

# The national farmers union and the British negotiations for membership in the European economic community\*

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## INTRODUCTION

At his press conference on January 14, 1963, General de Gaulle virtually closed the door to British entry into the European Economic Community (EEC). Less than two weeks later the negotiations between Britain and the EEC were suspended. Probably no one but de Gaulle knows why he decided to veto Britain's application, but ostensibly it was because Britain was not European.

« ... The nature, the structure, the very situation that are England's, differ profoundly from the continental's. » (1)

de Gaulle chose to illustrate his point by discussing the role of agriculture in the Community, the importance of the Community agricultural policy, and the difficulty of aligning Britain's agricultural system with that of the « Six ». There was some basis for using agriculture as an illustration of the difference between Britain and the continental countries. Agriculture was one of the more difficult areas of negotiation, and at the time of the breakdown of the talks, many of the important issues still to be resolved were agricultural.

The President of France was not the only person concerned about British agriculture and its future ties with the continent. Among others, the British farmer was vitally concerned. The entry of Britain into the Common Market would have called for many changes and adjustments on his part. As the most important representative of the British farmer, the National Farmers Union of England and Wales (NFU) reflected this concern (2).

The purpose of this paper is to describe how the NFU represented the British farmer's interests in regard to British entry into the Common Market. This will be done by examining the different ways that the NFU attempted to influence the negotiations, directly or indirectly, and by examining the issues which the Union thought important. By comparing the issues which were of concern to the NFU with the issues which were of concern in the negotiations, it should be possible to obtain a very rough, indirect measure of the influence of the NFU on the negotiations.

It is hoped that this paper will not only be useful in understanding the role of agriculture in the recent negotiations, but that it will also be useful in understanding an increasingly important phenomena, the political process in regional planning. All regional planning programs exist in a political milieu. The various economic and political interests which are effected by such regional programming form an important part of this milieu and in one way or another will try to influence the decisions of the policy makers. Whether this activity is readily visible or not, it still plays an important role in the regional policy-making process. In this context the British EEC negotiations can be characterized as the formulation of a regional planning program, and the NFU can be character-

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(1) *Keesing's Contemporary Archives* (Keesing's Publications Limited, Bristol, 1963). Vol. XIV, January 19-26, 1963, p. 1919.

(2) In addition to the Union for England and Wales there are Farmers Unions for Scotland and Ulster. 'NFU' will be used to refer to the Union for England and Wales which is by far the most important of the three.

ized as a group concerned with the effects of this program.

## THE ROLE OF THE NFU IN BRITISH AGRICULTURE

### Power in the Land.

« In the past fifty years the NFU has become a power in the land... » (3)

This opening statement of a pamphlet issued by the NFU summarizes the NFU's conception of its position in Britain today. In many ways it is not far from the truth. In 1957 there were 194,000 members of the NFU representing 75 to 80 % of the total possible membership (4). In addition to the fact that the NFU represents a significant portion of the farming population, its position is enhanced by the fact that in practice it is considered by the Government as the sole bargaining agent for the farmers and is given consultative status on many important decisions such as the annual price review.

The Union is organized into about 1200 local branches. These local branches are in turn organized into 59 county branches. The executive committee of each county branch is composed of elected delegates from the local branches and governs the affairs of the county branch. A county secretary is appointed who is responsible for the administration of the county organization. It is at the local and county level that the farmer most often comes into contact with the Union.

Each country branch elects delegates to the national Council which is the formal policy making body of the NFU. Although the Council meets at least once a month, the effective operation of the national organization is carried out by the President, the General Secretary, and a large competent staff.

Until the end of World War II the Presidency tended to be a parttime position with a new President elected every year. However, from 1945 to 1960 the Presidency was held by James Turner. During his tenure of office, Turner virtually professionalized the leadership at Agriculture House, the national headquarters of the NFU. Turner gave the organization a dynamic personal leadership with an emphasis on the political aspects of the national program. Since the election of the present

President, Harold Woolley, in 1960 after the retirement of Turner, the nature of the national leadership has changed somewhat. The importance of the staff has been increased and general leadership has been extended to a President's Committee, composed of the main office holders and chairmen of the Horticulture and Welsh committees.

Since World War II the national leadership has become increasingly more important in the structure of the organization. This has gone hand in hand with the success of the national organization's main task — « ...to bring the farmer's organized power to bear upon public policy. » (5).

### Agriculture House, Whitehall, and Westminster.

During World War II, Britain needed greatly increased production from her farms. The Government turned to the NFU for help in stimulating this production. This was the beginning of the NFU's close relationship with the Government. Out of World War II grew Britain's agricultural support system and the annual price review. The annual review and the support system are described in the British Information pamphlet, *Agriculture in Britain*, as follows :

« In February each year, in accordance with the Act of 1947, the agricultural Ministers review the economic condition and prospects of the industry. Between annual reviews, a special review may be held if the Ministers consider it warranted, but this Ministers are required to consult with representatives of agricultural producers — in practice the three farmer's unions in the United Kingdom... In the light of their conclusions, they determine guaranteed prices for fat cattle, fat sheep, far pigs, wool, milk, cereals, potatoes, and sugar beet... Various grants in aid of particular kinds of production or farming practice (known as 'production grants') are also considered...

The general policy of the Government is to use methods of agricultural support that allow the ordinary channels of trade to flow freely. The form of guarantee most generally used is the deficiency payment, which means that the Government makes

(3) *Power in the Land* (National Farmers Union, London, 1962).

(4) Self, Peter and Storing, Herbert J., *The State and the Farmer* (George Allen & Unwin Limited, London, 1962), p. 43.

(5) *Ibid.*, p. 48.

payments to producers, related to the differences between the average market price realised and the guaranteed price, for output eligible for guarantee » (6).

This statement points to the importance of the NFU in developing government policy. Although consultation is all that is called for in the legislation, the Government found it advantageous to have the NFU agree to its policy at the Annual Review. This gave enormous importance to the opinions of the NFU and concessions were often made in order to get an agreement. 1956 was the first year that the NFU and the Government were unable to come to an agreement. This breakdown led to the formulation of the Agriculture Act in 1957, which defined more clearly important aspects of the support program.

In the 1959 elections the NFU was able to extract from the Government a promise not to alter the support program set up under the 1957 Act during the Government's next term of office. This was an important concession. However, the need for agreement with the NFU at the annual price reviews seems to have lessened somewhat, because in 1958, 1960, and significantly in 1962, the Government and the NFU were unable to reach agreements. All in all, the NFU has been able to exert quite a strong influence on Whitehall, since World War II, regardless of which party was in power.

One of the most conspicuous aspects of NFU policy is its political neutrality. The Union has been very careful not to associate itself with party politics. 1940 was the last year that the NFU endorsed a candidate for Parliament and 1945 was the last year that money was spent from the political fund.

Peter Self and Herbert Storing point out in *The State and the Farmer* that the NFU doesn't have as much direct impact on Parliamentary debates and party policies as is often assumed, and they go on to point out that—

« ... the Union's first and basic aim since the war has been to reach agreement with the Government of the day, and with few exceptions it has carefully refrained from appealing to Parliament 'behind the Government's back' on any major matter... » (7).

This does not mean to say that the Union doesn't have an influence on Parliament. It does mean that its lobbying is more constrained than might be expected. The NFU's policies of political neutrality, constraint with Parliament and close association with the Government are interrelated. They represent the political milieu in which the NFU found it could best influence public policy. A significant change in any one of these policies would probably alter somewhat the other two policies. It is in this political milieu, with its advantages and limitations, that the Union had to operate in trying to influence the British-EEC negotiations.

## BRITAIN TURNS TOWARD THE CONTINENT

### The Decision to Enter the Common Market.

Emil Benoit writes in his book *Europe at Sixes and Sevens*—

« The breakdown of the negotiations may be ascribed not only to Britain's unwillingness to make substantive concessions, but also to the general tone in which she conducted the negotiations, and in particular to her failure to convey any impression of genuine sympathy for the wider political aims of European unification » (8).

This is in reference to the breakdown in November 1958 of negotiations for an All-European Trade Area and not to the recent Brussels talks. Britain had proposed such a Free Trade area shortly after the drafting of the Rome Treaty. Thus it can be seen that (Britain's first response to the emerging European Community was to try and find an accommodation with it which would keep Britain outside the Community and at the same time minimize the economic and political problems raised by the Community.

With the failure of these negotiations, Britain and six other non-EEC countries formed the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). This organization was created as a response to the EEC. The member countries hoped that by joi-

(6) *Agriculture in Britain* (British Information Services, London, 1962), pp. 18-19.

(7) Self, *op cit.*, p. 205.

(8) Benoit, Emile, *Europe at Sixes and Sevens* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1961), p. 75.

ning together they would be able to make some accommodation with the Six. It soon became clear that EFTA was not an ideal solution and in many respects not even a good solution for the problems facing the member countries.

Finding that her first attempts to deal with the Common Market were not successful, Britain began to reconsider her position. In May 1960, a little more than six months after the signing of the EFTA Treaty, rumors began spreading that Britain was willing to join the Common Market. Finally, on July 31, 1961, Prime Minister Mac Millan announced that Britain ask for negotiations concerning full membership in the EEC. On August 10, 1961, Britain made a formal request for such negotiations and on November 8, 1961, the British-EEC negotiations began in Brussels.

Thus it can be seen that Britain's decision to join the Common Market was made only after trying to find other alternatives. The British decision was a dramatic change from the policy of relative independence from Europe which she had pursued since the end of World War II and which had disappointed so many Europeans.

The were three main issues which the British Government felt, on the eve of the Brussels talks, would be necessary to resolve:

1. Satisfactory arrangements for the Commonwealth, especially Commonwealth trade.
2. Satisfactory arrangements for the EFTA countries.
3. Satisfactory arrangements for British agriculture (9).

### The Problem of Agriculture.

It was not surprising that agriculture would be one of the key issues around which the negotiations would develop. In the All-European Free Trade Area proposals, agriculture was specifically excluded from consideration. In addition agriculture was not included in the EFTA Treaty, although bilateral agreements were made concerning some specific products. Britain's low-cost food, farmer subsidy program was a cornerstone in her trading policy and she was reluctant to change this policy.

However, agricultural policy was one of the key

features of the Rome Treaty, and because of this, Britain was forced to accept a common agricultural policy as one of the conditions of membership in the EEC. Walter Lippmann in his book, *Western Unity and the Common Market*, writes:

« To understand the nature of the economic difficulty, around which the Brussels negotiations revolve, we must realize what is the basic compact of the Common Market.

It is a bargain between French agriculture and German industry. The key to this bargain is that French agriculture is being modernized and is becoming increasingly productive. At bottom the Common Market enables France to sell the bulk of the basic food — wheat and meat — protected against Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Argentine and the United States by a common variable levy which would prevent imports, no matter how low in price, from competing in the European market. In return, German industry primarily, but also Italian, Belgian and Dutch, have the privilege of free trade within the market and protection against the rest of the world by a customs union » (10).

Even though agriculture played an important role in the drafting of the Rome Treaty, it was not easy for the Six to reach an agreement on what type of policy it was going to pursue. The Rome Treaty did not go into too much detail on this subject, stipulating that the Commission should propose a common agricultural policy. In June 1960 the Commission submitted its proposal for a common agricultural policy, and on January 14, 1962, after very difficult negotiations, the Six finally reached an agreement among themselves on important aspects on this common policy.

A pamphlet published by the European Community Information Service describes this policy as follows :

« The common policy for agriculture aims at providing greater efficiency in production, a fair return for farmers, stable markets, regular supplies, and a fair deal for consumers, in a single Community-wide market with a Common price level. These

(9) « NFU Annual Report for 1961 », *British Farmer*, n° 215, January 6, 1962, pp. 12-13.

(10) Lippmann, Walter, *Western Unity and the Common Market* (Hamish Hamilton Limited, London, 1962), p. 14.



aims will be achieved along three main lines : common marketing policies ; a common policy for external trade, replacing the present complex and widely-varying national structures of tariffs, quotas and minimum prices by a single Community system of variable import levies and minimum import prices; and a common policy for modernization and structural improvement » (11).

It was the attempt to find a method of aligning British agricultural policy with the Community policy which formed the basis of the negotiations concerning agriculture between Britain and the Six.

### The Brussels Conference.

On October 10, 1961, a month prior to the opening of the British-EEC negotiations, Mr. Edward Heath, Lord Privy Seal and chief negotiator for Britain, outlined the position Britain would take toward agriculture during the negotiations. He emphasized that Britain was in basic agreement with the aims of the common agricultural policy, but that there were some points of discussion on implementing these aims.

Mr. Heath indicated Britain's desire to have a transitional period of twelve to fifteen years after she entered the Common Market in order to align her agricultural system to that of the Community. Britain would also ask for measures which would safeguard the British farmer's standard of living. Finally, Britain was concerned over the position of her horticulture industry in relation to the Community (12).

When the negotiations opened in November 1961, it was decided to postpone discussion of agricultural issues until after the Six had reached an agreement on their common agricultural policy. This agreement was reached in January 1962, and on February 22, 1962, negotiations opened concerning agriculture. The first discussions centered around general principles, but in May 1962, Mr. Heath indicated that the negotiations were beginning a phase where more specific aspects of the problems were being discussed.

The negotiations between Britain and the Six were hampered by procedural difficulties. The main difficulty was that it was necessary for the Six to agree among themselves on an issue before discus-

ing it with Britain. This need for unanimous agreement among the Six severely restricted the negotiators and their ability to make proposals and counterproposals, which forms such an important part of negotiating. Another similar difficulty was that Britain would submit a proposal and the Six would reject it and ask for another proposal without being able to agree on the reasons for rejecting the first proposals. Thus the negotiations were carried out in a very cumbersome framework (13).

## PROTECTING THE FARMER'S INTERESTS

### Climate of Opinion.

In the introduction to the 1961 Annual Report of the National Farmers Union there appeared the following characterization of the NFU's role in the British-EEC negotiations :

« It is not too much to say that the Union counsels, powerfully applied as they are with the recommendations of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers, are moulding the climate of opinion in regard to a common agricultural policy as it is now being shaped in Paris and Brussels » (14).

It is not an easy task to mold a 'climate of opinion.' In order to do this, the Union had to present its point of view to many publics : the negotiators ; Parliament ; the Europeans ; the British public and the British farmers themselves. The NFU had a significant advantage in the fact that it was widely accepted as the spokesman for the farmer, and that it was often turned to when the farmer's opinion as sought.

Since the NFU was already well-established as a source of opinion and influence, much of its activity in regard to the negotiations was carried out through its existing channels of communication and influence. Because of their importance, the negotiations received much greater emphasis than most

(11) *The Facts* (European Community Information Service, Brussels, 1962), p. 14.

(12) *British Agriculture and the Common Market (Part 1)* (National Farmers Union, London, 1962), p. 52.

(13) A characterization of the negotiations and the role of the NFU in the negotiations was given to the author by a member of the staff of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Brussels Conference in an interview on February 25, 1963.

(14) Annual Report, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

issues. In addition the NFU had to create contacts with the negotiators and extend its contacts with Europe.

There are many ways in which an organization such as the NFU can go about influencing decisions. Probably the most important means is through personal contact with the decision-makers. The success of these contacts depends to a large extent on the personalities and abilities of the organization's representatives as well as to the degree of importance the decision-makers place on the organization's opinions.

Influencing public opinion is also an important aspect of influencing decision making, especially in a modern democratic society where a shift in public opinion will often reflect itself in a shift or change in policy. In this respect the task of the NFU was to present its views to the public in such a way that they were understood, and if not accepted, at least not opposed.

Not only was it necessary for the Union to decide on how it would present its case, but also what would be said, and when it would be said. This is a difficult task especially when dealing with a situation as complicated as the British-EEC negotiations. Negotiations by nature are secret; consequently, it is difficult to time moves in such a way that they will have maximum impact on the negotiations.

It is not within the scope of this paper to examine in detail all the means with which the NFU influenced the negotiations, or to examine in detail the decision-making process that took place within the NFU in regard to the negotiations. However, principally through the use of NFU material, it is possible to characterize some of the major activities of the NFU with regard to the negotiations.

### **In the Halls of Government.**

*The Role of the NFU in the Negotiations.* — Because of its consultative status in regard to the annual prices review, the NFU felt that it should have consultative status at the negotiations. Before the talks opened in Brussels, the Government decided that it would not give the NFU official consultative status at the negotiations and any consultations that it would have with the NFU would be on an informal, unofficial basis. In this way the negotiators were given as free a hand as possible.

This meant, however, that the traditional relationship between the NFU and the Government did not exist in the case of the negotiations.

Mr. Harold Woolley, President of the NFU, and Mr. Asher Winegarten, chief economist of the NFU, were kept continually informed about what was happening in Brussels. These men agreed not to reveal the information they received in order that the secrecy of the negotiations could be maintained.

This meant that the NFU was placing a lot of trust in its leadership. It also meant that the direct influence of the NFU on the talks depended on the abilities and personalities of these two men. One aspect of this arrangement is that when it came to discussing complicated issues, it was necessary for these two men to rely on their own knowledge and experience and not on the accumulated knowledge of the NFU Agriculture House Staff.

When a proposal was going to be made to the Six, Woolley and Winegarten were informed of the nature of the proposal and what it was trying to achieve. It was at this time that they could give their opinion. When the Six rejected a proposal, they were also informed.

The most important direct influence on the negotiations by the NFU occurred in this context. It can probably be said that the consultations with the NFU had the effect of slowing down the rate at which the Government was willing to make concessions at the negotiations. Although this is an important factor, especially in negotiations, it probably is not as great an influence as the NFU would have liked to have had (15).

*The NFU and Parliament.* — Parliament was to have voted on entry into the Common Market only after the negotiations were successfully concluded; consequently, there was never a vote on the Common Market issue, even though it was frequently discussed and debated. Since there were no votes in Parliament concerning the EEC, the NFU spent most of its time at Westminster keeping MPs informed on the Union's position and trying to create an atmosphere which would be beneficial to the NFU cause.

This activity began even before Britain made

(15) See note 13.

formal application for membership in the EEC. The 1961 Annual Report mentions the fact that on August 2, 1961, when Prime Ministers Mac Millan opened the debate of the Common Market, MPs were sent copies of the NFU Council's Policy Statement on Britain and the EEC. The report also points out that—

« Steps were taken to ensure that those interests directly and indirectly connected with British agriculture and horticulture should be made aware of the Union's point of view. Meetings were held with MPs of all three political parties... » (16).

Another way of presenting the farmer's opinion to Parliament was through county branch meetings with MPs. However, this was more a function of local opinion rather than Agriculture House opinion as was illustrated at the May 1962 Council meeting when the Council refused to give guidance to the county branches on the conduct of such meetings. This is further evidence of the NFU's desire to maintain political neutrality.

In July and August 1962, when the NFU was becoming more dissatisfied with the direction of the negotiations, a subtle change appears to have taken place. Although the NFU still maintained a policy of political neutrality, there seemed to be a desire to point up the strength of the agricultural vote. The August 1962 issue of the *British Farmer* reports the position of the NFU in this regard :

« Remarking that it was important for Members of Parliament to be left in no doubt of the strength of feeling of their agricultural constituents, the President went on to say that as an organization the NFU had never taken the line of giving any lead on the question as to how our members as individual citizens should cast their votes. This remained as it had always been, essentially one for individual decision » (17).

Elsewhere in the same issue, there appeared the following interesting characterization of the influence of the farm vote in response to an article in *The London Times* which suggested that the influence of the farm vote was fading :

« Statistically it is not difficult to show that the number of farmers and the number of farmworkers is going down, and their votes to that extent count less ; but it may not have escaped the attention of the Government that administrations, and ma-

majorities, increasingly depend upon a declining number of marginal votes. A one or two per cent shift in the vote, or even an increase in the number of abstentions, can play havoc with majorities.

This is reinforced by the significance of Liberal interventions and the fact that recent byelections have shown the majority of seats held by Government to be, in the technical sense, marginal or at risk. This is not to say that fist-brandishing or muscle-flexing by agriculture is always sound : it rarely is. But it would be unwise for anyone to be misled by the possibly inspired sophistication in calculations by *The Times* » (18).

This raises the important question of the influence of the farm vote in the Parliamentary elections. The following statistics are presented in *The State* and the *Farmer* concerning the makeup of Parliament (19):

#### Agricultural Constituencies (1955)

Agricultural Employment as Percentage of Total Male Employment (Age 15 and Over)	No. of Constituencies
15 to 19 % . . . .	33
20 to 24 % . . . .	29
25 to 32 % . . . .	31
33 to 39 % . . . .	11
40 % and over . . . .	6
	110

#### Agricultural Representation (1955)

No. of seats where Agricultural Employment exceeds 15 per cent of Total Male Employment	
Conservative . . . .	95
Labour . . . .	11
Liberal . . . .	4
Independent . . . .	0
	110

No. of MPs classified occupationally as farmers—36.

It can be seen from these figures that agricultural constituencies comprised a little over one-sixth of the 630 seats in Parliament in 1955. A fact

(16) Annual Report, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

(17) Powell, B., « Looking in on... », *British Farmer*, no. 245, August 4, 1962, p. 14.

(18) Keen, Montague, « Perspective », *British Farmer*, no. 245, August 4, 1962, p. 58.

(19) Self, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

worth noting is that the vast majority of these seats were held by Conservatives. Since the 95 Conservative seats represent a significant portion of its majority, it can be seen why the Conservative-controlled Government would have an interest in farm opinion and the farm vote.

All three political parties have parliamentary agriculture committees with which the NFU maintains good relations. It is probably in the committees that the NFU maintains its greatest influence in Parliament. The Labour Party has been especially interested in being aligned with the farmer's cause on issues, in the hope that this would eventually win votes for them in the agricultural constituencies. Proper safeguards for the British farmer was one of the Labour Party's main points in debate on the Common Market.

If the negotiations had been successfully concluded and if the NFU decided to oppose British entry into the EEC, it is still unlikely that the Union would have abandoned its political neutrality. As mentioned earlier this would have upset its established pattern of influencing public policy. The position taken by the NFU in August tends to bear this out.

Since the Conservative Party would have had 'the whips on' in any vote on EEC membership, which means strict party discipline would have been invoked, the NFU probably would not have played an important role in such a vote. However, following entry into the EEC, a great deal of legislation designed to implement the agreements made at the negotiations would have been introduced. It is in the myriad of details involved in such legislation that the NFU would have been able to exert its opinion and influence. In this it would be important for the Union to maintain its relationship with the Government and its political neutrality.

### Contact with Europe.

The NFU has not had a reputation in the past for maintaining extensive relations with European farm organizations and interests. Consequently, one of the more interesting features of the Union's activity in regard to the negotiations was the development of contacts with European farming interests. This activity is described in the 1961 Annual Report :

« Closer contacts were developed with leaders

and officials of European farm organizations. Apart from the meetings of IFAP's European Committee, there were a number of meetings, formal and informal, during the year. All these were designed to ensure that there was a clear understanding of the Union's policy on the Common Market issue. » (20).

The effect of this contact with European organizations was described by President Woolley in October 1962 after a meeting with Italian farmer's organizations :

« The readiness with which the Italian farmers' leaders appreciated the importance of the basic principles which the British NFU have consistently advocated is very encouraging. They recognized them as being necessary for the sound development of European agriculture, both internally and in its relation to the rest of the world.

The high degree of understanding reached clearly demonstrates the value of such meetings. During the past eighteen months, the NFU have had similar meetings with the German, French and Dutch farm leaders and hope that they might soon have further meetings » (21).

There were two such meetings with European farm organizations which the NFU thought were particularly significant : the first was a meeting with the German Farmer's Union in December 1961 ; the second was the meeting with Italian farm leaders in October 1962.

The meeting with the German farm leaders was held before the negotiations on agricultural issues began in Brussels. The meeting concluded with a joint statement on several important issues, including the need for longer transitional periods and special consideration for horticulture (22).

The meeting with the Italian Farm leaders was held in Rome after the negotiations were well under way. The joint statement that came out of this meeting indicated, among other things, the need for adjustments on certain community commodity regulations if and when Britain entered the EEC. Here was an instance where the NFU and farm

20. Annual Report, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

(21) « Talks with Italian Farm Leaders Very Encouraging. N.F.U. President », *NFU News*, Press 123, October 5, 1962, p. 1.

(22) « Joint Meeting of German Farmers' Union and the Farmers' Unions of the United Kingdom », *NFU News*, Press 118, December 11, 1961.



leaders from an EEC country took a common stand on issues which were very controversial in the negotiations.

Another source of contact with European farm leaders was the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), an organization founded largely through the efforts of former NFU President, James Turner. The European Regional Committee of the IFAP met in Paris in October 1961 and took a stand concerning community agricultural policy which pleased the NFU. A report of the meeting was given at the October Council meeting :

« So it was that in this kaleidoscope of fast moving European developments, Council listened with intense interest to the report of the Union's delegates on the Paris meeting of the European Regional Committee of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers, our international farmer's union, in passing we reflected upon the far-seeing wisdom of the NFU leaders who many years ago had been responsible for the formation and development of this international farmers union at a time when some of our farmers at home had been criticising the NFU for spending money in sending delegates to these world conferences.

Council this day was to hear something of the return on these forward investments and to apprehend some of the results of the NFU's close and continued consultations with Europeans farmers. And so to the testimony of the trio who had represented the NFU in Paris — Mr. Geoffrey Redmayne, Mr. Fred Scott, and Mr. Asher Winegarten — and their words combined to convince delegates firstly how timely this meeting had been; and secondly, how influential it has proved in shifting Continental farming thought more in the direction of our own farming philosophy » (23).

That this was a little optimistic can be seen by a report given on a similar meeting of the European Regional Committee in May 1962 :

« From Mr. John Montgomery and Mr. Asher Winegarten came a report of the recent meeting in Edinburgh of the European Committee of IFAP. This had evidently been an occasion for taking stock of the Common Market situation following the partial agreement on agricultural policy reached by the Six in Brussels last January. And what emerged was clearly that there had been

a hardening of attitude in the matter of Britain's agricultural case and the Commonwealth's interests. » (24).

Other contacts were made with Europe during the year. Among these were : a conference held at Salzburg by the European milk producers ; a fact-finding tour of Europe by an NFU horticultural team ; and a visit to the Council by the President of the IFAP, Mr. Biesheuvel.

The NFU also made some visits to the European Community, and especially to the Commission. These visits concerned the community commodity regulations and also the NFU position toward the negotiations. It is probably safe to say that these meetings had little influence on the negotiations, but they were helpful in that they gave the NFU an opportunity to see first-hand the difficulties the British negotiators were having (25).

All in all, the NFU's contacts with Europe were quite extensive during the negotiations, especially when compared with the Union's previous contacts. These contacts were laying important groundwork for the time when, if Britain entered the EEC, the NFU would have had to join with other European farm groups in influencing agricultural policy in the Community. As the President of the IFAP said in a speech to the NFU :

« European farmers have to speak with one voice when they speak to European institutions, just as you speak with one voice to your own government ... » (26).

### Informing the Public.

The NFU has always been concerned with public opinion. This is pointed out by the following passage from *The State and the Farmer* :

« Union leaders saw early that the political position of agriculture was likely to deteriorate as Britain's economic position improved and that in the meantime public opinion should be cultivated. « The tide is with us now », *The British Farmer*

(23) Powell, L.B. « Return on Forward Investments », *British Farmer*, no. 206, November 4, 1961, p. 10.

(24) Powell, L.B. « Looking in on Council », *British Farmer*, no. 237, June 9, 1962, p. 19.

(25) See note 13.

(26) Powell, L.B., « Burden of Mr. Biesheuvel's Theme », *British Farmer*, no. 220, February 10, 1962, p. 10.

editorialized in 1950, « but time is not on our side ». Agricultural policy is finally judged at the bar of a largely urban public opinion, and it was desirable if possible to keep the judge favourably inclined. As Laurence Easterbrook put it, « The greatest hope of security for farming lies not so much in legislation as in a convinced public opinion. We shall be gafe when the great British public says, as a matter of course, « Well, whatever happens, we mustn't let agriculture go to the wall ». The difficulty was knowing how such a convinced public opinion might be fostered » (27).

In presenting its views on the Common Market to the public, the NFU was fortunate in being able to rely on its well-established, quite successful publicity apparatus. The Publicity Committee not only had wide experience in handling a multitude of different publicity problems, but also had acquired good relations with the main channels of public communication. Through the use of these channels of communication the NFU had already created a favorable milieu of opinion, and it was able to take advantage of this milieu when presenting its case on the Common Market.

Press conferences and presse statements made up a large part of the activity of the NFU in regard to informing the public on its position toward the negotiations. Anti Common Market newspapers such as the *London Daily Express* gave special attention to the views of the NFU. According to the NFU Annual Report.

« ... excellent press coverage was secured for NFU views on such widely differing topics as the Common Market (our views of this were quoted more widely than those of any other organisation), land use and sheep worrying » (28).

The NFU reports that « agriculture » is featured in over fifty programs a week on radio and TV. These programs provided a good outlet for presenting the NFU's views on the Common Market. An example of this was a TV program filmed at Agriculture House concerning the agricultural implications of the Common Market which was mentioned in the January 1962 issue of the *British Farmer* (29).

Another important aspect of the Publicity Committee's activity was providing information on the Common Market to those people who requested

it. Individual speakers, students, and journalists took advantage of this service.

The information service also published pamphlets reporting the results of studies carried out by the NFU on British agriculture in relation to the Common Market. In April 1961, the pamphlet *Agriculture and the Community* was published. This pamphlet was an analysis of the common agricultural policy and its probable effect on British agriculture if Britain joined the Common Market (30). In July 1962, in the middle of the negotiations, another pamphlet *British Agriculture and the Common Market* was published. It dealt with the changes that would be necessary in the common agricultural policy « if the Government's pledges to agriculture and horticulture are to be fulfilled » (31). These pamphlets were useful in presenting the technical side of the NFU's position.

Public meetings and speeches before various organizations by representatives of the NFU provided additional opportunities to present the NFU view. A typical example of such a meeting was President Woolley's speech at the Manchester Rotary Club on July 26, 1962. This particular meeting provided an occasion for Mr. Woolley to give a summary of the NFU's position in regard to agreements that had just been made in Brussels. The text of this speech was released to the press and thus gained an even wider audience (32).

Besides local and county branch meetings, the principal means of communication between Agriculture House and the farmer was the NFU monthly, *British Farmer*. According to readership surveys the *British Farmer* is read by more farmers than any other farming paper in Britain (33). During 1961 and 1962, quite a large amount of space was given over to discussion of the Common Market and the Union's position on the negotiations.

Through all these media of communication the

(27) Self, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

(28) Annual Report, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

(29) *Ibid.*, p. 78.

(30) *British Agriculture and the Common Market* (Information Service, National Farmers Union of England and Wales, London, 1962), p. 47.

(31) *Ibid.*, p. 49.

(32) « Brussels Proposals far too Uncertain-N.F.U. President », NFU News, Press 93, July 25, 1962.

(33) Annual Report, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

NFU was able to present its position to the general public as well as to the farmers. Although it is virtually impossible to measure the success of this effort, the fact that people in Britain had a vague idea that British agriculture might be hurt by the Common Market can be attributed in large part to the influence of the NFU.

### WE ARE PREPARED TO BE POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE...

The following resolution was passed unanimously at the 1962 Annual General Meeting :

« This Annual General Meeting of the NFU is opposed to the United Kingdom's entry into the Common Market under the terms of the present proposals for the common agricultural policy provided for in the Treaty of Rome, and considers that the conditions of Britain's entry into an enlarged European Community must include :

1. A continuation of the system of annual reviews of the economic condition and prospects of the agricultural industry ;

2. The maintenance of guaranteed prices for agricultural products and effective support for the horticultural industry ;

3. That Governmental support should continue to be given to producer-controlled marketing » (34).

This was the official position taken by the NFU before negotiations on agriculture opened in February 1962 and before negotiations were completed between the EEC Countries on their common agricultural policy. In order to have a very rough idea of the influence of the NFU's position at the negotiations, it might be interesting to see how each of the issues in the resolution fared at the negotiations.

The community policy and commodity regulations adopted in January 1962 were considered virtually untouchable by the Six during the negotiations. This was largely due to the great difficulty they had in reaching an agreement on these points. At any rate, the discussions at the negotiations generally revolved around how Britain would align itself with this policy and not how the policy itself would be changed.

In July 1962, Britain and the EEC came to a tentative agreement on a sort of annual review. The review was to be made by the Commission and used as a guide in making decisions on community policy. The NFU felt that this agreement didn't go far enough and that it didn't allow for enough independence of action by member countries (35).

It is difficult to determine exactly what is meant by guaranteed prices for agricultural products, but if the deficiency payments system was meant, then the Union did not have its way at the negotiations. However, the support system adopted by the Community would have had the effect of guaranteeing prices to farmers through subsidies and import controls.

Producer controlled marketing was not a point in issue at the negotiations. This meant that the EEC had no objection to producer-controlled marketing as long as it didn't become an indirect means of support acting against the common agricultural policy.

The question of horticulture was one of the remaining unresolved issues at the negotiations. Since British horticulture is protected by a tariff system and not guaranteed prices, and since most of Britain's horticulture imports come from Europe, Britain's horticulture industry was in a vulnerable position in respect to British entry into the EEC (36).

If the NFU's resolution passed in January 1962 is taken as a standard, the Union was not able to get much satisfaction out of the progress of the negotiations. Because of this, there was a good chance that if the negotiations had succeeded, the NFU would have opposed British entry into the EEC. It is the opinion of the author that the NFU would not have done this in a way that would have seriously jeopardized its political neutrality or its working relationship with the government.

By maintaining its policy of neither « pro » nor « anti » Common Market during the negotiations, the NFU found itself in a sound political position

(34) « Report on the Annual General Meeting », *British Farmer*, no. 220, February 10, 1962, p. 22.

(35) « E.E.C. Agricultural Agreement: « British Representatives Have Receded » - N.F.U. President », *NFU News*, Press 90, July 23, 1962.

(36) See note 13.

after the breakdown of the talks. Although the NFU-Government relationship has been weakening over the past few years, it nevertheless is still an important part of the influence that the NFU has on public policy. By not alienating the Government during the negotiations, the NFU is now able to continue effectively in this relationship.

The fact that during the negotiations the NFU didn't openly oppose the government, continued in its political neutrality, and pursued a rather constrained policy with Parliament, shows that an organisation like the NFU has certain limits within which it must operate if it wants to remain effective. When a very important, complicated issue such as the Common Market faces such an organization, it must weigh carefully how far it is willing to exceed the established limits in order to get its way.

This becomes even more difficult when the limits themselves are going to be significantly affected, such as was the case with the NFU and the Common Market. The NFU's policy making influence would have been seriously diminished if Britain had entered the EEC. The almost too obvious « turn toward Europe » which the NFU made during the negotiations was largely an attempt to work out the new relations that would be necessary in order to effectively influence public policy.

It is generally felt the Britain will eventually join the EEC. The NFU can be expected to represent the farmer's interests during the next round of negotiations just as it did during the recent round. The Union certainly will have profited from its experience in the recent negotiations, and can be expected to use this experience to advantage in the future.

