

'The Schuman Plan - The clandestine treaty or reign of the technocrats' from La Libre Belgique (11 November 1951)

Caption: While the pro-Europeans are pleased with the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), in its edition of 11 November 1951 the Belgian conservative daily newspaper La Libre Belgique deplores the clandestine and technocratic nature of the Treaty.

Source: La Libre Belgique. 11.11.1951, n° 315; 68e année. Bruxelles: Société d'Édition des Journaux du Patriote. "Le Plan Schuman ", auteur:T. , p. 3.

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The Schuman Plan

The clandestine treaty or reign of the technocrats

The objections that have been raised in many circles to the coal and steel pool, known as the Schuman Plan, and to which we have thought it our duty to give wide publicity, have attracted the attention of the public as well as that of the parliamentarians.

In the Foreign Affairs Committee, discussion of the topic has suddenly widened, and the Government has at last undertaken to throw a little more light on this matter. In this way, the impression is being somewhat allayed that people in high places are endeavouring to impose the Schuman Plan on the country for motives with which the country is not permitted to be acquainted.

In France, as in our own country, voices have been raised against this Hobson's choice policy and against the arrogant attempt of certain technocrats to impose their solutions on the duly appointed representatives of authority. This rule by a 'technocracy' has been strongly criticised by Mr Émile Roche, member of the French Economic Council, who attacks those who evince 'something akin to contempt for Parliament and for the public, when regarded other than in the manner of public relations officers.'

The author of the article has done well to point out that the draft treaty was initialled by the experts on 15 March last, and that a month later 'before the people and Parliament had had the time to study properly what was a long and difficult text, the Foreign Ministers of the six countries involved added their signatures to it. Of course,' continued Mr Roche, 'they made a certain number of important changes. However, if they had consulted a wide range of opinions, if they had opened the subject to greater debate in Parliament and in the press, many more would have been put forward. How have they managed to make people believe that they have been tricked in this way? ... It is just like someone plotting a crime.

'Such practices do have one merit. They are a warning. They throw light on what is in store for us. This contempt that the technocrats display for the common people, this desire to work secretly and without taking any notice of what people want, these are attitudes that we have witnessed before, when the Monnet Plan was being drawn up. And here they are again today. Is it not reasonable for us to assume that they will be back tomorrow in the heart of the European Coal and Steel Community and therefore right for us to examine, in the light of this hypothesis and of this experience, those new institutions which are being proposed, which some people want to impose on us?'

On at least two occasions, a technocratic dictatorship has been imposed on Belgian democratic institutions. On 6 October 1944 — without Parliament being consulted at all — we were subjected to a raid on our currency, to the registry of our savings, a tax on our capital, all means whereby inexperienced experimenters sought to raise the value of our money; we know all too well, alas, what disappointments all that led to! On 23 December 1945, we allowed ourselves to be committed to joining the international monetary pool, under what is known as the Bretton Woods Agreement. That compelled us to pay out more than BEF 2 000 million in gold and to commit ourselves to paying BEF 16 000 million on demand; the initiators of this system promised that currencies would stabilise and become convertible under the direction of the Monetary Fund; we know only too well, alas, where all these false assurances have led currencies in Europe!

Today the technocrats behind the Schuman Plan are promising us vast quantities of cheap coal if only we consent to putting a large proportion of our mines on short-time working or even closing them down.

The coal industry specialists do not agree, and neither does common sense, and the least that we can demand from the Government, which ratified the treaty on 18 April without referring it to Parliament, is that it no longer makes this into an issue of confidence when it comes to voting on it, so that no publicly elected representative should feel obliged to sacrifice the interests of the country to party political considerations.

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