
Editorial

UK and Europe

Relations between the United Kingdom Government and the Commission have been somewhat stormy in the last couple of months. Politicians huff and puff about an informal request to suspend work on a number of civil engineering contracts. The Foreign Secretary tells the Commission to keep out of British daily life. Politicians set their face against social policy proposals which would improve the quality of life, using arguments (cost) similar to those used by supporters of child and female labour down the mines. They also seem determined to maintain stricter immigration and customs controls in intra-Community traffic than any other Member State feels necessary. The evident benefits of a single currency in the Community for everyone except the banks in their bureaux de change activities also give rise to substantial conceptual difficulties for many in political circles.

Much of this is, of course, political posturing and sabre-rattling ahead of the Maastricht European Council, but it does reflect a still insular view of transnational issues and the emphasis

on intergovernmental rather than supranational co-operation which has been the preferred route of British European policy since the Second World War. Behind all this appears to lie a somewhat abstract and elusive concept of national sovereignty which takes scant account of political and economic reality.

At the meeting in Maastricht the Member States of the Community have a golden opportunity to agree the framework for future development of the Community in the direction already envisaged in the EEC Treaty itself. The commitment to the establishment of a common market and to the progressive approximation of the economic policies of the Member States has been in the Treaty since 1957. The two drafts (on political union and on economic and monetary union) offer a way forward which is inspired by the same commitment to a future shared which characterised the original EEC Treaty. It is to be hoped that the Community leaders will have sufficient vision to agree the drafts. By the time this issue appears the results of Maastricht will be known. If the Member States have not agreed the drafts before then all will, of course, not be lost, but it will require considerable political acumen for the

initiative to be regained in the immediate future.

Next month sees the final year for the completion of the internal market as envisaged in Article 8a of the EEC Treaty. Considerable progress has already been made but key issues such as taxation still remain to be satisfactorily resolved. As the emphasis moves from the legislative programme itself to the correct implementation of the programme, full co-operation from national administrations becomes essential to the success of the internal market initiative. In this respect the United Kingdom has (save in the environmental and social fields) generally been a model which other countries could usefully follow. There is little point in easily agreeing to everything and then frustrating Community legislation by failing to implement it correctly. One of the benefits of the Court of Justice's much criticised judgment in *Marleasing* is that through the vehicle of rules of interpretation there is now little incentive to do other than implement Community legislation correctly.

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