

WRITTEN QUESTION No 562/74
by Lord O'Hagan
to the Commission of the European Communities
(14 December 1974)

Subject: Accessibility of the Commission

There is much talk about the EEC being governed by a remote and faceless bureaucracy.

If a citizen of a Member State has a complaint about the activities of the EEC, how can he (or she) ensure that the matter is thoroughly looked into?

Answer
(6 February 1975)

The Commission is of course aware of criticisms of the kind mentioned by the Honourable Member. It believes that many of them derive from a lack of understanding of how the Community and its component institutions work. A main aim of its information activities, consequently, is to promote wider knowledge on this subject.

As to complaints about activities of the Community, the Commission, for its part, gives them full consideration whether they be written or oral, and whether communicated to it direct or through one of the information offices in Member States. It takes remedial action wherever appropriate.

Citizens are of course also free to address complaints to a Member of the European Parliament, who can ensure that they are fully considered.

WRITTEN QUESTION No 564/74
by Lord O'Hagan
to the Commission of the European Communities
(16 December 1974)

Subject: Community's attitude to consumers

The EEC is often criticised as being hostile to consumers.

What actions has the Commission taken in recent years in order to make sure that consumers' interests are safeguarded?

Answer*(5 February 1975)*

The Commission would refer the Honourable Member to its answers to Written Questions No 166/73 ⁽¹⁾ and No 486/73 ⁽²⁾, by Mr Jahn and Mr Cousté respectively, on the same subject.

In them the Commission described the new administrative machinery which had been set up and outlined the first steps taken to inform and protect consumers.

Since then the preliminary Community programme for consumer information and protection presented by the Commission on 12 December 1973 has been discussed at length by the Council. The Commission hopes to see it approved within the next few weeks.

The Consumers' Consultative Committee has met four times to discuss preparation of the programme, the common agricultural policy, the problem of prices, and a number of draft directives (on consumer

credit; the labelling of foodstuffs, etc.). A meeting between Mr Lardinois, member of the Commission, and the Steering Committee of the Consumers' Consultative Committee gave consumers an opportunity to voice their doubts about the common agricultural policy.

Finally the Commission has made a determined effort in recent months to provide increased information for consumers following the creation of a specialized information unit within the Directorate-General for Information. Its activities include the publication of a weekly bulletin, *Industry and Society*, which appears in six language editions and is widely distributed. It has also organized a number of multinational meetings to establish close contacts between the Commission and journalists covering consumer affairs for the specialist and non-specialist press, for family journals and women's magazines, and for television. These activities continue and will be developed once implementation of the programme referred to above can get under way.

⁽¹⁾ OJ No C 102, 24. 11. 1973, p. 6.

⁽²⁾ OJ No C 14, 15. 2. 1974, p. 21.

WRITTEN QUESTION No 567/74**by Lord O'Hagan****to the Commission of the European Communities***(16 December 1974)*

Subject: Economic difficulties of the United Kingdom

To what extent is membership of the EEC responsible for the economic difficulties of the United Kingdom?

Answer*(10 February 1975)*

A very high rate of inflation, a record deficit on the current account balance of payments and a rising trend of unemployment are the main problems of the present state of the United Kingdom economy. However these difficulties cannot be attributed to the United Kingdom's membership of the Community.

The sharp acceleration of the rate of inflation in 1973/74 was not confined to the United Kingdom, or even to the EEC, but could be observed throughout the western world. The main factors behind it were the world-wide shortage of foodstuffs following crop failures, record increases in prices of basic industrial