by each member state as in the case for the electoral system, pending the entry into force of a "uniform electoral procedure".

The likely result of this provision is that various forms of proportional representation (PR) will be used in member countries, including France—departing from its usual "first past two posts" system. The exceptions will be Ireland using the single transferable vote (STV) in multi member constituencies and perhaps the UK which may use its normal

"first past the post" system in single member constituencies, as recommended by the Commons Select Committee. However, the UK government is considering seriously the various range of PR options to see if it can identify a satisfactory alternative for this first election and may have done so by the time this is read.

If the UK does use "first past the post", calls for reform will be inevitable thereafter. Firstly because the Treaty requires a uniform procedure. Secondly, this simple majority system in such large constituencies would probably squeeze out the Liberals entirely (whereas the SNP, with fewer votes overall, would win several seats), and magnify the "swing" between the main parties, leading to greatly exaggerated majorities for one of them in one election, the other in the next. This would in turn cause repercussions in the balance within the party Groups in the European Parliament, as there could be twice as many, or half as many, Labour members in the Socialist Group as, say, SPD members, although both would receive a similar number of votes in the election. Similarly, there may be no UK Liberal, although the British Liberal party receives more votes than any other Liberal party in Europe. Thirdly, calls for reform will be strengthened by the fact that no executive body is formed from the European Parliament and there is therefore not a strong need for stable one party majorities (which will not be possible anyway). On the other hand, there is a fear that PR for these elections might be the thin end of the wedge for PR at Westminster, the consequences of which would be enormous.

the new parliament

The powers of a directly elected parliament will remain the same as those of the present Assembly. It will no doubt ask for more powers, particularly in the fields of control over Community legislation, the selection of the Commission and the CAP section of the budget, but these can only be granted if all member

states agree. The primary impact of direct elections will be to give the parliament a greater moral authority, and to improve its efficiency.

Its greater authority will stem from the simple fact that its members will be responsible to the electorate. As Michael Stewart, the first leader of the Labour delegation to the Assembly said: "People tend to make better decisions if they know they will have to defend them in public." The members will have been elected on the basis of electoral promises to aim for certain objectives.

The Commission and the Council will simply *have* to listen to the representatives of the public when they have received an overwhelming mandate for the reform of the CAP, for instance. Roy Jenkins' undertaking that his Commission will only propose legislation for which it has a majority in the Assembly is indicative of the respect with which the parliament will be treated.

The greater efficiency of the parliament will be due to the larger number of members and to the fact that most of them will be full time. Members will be able to spend much more time on their work, on research, on proper scrutiny of the Commission, and on establishing real links with their constituencies. They will be far less dependent on the parliamentary and Group staff for help.

The typical working month of a directly elected member will be somewhat different from that of a current Assembly member. Plenary sessions and committee meetings will no doubt be longer and more thorough, and there will be no time wasted constantly hopping back and forth for votes in the national parliament. Instead, the member will be able to spend time in the constituency, keeping in touch with the local interests affected by European policies. In the average month, it is likely that one and a half weeks will be spent in plenary sessions, a total of up to eight days in committee meetings, three or four days in Group meetings outside plenary ses-

sions, and the rest of the time in his own country, looking after electorate interests.

Constituencies will be large if "first past the post" is used, but "MEPs" (Members of the European Parliament) will at any one time be dealing with a narrower range of issues than Westminster MPs, and should nevertheless be able to perform an adequate representative function.

finance

European elections could cause enormous financial problems for political parties, especially in Britain where there is no provision, as yet, for public aid to political parties. The Houghton Committee Report on financial aid to political parties presented to parliament in August 1976 proposed a scheme for public aid to parties and to candidates, and advocated that the reimbursement schemes should also be applied to direct elections to the European Parliament. The scheme proposed an annual grant of 5p per vote received at the latest general election to political parties satisfying certain minimum criteria. It also proposed that up to half the legally permitted expenditure on candidate's expenses be refunded to the candidate. This latter proposal, if put into practice, would do much to get a substantial campaign off the ground. The former proposal, while important for parties, would no doubt go primarily into helping other aspects of party work (*Report of the Committee on Financial Aid to Political Parties*, HMSO, 1976).

It has been suggested that the European Assembly itself should help finance political parties fighting in European elections. A token sum was set aside for this purpose in its 1977 budget, and its acceptance was seen as the acceptance of the principle of Community aid to parties. A more realistically sized sum will in all probability be presented for 1978, if not in the main budget then in a supplementary budget early in the year. The modalities for the use of such

sums are being considered. Questions as to which parties will be entitled to funds, and whether only transnational groupings will qualify will cause considerable controversy.

the confederation of socialist parties

The Confederation of the Socialist Parties of the European Community was set up according to the provisions in the statutes of the Socialist International pertaining to regional co-operation among members, in order to define joint positions on problems raised by the existence of the European Communities. Its main organs are the Congress and the Bureau. The Bureau includes two delegates from each member party, the Chairman of the Socialist Group and, in a consultative capacity, members of the Socialist Group's Bureau, Socialist members of the Commission, a representative from the International, and a representative from the Socialists in the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe. Each member party and the Socialist Group have one vote. The Bureau deals with the running of the Confederation and the execution of Congress decisions. It can make recommendations to member parties.

The Congress consists of a different number of delegates from each country (18 from the Labour Party), plus the members of the Bureau of the Confederation and a further group of delegates equal to the number of members of the European Parliament belonging to each party. The Congress can make recommendations to member parties, and if a motion is passed by a two thirds majority on a unanimous proposal from the Bureau, it becomes a decision binding on all member parties. A total of nine Congresses were held between 1957 and 1974, the last one in Bonn adopting the programme *Towards a Social Europe*.

The Confederation set up a working party in 1976 to draft a socialist platform for the European elections. The draft texts were to be submitted to a

special Congress, probably in Autumn 1977. The working party had four sub-groups dealing with economic policy, social policy, democracy and institutions, and external relations. On each of these sat one representative from each party, except the Labour party, which boycotted the work on the grounds that it was opposed to direct elections.

3. consultations and controversy at home

The first public move on the part of the Labour government towards European elections came when they found themselves committed to discussing them at the April 1976 meeting of the European Council or summit meeting. In February the government published a consultative document or Green Paper. This raised a number of issues on which subsequent debates in both Houses of Parliament centred and on which a Select Committee of the House of Commons on Direct Elections, chaired by Sidney Irving, pronounced at some length.

A number of the issues are now matters of history as decisions on them were taken in the summer of 1976, after the government had taken account of the debates in the Commons on 29 and 30 March, in the Lords on 29 March and of the Select Committee's first report of 15 June 1976. The Committee had by that time already considered a great deal of evidence from political parties and groups and from other interested organisations and individuals, submitted in response to the Green Paper.

composition of the European parliament

The first area of discussion was over the size and composition of the elected EP (European Parliament)—it had to be larger than the present 198 delegated members to ensure adequate representation, but not so large that it would be difficult to expand should additional European countries be admitted. There were other difficulties and apparent incompatibilities to be reconciled—the present Assembly itself has spent a number of years attempting to reach an agreed solution. The smallest nation, Luxembourg, is grossly over represented on the basis of population size with 6 seats, against France, Germany, Italy and the UK with 36 seats each. It would still be greatly over represented if it retained 6 seats in an enlarged parliament unless that parliament had some thousands of seats. And yet it was said a country needed a minimum of 6 seats to make any effective contribution to committee work. All countries came to

accept this argument and once the principle of unequal electoral constituencies was agreed, it meant that a weighting element in favour of all the smaller countries had inevitably to be conceded.

The Assembly had produced a draft Convention in 1975 taking account of this weighting within a total formula of 355 seats. A number of counter proposals had been made by various countries and interested parties, varying between 284 and 550 seats.

The government's Green Paper, whilst accepting Luxembourg as the pace setter, was calling for the relationship between representation of the smaller states and "that of the constituent parts of the larger member states" to be taken into account, whilst aiming on the other hand for a solution which "tends as far as possible in the direction of relating the number of seats allotted to each country to its population". In other words, the government was concerned about the reaction of, say, Scotland, with a similar population to Denmark, having many fewer seats in the EP. The same considerations would apply to Wales and Ireland. But the government was calling for the reconciliation of the irreconcilable.

This dichotomous approach appeared to disorient the Select Committee, which endorsed the government's formula for providing representation for the UK's component parts "not significantly out of proportion to those of the smaller member states" in its first report in June, but in its second report in August had apparently changed its mind and was recommending population weightings only marginally more favourable to Scotland and Wales than to England and adding "the Committee do not feel it right to recommend that . . . further additions (of seats) be made, either in order to secure equality for these smaller parts of the United Kingdom with some of the smaller member states of the Community or for any other reason". They recommended that the UK's 81 seats be allocated: England 66 (average electorate per seat 514,067), Scotland 8

(470,399), Wales 4 (511,601) and Northern Ireland 3 (344,413).

The House of Commons had not at this stage concerned itself greatly with these aspects, being more interested first, in the whole principle of having European elections and second, in the powers which would be enjoyed by the new EP (which we have already seen will not formally change through being elected) and third in the relationship between the British parliament and the elected EP. In this last regard the Green Paper had proposed that there could be some informal links created by allowing MPs to stand also as MEPs if they wished. It said that the question of *ex officio* links between the UK parliament and MEPs could additionally be considered. Few people, however, believe that anybody will want to do both jobs. Members of the present European Assembly are especially sceptical. Apart from the time and travelling considerations, such a person, once directly elected, would find himself with differing and probably incompatible allegiances to separate electorates and party groupings.

But many Westminster MPs, even some strongly committed to European ideas, find something unnerving about the prospect of a "rival" parliament unless organically linked in some way with Westminster. It seems they feel an almost proprietorial right to keep a stern eye on any British subject who would assume the title of "parliamentarian" in another context. Some have even suggested that all MEPs should become honorary members of the House of Lords. It has been observed that this would, if nothing else, at least preserve the tradition of British eccentricity in continental eyes.

The case for formal links between the two parliaments appears to melt away the further it is examined. There would perhaps be no other example in the western world of formal links between elected assemblies which monitor their executives at different levels. Members of elected assemblies must ultimately be responsible to their electorates and not

to each other. It is in any case mistaken to assume that whatever links are necessary should be through elected members. It is the job of the members of the EEC Council of Ministers, who report back to Westminster and other parliaments, to provide the formal links. It is they who bear the constitutional responsibility of a dual mandate.

There is another "link" argument, about the necessity of keeping party political co-ordination—which is most important—but here, again, it is not really a parliamentary responsibility but one which should be organised by the party in the country. As Michael Stewart said in the Commons on 29 March 1976: "A member of the directly elected European Assembly . . . can and ought to spend a great deal of time in his constituency, and his political party ought to see to it that he is there at meetings on the same platform with members of this House and with members of local authorities, and that he is knit into the real political life of the country. That, I think, is the most important link which we can have between members of this House and members of the directly elected European Assembly."

There was an unfortunate climax to Westminster debates on and around all these controversial issues because of a coincidence of dates. On 12 July the House of Commons was debating the first report of its Select Committee, whilst in Brussels the Prime Minister was at the European Council meeting destined to agree the principles governing the first European elections. The Commons debate was confused because it looked as if MPs were being preempted in Brussels. Jim Callaghan, meanwhile, told the other Heads of Government that although he had agreed details of EP size and seat allocation, timing of elections and so forth, he could not formally sign anything until he had heard the outcome of the Commons debate. He also made it clear that there were some practical problems in Britain which made it uncertain whether the UK could actually be ready to vote

by the agreed time of May/June 1978. It was subsequently agreed that if any country had to postpone the elections, they should be postponed throughout the Community countries, thus putting a heavy onus on any country which deliberately allowed delays. This coincidence of dates did nothing to establish mutual trust between government and House of Commons, or at least those elements of the House which were not enthusiastic about the EP.

the labour party controversy

A similar state of affairs has unfortunately arisen, since, within the Labour party itself, where the government has been doing what it felt it had to do to maintain the confidence of its Community partners whilst the NEC (National Executive Committee) of the party was travelling in the opposite direction—away from European elections. This culminated in a specially written document of the NEC recommending the 1976 party conference to reject the principle of direct elections to the EP, which it duly did. This decision was two days after Britain's ceremonial signing in Brussels of the full agreement on European elections and one day after the then Foreign Secretary, Tony Crosland, had stated categorically that for the government to go back on its word to its Community partners on elections "would be an act of bad faith and a betrayal of the decision democratically arrived at by the British people". The government still regard their commitments as binding and they are pledged to bring legislation before parliament to implement European elections in Britain in spite of the Conference vote of 4,016,000 to 2,264,000 against. This vote, however, fell short of the two thirds majority for incorporation into formal party policy.

The debate about Europe continues to cut across traditional party lines and no British party can boast total unity on the subject. But the Labour party has been and is the most deeply divided, having several long standing and well

organised pressure groups within it which have mounted successive campaigns to get Britain into or keep her out of the European Community, to stay in or to pull out (the referendum campaign) and now whether to prepare for European elections or to speak out against them. The main pressure groups are currently known as the Labour Committee for Europe (LCE) which is pro EEC. Its first chairman was Roy Jenkins and it is now headed by John Roper MP. The other is the Labour Common Market Safeguards Committee (anti) chaired by Ron Leighton. The Young European Left is another long established pro pressure group. Each of the two main groups has a number of well known adherents in the Cabinet, in the Parliamentary Labour Party and in the trade unions. The LCE confines itself to individual membership across the broad Labour movement and has a range of regional or city LCEs organising separate meetings and activities from the national committee. The Safeguards Committee organises at national level only but in addition to individual membership accepts affiliations from national or branch organisations within the broad Labour movement. In personal loyalties, in tenacity and in arguments deployed these bodies appear irreconcilable, notwithstanding the overwhelming referendum result of mid-1975 to stay in the European Community and the party decision which followed it to take up representation for the first time in the present Assembly and in all other Community bodies.

The main arguments within the Labour party which have been used in support of European elections have been (a) that it gives more democratic control in the Community with regard to the Commission and the Council of Ministers; (b) that the bureaucracy will thus be more responsive to the public will and (c) that the referendum result rightly committed us to these elections in principle because they are provided for in Article 138 of the Treaty of Rome to which all member countries are pledged. The LCE has argued these points forcibly, but latterly has concentrated on dealing

with the political and technical means of achieving early European elections and how best British Labour Party efforts could be co-ordinated with continental sister parties to provide attractive international electoral platforms.

The arguments against have been arguments of principle for the most part, with subsidiary technical points. It is argued that as the referendum campaign official literature made no specific mention of direct elections, the country is not committed. But the more serious arguments are first, that it is feared that direct elections are a step to further integration and perhaps political union, which should be opposed; second, that in addition to devolved assemblies for Scotland and Wales plus the various local government tiers, an elected EP would be just too many layers of democracy, leading to confusion. Third, it is felt that close scrutiny of Community affairs by the British parliament is more democratic than scrutiny by an elected EP. A European Assembly delegated from national parliaments, as at present, is preferred, with more power being given to the Council of Ministers. This third argument is really a plea for the preservation of maximum national sovereignty. The British parliament is seen as incorporating the essence of democracy and other elected parliaments are seen as intruders or inadequate substitutes—notwithstanding they have quite distinct fields of responsibility—as is shown in the quote from the Safeguards Committee's argument against European elections in their 1976 pamphlet *The Common Market: Promises and Reality*: "... the power of our national government to resist changes in the EEC, which are not in our interests, ... would be fatally weakened once they could be met with the argument that approval had been obtained from a body which had at least an equal claim to democratic legitimacy".

It is clear that the government is faced with major party difficulties in getting these elections off the ground. There continues to be a majority in the NEC and in

the trade unions who are against them. A sizeable group in the Parliamentary party share that view. But international commitments cannot be shuffled off. The government, believing it has the country behind full European participation, as shown by the referendum result, may be inclined to use the natural pro-Europe majority in the House of Commons to help it bring about the elections.

other parties' postures

The Tories make up a large part of this Commons majority for elections. Only a handful will abstain or vote against. Successive party conferences have endorsed the principle and the party is keen to meet the 1978 date. The Liberals, although in favour in principle, may not support it if the UK elections are to be held on a "first past the post" constituency basis. As has been said, it is very unlikely that any Liberal candidate could be successful if that electoral system were used. The Scottish National Party wants more seats for Scotland than the eight recommended by the Select Committee and it, also, may have reservations about the "first past the post" system. Nonetheless it supports European elections. Plaid Cymru does not favour the elections but is likely to press for more than the four seats for Wales recommended by the Select Committee when they do take place.

necessary legislation and electoral system

The UK government has fallen well behind the timetable set out by the Commons Select Committee if the necessary legislation were to be through the House to meet the European elections target date of May/June 1978. The Committee's assumptions were that the "first past the post" system would be used in 81 constituencies and that the Boundaries Commission would need time to define the boundaries. This required the first Enabling Bill to have passed all stages by February 1977. Government spokesmen were originally

saying they would use their "best endeavours" to meet the target date for elections but without naming a date for introducing a Bill. When the pact with the Liberal Party was made to preserve the government's parliamentary majority, the Prime Minister took a more committed line in the Commons on 23 March 1977 in the following words: ". . . the government will be presenting legislation on direct elections to parliament in this session for direct elections next year. The Liberal party has reaffirmed to me its strong conviction that a proportional system should be used as the method of election . . . in view of the arrangement that I now propose to enter into with the Leader of the Liberal party there will be consultation between us on the method to be adopted, and the government's final recommendation will take full account of the Liberal party's commitment . . . whatever the final recommendation on these matters it will be subject to a free vote of both houses of parliament".

This raises the prospect that a proportional rather than a "first past the post" electoral method will be used if a majority can be found for PR on a free vote. Traditional attitudes in the two biggest parties would normally rule out such a majority but widespread predictions of disastrous results for Labour, in terms of seats, if "first past the post" is used, makes PR an intriguing possibility.

Depending upon the system of PR chosen such a break away from "first past the post" could be helpful in terms of meeting the May/June 1978 target date. A system such as the Party List or the Single Transferable Vote (STV) in multi-member constituencies may not save legislative time but could save time in terms of the elimination of Boundary Commission studies and a diminution of parties' organisational preparations at constituency level.

As we write (early April 1977) the latest consultative White Paper—*Direct Elections to the European Assembly*—has just been published. It sets out a choice

between different electoral systems but does not itself make any recommendation on the method to be used. It identifies four options: (a) to stick to our traditional simple majority electoral system; (b) to change to a list system of PR, probably on a regional basis; (c) to change to STV; (d) to combine one of these electoral systems with the compulsory dual mandate.

The White Paper says the government wishes to listen to views expressed in parliament and elsewhere before coming to a conclusion on these options. This new publication gives the government a bit more time to try and bridge the rift within the Labour party and perhaps to win more MPs of both major parties round to the idea that a form of PR would be right for this particular electoral purpose. The fourth identified option of a compulsory dual mandate system, however, seems to stand little chance of winning a majority in parliament or in any political party. It has presumably been written in to the White Paper in a final attempt to take the Labour party's anti-direct election campaigners along with the majority in the government. Those campaigners believe it would be the only acceptable solution because it would ensure that UK members had their position at Westminster and in their Westminster constituencies as their primary base. It would also discourage federalist developments. Most other observers, however, appear to believe the option undesirable and/or technically unworkable.

The government's pledge to use its "best endeavours" to meet the elections target date is renewed in the White Paper but timescale difficulties are recognised. The Labour party's rift, plus other heavy legislative commitments, no doubt made it risky for the government to push the elections Bill through too soon. The possibility of postponement of the election date for the whole Community by the UK's inability to meet the date cannot be ruled out. But it would be an even greater risk for the government. It needs the other countries' goodwill for too many other reasons.

4. programming for a socialist victory

The decision of the NEC of the Labour party to publish a document recommending the 1976 Conference to reject the principle of European elections came as a surprise to many. After the referendum the Labour movement had appeared to accept the fullest participation in the Community's institutions.

The Parliamentary party sent Labour delegates to the present Assembly for the first time, although the Tories and Liberals had long been attending. The TUC had, for the first time, taken up its allocated seats on the Community's Economic and Social Committee and various other specialist Community bodies. A full part was being taken in the decision making process without too much clamour and the Labour party joined the Confederation of European Socialist Parties—a Community body with its secretariat in Brussels—from which it had previously held aloof.

There could have been no doubt in the mind of any politician or party member who had followed events that the UK's confirmed membership of the Community meant acceptance of the Rome Treaty and of Article 138 committing the Member States to European elections in principle, and in practice as soon as differences over their exact form could be resolved within the Community.

The 1976 developments within the Labour party can therefore only be viewed as a determined rearguard action by committed anti-Community campaigners for whom the referendum result was a major battle lost rather than a war ended. But the continuation of the war is very damaging to Labour and to European socialism. Its continuance is causing: (a) a reduction of the government's negotiating credibility with its Community partners; (b) dismay among European socialist colleagues at what appears to be a lack of good faith in the British; (c) a reduction in the Labour party's ability to win the elections when they are held due to delay in getting the party machine operational at national and constituency levels and

failure to generate enthusiasm for winning. These effects need to be examined more closely.

government and community credibility

The European Community has to take new initiatives to survive. Its fortunes have gone in cycles. On the downswing new initiatives by the Commission run into the sands because of national political disagreements or the vetoes of single member states. When the clamour in the media about the imminent break-up of the Community is at its highest the European Council (or Summit) tends to save the day by agreeing what previously seemed unattainable and the upswing begins. This has happened time and again over the years and old hands have come to regard it is a way of life. In the first part of 1977 we are in a major upswing period due in large part to the 1976 agreement to hold European elections after many years of stalemate on the issue.

The British government would not only incur a great deal of odium among its partners if it now went back on the elections agreement but the failure would set back the Community's morale and development and seriously threaten its unity and ability to succeed. Even avoidable delay in holding the elections in the UK would do major damage because of the provision that if any member state has to postpone the elections they will be postponed throughout the Community. Such postponement would seriously lower morale, even among the present Assembly members, who fully accept the need for their own impending redundancy.

the European socialists

The socialist group in the present Assembly as we have already said has been the largest of all the party groups ever since the 18 British Labour members took their seats after the referendum. The next largest group is the Christian Democrats. The latter would

be the largest but for the presence of British socialists. A similar sort of balance is to be expected in the elected parliament of 410 members unless, unthinkable, the British Labour party fails to contest in the UK. The result of such a failure on the morale and attitudes of continental socialists hardly needs spelling out. It would be a disaster for them and for socialist policies in the Community.

The others were already dismayed that the British Labour party had failed to take part in the four working parties set up by the Confederation of European Socialist Parties to prepare common platform policies for the elections as described in chapter two and developed in chapter five. Foot-dragging on the principle of elections itself will be seen as the last straw. The socialist group in the Assembly has been enthusiastically pro-direct elections for years and it was the Dutch socialist Schelto Patijn who did more spadework than any other man in the Assembly to clear away the hurdles which had previously prevented agreement at the heads of government level.

contesting and winning elections

Winning elections, of course, presupposes that the party has policies which are attractive to the electorate and this aspect is dealt with in chapter five. The immediate problem facing the Labour party, however, is—policy or no policy—whether it can get itself administratively and organisationally into a position to fight elections properly in the time available.

The position taken up by the NEC and the party conference, on the face of it, is that they do not want and will not contest elections. It seems inconceivable that this attitude will prevail once the statutory arrangements for elections are made by parliament. If it did, free-wheeling left wing candidates would begin to appear in the absence of official Labour candidates, and they would stand a good chance of winning under

their own labels in some areas. A large part of the electorate is accustomed to voting Labour, it feels a strong need for Labour MPs to represent its interests and if it does not get them it will in all likelihood vote for what appears to be the nearest substitute; this could in some cases be a Liberal candidate. But the electorate would, at the same time, feel traumatically let down by Labour and their loyalty to the party, subsequently, would be under severe strain. A Liberal who gained a seat through Labour default would be quite likely to stay there on the basis of his personal vote in subsequent elections.

Another prospect for the party in the absence of timely action from Labour head office is that if "first past the post" were used, constituency parties in a number of areas would get together on the basis of new European constituencies, when those are determined, to select their candidates and gear their election machines without any guidance from national level. Because of the shortness of time and of appropriate advice on campaign styles, media publicity, and similar, their campaigns would be likely to go off at half cock, leaving the Tories to gain major advantages. The available choice to constituencies of suitable candidates would also be drastically curtailed in the absence of centrally organised and centrally approved lists.

the first election

The first immediate need in the Labour party is for diplomatic peace and quiet between the government, the Parliamentary Labour Party and the NEC over the European issue. Government and NEC have moved in opposite directions and the breach must be healed quickly. The NEC cannot afford the disgrace of failing to allow the party machine to swing into action to win a very important set of elections. The government can neither afford the loss of face abroad of its own party failing to contest and make a substantial showing in European elections nor of the alternative of causing a postponement of elections from the agreed

date throughout the whole Community because it has insufficient authority to take its party machine along with it.

The Tory party is well advanced in setting up its list of approved candidates and Labour needs to do the same immediately.

There is a disposition in large organisations, especially at times of pressure, to do what is familiar. Political parties, trade unions and the Co-op movement are no exceptions. There is therefore a danger that as soon as they are persuaded of the need to get the election machine into action quickly it will be done on the familiar basis of Westminster and local government elections if the electoral system is to be the same. This would be a great mistake. The mechanisms, even at this late stage, need to be considered afresh. Let us take them in the sequence they will happen and see why.

First, lists of candidates for selection by the new European constituencies on the assumption of "first past the post". Selections will have to be made by each of the 81 UK constituencies and this means that each constituency will be, on average, about eight times the size of a Westminster constituency, in terms of electorate. That represents for an MEP a massive responsibility and workload in terms of keeping in touch because he will need to spend at least half this time working and travelling on the continent on parliamentary business.

We have also to assume that the European elections will happen in May or June 1978 before the next Westminster elections, as the present UK parliament could run, constitutionally, until October 1979. The likelihood is, then, especially with the knife edge party balance at Westminster, that few Labour MPs will either resign to fight a European seat, or fight it whilst still sitting at Westminster, with the prospect of having to desert their voting obligations for long periods during the EP election campaign. This may well mean that few nationally known names will appear as potential

EP candidates. Perhaps only about one tenth of Labour candidates will have had experience of sitting in the present Assembly.

the job of a European MP

The name "parliament" pre-conditions people to thinking in Westminster terms but the European Parliament will be a very different sort of institution, likely to attract a rather different sort of person to want to sit in it. Somebody attracted to stand for Westminster may be drawn by the prospect of making the necessary laws to reform the country in the way he sees necessary. Even more he may be drawn by the possibility of becoming a member of the government and himself administering a ministry.

An EP member will have neither of these enticements in prospect. The job of the EP is to monitor, to debate and to stimulate good policies and administration and criticise the bad. The parliament has no constitutional control over the Commission and the Council of Ministers except, ultimately, to sack the whole of the former or turn down their budget. It will have only a moral authority over the latter. An MEP has no direct prospect of becoming either a legislator or a member of the executive arm of the Community. His prospects of being termed a successful politician will lie in being a first class representative of the people through his skills in international communication and much hard work in specialist areas of Community policy requiring, probably, travel throughout the Community. He will thus be able to build up an authority for himself and the EP committees in which he works which will prove influential with other Community bodies. Constitutionally he will have little or no power, but this does not imply any lack of status or authority. Indeed, politicians of the calibre of Brandt and Mitterand have declared their own intention to stand, which speaks for itself.

It is essential that in drawing up national lists of potential candidates

these facts are well understood both by the people willing to be nominated and by the party conferences or committees which select them. Otherwise mutual dissatisfaction may result when it is too late and the candidate has already been elected to the EP. The primary need to insure against such mishaps is for the Labour party to put forward a list of potential candidates totally distinct from its other parliamentary lists, to include people who have been quite separately interviewed and vetted and their qualifications assessed. The same principles could best be adopted by trade unions and by the Co-op movement when building their own sponsored panels of qualified parliamentary aspirants within the context of Labour party selection procedures. Candidates will need to be identifiable on the basis of their knowledge or experience of European affairs and a separate list will therefore be appropriate.

nomination and selection

Because of the shortage of time before the European elections and because of the importance of putting before selection conferences and the electorate candidates of adequate calibre, it would be advisable for the Labour party to draw up immediately a list of "recommended candidates", that is, people who had been vetted and approved by a special body consisting, perhaps, of one third present Euro-MPs, one third Parliamentary Labour Party and one third NEC members. One task would be to ensure that aspirants fully understood what they were proposing to take on. The resulting recommended list could save selection conferences much difficulty in drawing up lists of candidates for interview whilst presenting a choice of well qualified party members. The recommended list would not, of course, in any way prevent selection conferences from inviting or selecting others not on it. The list would be purely an efficient convenience.

The method of nomination for consideration by the "recommended list"

vetting panel is also of considerable importance. The Labour party might be well advised to accept nominations for their lists from any constituency party, trade union, Co-op party, or other affiliated body, of any party member at all, irrespective of his membership of the nominating body. The reason is that the Labour movement has been split for so long on European questions that there is an emotional hangover. To ensure fairness to all and to prevent bitterness arising in some situations candidates known for either pro or anti views or, indeed, those not so committed at all, must all be considered equally eligible. The danger is that their nomination could be precluded if the constituency or union of which they were a member held views or policy commitments of the opposite tendency. In view of the timescale it would be advisable to have a single all-embracing list. A separate list of financially sponsored candidates as for Westminster elections might cause problems. Trade union procedures are often protracted and the normal sponsorship mechanics may well hold things up.

Familiarity may tend to push the party towards traditional selection procedures but there is a strong case for arguing that in the time-critical circumstances this would be wasteful and ineffective as far as winning elections is concerned. As we have seen, most of the candidates are likely to start off in their new constituencies or in a large part of them as unknowns. They will have relatively little time to get themselves known either to the majority of their party members, personally, or to the electorate through the media and through local appearances. Both operations are essential to winning elections and the selection procedures need to operate with the criteria of early selection and maximum candidate exposure time in mind.

One prospect is that grouped Westminster constituencies will have to come together quickly to form a new European constituency, as soon as boundaries are decided. The last thing that will be wanted at that time is a complicated

procedure to obtain the traditional type or size of selection meeting by grouped parties, many of whom will never have worked with each other before. The potentialities for bickering and the interplay of local politics would best be avoided as far as possible.

A simple solution is called for and this could be achieved by amassing the general committees (GCs) of the combined parties in one hall under the chairmanship, say, of a regional official of the party to hear short speeches from the invited candidates and to ask them questions. Each GC should previously have had the opportunity of putting forward one name only for consideration. The appropriate region of the party might also have the right to put forward a nominee. The NEC should have the right to put forward a nominee from the recommended list if it were found that no person from that list had been invited.

It may be thought that a selection conference of this size would be unwieldy. By conventional standards it might be because it could well consist of several hundred people. This prospect should be viewed in the light of the advantages that would bring. First, it would be the best guarantee that the people who matter most in the constituency parties not only knew their candidate but had exercised their full democratic right in helping to select him or her. This is also probably the best way to ensure that they feel solidly committed to work for the candidate at an election coming, for many, shortly after exhausting local government elections have finished in May. It has to be borne in mind that some local parties will still, in the aftermath of the 1976 Conference decision, not be otherwise highly motivated to doing anything much about European elections. Inactive party workers could cause a number of severely embarrassing election fiascos.

Second, a large selection conference of this sort in a regional centre should be seen as a natural platform for launching a candidate through the media. Not only

the local and regional press but television and radio will be interested. Immediately following the selection the meeting could be turned into a conference for the media and the chosen candidate would be well on the way to becoming known.

campaign style

The more they consider it the more constituency parties are likely to find that the type and style of campaign for European elections needs to be quite new. The constituencies will be so large and the issues at stake may often appear so much more remote than usual, that doorstep canvassing and the marking up of electoral registers, for instance, will probably be fairly irrelevant. For the reasons mentioned it would be almost impossible to achieve an efficient canvass and pulling-out operation on election day by this process. It may well be better, therefore, to abandon it altogether and concentrate on those aspects which look as if they will produce better results. These will be American sized constituencies in population terms and whilst the British and other Europeans will probably wish to avoid the razzmatazz of American electioneering they would, perhaps, be ill advised to ignore some other lessons of campaign style from across the Atlantic. The main objective for a candidate is to get himself and his views known and as he cannot hope to meet more than a tiny fraction of the electorate face to face he has to do things which will attract maximum media publicity.

This will include the organisation of several big meetings or demonstrations in main towns or cities with effective and well planned arrangements for TV, radio and press, with proper advance handouts which draw attention to the most exciting or controversial passages of the speech. It will include quite a number of loudspeakers and meet-the-people occasions at shopping centres, factory gates, and so on, again with the media well primed in advance. It will include a large number of lesser but

similar forays (whistle-stop tours) into the smaller towns and villages a bit later in the campaign—all well notified in advance in the local press—where the main requirement will be good loud-speaker work plus sufficient cars and supporters to put on a good, if brief, parade so that the population knows the candidate has been through and some will have turned out to see.

The candidate will probably find great advantage in seeking out all the main organisations and pressure groups in his large constituency, even before they seek him out, and offering them meetings to discuss any problems relevant in the European context. Trades councils, employer organisations, local authority spokesmen, commercial groups, political groups, social groups—probably all should be approached. The candidate is often likely to be more aware of the European implications in their area of interest than the groups themselves in this first election of familiarisation to the new concept of an international parliament overseeing an international Community. This should give him good lift-off.

Constituency parties will probably find the main workload which falls on their party officials and workers in these circumstances will be: (a) The planning and organisation of meetings, parades and tours with particular attention to obtaining media coverage and taking selected press or broadcasting people along with the candidate throughout some tours; (b) Persuading party supporters to turn out in good numbers for these, preferably with some eye-catching motorcades and similar; (c) The usual folding, enveloping and addressing of the candidate's electoral address ready for the free postal delivery which it is expected the law will provide.

the possibility of PR

All the foregoing has assumed the "first past the post" system in single member constituencies, which was also the government's original assumption. The

psephologists, however, were saying that on late 1976 and early 1977 poll trends, Labour might win very few of the 81 UK seats (with the SNP taking *all* the Scottish seats). This did not mean that European elections were naturally loaded against Labour; it was, rather, an indication of the fact that the normal mid-term swing against *any* UK government would be greatly exaggerated in terms of seats changing hands under a system where eight or so Westminster constituencies were merged into one Euro-constituency. The Tories would fare similarly badly, mid-term, if they were in power in Westminster.

These predictions are themselves probably much exaggerated because they assume that people will vote for or against Euro-candidates purely on the basis of their current feelings about national politics—an assumption which could be very wide of the mark. Be that as it may, the government is seriously considering PR for the European elections and it knows that Liberal party backing, in general, can be best assured by promoting it. There are so many PR options that it is not really practicable to assess the rather different implications for compiling approved lists, selecting candidates or working out electioneering styles in advance of a firm decision. However, a number of the suggestions made above could be applicable to regionally based PR systems.

One interesting possibility is that if the government decided on a straight party list system for the 1978 election only, whether nationally or regionally based, it would create some difficulties but also get itself off a number of hooks. It would require less time to set up in terms of party organisation and official electoral machinery, it would tend to centralise the campaign effort (a mixed blessing) thus reducing the need for local party efforts and expenditure and it would enable simplified selection procedures to operate. It would also reduce the unpredictable element of the party representation in the new elected parliament and thus underwrite certain minimum standards of experience and calibre. Against

these advantages it would undoubtedly create some new hostilities because many people would think it less than democratic and others would distrust party patronage on this scale. It could also cause further dogfighting between pro and anti Community factions if great care were not taken to achieve balance. This balance might be helped if both the Labour Committee for Europe and the Labour Common Market Safeguards Committee were given some official status in nomination and selection procedures.

The means by which European elections of any sort will be financed is as yet uncertain. It will be a heavy extra burden on all political parties, but especially on the Labour party with its more limited resources. Chapter two explained the possible external sources of finance—from the EP itself and through the Houghton Committee recommendations—but even if they both prove fruitful it will still remain with the parties themselves to find a good deal more money. This will be an additional task to those listed above and in most cases probably a very difficult one, often following directly on heavy expenditure on local government elections. But the effectiveness of the campaigns, as always, will depend on finding the money. Many special efforts will have to be made by constituency parties.

It has been shown that there is a huge work programme ahead for Labour, as for other parties, if it is to make a good showing in the European elections in 1978. It is dismaying that for internal policy reasons Labour starts with an organisational and policy handicap. There will, no doubt, be an inclination for many stalwart party members who have turned out for every past election and party crisis to wonder whether they should, after all, give European elections a miss.

We believe it would be a tragedy if they did. It has to be remembered that once the law provides for the elections, the European Parliament will go ahead whatever the British constituency Labour

parties do or fail to do. Those same constituency parties would never forgive themselves if the EP became dominated by the political right instead of by the Socialist Group. Socialist predominance seems likely if party members in each member country pull out all the socialist stops in the coming campaign. Labour party members would bitterly regret it later if they allowed British Tories to sweep the board and thereafter pose as the international party, labelling Labour as an inward looking national party. Socialism and British electors would equally be the losers for many years to come.

5. evolving a European socialist platform

Important though selection and election procedures are, they can only play their part in putting socialist candidates in the EP if those candidates first have an attractive policy on which to campaign. A well known candidate in other elections may occasionally get by on his past record and his personality but that cannot happen in this new election for a new sort of parliament. There will be absolutely no substitute for a well thought out policy to put before the electorate. Where will it come from?

In most elections the answer to this question would be crystal clear and unambiguous. The policy would be formulated by the Labour party at the appropriate level because that is the constitutional function of the party. But the constitutional function of policy formation in the European Community is not yet fully agreed by the national parties. Certainly the Confederation of the Socialist Parties of the European Community would like the function and will, given time, probably come to hold it by common consent because that would be the logical position. Such a major shift of authority away from the national parties has to come gradually, but already the Confederation's Congress has quite considerable influence, as was indicated in chapter two.

Political parties of the centre and right are themselves making considerable headway in evolving common platforms although there are divisions, often along national lines, among them as, indeed, there are among socialist parties. The British Conservatives, however, are somewhat isolated at the European level, a fact which Labour could better exploit if it were, itself, better integrated at this level.

In chapter two we briefly mentioned the working party on a European socialist platform set up by the Confederation at the EP and its four sub-groups which were considering separate aspects of policy. All socialist parties except the British Labour party have participated. This boycott was extremely unfortunate. European elections are

likely to occur whatever the Labour party says and the party should be prepared. Even if the elections did not materialise no harm would have been done by discussing policy with fraternal parties. If the party continues to miss out on policy formulation a gulf will appear between the policies of the Labour party and those of its other European colleagues. The consequence of this will be either that the Labour members will sit in a socialist group in the EP committed to policies which they had no part in forming or else, if they are numerically large enough, that they form their own group, in which case both the Left in general and Labour in particular would be far weaker forces in the parliament. If the Labour party wishes to have a voice in Europe it must join in electoral policy formulation as soon as possible in the same way that it has joined in everything else since the referendum.

the policy vacuum

Whilst the Confederation still lacks ultimate authority the Labour party, itself, has no constitutional authority to require candidates to adopt policies which might override Confederation policy, for reasons outlined in chapter two. It is no more competent, for instance, to insist on Labour candidates taking a particularly British line against a proposal which the Confederation had endorsed than the London Labour party would be competent to insist that candidates standing in London for the UK parliament should oppose a proposition which the NEC and Conference had favoured. There is likely to be something of a policy vacuum at the first election because the Confederation will have had neither the resources nor the authority to produce more than skeleton policies in defined areas and the national parties will not have had the time, the prerogative or in some cases the inclination to fill the gaps. A good deal of policy therefore is likely to be filled in by the candidates themselves, in conjunction with their local parties. There seems every likelihood that regional or con-

stituency issues will produce some planks in most candidates' platforms. But it is also likely that national approaches to European problems will be heard frequently. At a time when both electorates and candidates will be unused to a pan-European approach to politics many pledges will undoubtedly be made to get Britain a better deal out of the European Community, just as Westminster candidates will promise to get a better deal for their towns or regions. But electorate and candidates should both be aware that this emphasis will begin to shift after the first election. Constituency and national considerations will continue to feature, of course, but will come gradually to be overtaken by considerations of planning in a European context. The inevitability of coming to think in a European context at the second election is not soon enough. It must happen in good measure at the first election. The Labour party and its aspirant candidates will find themselves in a very difficult position if they wait until the campaign is on before they work out this angle. They will run the risk of their policies having few distinguishing factors from their Tory and Liberal opponents if they concentrate on national and constituency issues. They will not even have the normal rallying cry of "elect a socialist government" with which to enthuse their party workers and their electors.

The only substitute to rally the faithful will be a coherent socialist strategy for causing the Community to do more international planning with a socialist slant. Nobody but the Confederation can produce that programme at present although at subsequent elections the European parliamentarians through their socialist group are likely to have a major and direct influence on the pan-European aspects of their manifestos. The group cannot be effective at the first election because there is likely to be only a small overlap between the present group and the group which will form after the election.

So it is essential that the British Labour party, even at this late stage, should join

in the Confederation's policy work. It is not really possible in the time available for the party to evolve its own *European approach to socialist policies* as opposed to the *socialist approach to European topics*, which it has always had. It is unlikely to feel committed to the programme hammered out in the Confederation by the other nine parties unless it joins in before they reach conclusions. Failure to act will leave British Labour candidates with this unpleasant prospect of a policy vacuum at election time and subsequently joining a Socialist Group which may well have been elected on a quite different platform in other countries.

containing divergence

There is another factor—which we may call the divergence factor—which makes it necessary that the Labour party should act quickly to bring itself into a common policy fold for the European elections. The candidates selected in the UK will be likely to encompass a wide range of views on pan-European issues which will need reconciling into a common platform if electoral opponents and the media are to be prevented from exploiting those differences to Labour's disadvantage. For instance, there will be some candidates with records of being strongly pro British membership of the Community and others with equally strong anti records. These aspects of history must be submerged and both groups caused to concentrate on the present political and technical shortcomings of the European Community and how the new parliament can help to put them right.

On functional topics, too, the divergence factor will need to be harnessed and put in a common framework. For example, some will be inclined to advocate a revaluation of the all important Green Pound used in the common agricultural policy whilst others will prefer it to remain at current levels, perhaps according to constituency interests. Some will be inclined to advocate brisk movement towards a European Monetary Union

and others will be against. Some will want the balance of power in the Community to be tilted more in favour of the Commission whilst others will favour more power for the summit and Council of Ministers' meetings. Some may be inclined to campaign for the growth of greater industrial democracy within similar guidelines for all European workers whilst others will see this better pursued in a national context. Labour will lose a lot of credibility if it does not find the right formulae for confining these divergencies within a jointly approved European policy.

labour party proposals

The Labour party has many practical ideas of its own which it should be putting forward to other European socialist colleagues to help forge the international platform. For example, the 1976 Party conference adopted the NEC's programme which included a section committing the party, among other things, to the reform of the common agricultural policy; a redistribution of Community funds to ensure a fairer allocation between agriculture and, say, regional and social funds and energy research; the setting up of a Public Accounts Committee in the EP with wide powers; free access for temperate agricultural produce from ACP countries and for the liberalisation of trade arrangements with non-associated countries, particularly in Asia.

If the party wishes to get its policies on Community affairs implemented it has one method of doing so, through a Labour government. But the government then has to battle them through unanimous acceptance by the Council of Ministers or the European Council, which means convincing the other eight member governments. Uphill work. Pushing it through the Confederation may sometimes pay quicker dividends, especially when a European election is approaching. It can then be put up for adoption, potentially, in the common platform. But even at other times the close links between the Confederation and the Socialist Group in the parlia-

ment means that once the largest EP group—the socialist group—is convinced on a policy then there is a reasonable chance that Community policy can be shifted in that direction. This would be done through the parliament's own political influence on the Commission and the Council of Ministers. It has also to be borne in mind that should Labour become the opposition party at Westminster, the Confederation will be the only main avenue through which British Labour policies can be pursued in the Community.

need for a European approach

Finally, there are many aspects of policy which it makes increasing sense to progress at international level because national level is an inadequate base. Balance of payments difficulties is an obvious one—so far tackled mainly at IMF and "group of ten" levels, but with increasing possibilities of mutual self-help among Community countries. Environmental matters are another obvious candidate for European treatment. The pollution of rivers and seas and of the atmosphere by industrial waste, by chemicals and by noise, the conservation of natural resources, of agricultural lands and areas of natural beauty are all of common concern. National boundaries are increasingly irrelevant in these matters. The Community has made its own start on environmental policies, but much more needs to be done in a European context.

Another example is regional policy on which the Community has already made a limited start. Co-ordination of regional policies at the European level is essential if we are to avoid having nine competitive national systems of grants and aid toward investment. They would only undermine each other and the richest nation would always do best. Policies for economic growth, for constraining multinational company power, for curing unemployment, for improved social action programmes, for better educational standards and for teaching languages are all obvious areas which

6. summary of conclusions

1. The workload of a member of the present European Assembly, who is also required to attend his national parliament, is far too heavy. European elections will give members of the European Parliament just one job to do and enable them to give proper time to constituency matters.

2. The socialist group is the largest group in the present Assembly, is the only group having representatives from all nine member countries and is more cohesive than any other group. It is the largest group only since the British Labour delegation joined it. That predominance is likely to continue after European elections if all national parties in the socialist group pull their full weight.

3. Constitutionally, the directly elected parliament will have only the same limited powers as the present Assembly unless a summit meeting unanimously agrees otherwise. But its influence will grow considerably, mainly because it will be representing the electorate, directly, for the first time.

4. Although membership of the elected European Parliament and of a national parliament (the dual mandate) will still be allowed, very few are likely to attempt the double task. The dual mandate will not be necessary as a "link" between parliaments—the need some people see for other formal links is based on false premises.

5. The government is in a dilemma over when and how to promote its legislation to make provision for European elections in the UK. The Labour party is split on the issue and the normal electoral system of "first past the post" may result in a decisive defeat for Labour in terms of seats at the target date of May/June 1978. And yet the government is heavily committed to having elections from the Summit meetings and would hold up all countries' elections if it were delayed.

6. The 1975 referendum result was for many Labour party members a battle

lost rather than a war ended. This unfortunate attitude to Europe, still, is causing a reduction of government negotiating credibility in Europe, dismay among European socialist colleagues and is badly handicapping Labour in the coming electoral battle for seats in the European Parliament.

7. The Labour party needs to gear its machinery to fight the elections straight away. The "usual" machinery is in many ways inappropriate and special provision needs to be made. For instance a special "recommended list" of candidates, suitably vetted for the European Parliament, needs to be drawn up very quickly. It should be a common list in which financially sponsored and other potential candidates are all included.

8. A European MP will, unlike a national MP, have no prospect of becoming either a legislator or a member of the executive arm of the Community. He will have little formal power but will be able to build up plenty of authority if he concentrates on being a first class representative of the people, a skilled international communicator and is prepared to work hard in specialist areas of Community policy.

9. Candidate selection, assuming a "first past the post" system in new constituencies about eight times the size of Westminster constituencies, could best be undertaken by amassing the General Committees of all those eight constituency parties in a regional centre to make the selection after hearing all nominated aspirants speak and answer questions.

10. On the above assumption of American sized constituencies, some traditional means of election campaigning will be best dispensed with and a greater concentration on achieving media coverage and on organising mass demonstrations and "whistle stop tours", motorcades and similar will be called for.

11. Some form of proportional representation is another option which the government is considering for this first

election in 1978. The Community is committed to moving towards a common electoral system later. A simple party list system, whilst undoubtedly having some drawbacks and opposition would certainly be helpful in meeting the 1978 timetable, in ensuring an equitable and undistorted result (it is likely to be inequitable and badly distorted under "first past the post") and in reducing the unpredictable element of Labour's first elected group in the new parliament.

12. Money to fight a campaign will be a considerable problem for all parties partly because of expenditure required on 1978 local elections in May. The European Parliament may, itself, provide some money to parties, but not enough. The Houghton Committee Report of August 1976, if implemented, would provide further assistance from the State to UK political parties for European and other elections.

13. The British Labour party cannot finally determine the platform for UK Labour candidates although it will provide some planks. The appropriate co-ordinating body is the Confederation of the Socialist Parties of the European Community. The Labour party, whilst being affiliated, has boycotted machinery set up to formulate the common platform, because of the Party's attitude to direct elections. This boycott must cease or UK candidates will find themselves in a policy vacuum, unable to distinguish their own "national approach" platforms sufficiently from those of Tory and Liberal candidates.

14. The Labour party needs the framework of a common European policy approach to limit and confine the divergencies there will be between candidates who have been broadly pro and broadly anti-European participation, and between those who will otherwise have strikingly different approaches to some functional areas of Community policy. There is really no substitute for the Confederation in providing this framework.

15. National boundaries are increasingly irrelevant in formulating environmental

policies, for example, to reduce pollution and to conserve natural resources and areas of natural beauty. The same applies to regional policies and many other areas of forward planning. The Labour party needs to put much more effort into helping forge a common European socialist approach on a wide range of issues.

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