

responsibilities attend Council meetings, depending on the topics under discussion. The Council usually meets three or four times a month. The Council presidency rotates every six months between member countries, in the following order: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Britain.

A permanent Secretariat and the Committee of Permanent Representatives help the Council prepare the meetings. The Committee of Permanent Representatives consists of the ambassadors of the nine member countries to the Communities. The Committee lays the groundwork for Council meetings by reviewing Commission proposals and indicating areas of agreement among national viewpoints.

The Council can make most decisions by a simple or "weighted-majority" vote but usually seeks unanimity on what a member state considers a vital national interest. Some decisions, such as on the acceptance of a new member, must be made by unanimous vote. In a weighted-majority vote, Germany, France, Britain and Italy have ten votes each, Belgium and the Netherlands have five votes each, Denmark and Ireland three votes each, and Luxembourg two votes. Forty-one votes, cast by at least six members, are needed for a majority. Thus, the large countries, voting *en bloc*, cannot dominate the smaller nations on any issue.

All Council decisions must be based on Commission proposals, which can be amended only by unanimous Council vote.

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The European Parliament consists of 198 members appointed from and by the national legislatures: 36 members each from Britain, France, Germany and Italy; 14 each from Belgium and the Netherlands; ten each from Ireland and Denmark, and six from Luxembourg. Members sit according to party affiliation, not country. Community leaders have agreed to work out plans by which the Parliament's members will be popularly elected from 1978.

The Parliament can oust the Commission by a vote of censure and controls certain budgetary expenditures. It is still mainly a consultative body, giving its opinion on most Community legislation. Numerous specialized committees meet to prepare for parliamentary debates and to write opinions on laws under consideration.

COURT OF JUSTICE

The Court of Justice, the Community's "Supreme Court", consists of one judge from each member state. Its decisions are final and cannot be appealed in national courts. The Court ensures the observance of law and justice in the interpretation and application of the treaties and laws passed to execute them. It may give judgment on appeals brought by a member state, the Council, the Commission or any person or company affected by a Community decision. Four advocates general help the Court reach decisions. Judges are appointed by the member states for terms of six years.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

The Economic and Social Committee con-

sists of 144 members: Germany, France, Italy and Britain, 24 members each; 12 each from Belgium and the Netherlands; nine each from Denmark and Ireland, and six from Luxembourg. Committee members are selected from labour, management, agricultural, consumer and family organizations. The Commission and the Council must consult the Committee on most major policy proposals. Although the Committee has no powers of decision, it does influence policy-making. It is one of the Community's main points of contact with the public in the decision-making process.

A similar "Consultative Committee" advises the Council and the Commission on affairs relating to the European Coal and Steel Community.

WORKING METHODS

Community law

The ECSC, the EEC and Euratom Treaties are the Community's "constitution". They provide a policy framework and empower the Commission and the Council of Ministers to pass laws to carry out Community policies. The Community uses three types of legal instrument:

— *Regulations* bind the member states directly and have the same strength as national laws.

— *Directives* also bind the member states but allow them to choose the means of execution.

— *Decisions*, addressed to a government, an enterprise or an individual, bind the parties named.

The Commission and the Council also render non-binding *recommendations* and *opin-*