

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

Where do we stand after Fontainebleau?

Unlike its two predecessors the Fontainebleau summit meeting did not end in complete failure. Results were obtained – financial compensation for the United Kingdom and a moderate increase in the Community's share of VAT from 1 to 1.4 per cent. Initiatives were taken to facilitate the crossing of internal frontiers, to introduce a European passport and a European coin and to adopt a European hymn and a European flag. Furthermore a Committee was established, modeled after the Spaak-Committee and composed of the personal representatives of the members of the European Council. A first step to a political secretariat?

Part of the British electorate may well be happy that Mrs Thatcher succeeded in getting such a substantial rebate. But at what price? The incessant squabbling over contributions has demanded excessive government energy. As a result many more important things have had to be left to one side. The fight is not yet over. If one thing was evident throughout the decision-making process, it was that the system is wrong. The Community's machinery is simply unable to deal with current problems. Cabinet ministers elected to promote their national interests are not the right persons to form an effective and dynamic European Government. Heads of state and government are even less so. Selfishness is to some extent inherent in human beings, but it tends to be counter balanced by feelings of reasonableness, modesty and fair play. Collective selfishness is not counter balanced to the same extent. Feelings of modesty and fair play rapidly disappear when domestic colleagues advocate and applaud selfishness. Persons charged with the promotion of short term national interests cannot be entrusted with the fostering of a more united Europe. It cannot be expected that either cabinet ministers, or national civil servants will really cooperate in the creation of any sort of supranational Community.

Many people do not want any sort of supranational Community. They consider that the more homogeneous and smaller national com-

munity can serve their interests better. Economists, however, claim that a larger scale is necessary if the Community is to survive the competition of the USA, Japan and possibly other States. One thing is obvious: we must decide what we want. If it is felt that a supranational authority is needed then it must be created. If smaller national units are preferred then we must be willing to pay the price of less wealth. If neither of the two available options are chosen, then the Community cannot but stagnate.

In the past decade several projects have been launched, for example, the reports by Tindemans and Genscher and Colombo which had little real effect.¹ It appears that the national civil servants just do not want to accept any fundamental changes in the Community's decision-making processes. Convinced that the Council was unable to act, the European Parliament in February 1984 adopted a Draft Treaty for the creation of a European Union which clearly opts for a supranational, if not federal, organization. In order to avoid the risk that governmental authorities would again shelve this draft, the Treaty was sent to the national parliaments. In this manner the European Parliament seeks to obtain sufficient electoral support to establish the union notwithstanding the lack of support from national governments. The theory is that the representatives of the people will compel the governments to accept the new Treaty.

Many national parliaments are in a position to coerce their governments to accept the new Treaty if they really want to do so. But do they? Is national public opinion sufficiently in favour of a European Union to force the national parliaments to move in this direction? And does the European Parliament command sufficient respect to ensure that national parliaments take this direction? The answer is not the same for each Member State. According to its Article 82 the Treaty for a European Union will enter into force when ratified by a majority of the Member States, of which the population must be at least two thirds of the population of the Community. This means that the "old six" could go ahead if they accept the Treaty. But even their parliaments

1. See, Editorial Comments: *An Ever Closer Union ... ?* in 20 CML Rev (1983) 637-639.

have not been eager to follow the proposal of the European Parliament. This may be partly ascribed to the limited authority of the European Parliament. During its first mandate the directly elected parliamentarians exerted themselves individually to "make the press" and to get known to their electorate, but as a collective body the Parliament failed to make a real impact on public opinion.

The recent elections have not strengthened the position. During the electoral campaign the people scarcely understood the issues and remained at best lukewarm. Only about sixty percent of the electorate voted. Nonetheless the national parliaments should seriously consider the "Spinelli-Treaty". There are loopholes in it and articles which may be criticized, but for a long time to come it may be the only way of restoring the dynamism which Europe badly needs.