

APPENDIX TO THE MINUTES OF THE SESSION
OF FRIDAY 17TH NOVEMBER 1989

SUMMARY REPORT BY MR. CHARLES JOSSELYN
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Chairwomen and Chairmen,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
My dear colleagues,

I would first like to underline that our meeting has been a success. Your attendance in such large numbers, the fullness of your contributions and the interest which you have shown in our debates prove the necessity and usefulness of our meeting.

I believe that two points should be underlined immediately:

First, irrespective of our concept of the current and future role of the European Community, we must recognise one thing: Europe already intervenes in the economic, social and cultural life of our fellow citizens and is already influencing our legislation.

Secondly, irrespective of the differences between the European affairs committees established by our parliaments, we are pursuing the same objective: enabling our countries to be more closely associated with the European legislative process and control of its implementation. I also think that we are agreed that the results in this area are still insufficient. We are aware of the risk of a technocratic deviation by

Europe is advancing but generally it is advancing far from its citizens, who are not part of the decision-making process or are insufficiently associated through their representatives in the European Parliament and the twelve national parliaments.

Apart from its budgetary powers, the European Parliament exercises only limited control. True, since the Single Act, it has been associated with the development of standards through the co-operation procedure but the "legislative power" is still in the hands of the Council. The democratic body of the Community institutions is not the legislative body.

The member states' parliaments, meanwhile, with a few important exceptions, have too little influence over their governments in European affairs. Their means of obtaining information on Community projects and the influence which they can exercise before their adoption are insufficient. They generally find out about Community standards to be transposed into national law after the event, with reduced powers of intervention. Usually their legislative function is limited by a prior decision resulting from negotiations between the twelve. Their function of controlling the executive suffers from the same constraints. True, the representatives of member states on the Council are answerable to their respective parliaments but, in practice, apart from Denmark, the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany (the Bundesrat), governments do not sufficiently report on the positions which they defend and the compromises which they accept.

Thus, the two indissociable principles of democratic control - the sovereignty of the people and the balance of power - are only very imperfectly integrated in the institutional system of the Community.

The democratic process also requires that each party should intervene at the most appropriate level. This is the famous "principle of subsidiarity" which guarantees respect for each party's powers and must be one of the main points of our discussions since it should preside over the development of European construction.

I think that we are in agreement on this conclusion: the current situation is not satisfactory as regards the principles of democracy.

The progress of European construction requires greater participation by the representatives of the people meeting in the parliaments of the member states and the European parliament.

To achieve this objective it is possible to imagine several scenarios but I will restrict myself to the solution which seems to me to be the most effective: the increase in the control exercised by parliamentary institutions at European level and at the level of each member state and the development of co-operation between assemblies.

An increase in the European Parliament's power of control springs immediately to mind. If it is desirable for any reform of institutions to reinforce the democratic character, the European Parliament must be the main beneficiary. The Single Act has been reflected by a small step in this direction. We must continue along this road. The French President, Mr. François Mitterrand, expressed this idea on 25th October last in Strasbourg in his capacity as President of the European Council. In his declaration, he mentioned the reinforcement of the co-operation procedure and the appointment of the President of the Commission by the European Parliament.

However, in the short term, the European Parliament will not have the legislative power. Need I remind you that, in addition, the Council is not answerable to the European Parliament? The task of reducing the lack of democracy will therefore fall largely on the parliaments of the member states.

As the Community's standardising work increased, most of our assemblies found it necessary to create a specific body to examine Community legislation. Today, nearly all the twelve member states' assemblies have a committee of this type, except for the Italian, Greek and Luxembourg chambers of deputies and the Belgian Senate, although bills for this purpose have been proposed by two of our colleagues present here and may be passed soon.

As our debates have shown, the committees of our assemblies are of very different natures: they do not have the same competence nor the same powers. Only the Folketing, the British Parliament and the German Bundesrat committees are really able to orient the positions which their governments adopt during negotiations between the twelve.

However, the committees also have common features. Responsible for working upstream from European decisions, they follow the different phases of their development and are able to take an overall view of Community policies.

In this spirit, I would like to put forward some proposals. They concern co-operation between our committees and collaboration between national parliaments and the European Parliament.

I will begin by dealing with the development of closer relations between our European affairs committees. Following our first day of debate, I think that it is desirable for us to pursue the dialogue which we have begun.

My first suggestion is that we should devote all our efforts to improving our reciprocal information in order to be more familiar with the activities of each committee. This collaboration can take diverse forms, depending on each committee's operating procedures. I think, in particular, that we could systematically exchange the texts which we adopt and inform each other of the positions which we take on the Commission's main projects, independently of the bilateral contacts which committees may have established between them. (For its part, the French National Assembly European Communities Delegation received delegations from the House of Commons Select Committee on European Legislation and from the Bundestag European Affairs Sub-committee in April this year. The Delegation is preparing to visit its colleagues in the House of Commons and House of Lords in the very near future).

However, I also think that it is desirable for all the European affairs committees to meet regularly. This is my second proposal, to "institutionalise" our Conference.

These conferences will offer opportunities to debate certain European policies on which the European affairs committees will have to pronounce in any event and it seems quite natural that we should compare our viewpoints on the main topical subjects in the Community without always being necessarily obliged to arrive at common positions.

These are the principles which should guide our meetings in the future. We still have to decide on their frequency and perhaps the topics of our forthcoming meetings. I would suggest that we meet in principle every six months in the country holding the presidency of the Community Council. With respect to the topics which will be discussed, the principle applied in other meetings of a "troika", comprising representatives from the country which hosted the last conference, the country which is about to host it and the one which will host it in the following half-year could be used. This group, which has the merit of ensuring continuity, could be responsible for preparing subsequent meetings.

I think that it would also be useful to promote the development of relations between national parliaments and the European Parliament, at different stages of the procedure.

First, when the standard is being developed, it would be very useful for the European Parliament to be aware of the positions expressed by the national parliaments to provide information for its decision.

When the standard is introduced into internal law, it is just as important for national parliaments to be aware of the advice of the European Parliament and the assemblies of the other member states.

In order to allow this inter-relation, the twelve member states' parliaments should be able to associate Members of the European Parliament with their work, particularly by hearing the rapporteurs of its committees. Members of the European Parliament are already present on certain European affairs committees, such as the Belgian House of Representatives Advisory Committee on European Affairs, which is formed by ten deputies and ten Belgian Members of the European Parliament. We also have the example of the Bundestag, which has authorised thirteen German titular Members of the European Parliament and thirteen substitute Members to participate in the work of the European Affairs Subcommittee, in a consultative capacity. The bill which I have proposed

and which is currently being discussed in the French Parliament also makes provision for the National Assembly and Senate Delegations to be able to "invite French Members of the European Parliament to participate in their work in a consultative capacity".

In the same spirit, national parliamentarians should be associated with the work of European Parliament committees. The European Parliament included this proposal in the resolution which it passed on 16th February last on the Seeler Report. The European Parliament has since instructed its competent committee to prepare the corresponding modification of the rules.

With respect to the integration of the Community dimension in national parliamentary debates, it is up to each party to assess the opportune moment and to define the procedures.

For instance, among the proposals on which the French National Assembly is working is the idea of a European question time.

Similarly, we think it desirable for a debate to be organised in the future on the occasion of the European Council meeting. If this debate was organised during the same period in all national parliaments, this would have more impact, particularly on public opinion.

This would then allow our parliaments to fully assume their role as a relay station between citizens and the executive power.

I also remind you that the Madrid Conference decided to organise an annual Europe meeting in national parliaments during which each one will debate a subject of common interest.

We can already consider that the European affairs committees will have a major part to play in preparing for this day.

These are, Ladies and Gentlemen, my dear colleagues, the thoughts which our work has inspired in me. The conclusions submitted to you are based on our common determination to associate our parliaments still further with the democratic control of European construction. It is by working together and demonstrating imagination and determination that we shall best succeed in performing our task.