Three little words

This letter was sent by our Chairman to Derby, Leicester, Nottingham and Burton on Trent papers.

The government is introducing the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill and many Europhiles have acquired a new-found zeal for the principle of parliamentary scrutiny. They say the Bill gives "Henry VIII" powers to the government to strike out legislation which has come to us from the EU.

This is the height of hypocrisy. The European Communities Act 1972 was voted through by MPs who had not had a chance to see the treaty to which they were agreeing. Nigel Spearing (Labour), the last MP to speak against it, complained that Parliament was "signing a blank cheque".

The treaty of accession to the EEC had been signed under royal prerogative without any parliamentary scrutiny at all. The 1972 Bill made the terms of the treaty enforcible in British law. It said that all European law – past, present and to come – would immediately become binding in its entirety "**without further enactment**" by our Parliament. This is the settlement of subjection which advocates of EU membership have maintained and supported ever since.

It was an Enabling Act, transferring responsibility for our laws out of democratic control – more gradual but not dissimilar in kind to the one which Hitler used to nullify the German parliament. Twelve years before, the Lord Chancellor Lord Kilmuir had written to Edward Heath to say that Parliament would have to become accustomed to being a rubber stamp, if we joined the EEC. That was kept an official secret for thirty years.

Governments of all parties have since promiscuously overused the device of Statutory Instruments to bypass effective

parliamentary scrutiny and debate. So there is every reason to reform parliamentary procedures, now we are getting our country back. However, the least hint of filibustering by Europhiles under the cloak of a pretended concern for the dignity and powers of Parliament should be seen for the fraud that it is and disregarded. The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill must go through in a timely way, or we will never see a return to any proper, democratic accountability at all. Parliament can always kick out a government here – something we never could do with the European Commission.

Yours faithfully,

Edward Spalton