

FULL-HEARTED CONSENT ?

IN CASE some people may be thinking that the EEC referendum has already become the great bore of 1975, it might help them to accept it and use it more readily if I point out what I consider to be the vital argument for holding it.



It has often been asked, why should we hold a referendum on the EEC issue in particular? Why have we not found it necessary or desirable to hold one on capital punishment, or abortion, or immigration? Surely it would be helpful and in the interests of all if we found out public feeling on these important issues?

Indeed it would, but these are among the many questions which our members of Parliament are elected to deal with among themselves. Obviously no M.P. can possibly represent or reflect the majority view of his constituents on every issue, but he is the nearest we can get to that ideal. It has to be assumed that he is sincere and is at least of a standard of intelligence not lower than that of the ordinary man, well able and willing to heed his conscience and exercise what power and influence he has to the common good. More than that we cannot reasonably expect - (though some

of us occasionally find to our surprise and delight that we have it) - and whatever the results of our members' deliberations and debates, they directly affect only us, who put them there to do a job. The questions they deal with are all material affairs and of no concern to other people; any resulting legislation may be amended or repealed whenever we (our MPs

that by ratifying the Treaty of Rome.

Another objection that is made to this referendum is that it is foreign to our way of government; that we have never resorted to it before, so why now? The answer - if it is still not clear in the preceding paragraphs - is that never before have we joined an organisation which demands that we surrender part of our authority to govern ourselves, and since the Act of Accession to the EEC is a first time for Britain in that respect, then we can similarly justify our first referendum.

Robert Miller's

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representing us, that is) think fit. Whatever laws we may choose to live by and under, we may change as many times and in any way we wish without reference to or interference by any other ruling power.

The EEC issue, however, is quite different. It is a constitutional one, and Parliament had no right in the first instance to surrender any part of its authority to govern us to any other power, foreign or otherwise, without prior reference to the people from whom that authority derives. The Parliament of October 1972 did just

Whatever the result of this referendum may be, every Briton has the right to express his opinion in it, and no matter how much or how little he knows of the subject, or whether or not he knows who or what is best for him and his children, it is his right and responsibility to decide, and accept whatever the outcome may be, by making his own mark on the ballot paper. And since, for once, every vote will count, that is precisely what he will do.

Few people disagreed with Mr. Edward Heath when he said that it would not be right to join the EEC without the full-hearted consent of the British people. Unless you ask them, how otherwise can you be sure that you have it?