

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

A Different Sort of Balance Sheet

This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing at Rome on 25 March 1957 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community. The occasion of such anniversaries traditionally prompts the making of assessments, retrospective and prospective. Looking about us, we see that the Community has by no means achieved as much as was hoped for at its inception. The vision of its creators appears to have been lost in a morass of detail. The inconclusive result of the European Council in London and the lukewarm reception of the Colombo-Genscher proposal for a European Act highlight a Community concerned as much with accounting as with future plans for "an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe". Budgetary problems hinder action on many fronts, and in one of its greatest challenges, the unemployment situation within the Community, the institutions have so far failed to respond by concrete action.

Of the institutions themselves, only the Court of Justice has lived up to and perhaps exceeded what was hoped for it. The Commission's role as a driving force in Community affairs has been lost, to a certain extent, to the Council, while the European Council has grown in importance. The Parliament, as revealed in recent opinion polls, has still not made an impact on those who so recently elected its members by direct vote.

Nor is the public image of the Community good. In our last comment on these pages, we spoke of the anti-European stance of the British Labour Party.¹ It is important to remember, however, that anti-marketeers enjoy considerable support from those who see the Community as an exercise in bureaucracy gone wild. And to an extent, the institutions have played into their hands. "Foolish harmonisation" is the Community's worst enemy, and bureaucratic nonsenses such as the recent fuss over labels in the Welsh language only serve to confirm already negative impressions.

To be sure, the picture painted above is gloomy, and it ignores successes such as the growth of Political Cooperation and the removal of tariff barriers. Nevertheless, we would be lacking if we did not ask, where do we go from here.

In November 1981 the European University Institute in Florence organized its fifth special lecture in honour of Jean Monnet. The speaker was Max Kohnstamm, the first president of the Institute who retired that year.

Max Kohnstamm, one of Monnet's closest collaborators and himself for so long associated with European integration, reminded us of the technique used by Jean Monnet whenever he was confronted with new and difficult problems. His first act was to take stock, to draw up what he called a balance sheet. Often

1. Editorial Comments, *Labour's Love's Lost*, 18 C.M.L.Rev. 443.

a careful stock-taking would open the way to innovative solutions. In his lecture Kohnstamm proposed the drawing up of a “balance sheet” for the Community.² This reckoning would take into account the goals to be achieved, the resources available and the constraints to be observed. Most of the elements necessary for a balance sheet already exist. What should be done is to put the elements together and to use them for planning future policy. Kohnstamm suggests an overall appraisal to take into account such issues as the Commission’s medium-term economic programme and the proposals for implementing the Mandate of 30 May. No one could argue with that. In the short to medium term, the Community’s spending needs to be reordered, and a true competitive market achieved. For the long term, some serious thinking needs to be done, and the drawing up of such a balance sheet may be a helpful contribution.

2. Max Kohnstamm, “Jean Monnet: The Power of the Imagination”, Fifth Jean Monnet Lecture, 23 November 1981.