

The Debates in British Parliament

Most politicians, if not all, know exactly what the European Union is to turn into, for it is written clearly enough in Hansard. It is only the ordinary people of the Country that these politicians of yesterday and today didn't see fit to enlighten. Yet these ordinary people trusted them, they voted for them to look after them and this their Country.

As I take words from Hansard, and to mean anything at all, they have to be the words taken from before we actually joined the European Community or Common Market as we were told. My one difficulty is, there are so many words to choose from on this subject it is difficult to choose which ones to set down for you to read. I have put the dates and column numbers for your own confirmation.

Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, 31st July 1961 (column 928)

"This is political as well as an economic issue. Although the Treaty of Rome is concerned with economic matters it has an important political objective, namely to promote unity and stability in Europe which is so essential a factor in the struggle for freedom and progress throughout the world."

Mr Fell, same day (Column 935)

"Is the Prime Minister aware that this decision to gamble with the British sovereignty in Europe, when 650 million people in the British Commonwealth depend upon his faith and his leadership, is the most disastrous thing that any Prime Minister has done for many generations past?"

On 2nd August 1961 (column 1478), a Mr Silverman is restating that on the 28th June he moved a Motion about the European Common Market in the following terms, *"That this House, being*

gravely concerned at the pressure to make this country enter a European Common Market and the consequent threat to subject its independence, its membership of the Commonwealth and its right and power to plan its economy in its own way, to a political union with Germany, France, Italy and Benelux, as well as a threat to the survival of the Commonwealth inherent in

these proposals, urges Her Majesty's Government not to enter into any negotiations concerning such entry until expressly empowered so to do by a conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers and by this House."

Later on that same day (column 1480) at 3.42 pm, the Prime Minister Harold Macmillan:

"I beg to move, That this House supports the decision of Her Majesty's Government to make formal application under Article 237 of the Treaty of Rome in order to initiate negotiations to see if satisfactory arrangements can be made to meet the special interests of the United Kingdom. Etc, etc"

Later on (column 1491), he states,

"This problem of sovereignty, to which we must, of course, attach the highest importance is, in the end, perhaps a matter of degree. I fully accept that there are some forces in Europe which would like a genuine federalist system. There are many of my colleagues on both sides of the House who have seen this at Strasbourg and other gatherings. They would like Europe to turn itself into a sort of United States, but I believe this to be a completely false-analogy."

Mr Gaitskell then reminds the Prime Minister (column 1498) what Macmillan said in 1956, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, which was,

"Finally, we must recognise that the aim of the main proponents of the Community is political integration. We can

see that in Article 138 of the Treaty, which looks towards a common assembly, directly elected. The whole idea of the six, the coal and steel community and Euratom is a movement towards political integration. That is a fine assertion, but we must recognise that for us to sign the Treaty of Rome would be to accept as the ultimate goal – to accept as the ultimate goal– political federation in Europe, including ourselves.”

Later on (column 1501), Mr Gaitskell says,

“There is the question of a common currency, which is mentioned in various quarters as something to which we must look forward. In my opinion, it is idle to speak about a common currency until there is a common government, and the idea of not being in control of our own currency, and having it subject to a supranational or international gathering, would be quite wrong, and I hope that, equally, will be made abundantly plain.”

On 3rd August 1961 (column 1735), Mr Shinwell continues his words after having read out a part of the Treaty of Rome, ending with

“reinforcement of the European Parliament through direct elections and widening of its powers and, finally, a European Government. That is the intention. That is their object and that is what they are saying on Hon Members can talk until they are black in the face about the Rome Treaty and there being no provision for federation, but there is no doubt that from the declarations made by some of the most influential people – M.Spaak, Professor Hallstein and others who have indicated that there is a definite intention and that once we accept the economic provisions of the Rome Treaty – and it looks as though this government might – they are on their way towards complete political integration.”

“I wonder what this place will be like during the course of the next ten years? There will not be 630 Hon Members. There

will be no need for more than 150 or so. It will be like—

Mr A. C. Manuel, *"A Council."*

Mr Shinwell, *"I was about to say a Parish Council, with the authority of some kind delegated to it by the European Parliament and dictated to be a European Government. To that we are being led."*

On 16th November 1966 (Column 446), I quote just a couple of comments from the then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr George Brown, on the subject of joining the EEC,

"The issue today is not do we join Europe – (who does he remind you of?) we have always been there. The issue is can we play such a role that from here on the continent shall be unified and we shall be effectively a leader of it?"

And a little later on (Column 488) he says,

"We could clearly play a much greater role from within the Community, in influencing these affairs than we can play from outside".

I now turn to Sir D.Walker-Smith, snippets from his speech on 16th November 1966 (Column 474)

"On the constitutional side, the agricultural position shows clearly under the Treaty of Rome we would no longer be masters in our own house and that the powers of decision would pass from Parliament. For many years this country has practised a system of price support. It may or may not be the best system, but it has operated for 20 years with the assent of both sides of the House, etc, etc."

"But the constitutional question is clear. It would not matter if not one Member wanted to change the system. That would be irrelevant because, under the Treaty of Rome, if we join the Community the power of decision passes from this House."

"I now turn to the political and constitutional aspects, of which there are two. First, there is the immediate affect of adherence to the Treaty on British sovereignty, and secondly, the future question whether membership of the Community carries any implied or inescapable commitment to political federation in the future?"

"On the second of those matters, the position is clear as far as it goes; but our range of vision is necessarily limited. The Treaty, of course, carries no express commitment to future federation. But the difficulty is that as time goes by, if we join the Community, the decision about federation would not be one of our own choosing so much as the will of others, because our arrangements would be so inextricably involved with those of the Community that it would be difficult to the point of impossibility in practice—though not impossible in theory— to dissociate ourselves from a supranational federation if our partners decide that they want it." Etc, etc.

"I come now to the other question relating to the political and constitutional aspect--the immediate consequences of signing the Treaty of Rome. Here we can see the position much more clearly. Two truths are apparent—first, that over a wide range of our national life there would be an immediate abandonment of sovereignty and of our constitutional principle of the sovereignty of Parliament. The second truth is that, so far, the British people have very little idea of what is involved."

(Column 478),

"It is clear that Article (189) in respect of those Regulations this House can be nothing but a conduit pipe. That will be its role. We cannot reject or even vary any of the regulations which are at present pouring out from Brussels. The collective law of the Community would bind the individual British citizen, and Parliament and Courts alike would be powerless to intervene. That would be a heavy price

to pay for Membership of the Community."

"The British people may, in the event, pay it. I do not presume to prophesy about that, but I do know that they should not be asked to pay it in ignorance. It is a mistake to assume that the British people are interested only in the economic bread and butter aspects of this matter. It is a mistake to assume that they are not interested in these great political and constitutional matters. I know, of course, that terms like "sovereignty" are not part of the every day idiom of the British people; but they represent things which are long-established and cherished. They are like the air we breathe – little noticed in its presence but valued beyond price in the event of deprivation."

"There is therefore, a duty on the Government of explanation and instruction, a duty not to gloss over these political and constitutional consequences."

Mr Stanley Orme, 16th November 1966 (Column 489),

*"I want first to consider the European situation. At a private meeting in the House, M. Spaak, who was prominent in the setting up of the Community, explained his concept of what the European Community should be and what it should entail, and his explanation sent shivers down the spine's of some of my Hon Friends who are very pro-European. M. Spaak's political concept is that of many statesmen, particularly among the five, excluding France, (General de Gaulle, who wanted a *Europ des Patries*) It is the political issue which we must seriously consider."*

"M. Spaak is against the entry of any neutrals. He regards the Community purely as an extension of the militarily based N.A.T.O. a further extension of a military alliance. I do not attribute those views to all of my Hon Friends who favour entry, but I do know that there are many Hon Members on both sides of the House who are interested in the Community not

just as an economic unit but as a political unit too. They regard it as a supranational authority of which Britain should be a part."

Page 492, still Mr Orme,

"It has been said that the British people do not fully understand what is involved in our entry to the Common Market. This is true, and I am hoping that the continuing debates on this matter will get the facts across to our people. It is not just a matter of an increase in food prices, serious as they may be; it is not simply the effect on the economy, the distribution of our industry and our future development, or our social services. It has also to do with how the Community is operated and controlled. The Community is undemocratic."

Mr Jennings, 16th November 1966 (Column 495),

"I cannot bring myself to assume that there will be no political and constitutional connotations if we sign the Treaty of Rome. It is historically illogical that this should happen, that one step will follow another, and that from economic union there will follow political union. I have no objection to economic arrangements, even a negotiated economic union, provided we get certain safeguards. But I am horrified when I am told that I am as British as ever because I do not want to be a European first. I want to be British first and European after. Is there any shame of disgrace in wanting to be British first? It is therefore the implications and consequences of economic union of which I am frightened."

"We know quite well that five or six years ago, when we debated the question in this House, the sentiment in most of those who supported going into the Market was eventually for a political alignment and a politically united Europe. They do not deny it. They are quite honest. Even Members who are here tonight are nodding their heads on agreement. They know that

this is what they want. That is what frightens me."

"The question of sovereignty or loss of sovereignty and political union in a political union in a federal United States of Europe has been swept nicely, beautifully and quietly under the carpet."

"It is almost a sin to talk about it. Apparently we have got to get into the Community, because of the mess we are in, in order to live as a nation. 'Oh thou of little faith',. Have we lost faith in our own selves? Have we lost pride in our own ability even to stand alone?"

Page 497,

"My Rt. Hon and leaned friend the Member for Hertfordshire (Sir D. Walker-Smith who five years ago most expertly, throughout the country and in this House, exposed what the loss of sovereignty would be, has touched upon it and given us the gist of it this afternoon. But the ordinary man in the street has no conception of what he will lose in rights and privileges that he now enjoys, even in a denigrated Britain, which is the attitude that many people tend to adopt. I mean questions of social services, benefits, rates of contributions, the position of the trade unions and all that sort of thing. How much loss of sovereignty of this House will there be?"

"It is easy to talk glibly about going into Europe. That is the way that it is put over to the electorate. "Let us go into Europe". Is the theme. We never attempt to say what we mean by going into Europe, but just what do we mean? Do we mean trade? Is that all? Do we leave the other sort of things, the unmentionables? Under the carpet or push them under the bed, or where? By going into Europe, do we mean in addition to the trade negotiations a form of federalism in which Britain would become a State in a United States of Europe, or part of Europe—what I have described as the rump of

Europe?"

"I am not in favour of a federal United States of Europe or binding ourselves in any direction like that. I would look more kindly on a confederal system, if we had to have something like this. The alternative is what is called federalism."

"I am not prepared to sign a blank cheque that would denude this House of its powers; nor can I support a central Parliament to which we would contribute electorally, a central Parliament in Europe. I ask the Rt Hon Gentleman who is to reply to this debate, if this question of sovereignty and all it means does not arise, will he tell us quite clearly, and if he does, will he tonight, or his Rt. Hon Friends tomorrow night, tell us how much loss of sovereignty is involved?"

16th November 1966 (Column 510), Mrs Renee Short,

"I must add my view that many of those speaking in favour of going into the Common Market are tending to gloss over the problems and difficulties that would face us as a Nation. This is not really being fair to the public outside this place whom we represent and who rely on us for leadership in this matter, and in connection with all the other important problems with which we as Members of Parliament have to deal."

"My own view on this issue of entering or not entering the Common Market we have been brainwashed for a long time. I do not go along with this emotive phrase, "Going into Europe". As my Rt. Hon Friend said, we are in Europe; the question is what sort of Europe are we going into? Enormous pressure has been exerted, not only by big business, which has obviously vested interests for going into Europe, but by the Press." Etc, etc.

Page 518, still Mrs Short.

"It is no use saying that if we go into the Common Market we should accept the Treaty of Rome as if it is written, with all

the small print—most of which I find extremely alarming, including many articles which were referred to by the Rt. Hon and learned Member for Hertfordshire (Sir D. Walker-Smith), which refer to the power of the Commission to issue directives to Member States as to what they should do about their economy. There are many of these articles (Interruption) Oh yes, there are. There are at least a dozen. The Rt. Hon Gentleman gave some of the numbers. They lay down clearly that the Commission can issue directives to Member States. In the event of economic difficulties the Commission can issue directives about taxation, aid to nationalised industries, and many other matters which affect the economies of nations.”

“It is no good saying, “It is all right. We can accept this and when we get inside we shall be able to change the machinery.” This is barking up the wrong tree. If we go in we shall have precisely the same voting power—no more and no less, as West Germany, France or Italy, based on population. We shall therefore be faced with the possibility of being out-voted if three or four or five, of the existing Members decide to vote together on any issue. We shall be able to speak and raise our voice, but our vote will not be decisive.”

16th November 1966 (Column 530), Mr. A.J.Irvine,

“It will be found that there is strong opposition in this country and, I think, on this side of the House, to federalism, and I share that opposition. There is certainly strong opposition to an excess of federalism, to any loss of identity of this Parliament, to any loss of sovereignty affecting foreign affairs, defence or certain aspects of our industrial and economic planning.”

“The most interesting single feature of the Community at present is that, as I understand it, in our dislike of the federal solution we have a supporter in the President of France, and in the outlook of the French Government. The President’s objections to federalism, which I share and which

are enormously influential inside the Community, might in some respects neutralise his objection to our special relation with the United States."

16th November 1966, Page 535, Sir Legge-Bourke,

"The only respectable basis upon which anybody could be in favour of Britain's entering the Common Market is by being at the same time entirely confederalist or federalist for Europe as a whole. A study of the Treaty of Rome shows straight away that inevitable it will involve political changes of a federal kind. How far and how fast and exactly how federal or confederal will be worked out as the years go by, but it is wrong to suppose that the Community can survive without a customs union being followed by a single currency, and it is wrong to suppose that the countries of the organisation can keep alive the vigour with which they started— and all credit to them— without developing politically with all this. To make that supposition is to fail to face what is in the Treaty, or is deliberately to deceive the people."

"I believe that the Treaty was conceived in a spirit of high federalism. It was soon apparent to Europe that Britain was not overkeen on that idea, but Britain had to be brought in by the architects of the document. And so the whole thing was trimmed and as the negotiations developed, the emphasis was more and more on economics and less and less on the political side."

"I have long believed that the most important economic freedom for nations is the one freedom which was left out of the four Atlantic freedoms—the freedom of choice to do business with whomsoever one will on mutual beneficial terms. In other words, this is the right to discriminate in trade. This right was taken from us particularly by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which was signed by the first Labour Government after the war. Again, I do not want to hark back over what happened after that. I deeply regret that when it

was returned to power the Conservative Party did not exercise the full rights which it had reserved through the mouth of Oliver Stanley and reassert our rights to alter our preferential tariffs and so on."

8th May 1967 (Column 1088), The Prime Minister, Mr Harold Wilson,

"I should like to deal before I come to the political issue. One of them, on which certain anxieties have been expressed, is that the constitutional and legal implications for this country if we join the European Community. Here again, our examination of the Treaties and the other law emanating from the European Institutions, but even more of the way in which member states have been applying Community law, taking full account of realities prevailing in the member states, has greatly reassured us about the possible implications for Britain."

"It is important to realise that Community law is mainly concerned with industrial and commercial activities, with corporate bodies rather than private individuals. By far the greater part of our domestic law would remain unchanged after entry. Nothing in the Treaty would, for example, materially affect the general principles of the law of contract or tort or its Scottish equivalent, land law, the relations of landlord and tenant, housing, town and country planning, matrimonial law, or the law of inheritance. The constitutional rights and liberties of the individual such as habeas corpus and the presumption of innocence will, of course not be affected; not in any material sense will our criminal law. The main affect of Community law on our existing law is in the realms of commerce, Customs, restrictive practices and immigration and the operation of steel, coal and nuclear energy industries."

8th May 1967 (Column 1109), Mr Turton,

"The debate is historic, to follow the remarks of my Rt. Hon Friend, Sir Alec Douglas-Hume) It is historic because, if we join the Common Market, under Article 189 of the Treaty of Rome, NO Hon Member will be able to get up in this House and protest and vote against regulations which affect the economic or social welfare of his constituents. For many of us that is the main reason why we take the view which we hold on this issue."

"Last November, I and many of my Rt, Hon Friends asked for a White Paper on the constitutional issues. We felt that they were what all the country should know about. We have never had it. We have never had a White Paper on the economic issues. We have only had an article, a very fair and, I thought, damning article in The Times of last Monday."

(Column 1114),

"I believe that acceptance of the Motion would lead to a betrayal of the Queen in Parliament, would be disloyal to our Commonwealth Members, and would put unendurable burdens on the British people."

8th May 1967 (Column 1154), Mr Erec S. Heffer,

"I also want us to go into the Community because I believe that a United States of Europe is absolutely essential, and I want to see a Socialist United States of Europe. That is the prospect. I believe that we can get a socialist United States of Europe."

Finally, I will finish with Mr Peter Shore (as he was then) on 22 February 1972 (column 1164),

"When we consider the net effects of what we pay out and receive back, these arrangements are little short of a national disaster. No Government in their senses could have agreed to terms so clearly against and detrimental to our interests. It is difficult to imagine a system of taxation, a

tax mix, that could impose a heavier and more disproportionate burden upon us than the particular tax mix that has emerged as the permanent tax system of the Community under the "own resources" rule. I do not say that was the Community's purpose, but they have been extremely blind in not recognising the grievous effect this is bound to have upon us. Indeed, I cannot recall another example in history of a free country, without compulsion from outside, entering upon an arrangement so damaging to itself."

"Apart from being disastrous and unfair, these arrangements, as the Financial Secretary has made abundantly clear, constitutes a direct challenge to the most important power of Parliament, our exclusive control over taxation. As the Ways and Means Resolution makes clear, we shall permit the Community to tax the British people. We are acceding not just to the Treaty of Rome but to the Treaty of

Luxembourg of April 1970, which specifically authorised the Community to have its own resources and to receive the yield of the three taxes to which I have referred."

"That agreement was a major development in the Community and I found it extraordinary that, in our debate last week, neither the Solicitor General nor the Prime Minister had anything to say about it. The Solicitor-General amused himself greatly by quoting from the 1967 White Paper on the legal and constitutional implications of Britain joining the Common Market but, in his efforts to show that the constitutional innovation of the Communities having directly applicable law in the United Kingdom was known in 1967, he totally, and to me surprisingly, omitted to mention the second and even greater constitutional innovation which occurred in 1970: the right of the Communities to tax directly the Member States."

"For the Prime Minister to say, as he did last Thursday, that the constitutional position has not changed in any single respect since the negotiations of 1961, when it was fully

discussed in the House time and again, is stretching the truth to the greatest possible extent."

"This is a major development in the Communities, as a consequence of which there is a major intrusion into the sovereignty of Parliament. The strongest of all our constitutional principles is that Parliament, and in particular the House of Commons which represents the people of this country, alone has the right to levy taxation. That has been the basic constitutional doctrine. Because Parliament three centuries ago insisted on this right, we gradually brought the Crown and the Executive under the control of elected representatives. As we were reminded recently, Parliament made the supply of money to the Government conditional on the remedying of grievances. That was the way in which control by the House of Commons was brought about."

"There should be no doubt about what is intended here. It is not proposed that we should make a contribution to the Communities, which we can alter if we think it is too much or too little. It is not a contribution at all. The right to levy taxes, which are specified, is to be ceded to non-elected institutions of the Community without the further consent of Parliament of the British people. As the Ways and Means Resolution puts it, we shall be, "giving effect to any charge to taxation of those Communities" That is quite unacceptable to us."

There are more, many, many more pages of these debates; for the debates on our entry into the Community cover a great many number of years. I hope I have proved, without a shadow of doubt, that most, if not all Members of Parliament knew what the Community was eventually, step by step, to become. Many Members of Parliament wanted to join, many did not. Again without a doubt, the truth of what the Community was to become was kept from the people of this Country. This was a complete betrayal to ALL in this Country. Today's politicians can find out the true facts of our history regarding this

County's entry into the European Community in exactly the same way that I have. It just takes time and patience. It is all recorded, every sordid detail, (Britain's shame) in Hansard.

No matter how long ago these events took place, the Members of Parliament that are still alive, should and must be made accountable for their actions, in the same way that 'today's' MPs will surely be.