

delegated to the Commission by the Community treaties. It has in theory no right of initiative and no responsibility for administration, but it wields decisive influence by virtue of its power of approval or disapproval of Commission proposals.

The Commission, the central executive, embodies the conscience and interest of the Community as a whole and has the exclusive power to initiate proposals. Thus it can be said that the Commission proposes and implements while the Council disposes. This creates rather obvious problems for dialogue and negotiation. Although, for example, foreign ambassadors are accredited to both bodies, the Council is elusive — virtually unapproachable by foreign governments. Its composition varies with its agenda; the rule of unanimity applies even when its rotational chairman speaks on its behalf; and in theory it acts only on proposals of the Commission. In contrast, the Commission is approachable and disposed to be helpful but its competence and powers of decision are limited.

The difficulties created by this institutional arrangement are generally recognized and will probably be remedied in time but for the moment foreign governments cannot deal with the Community as they would another government. There are some problems on which it is difficult even to find anyone with whom to talk, and experience has shown that the best way to proceed is to cast one's consultative net as wide as possible, cultivating one's contacts with the Commission, with the governments of member countries and with their missions in Brussels (which provide backing and continuity for the deliberations of the Council). Contacts with the Community in Brussels and with governments in national capitals are thus compatible, complementary and necessary.

Largest trading entity

As suggested earlier, a relationship with the Community has other singular features. It is already the world's largest trading entity, with a gross national product approaching that of the United States; intra-Community trade in 1972 reached nearly \$80-billion and exports to third countries about \$73-billion. Trade of this magnitude inevitably occasions problems that impose a fearful burden on its institutions (which are most austere manned). These institutions have also to implement the ambitious program decided at the Paris summit meeting in October 1972 for achieving a European union by 1980, including an economic and monetary union and common policies across

the whole range of economic broadly defined. The wonder is that the Community is able to devote the attention it does to its international relations when that it should do so is a token of importance.

Community priorities

The fact that the process of European construction is still not far advanced does not mean that further constraints on the nature of the Community's international relations are not being considered. In terms of priorities, the Commission has chosen first to set in order its relations with its nearest neighbours and with developing countries for which its members have had special responsibilities. The Community has completed largely and negotiated a number of free-trade areas with the other members of the European Free Trade Association and preferential agreements with countries of the Mediterranean and the Yaoundé Convention for the association of most francophone African countries. A tentative step has been made in the negotiation of a preferential commercial agreement with other, more distant, countries, but for the large the Community has preferred to leave its relations with them in the status quo. Several explanations are advanced for this, but one wonders if, particularly in relations with its more important industrial trading partners, the reasons do not lie in the transitional state of Community development.

The design for European Union is a vast and complex and, if successful, will entail not only a myriad compromises between vested interests but the negotiation of the domestic and international orientations of a new and powerful institution. What could be more plausible than to place the institutions responsible for the Community's operation should want to be of the arm's length those whom it feels least capable of exercising an extraneous possibly unhelpful influence? At least, is one rationalization of the Community's hesitancy to institutionalize its relations with the industrial nations.

As an old friend and ally of the constituent members, sympathetic to the Community undertakings and in sympathy with them a broad identity of interest and conviction on the major issues of the day, Canada might have expected to receive what more individual treatment. However, our North American identification has clearly made it difficult for the Community to draw distinctions between itself and the United States. The misunderstanding that so often leads to the European

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