

## Manifesto by the National Executive Committee of the British Labour Party on European unity (May 1950)

**Caption:** In May 1950, the National Executive Committee of the British Labour Party publishes a manifesto entitled European Unity in which it sets out the official British position on the question of European unity.

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## Manifesto by the National Executive Committee of the British Labour Party (June 1950)

Ever since 1945 the Labour Party has been guided by a firm conviction that the peoples of Western Europe must work closely together and that Britain must play a leading part in their co-operation. Unprecedented progress towards closer unity has already been made. The Council of Europe, the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation, and Atlantic and Brussels Treaty machinery, these and a host of other bodies are working hard and successfully to express Europe's urge for unity in practical terms. The Labour Party takes pride in the contribution which the British Labour Government has made both in launching, in fuelling, and in steering this great movement.

The point has now been reached at which it is essential to define more clearly both the purposes of European co-operation and the form of unity which its purposes must impose. In particular, at its second session in August 1950 the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe is to consider what modifications, if any, are desirable in the political structure of the member states in order to achieve closer unity. The Labour Party is therefore stating its own view on these matters as a guide to its own members and as a contribution to public discussion.

The statement which follows does not attempt to deal with specific issues of economic or political co-operation except in so far as those issues are directly relevant to the central question. Should the peoples of the existing European states surrender to a supra-national authority some part, or all, of the constitutional powers which they exercise at present? Or should unity continue, as now, to be pursued through co-operation between responsible governments by mutual consent ?

**The Labour Party's attitude towards problems of European unity, as towards all other problems of domestic or foreign policy, is determined by the principles of democratic Socialism and by the interests of the British people as members of the Commonwealth and of the world community.**

### **The Principles of Democratic Socialism**

Socialists believe that an uncontrolled capitalist economy can function only at the cost of conflicts between nations and classes which may be fatal to civilisation in the atomic age. In the international no less than in the national field, society, must be so organised as to offer all its members equality of opportunity, responsibility and sacrifice. This simple moral principle should lie at the root of all democratic thinking. But it can be fully satisfied only if the people are able and willing to control the operation of economic forces. Social justice, full employment and economic stability should be among the aims of every democratic government. They cannot be maintained in a free market economy unless the state deliberately intervenes to correct the harmful tendencies and stimulate the beneficial. Without such intervention adjustments are made at the expense of the working population and a schism is created in society which may destroy democracy.

Economic catastrophe and war have always punished failure to achieve these aims. At the present time failure to achieve them is doubly dangerous. A large part of the world is controlled by men who have rejected freedom as a principle of human progress. They claim that social justice, full employment and economic stability can be provided only at the cost of a rigid tyranny over men's minds and bodies. Wherever democracy has failed to meet these needs the doctrine of Communism falls on fertile ground. This doctrine is now a major weapon in the expansionist policy of the Soviet State. Thus Russian imperialism threatens the free world as much with ideological penetration as with military aggression.

**Socialism is therefore an indispensable arm in democracy's battle against totalitarianism. The Labour Party could never accept any commitments which limited its own or others' freedom to pursue democratic socialism, and to apply the economic controls necessary to achieve it.**

### **Britain's Economic Problems**

The postwar economy of Britain presents some special problems which will call for conscious control by any British Government for some time to come, whatever its party complexion. More than any other major European country, Britain depends on world trade to provide the food and raw materials needed to keep her

people and factories at work. The World War 1939-45 not only cost Britain a quarter of her national wealth but also shattered the complicated framework of world trade on which Britain had depended in the past. Thus Britain's postwar economic problems are greater in scale than those of any other European country, except perhaps Western Germany. It is only Britain's extraordinary success in solving them which has tended to conceal this fact. The changes needed in the pattern of Britain's production, trade and consumption are too great to be produced by the play of uncontrolled market forces except over too long a period and at the cost of ruinous political disorder. Thus no Government, whatever its political opinions, could save Britain from bankruptcy without retaining the general framework of control which has been used during the last five years by the Labour Government.

### **The Commonwealth and Sterling Area**

Finally the Labour Party cannot see European unity as an overriding end in itself. Britain is not just a small crowded island off the Western coast of Continental Europe. She is the nerve centre of a world-wide Commonwealth which extends into every continent. In every respect except distance we in Britain are closer to our kinsmen in Australia and New Zealand on the far side of the world, than we are to Europe. We are closer in language and in origins, in social habits and institutions, in political outlook and in economic interest. The economies of the Commonwealth countries are complementary to that of Britain to a degree which those of Western Europe could never equal. Furthermore Britain is also banker of the sterling area. This is the largest multilateral trading system in the world — within which exchange controls are not applied and all transactions are conducted in a single currency. We believe it is in the interest of the world at large that this system should be protected and maintained. In any case it is a vital British interest.

By transforming four hundred millions of Britain's Asian subjects into friends and equal partners the Labour Government has built a bridge between East and West, between the white and coloured peoples. The Commonwealth now represents the nucleus of a potential world society based on free co-operation. We believe that our overriding aim in the present age must be to unite all the non-Communist peoples into a single system which is both economically stable and politically secure. Such a system is needed to preserve both peace and prosperity.

### **The Need for Unity throughout the Free World**

Western Europe cannot solve its economic or political problems in isolation by its own unaided efforts. The solution of Europe's economic difficulties depends not only on developments within the boundaries of Europe but no less on adjustments in American policy and on rising standards in the world's underdeveloped areas. Nor does it lie exclusively in European hands to preserve world peace. Europe may become a battlefield again if ever the Kremlin can reverse the free world's potential predominance of power. Thus the battle for Europe could well be lost in Asia.

But world unity would be no less necessary even if the Soviet Union did not exist. World wars and economic crises have menaced human progress for centuries long before the Bolsheviks stormed the Winter Palace in 1917. Later generations may well be grateful that the Kremlin has compelled us all to face a vital task we might have shirked without its prodding.

It has always been our hope to construct world unity through the United Nations, but Soviet policy has for the time being greatly weakened the effectiveness of the United Nations as an instrument for this task. So long as Russia continues to believe that she has more to gain by obstructing world co-operation than by joining in it, the free nations must pursue their aims without her.

In the building of unity throughout the free world the U.S.A. must play a major part. For unless America's strategic, economic and political activities are closely integrated with those of Europe, Africa and Asia, the non-Communist world will be dangerously weakened. Moreover, America alone at present commands the resources needed to support the development of world unity in its early stages.

**To conclude, the Labour Party's socialist principles demand that the movement towards European unity should be such as to permit the continuation of full employment and social justice in Britain and the extension of those benefits over the rest of Western Europe. Britain's economic predicament**

**demands that her co-operation with Europe should not prevent the Government from continuing to exercise extensive control over her economy. Any changes in Britain's relations with Western Europe must not impair her position as nerve centre of the Commonwealth and banker of the Sterling Area. Close co-operation with Asia and America is vital to Europe's peace and prosperity. Until the Soviet Union allows the United Nations to function, as it should, the first immediate aim of British foreign policy must be to construct an organic unity throughout the whole of the non-Communist world.**

### **The Purposes of European Unity**

There is general agreement about at least the immediate purposes of West European unity. The Kremlin has already mutilated Europe's unity by forcing its dominion on all the peoples of Eastern Europe — peoples which must return to the world of freedom before our task is ended. Meanwhile all the European countries west of the Iron Curtain fear the further expansion of Soviet power either through military aggression or through the internal subversion of any of their members. Since no country in Western Europe feels strong enough to resist Soviet aggression by its own unaided efforts, all recognize the need to combine their resources of manpower, industrial potential and human skill in the service of a single policy.

In the second place the recent war has given most of the Western European countries economic problems comparable in kind if not in severity with those of the United Kingdom. Those problems hang largely on an inability to pay for essential imports from the dollar area. Thus in varying degrees most of the Western European countries have the same need as Britain to change their traditional patterns of production, trade and consumption. Any country which fails to bridge its dollar gap will face large scale unemployment and a fall in living standards, leading in turn to political unrest of which the Soviet Union will rapidly take advantage. For this reason if no other, no single European country can afford to solve its own economic problems at another's expense, or to sit idly by and watch another's failure. But though political interdependence imposes economic co-operation, such co-operation cannot be expected to bring great new positive advantages to Europe as a whole. The national economies of Western Europe are parallel and competitive rather than complementary. Much of the specialization which is possible has already taken place.

**Whatever other purposes European unity may ultimately fulfil, the survival of Western Europe in any form will depend on achieving adequate solidarity in face of Soviet expansionism and on bridging the dollar gap within the next few years. The methods adopted to create European unity must at least serve to meet these two needs in the immediate future.**

### **The Form of European Unity**

Some people believe that the required unity of action cannot be obtained by co-operation between sovereign states; it must be imposed by a supra-national body with executive powers. They consider that the European countries should form a Union in both the political and economic spheres by surrendering whole fields of government to a supra-national authority.

The Labour Party considers that it is neither possible nor desirable under existing circumstances to form a complete Union, political or economic, in this way. Instead national policies must be progressively harmonised or co-ordinated by consent through co-operation between governments. Whether or not this process will ultimately lead to a complete Union cannot be foreseen. But it will be enough to solve the urgent problems of the immediate future.

**The European peoples do not want a supra-national authority to impose agreements. They need an international machinery to carry out agreements which are reached without compulsion.**

### **An Economic or Political Union?**

Various types of Union may be envisaged. There has recently been much enthusiasm for an economic Union based on dismantling all internal barriers to trade, such as customs duties, exchange controls and quotas. Most supporters of this policy believe that the free play of economic forces within the Continental market so created would produce a better distribution of manpower and resources. The Labour Party fundamentally rejects this theory. Market forces by themselves could operate only at the cost of economic disturbances and

political tensions which would throw Europe open to Communism.

The sudden dismantling of internal barriers to trade would in the short term cause serious dislocation, unemployment and loss of production. This would sharply widen the dollar gap just when it is most imperative to close it. It would also cause most dangerous social convulsions. Whole branches of industry and whole districts in many parts of Europe would go bankrupt and destitute. Europe today is not strong enough to undergo shock treatment of this kind even if it could be proved that it would do her good in the end — which is highly debatable. Communists and Fascists would gain most from such disturbances and Democracy, particularly in countries where totalitarianism is present, might be an early casualty.

There is moreover a real danger in proposals which aim primarily at increasing trade within Europe. Europe's main economic problem is the dollar gap. The greatest difficulty impeding its solution is the unwillingness of private traders to attempt the difficult dollar markets while it is so much easier to sell currency areas. The main positive argument for devaluation was that it increased the relative attractiveness of dollar markets. Any further liberalisation of intra-European trade will tend to offset the benefits of devaluation by making it easier to sell in Europe. A complete economic union would undoubtedly create a protected high-cost European market and greatly hinder the solution of the dollar problem. The right compromise between this extreme and paralysis of inter-European trade is probably something like a return to the position which obtained in 1928.

Socialists would of course welcome a European economic Union which was based on international planning for full employment, social justice and stability. But international planning can only operate on the basis of national planning. And many European governments have not yet shown either the will or the ability to plan their own economies. In this respect M. Schuman's proposal to plan the steel and coal resources of Western Europe as a whole presents a critical challenge which socialists will be the first to welcome.

The fact is that an economic Union would require a degree of uniformity in the internal policies of the member states which does not now exist and is unlikely to exist in the immediate future. Civic and administrative traditions would prevent some countries from applying the methods of democratic socialism as practised in Britain and Scandinavia, even if their parliaments had a Socialist majority. And even under a Conservative government Britain could not afford the degree of economic *laissez-faire* practised in Italy or Germany. By planning and control Britain has gone twice as far towards bridging her dollar gap as all the E.R.P. countries together, including Britain. Full employment and fair shares have created a degree of national unity never before known in peacetime Britain. Countries with smaller problems may feel that they can afford smaller successes. Britain could not. We could not afford to have one out of ten workers idle, like Belgium, Germany and Italy. We could not afford to lose 22 million days' production through strikes alone, as did France in 1947.

Moreover our population would not tolerate the flagrant injustices of a free market economy in which workers live in squalor yet see the shops bulging with goods beyond their reach, in which building materials and labour are spent on splendid villas and luxury flats while millions still seek a home. If the Conservative Party in Britain genuinely intended to pursue the social aims it claims in its Manifesto it would have to use economic methods far closer to those of the present Labour Government than to those of the Governments of Germany, Belgium, France and Italy.

**A complete economic Union of Western Europe must therefore be excluded, since it would demand an unattainable degree of uniformity in the internal policies of the member states. If based on "laissez-faire" it would not only impede the bridging of the dollar gap but also cause fatal political upheavals. If a complete economic Union is impossible, a complete political Union is thereby also excluded.**

#### **A Supra-National Parliament?**

If complete Union is excluded, is it possible or desirable to create some representative body in Western Europe, with limited functions but real powers over the national legislatures? Certainly no parliamentary assembly could assume supra-national powers unless it was in some way strictly representative of the European peoples. Any such representative body in Western Europe would be anti-Socialist or non-Socialist

in character. In the Consultative Assembly itself the Socialists number only one in four. This proportion would be even further reduced if Communist opinion was represented in a European parliament.

The Labour Party believes that its policy of full employment and fair shares is vital to British recovery, and that if the whole of Europe followed the same policy many of its problems would disappear. The price of economic liberalism today is class war and social unrest. Policies which throw the main burden of sacrifice on the working-class are the fifth column of international Communism. At present those European countries are most immune from Communist penetration which follow the policies of democratic Socialism. It would be criminal folly to wreck their achievements in the search for a unity whose main purpose was to restore Western Europe to economic and political health. No Socialist Government in Europe could submit to the authority of a body whose policies were decided by an anti-Socialist majority.

This general attitude is shared by all the working class of Europe. All the non-Communist Trade Unions in the E.R.P. countries were represented at a Conference held in Rome from 18-20 April, 1950. This Conference made a unanimous declaration on problems of European unity. They agreed that the only acceptable basis for economic integration was the pursuit of full employment and social justice by all the governments concerned.

They declared: "Full employment policy is imperative as an end in itself and as an indispensable prerequisite for the welfare of each country and the whole community of nations. . . . Schemes like the European Payments Union are only desirable from the trade union point of view if operated within the framework of national and international full employment policies." In particular they insisted that "liberalisation of trade and payments should not result in lowering the social and economic achievements of progressive European governments."

This declaration is of exceptional importance. None of the aims of European unity can be achieved without the active support of the organised workers.

**No Socialist Party with the prospect of forming a government could accept a system by which important fields of national policy were surrendered to a supranational European representative authority, since such an authority would have a permanent anti-Socialist majority and would arouse the hostility of European workers.**

### **A Third Force between America and Russia?**

Many of those who demanded a complete European Union tend to see Western Europe as a potential super-state exerting its influence in world affairs as an entity equal with the U.S.A. or the U.S.S.R. and wholly independent of both. Many of those who oppose a complete Union do so because they do not wish their country to be more closely tied to Western Europe than to certain countries outside Europe. On this issue the Labour Party's position is clear.

Britain must work at least as closely with the Commonwealth and U.S.A. as with Western Europe. There is no certainty that if Britain transferred fields of government to a European authority she would retain her freedom to do so. It is by no means clear that a majority of Europeans recognise the need for global unity. Many people of all parties believe that Western Europe can and should stand aloof from what they see as a struggle between Russia and America for world power. Some do so because they think neutrality more profitable. Others imagine Western Europe as an ideological bridge between "capitalist America" and "Communist Russia."

But Western Europe neither could nor should attempt to constitute a geographical Third Force. For some time to come its economic stability and strategic defence will depend on close co-operation with the U.S.A. Moreover, the Soviet Union has repeatedly demonstrated that it recognises no alternative between slave and enemy — neutrality is not a possible choice. Finally, in its social and economic policy Western Europe as a whole would stand to the Right of the U.S.A., not between America and Russia. Outside Britain and Scandinavia there is no government with a more progressive domestic or foreign programme than the present U.S. Administration. Ever since 1931 America has pursued more advanced policies than most of the

European countries.

The Third Force is a valuable concept if it means political solidarity against extremism of Right or Left. As such it must comprise enlightened opinion in all regions of the world. As a neutral geographical bloc based on the Western fringe of the Eurasian land mass it is a sterile and a dangerous concept. For this reason the Labour Party welcomes the extension of European planning for peace and prosperity to cover the Atlantic community as a whole. We also look forward to its further extension over the Commonwealth and Asia, until we have achieved organic unity throughout the non-Communist world.

**European co-operation cannot aim at creating a neutral geographical bloc. The Third Force must be a world-wide political alliance against totalitarianism wherever it is found.**

### **Majority Rule?**

Many people accept the justice of these arguments but object to the existing system by which even co-operation between responsible governments is subject to unanimous agreement. There is no doubt that governmental representatives, with several years' experience of successful co-operation behind them, are much more responsible in their behaviour than could reasonably be expected of delegates to a parliamentary legislative body. But even the European governments do not understand one another's problems sufficiently at the present time to justify them in taking mandatory decisions by a majority vote. O.E.E.C. recently considered a scheme for creating a European Payments Union. Though acceptable to all the European governments except the British, this scheme would yet have proved fatal to Britain's position as banker of the sterling area.

If the establishment of this scheme had rested on a majority vote Britain would have been faced with the choice between wrecking a framework of co-operation on which all the other European countries depend, and wrecking a system of multilateral trade on which half the world and she herself depend.

Such dilemmas would continually arise if European unity were pursued through a supra-national authority. It is far better that unity should continue to be pursued as at present through co-operation between governments by mutual consent. Moreover the real achievements possible by this method must not be underestimated. Based on this principle, the Combined Boards in Washington played a major part in winning the last war. The experience of working together teaches governments mutual tolerance, respect, and confidence, so that the need for voting arises more rarely as time goes on. Decisions are easily reached according to the sense of the meeting. Safe in possession of the ultimate right of veto, a government can afford to make concessions it would not yield under pressure. Thus, in fact, on the issue of a European Payments Union quoted above, Britain has been able to suggest a compromise which safeguards the sterling area while meeting the need for greater convertibility of currencies within Europe.

**It is highly doubtful whether at the present time any European government would submit to a majority ruling against its profound conviction on an issue vital to itself. Any attempt to establish majority rule would wreck the atmosphere of confidence which already exists and revive ancient jealousies and suspicions. Co-operation between governments must be based on mutual consent.**

### **The Peoples must be Consulted**

All the forms of Union so far discussed entail a transfer of power from the peoples of the individual European states to some new body. This would involve a major constitutional change in every country. Such a change can only be made if the people of every country so decide after mature consideration during which all the implications of the change have been fully presented. It is therefore the duty of any group of persons who desire this change to seek to convert the people in each country to their views. In particular, any political party which supports the change is clearly obliged to make it a major proposal in its election programme.

Already dangerous misunderstandings have been created. In surroundings where such generalities gain popularity, prominent politicians have vaguely expressed their readiness for new constitutional forms. Yet the same politicians have too often conspicuously failed to present their proposals for judgment to their own

electorate. For example, leading members of the British Conservative Party won praise at Strasbourg in August 1949 for the generous audacity of their proposals for dismantling economic barriers between Britain and Western Europe. In January 1950 the Conservative Party's Election Manifesto, "This is the Road" contained only one reference to economic relations between Britain and Western Europe. It read as follows: "British horticulture must be safeguarded against destructive imports."

No British Government has ever done more than the Labour Government in the past five years to safeguard the interests of British horticulture, and indeed of British agriculture generally. This policy we shall continue — but we do not regard it as the sum total of our contribution to European economic unity.

**Constitutional changes which would limit or transform the democratic authority of the sovereign peoples of Western Europe must be submitted to judgment by those peoples. No politician has the right to support such changes unless he has the honesty and courage to present them for the verdict of his own electorate.**

### **The Way Ahead**

The fact is that attempts to force co-operation on unwilling peoples by binding them in rigid constitutional shackles can only hinder the development of mutual confidence. Those who champion such methods are unwittingly among the most dangerous enemies of European unity. New constitutional forms can only follow, not precede, the growth of a genuine European community. The main responsibility for fostering this still delicate plant must fall on the governments which are democratically responsible to the European peoples.

Unity can develop best on a basis of success in solving problems in which all recognise an urgent common interest. At the moment there are enough such problems to strain Europe's resources of expert skill and knowledge to the utmost. Nor is there any lack of organisations for dealing with them.

Military co-operation is pursued by the Atlantic and the Brussels Treaty organisations. The Organisation for European Economic Co-operation exists to co-ordinate the struggle of Western Europe to bridge its dollar gap. Both O.E.E.C. and the Atlantic Treaty organs are concerned to associate the U.S.A. with Europe's major problems. There is scarcely any European organisation which does not grapple with the problem of Germany in some form or other.

**Where progress has been disappointing, the cause does not lie in any inadequacy of the institutions which exist. It lies in real conflicts of interest which cannot simply be ignored or suppressed — they must be patiently removed by mutual adjustments freely made.**

### **The Problem of Basic Industries**

For example, O.E.E.C. has so far signally failed to make real progress in co-ordinating the operation of Europe's basic industries. This was not for lack of study — reports which fully analyse the problems in all their complexity have long lain before the governments. But there is no field of co-operation which raises more delicate yet vital issues — the most fundamental conflicts of national interest and political doctrine are involved.

The European Socialist parties have repeatedly emphasised the need for co-ordinating Europe's basic industries since they first pledged support for the European Recovery Programme in March 1948. Continuous study has convinced them that international planning of iron and steel is the key to economic unity. But such planning will be worse than useless if it is inspired, like the cartels of the past, exclusively by the desire for private profit. The interest of the European peoples as a whole must guide all planning, and this can only be assured if the peoples are ultimately responsible for organising it. This means that any industries concerned in European planning should be subject to government direction in their own country. Otherwise a government which has accepted certain obligations in an international organisation will have no means of carrying them out.

In particular, the peoples must be able to decide the investment policies of the basic industries. Joint



planning means nothing unless the industries in each country are required to fit their investment programmes into a European plan. The Labour Party is convinced that nothing less than public ownership can ensure this fully. Control without ownership can only be effective for negative purposes. Thus a government without ownership can assume powers to restrict investment in private industry where this is against the public interest. But it has yet to be proved that any government can force a private capitalist to invest new money in an industry where the expectation of profit is insufficient to attract him. Yet the interest of the community as a whole will often demand this, above all in the basic industries.

The basic industries of iron and steel hold the key to full employment and stability in every country. If there is any threat of a recession in world trade, it is then vital to maintain and perhaps increase investment in these industries. But this is just the time when private capitalists, fearing for their profits, restrict production.

There is no doubt that at this moment Europe's private industrialists fear overproduction and will try to re-organise restrictive cartels as in the past. They will seek to pervert the Schuman proposals for their own selfish and monopolistic ends. A co-ordinated perversion of this type would be far worse than our present unco-ordinated competition. The European peoples must be on their guard. They can only benefit if their basic industries are planned for expansion to meet the real needs of Europe and the world outside, and buttress full employment and stability. To restrict European steel production when Africa and Asia are crying out for machines is no less lunacy than burning coffee in Brazil.

It is also vital that the Trade Unions should be intimately concerned in the planning of Europe's basic industries. Only they can guarantee that wage levels will not be set by the least progressive industries in the plan. With their help the planning of basic industry can be an instrument for raising labour standards throughout Europe.

Until M. Schuman's historic proposal to pool the steel and coal resources of France, Germany and the Saar under a single authority appointed by the governments, the unwillingness of many governments to control their own basic industries obviously made European planning of coal and steel impossible. The opportunity now exists to fill the greatest gap in European economic co-operation.

**It is the duty of all who have European unity at heart to see that the Schuman proposals are shaped in the interests of the peoples as a whole. The decisive part in co-ordinating Europe's basic industries must be played by the governments, as trustees for their peoples.**

### **The Council of Europe**

Nearly all the urgent problems which demand common action, like the planning of European basic industry, are primarily a task for the governments. When the Council of Europe was first set up last year, the governments wished the Committee of Ministers rigidly to control the scope of discussion in the Consultative Assembly. So rigid a control soon proved impossible. At its first session the Consultative Assembly ranged over almost every aspect of European co-operation except defence — defence was necessarily excluded because some of the countries in the Council of Europe wish to play no part in European military co-operation. Many delegates to the Consultative Assembly did not disguise their desire to see the Assembly usurping the functions of the inter-governmental organisations. In fact, they envisaged the Assembly developing into a European Parliament, with legislative powers at least in certain fields.

A disagreement has already developed between the Committee of Ministers, whose members are responsible for the work of the inter-governmental organisations, and some members of the Consultative Assembly who wish it to supervise the work of the inter-governmental organisations and ultimately to usurp their functions. Unless a clear decision on this issue is made and sincerely accepted by both partners to the dispute, the Council of Europe may soon discredit itself by sterile wrangles over questions of jurisdiction.

In its present form the Assembly is quite unfitted to exert legislative powers. Its members sit as individuals, not as official representatives of countries or even of parties. Since most countries have refrained from appointing Ministers as delegates to the Assembly, the case of the European governments is not often adequately presented. In fact the Assembly has tended to become a sort of unofficial Opposition to the

European governments as a whole. If the delegates were to assume legislative powers, there would have to be some system for electing them so that they genuinely represented the peoples of their countries.

**For reasons already stated, the Labour Party does not favour the creation of a European Parliament with legislative powers. It would consequently oppose any attempt to give the Consultative Assembly such a status. The Consultative Assembly should remain consultative. Moreover, we believe that in its present form the Assembly is ideally constituted so as to deal with one major problem of European unity, which inter-governmental organisations cannot easily handle.**

### **A Threat to Democracy**

The Rome Conference of European Trade Unions, already mentioned, included the following statement in its Declaration: "The importance of unity is so vital that risks must be taken; but it must be recognised that unless certain policies, particularly the full employment of available resources and a more equitable distribution of national incomes, are followed from the beginning, unity will not be built on firm foundations, and will, in the long run, be undermined by political and social instability."

This is profoundly true. There is no advantage in uniting the European peoples across national frontiers if they are deeply divided within each nation by class war.

Moreover the spiritual community underlying European co-operation rests on a firm belief in the superiority of parliamentary democracy over other forms of government. It is this belief which must exclude Spain from the European community so long as the Franco regime remains in power. Yet at present this belief is challenged within some of the largest countries already in the Council of Europe, by large sections of the population on both Right and Left. Fascism has reared its head again at least in Germany and Italy. Communism commands the allegiance of millions of workers and peasants in Italy and France. Unless these important groups can be converted to a faith in democratic freedom, European unity may be corrupted at the roots.

**Foremost among the causes of democracy's weakness in some parts of Europe is the failure of democracy in those areas to provide full employment, social justice, and economic stability. Now that all the peoples of Europe have a common interest in one another's political health, this has become a major problem of European unity.**

### **Full Employment and Social Justice**

It is difficult to raise this problem in an inter-governmental organisation without one government appearing to criticise another in the conduct of its own internal affairs. But the Consultative Assembly is ideally fitted to handle it, since its members sit as individuals and it has already committed itself to an interest in the problem.

The first paragraph of the Assembly's Recommendation to the Committee of Ministers on the Council of Europe's role in the economic field pledges the Assembly to "promote a policy of full employment and a rising standard of life."

In the Recommendation on Social Security the Assembly states its conviction that "one of the best means of preserving peace in Europe is for all the nations to strive tirelessly to satisfy the vital needs of the workers. . . . Social security is one of the best safeguards of democratic institutions against the constant danger of totalitarian dictatorships."

The Assembly's Recommendation on Human Rights asks that all member countries shall guarantee their peoples the effective enjoyment of the rights referred to in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. This Universal Declaration asserts in Article 25: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control."

Moreover all members of the United Nations are formally obliged by Article 55 of the Charter to promote "higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development."

As Keir Hardie used to say, the right to work is far more fundamental than the right to aid if unemployed. Mass unemployment can no longer be considered a visitation of Providence — it is the consequence of human failure to apply measures which have long been common knowledge. Any government can choose whether or not to base its own economic policy upon the maintenance of full employment, with full hope of success unless external factors intervene. If all governments together are determined to preserve full employment, its achievement is assured.

**Yet, though every country in the Council of Europe is pledged to pursue full employment and social justice, even a superficial glance at the present situation will reveal glaring failures to redeem these pledges. There is no work which the Assembly could more usefully perform than to consider ways and means of obtaining their fuller observance. And if the Assembly fails to fulfil this function it is difficult to see what other organisation can succeed.**

### **Ways and Means**

The Assembly cannot of course produce legislation to bind the member countries. It can only make recommendations, which, if accepted by the Committee of Ministers, still require ratification in the national parliaments. But there is a valuable precedent in this field.

The International Labour Organisation has a record of solid achievement over thirty years which no other international organisation can parallel. It owes its success mainly to the fact that no government would dare to challenge its general aims of improving the workers' lot. By setting standards of labour legislation based on the practice of the more progressive countries it has produced a steady improvement in working conditions throughout the world. Yet it has had no legislative power. It has proceeded by drafting Conventions which each government could choose to ratify or not. And its ever-growing moral authority has won it innumerable victories over official reluctance or obstruction.

It may be that some similar procedure could be followed by the Council of Europe to raise standards of employment policy and social justice among its members. The responsibility for suggesting lines of action should fall to the Consultative Assembly. The Committee of Ministers if it agreed with these recommendations could then draft international Conventions or multilateral Treaties to be ratified by the separate governments.

If the Consultative Assembly decided to set up Commissions in this field, it would be wise to invite the co-operation of Europe's trade unionists — another reason for the I.L.O.'s success was the full participation of workers' and employers' representatives. Indeed, the Assembly might well seek direct co-operation with I.L.O. itself on relevant aspects of the general problem.

One subject for urgent study is the recent report on National and International Measures for Full Employment by a group of experts appointed by the Secretary of the United Nations. This epoch-making report has so far received far too little attention from governments and public opinion as a whole. The Consultative Assembly should consider whether the measures it suggests could be adapted for use within the regional community of Western Europe.

By making clear and realistic recommendations in these fields the Assembly can perform a double service to the cause of European unity. It will kindle the enthusiastic support of Europe's workers in a way which other organisations have so far failed to do. Some of the existing barriers to economic co-operation would become less important if the workers felt they had a real stake in supporting European unity.

In the second place by concentrating on these problems the Assembly will be attacking the greatest of all obstacles to closer unity in Europe — the disparity in social standards between one country and another.

Many of the arguments already used against a complete Union of Western Europe would lose their force if conditions in the various countries were more uniform.

**If the Assembly succeeds in raising standards of employment policy and social justice it will attack the causes of Europe's weakness and division at the roots. Fascism and Communism will lose their appeal. The workers will give the movement for unity their full support. As social standards become more uniform a major obstacle to Union will disappear.**

#### **A Challenge to the Assembly**

At its second session the Assembly faces a choice which may determine its whole future. It can continue to juggle with projects of constitutional engineering which lead only to sterile and exhausting wrangles with the Committee of Ministers. Or it can boldly attack a problem vital to Europe's survival. If it chooses the first course it will discredit not only itself but the whole movement for European unity. If it chooses the second, it will win the passionate goodwill of freedom-loving men not only in Europe but throughout the world. Those peoples whose health has been sapped by totalitarian infection will take fresh heart from the help which the Assembly can give them in their struggle.

**We of the British Labour Party are quite sure that the fight for full employment and social justice must be won if democracy itself is not to die. It must now be won in the fields and factories of Western Europe.**