

E.E.C. Costs and Benefits: an Alternative Yardstick Needed

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SUPPOSE that a biologist wishes to ascertain what effect a particular factor has on a phenomenon he is studying. He wants (let us say) to discover whether rats develop faster at 20° centigrade or 25° centigrade. He takes two similar sets of rats and tries to rear them in conditions which are identical save for temperature. He tries, for example, to ensure that the two samples have the same sex proportions, are of similar genetic constitution, are of the same initial age and size, are kept in similar cages on similar food, and so on. He tries to use large numbers of rats in each sample, so that the effect of a few aberrant individuals will not distort his results. Finally, he submits his data to mathematical analysis, and ends by telling us what the "probability" is that one set of rats grows faster than the other.

Analogue techniques are often applied in other sciences; but even when rigorous controls are applied, the conclusions are often criticised by different workers in the field. How much more difficult is it to derive satisfactory conclusions from observations in economics! There can be no "controlled experiments". Even when it can be clearly demonstrated that a particular result has occurred—the price of butter, or the number of registered unemployed, has increased, for example—it is seldom possible to establish beyond reasonable doubt that some particular measure (like joining the European Common Market) produced that effect.

This is the sort of difficulty we encounter when we discuss and compare two recent pamphlets which are designed to establish opposite conclusions. They are *Britain in Europe Since 1973: The Benefits of Membership*¹ and *The Common Market: The Cost of Membership*.² Both documents

are crammed to the rafters with data, which I suppose we must accept as authentic. Yet Lord Thomson, who writes the introduction to the former pamphlet, practically admits the dubious value of all the figures: "There is a lot of talk about the economic cost of membership. That can fluctuate from year to year and even from month to month."

Just so. On the balance of figures adduced, I should be disposed to award the palm to the anti-Market pamphlet; but nobody will call me an impartial umpire!

Yet when we ask the cost of membership, what is our standard of comparison? Do we hypothesise what would have happened if we had continued our former trading policies, or do we consider some third or fourth possibilities? At one extreme an "alternative" to the Common Market would have been free trade; at the other extreme an all-out policy of trade restrictions. If I am asked whether I want a portion of chicken-and-veg, I like to know whether the alternative is steamed cod, or roast pheasant, or no food at all! Neither side has really stated clearly with what particular alternative they are comparing membership of the Common Market.

On one point, I am quite sure the pro-Marketters are wrong. "It is the political case for British membership," Lord Thomson writes, "that remains fundamental and consistent, whatever the current state of economic argument on the surface." The political and economic arguments cannot be in conflict. If the people of Britain are convinced that it is economically harmful to remain in the Market, then membership will assuredly produce unbearable political tensions—and vice versa. Surely the whole history of post-1945 separatist movements throughout the world has established that, if nothing else?

Although both pamphlets have

been carefully compiled, I do not believe that either will make ten converts throughout the land. What will ultimately decide the people of Britain whether to remain in the Common Market or not will be the policies pursued by the E.E.C., and the alternative offered by the anti-Marketters. Both sides may with profit consider those questions.

This country has almost twice as many people as it can feed. The continental E.E.C., by contrast, can more or less feed itself. A similar, though not quite so stark, contrast exists with raw materials. If the Common Market continues to operate (as it does operate today) in a manner which compels us to buy our food and raw materials at prices higher than those which we could obtain outside the E.E.C., then it is acting to our detriment, and in the end this country will leave it. If the Common Marketters are truly convinced that it is for everybody's long-term good that Britain should remain in the Market, then the most useful thing they can do is to exert every pressure on Brussels (including the threat of withdrawal) in order to compel the organs of the E.E.C. to allow Britain to obtain these goods from outside sources without tax or restriction. Better still, let the E.E.C. methodically dismantle its own trade barriers towards the rest of



the world. Let the Common Marketters also take action to cut down the power of that monstrous bureaucracy, the E.E.C. Commission. If, after a few years, they

1. European Movement, 50p.

2. Labour Common Market Safeguards Committee, 50p + 10p postage.

can show real results on those two fronts, the people will be much better disposed towards their case.

Conversely, however, let the anti-Marketees look to their laurels, and not simply wait for an impoverished Britain to collapse out of the Common Market. Let them sit down and think out the free trade alternative. How do we get from here to there? Today,

not only our external trade but our internal trade as well is subjected to an almost unbelievable range of restrictions. Many of these restrictions spring from the E.E.C.; but many were there before we joined. If Britain had not clogged up her economic life by this farrago of controls, the question of joining the E.E.C. would never have been seriously raised.

If the people come to believe that the only alternative to the E.E.C. is the kind of economy some of its opponents on the Labour "left" desire, they may well conclude that even the E.E.C. is preferable.

To both sides, then, the message is equally clear. Less of the apologetics; more action! Nothing is permanent in politics.

Where have all the Flower-children gone?

ROBERT CLANCY

IN the late 1960's the world seemed to be coming apart with a series of disturbances, protests and revolts, largely on the part of youth. Hippies and yippies, flower-children and counter-culture protagonists passed in array and promised or threatened a new order of things.

How has it been since then? What has become of the youngsters of that era? And what are the new youngsters of the late '70's doing?

A good deal of the older manners and morals have indeed become unstuck. There is more informality, more sexual permissiveness, more drifting away from the established religions, more drug-taking and alas, more violence.

As for the youth of the '60's, they have tended to blend in with society without having moved it very much (other than a proliferation of blue jeans and longer hair). A bit of research along these lines appears in the book *What Really Happened to the Class of '65?* by Michael Medved and David Walchinsky. A group of high school students of that year were christened by *Time* magazine as "child-

pursuits ranging from suicide to success in business—but hardly ushering in a golden era.

As for today's youth, there is also a spectrum: a good many are simply going along with things as they are, hoping to get ahead. Many are experimenting with sex and drugs. There is still youthful idealism. Current students of Kent State University have vigorously protested at the building of a gymnasium on the site where students in 1969 were shot down by National Guardsmen.

Many young people are devoting time and effort to various causes. But the causes of today differ from those of yesteryear. Rather than social gospels, there is emphasis on cults that seek more to escape from the problems of society than to solve them, a drift toward individual salvation rather than social salvation. Hare Krishna, Rev. Moon's Unification Church, Scientology, transcendental meditation and the like are claiming hordes of young adepts. If there is any zeal for reform it seems to be in the area of agitating on behalf of minority groups, prisoners, homosexuals, various nationalities, etc.

The most lamentable of all trends is the proneness to violence. During New York's recent blackout, gangs—largely young people of minority groups—looted and pillaged. It was a sad illustration of Henry George's premonition of "carnivals of destruction alternating with the lethargy of a declining civilization." Apart from this special case, slum youngsters of sixteen, fourteen, twelve and even younger go around mugging,

stealing and setting fires.

Misguided youth of various nationalities, supposedly to voice their national grievances, are turning too readily to senseless violence—bombing, hijacking, kidnapping hostages, killing—and one wonders what good they can expect from it.

We wax hot with indignation at such goings-on, but it must not be forgotten that these things are coming from within our own civilization. In the case of violent and destructive youngsters, it is fatuous to rail against them, for we are literally breeding such problems. Plainly, we are doing something, or not doing something, that is making these things happen.

One important factor that has to be considered is that in this restless era, our society has not lived up to the promises it has made. It has created marvels of technology and has withheld their benefits from many people. It has preached morality and has produced corruption in high places. It has held up education as a goal and has turned out ill-trained misfits. It has put forward the injunction to succeed and has denied economic opportunities to many.

Modern society has not really provided a satisfying matrix for youth, a *rite de passage* for joining the mainstream—and ill-guided youth makes up its own rude standards.

Young people are of course going to inherit it all, for weal or woe. Since they are human, they will probably carry on many of the mistakes that are now being made. But a hope remains that within human nature there is a balance that—with all the deviations we have gone through and are going through—will eventually lead to the basic truths of equal liberty, economic opportunity, freedom of trade, a just system and social harmony.



ren of destiny . . . on the fringe of a golden era." The authors tracked down these favoured individuals and found them in varied