

richness in those forms of witness and service which God requires of them in the contemporary situation.

One final very small point. The writer of this article, who was kindly given leave by the church in St. Albans of which he was minister to be present at the first assembly of the CEC in January 1959, who became the part-time Executive Secretary of CEC in 1961 and has been its first General Secretary since 1968 is, incidentally, also a Baptist—from South Wales.

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The Churches and the European Communities

IN OUR everyday talk we often refer to Western Europe as the “Common Market”. But the Common Market is only one aspect of European cooperation. By the 1952 Paris Treaty the European Coal and Steel Community was established. The 1958 Rome Treaties set up the European Atomic Energy Community and the European Economic Community (the Common Market). Originally the three Communities had separate Executive Commissions and Councils of Ministers, but since 1967 one Commission and one Council have exercised all the powers formerly vested in their predecessors. This merger of the institutions was but the first step towards a European Community governed by a single treaty. This explains why many people on the Continent speak of “The Community”, but so far that is more a vision than a fact. When the United Kingdom, along with Ireland and Denmark, joined the Communities in 1973, their basic structure remained the same. They continued to work through four institutions—the Council (representatives of the governments of the nine member states), the Commission (thirteen Commissioners each with a specific mandate), the Court of Justice (nine judges) and the European Parliament. Even as I write, discussions are taking place about the ways in which the churches can be involved in parliamentary affairs. We have some idea of how the architects of the Parliament want it to function, but at this stage no one is sure how it will work out in practice. There are those who are determined that it shall have “teeth” and authority. Others are equally determined that it will be just a bureaucratic institution which has a big name, plenty of paper, decisions and officials, but does nothing.

The story of the Churches’ relationship with the Commission and the Council of Europe began with a group of Christian “Eurocrats” in Brussels. They were initially concerned about the Christians who

worked for the Council and Commission there. Men and women had been uprooted from their own countries and set down in a strange city. Some had pastoral problems. An evangelistic programme was also needed. Again, there was a need for the wider Church to know about the increasingly important decisions being taken by the Communities. The Protestant Churches set up a Consultative Committee. From its discussions the Brussels Ecumenical Centre began its work, collaborating where possible with the Catholic information office. Added to the pastoral and evangelistic responsibilities—though these in fact are handed over to the local churches, for instance, the English-speaking Anglican church in Brussels—there was the task of bringing Christian comment to bear on ethical aspects of the Communities' work. It was soon apparent that some of the larger Churches in the member states and some Federations (or to use our term "Councils") of Churches wanted not only to use the facilities of the Brussels Ecumenical Centre but also to become more closely involved in its work. This resulted in the formation of the Commission of the Churches for the European Communities (CoCEC), on which I represent both the Free Church Federal Council and, along with others, the British Council of Churches.

The CoCEC meets twice a year in Brussels for two days. Our first task is to listen.

I. *We listen to what the Commission is planning.* In the few years I have been in attendance, I have heard five Commissioners speaking about their work. One of them was the Commissioner for Migrant Workers, and he surveyed some grim social problems. Someone put it (he was not from U.K., though he could have been), "The peoples of Europe like large wage packets but they do not like doing the dirty work". So there was need to draw into the more affluent parts of Europe, particularly during the boom in the 1960s, workers who would do the dirty jobs. They came in from the poorer countries surrounding the Community and flocked to the places where there was heavy industry. The number of migrant workers has risen to about eleven million—a larger number than the population of at least three of the member states. The Commissioner painted a dreadful picture of their living conditions ("some of the worst in the world"). He outlined how the Community dealt with the migrants' political and social rights and how the Churches might help both in designing a programme and implementing it. The Commissioner for Social Policy spoke with equal frankness and expressed gratitude for the useful and practical points made by CoCEC.

II. *We listen to one another.* At one meeting an international working group presented a paper on "Finalities and Priorities". It is a very lengthy document, but the priorities can be briefly summarised: theological reflection on justice both within the Community and in the Community's relationships with others, particularly Third World states; reflection on relationships with Eastern Europe and close attention to the work of the Conference of European Churches; human

rights; the quality of life; and the major question, "What sort of a Europe do we want?"

We have much to learn but we also have something to contribute. At the last meeting in Brussels a disturbing development was reported. In recent months, perhaps encouraged by the rise of nationalism in all European states, there is evidence of colour prejudice on the Continent. In sharing experience of this problem delegates from Britain can make a positive contribution.

III. *We listen to the needs of the world.* Even some of the most "convinced" Europeans had—and still have—a fear that the EEC would simply become a rich man's club. Two years ago CoCEC invited the Commissioner responsible for Development Issues to address them. He spoke of the plans that the EEC had for its relationships with the Third World. It was the sort of programme that all who read this article would, I hope, approve. Some of it is still unrealised. Part of the delay arises from the very nature of the discussions. We are familiar with the difficulties in our own Parliament of passing controversial measures. Those difficulties are multiplied when there are nine nations each with its own culture and language. There is also reluctance to give consideration to the Third World, and it is here that the Churches have sought to bring pressure to bear. We are concerned not only with aid (the Community's record on aid has been good), but principally with the effects of trade. In 1975 a four-year convention between the EEC and African Caribbean and Pacific countries was signed at Lome. For the first time in history a group of industrial countries granted to a third of the members of the United Nations Organisation complete exemption from customs duty on their basic export products and offered a guarantee for the receipt of those products. It was a great step forward, and the tireless activity of the CoCEC Task Force has had some influence in its continuance in a new convention to be signed this year. But the Churches still have plenty to strive for. The Community could do much more for the very poor countries of Asia.

In addition to listening, CoCEC has sponsored a number of activities. It is well known that Europe's present consumption of energy cannot be afforded. Oil supplies will soon run out. Nuclear energy presents as many problems as it solves. Safety for the workers, the siting of power stations and the disposal of nuclear waste are all on our agenda because the first article of Christian faith is "I believe in God the Creator". Such topics have sparked off projects in various countries which have drawn on the support of the Centre. An "Ecotheo" group (economists and theologians) is also active.

One thing that has been very impressive about the attitude of the EEC Commissioners and CoCEC members has been their willingness to consider what the churches are saying. They listened and were open to suggestions and criticisms! The British representatives have taken their part in the discussions, but I get the impression that ordinary church people and certainly the leaders of the churches on the main-

land of Europe have caught a far greater vision of what Europe can do for the world than their counterparts in this country.

In June 1979 the churches are given a new sheet of paper through the new Parliament. What will the pen of history write on that page? That Parliament "got away with it" because no one was taking any notice? Or will it be said that British Christians accepted fully this new responsibility and sought to fashion a Community in which people are counted more important than things, in which there is concern for the hindmost and where the Church is free to fulfil its mandate "to preach to all the world"?

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