European Referendum witness seminar, 5 June 1995

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The seminar was held at the European Commission's London Office on the 20th anniversary of the referendum on the results of the re-negotiation of the terms of British entry to the European Community in January 1973.

Dr David Butler took the chair and the introductory paper was by Vernon Bogdanor, then Reader in Government, Oxford University. The witnesses (with their roles during the referendum) were Graham Angel (Home Office), Timothy Bainbridge (Britain in Europe), Richard Boaden (BiE), Sir Richard Body MP (Co-chairman, National Referendum Campaign), Roger Broad (European Parliament office), Lord Harris of Greenwich (BiE), Sir Russell Jonston MP (BiE), Jack Jones (Co-chairman, NRC), Sir Patrick Nairne (Cabinet Office), Lord Rogers of Quarry Bank (BiE), Peter Shore MP (NRC), Tom Spencer MEP (BiE), Sean Stewart (NRC) Sir Robin Williams (Common Market Safeguards Committee), Ernest Wistrich (BiE), Bob Worcestor (MORI).

BOGDANOR:
One of the odd excesses of my youth was an interest in political philosophy. I read endlessly the classics of political philosophy, one of which was Hegel. I well remember his concept of the Cunning of Reason. I wonder if that concept can be applied to the referendum. What Hegel meant was that somehow history uses individuals for purposes of which they are not aware, and it seems to me that this may have been so with the referendum. There are many paradoxes. The first is that the referendum was proposed almost entirely by people who were hostile to Britain's membership of the European Community. It was proposed first by Tony Benn and Douglas Jay. But it resulted in the greatest endorsement of British membership and the British connection with Europe that there has ever been in this country, by a two to one majority. That was the first paradox.
The second paradox was that the referendum was conceded as a unique issue, one that was quite exceptional and which could never occur again, in any form at all. Yet within eighteen months of this referendum, further referendums were proposed for devolution to Scotland and Wales. The consequence of these referendums was not only the defeat of devolution in Scotland and Wales but also the end of the Labour Government, because those defeats deprived the minority Labour Government of the support of the Nationalist parties, and in effect led to the defeat of the Government in a no confidence vote in March 1979. It is a further paradox that a proposal which the Labour Party had put forward to keep itself in government, was partly the instrument of it being pushed out of government. Finally, the European referendum proposal was accepted as a device to hold the Labour Party together. In the famous phrase of James Callaghan's, it was 'a life raft which we would all have to climb aboard', the only way in which the Labour Party could be held together on the European issue. Yet it might be argued that it was a precipitating factor in the split of the Labour Party in 1981 because it led to a number of figures on the Labour Right feeling that perhaps they had more in common with the Liberals, who were supportive of Europe, than with their colleagues on the Left who were hostile to Europe. Tony Benn who was, at least at that phase of his career, opposed to Europe, said that it showed that there were people in the Labour Party who cared more about Europe than they did about socialism. That perhaps is a not unfair characterisation of a part of the Labour Right.
So there are these paradoxes: the referendum had effects which were not foreseen. The experience of 1975 gives rise to the question of whether the referendum is or ought to be an instrument permanently available to British Governments; and if so, for what issues ought it to be available. It was suggested as a means of validating the Maastricht Treaty by Margaret Thatcher amongst others. It has also been suggested as a precondition of European monetary union, or perhaps before any further major transfer of powers to the European Union.
The referendum seems to have had fortunate results in 1975. It seemed to endorse Britain's membership of Europe. Tony Benn said of it:

> I have just been in receipt of a very big message from the British people. I read it loud and clear. By an overwhelming majority the British people have voted to stay in and I'm sure everybody would want to accept that. That had been the principle of all of us who advocated the referendum.

But of course five years later Tony Benn was successfully proposing at a Labour Party conference that Britain should leave the European Community without a referendum, so the decision was not accepted for very long by those who had been opposed to membership, and who had pressed for a referendum. Harold Wilson said, quite wrongly in retrospect, that it meant that 14 years of national argument were over. It did not in fact mean that at all, so the question remains what did it actually settle? Did it settle anything, and was the referendum a good way of settling whatever it was that was settled? The referendum seemed to have fortunate results for the Labour Government, but that was partly from the fortuitous circumstance, it seemed to me, of a clear and indisputable outcome. Suppose the result had been a 'No' could the Wilson Government have easily carried through Britain's withdrawal from the European Community? Suppose, in particular, that the result was 'No' on a low turnout. Would the Government have then undertaken a measure - withdrawal from the Community - which it believed to be wrong? Could it have got parliamentary support for that measure? Edward Short said at the time 'The Government would be bound by the result but Parliament, of course, cannot be bound by it.' What would have happened in that situation? A further fortunate feature was that there was a fairly even 'Yes' vote across the country; suppose that there had been a 'Yes' vote in the United Kingdom as a whole but a 'No' majority in Scotland. At that time, with the SNP in a strong position, might that have encouraged not merely devolution but the separation of Scotland from the rest of the United Kingdom? Furthermore was it the ringing endorsement of the European Community which people saw at the time, or was there what has been called a 'shadow referendum' behind the real referendum, that is a referendum on which people one wanted to govern the country? The politicians who favoured Europe were generally seen as fairly congenial, while the politicians who were opposed to Europe, led as they were by Tony Benn and Enoch Powell, were seen as uncongenial, as extremists. Was there a 'shadow referendum' behind the real referendum just as perhaps in the devolution referendum there was a shadow referendum which was the 'winter of discontent' and the failure of the Callaghan Government to deal with that successfully. And is there not always a shadow referendum, a different question from the one posed, that is really the one influencing people? So did the 1975 referendum perhaps mislead both supporters of the Community and opponents of it into believing that the British people had given a ringing endorsement to membership of the European Community when they had not in fact done so.

I believe that the referendum did solve certain issues but raised new ones. What happened in 1975 at least showed that the referendum was not incompatible with the British constitution, as some had previously

suggested. It showed, also, that it did not threaten, as had been feared, the status or the independence of MPs. One question it did not really answer, was whether it excluded debate or widened the focus of debate. David Butler in his book said that the referendum showed a certain public spirit at the grass roots that could prove important for the future health of British democracy.
Was the referendum an educative device, did it play a role in informing people more intensely than they might otherwise have been informed about the European issue? Finally, and in some ways most important for the political scientist, did the referendum hold the Labour Party together, did it preserve the party system or on the contrary did it help to undermine it? If it did undermine the party system does it matter that it did? Was it a good thing that it helped to undermine a party system that may have been no longer congruent with public attitudes.

BUTLER:
Essentially this is a historical question, though obviously all of us must be aware of the future possibilities and the lessons to be drawn from this. We are concerned with what actually happened and why it happened and the way it turned out in 1975. I would like to start with Roy Jenkins, by asking his view of how the referendum came about. When did Harold Wilson become committed to the idea that this was the answer? You resigned from the deputy leadership over the issue.

JENKINS:
Well, Harold Wilson - we're talking very much in the shadow of his death- but we can't be too intimidated by that. Harold Wilson did, superficially at least, change on the referendum within two weeks. There was a meeting of the shadow cabinet in which the referendum was heavily turned down, with Harold Wilson being against it, and there was a meeting two weeks later in which it was carried by a majority of 8 votes to 6 on 29 March 1972, so it was a very sudden switch of position. The motives, although it's difficult enough to know one's own motives without trying to interpret other peoples, so I'd rather not go into that one, because I don't think what I would have to say would have particular validity, but it was a very sudden switch of position which occurred over 14 days between two meetings of the shadow cabinet.

BUTLER:
Peter Shore, can you contribute any light on the question of how it came about?

SHORE:
I think there were events between the two meetings of the shadow cabinet that Roy has reminded us of, and certainly I can't give you an accurate recall of all the events that took place between those two dates. One of them I can, and it clearly has relevance. The Government of France in the person

of Monsieur Pompidou announced that the French were going to have a referendum on whether the British should be allowed to enter and this quite clearly was a major new factor in the situation. Given the fact that on all these issues Wilson had far from settled convictions about the merit of the underlying issue, it isn't surprising he took account of that.

BUTLER:
Anyone else on the 1972 decision by the Labour party to hold a referendum should they get elected?

JONES:
I thought the Labour party was saying in the 1974 election, at the end of the Conservative Government, that there would a test of public opinion, a vote, but it appeared to leave open either a general election or a referendum.

JENKINS:
Ah, but this was two years later.

JONES:
But there wasn't a great campaign about the referendum.

JENKINS:
Benn had started a considerable campaign, he moved a resolution at the national executive.

BUTLER:
That was on 22 April. Benn, now chairman of the party, put the issue of the referendum to the National Executive, when it was carried by 13 votes to 11.

JENKINS:
Yes, but he'd previously put it about a year before when he'd got about one vote or two votes at the most.

BUTLER:
That was when Jim Callaghan made his remark about it being a life boat into which we may all have to climb.

SHORE:
I remember something else that occurred between those two dates that also had an effect, why it came back on the agenda, was that Neil Marten[1] put down an amendment to the European Communities Act saying that this act shall not come into effect until there has been a consultative referendum, or whatever words he choose. That meant obviously that the matter had to come back to the shadow cabinet - it wouldn't presumably otherwise have done so - and at the same time, as I say, Pompidou announced that France

was going to have a referendum and I'm sure these were two factors which were very influential in getting Harold, who was standing, as it were, on the pivot of the two sides, to move in the direction that he did.

JENKINS:
I agree that Harold was standing on the pivot and might have gone one way or the other. I agree that the announcement of the French referendum had a certain effect, I remember hearing it on a news bulletin and thinking 'oh Christ, another cross to bear', but I don't think it was an absolutely decisive factor; we were quite used to other countries having referendums without necessarily following them. There was a bit of internal Labour party politics, very complicated, which was going on at the time, which was a great dispute about who was to be the general secretary of the Labour Party, and this was a major factor in the internal politics of the time, as to whether Gwyn Morgan, or, as it turned out, Ron Hayward should be general secretary, and Harold Wilson switched his position on that, in the way that these convolutions can take place. That in my view was a substantially more significant factor than the French referendum.

NAIRNE:
Perhaps its not significant but when the Labour Government came to power in 1974 after the October election, as Jack Jones has said, I can remember Tony Benn handing me, outside the cabinet room before a Cabinet meeting, a copy of a model referendum bill that he had actually had printed.

WILLIAMS:
Surely the French referendum was in 1972, as to whether or not they would let us join the Common Market, and the British referendum was in 1975 and of course the British people had been denied a referendum in 1972. Neil Marten put the amendment that there should be a referendum, a lot of Conservatives were going to vote for that, and it was going to be carried, and I think Lord Jenkins and others in the Labour Party didn't support the party line, which was to support the referendum, and that as I recall was the principle resignation issue. So as far as the supporters in the country of the 'No' campaign there was a strong sense of grievance that we'd been denied our say during the period of 1972 before our entry.

BUTLER:
If we move on from the decision of 1972 to the election of February 1974, when Labour won, or got the largest number of seats, unexpectedly, and then started into the renegotiation. Do you think Harold Wilson had a clear strategy then, believing that the renegotiation was going to succeed, but the way in which he could get off the hook of Labour's earlier commitments was a referendum?

RODGERS:

I don't think I've got evidence, it's a matter of trying to read his mind, which everyone concedes is not easy. I can only say that I took for granted from 1973 onwards that there would be a referendum, and I very well remember the Labour Committee for Europe, which had not really campaigned at all, had been very ineffective in the period before the vote in October 1971, and took for granted that there would be a referendum, and really began to prepare for that quite early on; in fact not that long, I think, after Roy's resignation as Deputy Leader. I took it for granted, I have to say, that if Harold Wilson thought he could win he would be in favour of both a referendum and of a decision to remain in the Community, and I think it was clear by the beginning of that Government that's what he wanted. I would assume that from 1974 onwards he wanted us to stay in and that would be the purpose of the referendum.

NAIRNE:
Well, I can only speak as an official, but were there not two important factors at this point: the likelihood that after the February 1974 election there would have to be a further election; and, secondly, as soon as we had discussed with the Foreign Secretary, and then he had put in front of the Cabinet, what the renegotiation would involve. It was quite clear that it was going to take quite a long time to achieve the sort of results that could offer a basis for consulting the British people.

BUTLER:
Behind all this there must have been guesstimates about public opinion? If Ted Heath thought that he'd easily have won a referendum in 1972, he might quite well have had one. Bob Worcester, can you give any testimony on the ups and downs of public opinion and the way you saw them being reacted to by the people in the Labour Party who you were doing research for?

WORCESTER:
The most telling measure of public opinion was the Gallup poll in January 1975, which showed the continuation of a fairly consistent pattern up to that point, that a majority, by a narrow margin, from about mid 1973 to January 1975, if asked in a referendum how would you vote, would vote to get out. That's what I was finding and reporting to Harold Wilson, Ron Hayward and the other people I was working with at the Labour Party. However Gallup, very adroitly, asked a second question: 'If the Government were to renegotiate the terms and strongly urge that Britain stay in, then how would you vote?' And I remember that the figure was 65 to 35 (reallocated). Just as an aside, I used the same technique in Denmark last year, in between the two Danish referendums, and got almost identically the same kind of a switch; that if there is no renegotiation, and if the Government doesn't argue then we're going to vote out again; but if the Government gives the lead on this we'll vote to stay in. By and large there was a reaction against the French position in the minds of the British people, saying we're not

coming to a party we're not invited to, and if that's the way you feel, to hell with you.

JONES:
What was the nature of the media at that time, what were they doing?

BUTLER:
They were almost all pro-Europe.

JONES:
The British media was influencing opinion, was it ?

WORCESTER:
Yes, and almost all of them were for and yet the British public were against.

STEWART:
I had a leading part in the 'No' campaign, but I'd like to give a neutral explanation of the things that happened. It wasn't decisive in the end, but you've got to think about the economic situation in 1970 to 1975. First of all, we had the first big unemployment. You had a threatening oil crisis in late 1973, in 1974 and the at opening of 1975 you had a threatening of a raw materials crisis and the near threatening of a shortage of some basic foodstuffs, so the 'Yes' campaign was saying that the Common Agricultural Policy didn't matter. The situation was chaotic, there was 30 per cent inflation, Heath had tied wages to prices. It wasn't the Labour Government's fault there was 30 per cent inflation in 1974, they had inherited from the previous regime. There had been a fall of 11 per cent in the real exchange rate in the second half of 1973, after we left the Bretton Woods system. Everyone was in turmoil at what was happening, wages and prices were in crisis all over the place. At this stage the public were told, a reasonable argument by the 'Yes' campaign, that if we came out we'd lose jobs and unemployment would go up. You did, and I think this is an objective fact, have most of industry supporting the 'Yes' campaign. You had the head of British Leyland saying it was a marvellous opportunity for their cars, and taking a two-page spread in all the newspapers. I was working with Neil Marten in his office for four months and it was my job to research this - I think the political scientists neglect to look at the economic circumstances behind things - you get these instances where people are not always rational because they're looking at their own personal financial situation. I would like to suggest that the majority would have been substantially less if it had been a time of stability and if it was a question of 'coming out', rather than 'going in'. The idea of 'coming out' was very heavily stressed by the 'Yes' campaign.

BUTLER:
Of course these are the larger conditions, but some of the time we're trying to understand what happened at the elite level, and the decision to proceed

as the Government did in fact proceed from February 1974 up to the decision on 5 June 1975. When did it become plain to the main political actors that there was going to be a referendum, and that the referendum wasn't just a vague sort of idea?

JONES:
There had been a promise by the Labour Party in the 1974 election that there would be an attempt at a renegotiation, and that the people would be allowed to vote on it presumably by either a general election or a referendum within twelve months. That was quite specific, that they would be allowed to vote on it.

BUTLER:
Was there any move to get out of that?

SHORE:
Not that I recall, no move to get out of that. Indeed, there was a white paper issued in February 1975 outlining the major arrangements that would be made in practice for the referendum.

JENKINS:
I don't think the referendum played much part in the first 1974 election, partly because the Labour Party didn't really expect to win that election, that was one reason why it wasn't tremendously important. Well, Wilson certainly did not expect to win, I can assure you of that, but that is a side issue. Anyway they did narrowly win, and then renegotiation started, and then came the referendum. I think I probably assumed there would be a referendum if there was a Labour Government from 1972 onwards. It was not made precise until the manifesto meeting, which was a joint meeting of the shadow Cabinet, or the Cabinet as it was then, and the National Executive, before the second 1974 election.

NAIRNE:
We did not know until after the victory in the October 1974 election that the Cabinet was deciding to go for a referendum, and at that point I was instructed to produce the paper for the Cabinet which eventually provided the substance of the White Paper that Peter Shore has just referred to. At that point we never really knew what the decision would be; it was still simply talk, as the journalists put it, of consulting the British people.

JENKINS:
At that meeting in the large dining room at 10 Downing Street there was a considerable argument, in a day-long meeting, as to what the formula should be for consulting the British people. There were two alternatives; just to consult the British people by referendum or by general election, or whether it should be a commitment to just a referendum. I was in favour of a more general commitment but we were beaten, surprisingly narrowly

beaten, by about 55 to 45. The commitment to a referendum was precise for that second 1974 election.

BOGDANOR:
Having had two elections it would be difficult to have a third one on the European issue. In the February election it played a part, to the extent, surely, that Enoch Powell made it the peg on which he hung his advice to voters to vote for the Labour Party, and that may well have had an effect on the result. It seems to me that the 'antis' lost the campaign some time shortly after the February election, I think, when they allowed Wilson and Callaghan to get away with the proposition that they could renegotiate without amending the Treaty of Rome. It seems to me that the anti-Europeans took the view that the changes they would like to see did involve amendments to the Treaty of Rome. Why did not the 'antis' in Cabinet insist that the renegotiations involve such amendment, why did they let Wilson and Callaghan get away with the contrary view?

SHORE:
Because they couldn't out-vote them, that was perfectly obvious. I was following very closely the renegotiations. When Jim wasn't there, I was there in Brussels and it was quite clear.

NAIRNE:
Peter Shore will remember that he used to accompany the Foreign Secretary to meetings in Brussels and Luxembourg. The words the Foreign Secretary, Jim Callaghan, used were, 'I am an agnostic', but quite soon after, during March 1974, he became convinced that it was necessary to work within the Treaty and that it could be practicable to do that. That was the position on which we had a crucial summit meeting in Paris in December of 1974.

BUTLER:
Ernest Wistrich, you were in the European Movement trying to watch these things. You had an extreme interest as to the consequences for your movement. Has anything that's been said gone against your memories?

WISTRICH:
Within a month of the February 1974 election we set up a campaign committee involving not just the European Movement, but representatives of political parties and others. We conducted a major attitude survey in June; in July we distributed six and a half million leaflets to try and recruit the troops to conduct a referendum, as a result of which we got about 12,000 people involved. So we were already working flat out between the two general elections, and we definitely expected a referendum in due course.

BUTLER:
And what about the 'No' forces? When did they begin to coalesce under the Safeguards Committee and other independent bodies? When did you feel that you were doing something collective about a real event that was coming along, and that you had to get things going?

WILLIAMS:
Probably in the autumn of 1974, I don't know what Richard Body thinks about this. There was some activity before then, I don't suggest that there wasn't any.

BODY:
I think that's right. There were of course two organisations going in parallel. There was one Robin Williams was representing,[2] and the other which Jack Jones and I were joint chairmen of.[3]

BUTLER:
I'm trying to pin it down. The battle forces were joined on an issue over which the outcome at that stage, to the general public, must have seemed doubtful. As Bob Worcester suggests the public had been saying 'No' in polls since early 1971. It was in a sense an act of courage to believe the hypothetical Gallup question to which Bob Worcester was referring, and to say that the referendum was something worth engaging in and could be won.

WORCESTER:
There was very low salience among the public. There were very few people in the public who thought this was a burning issue. It is the usual thing where questions of process take second place to questions of policy, and if you asked the British people what were the important issues very few - from memory 10 or 12 per cent - said Europe, or a referendum or Britain's involvement; whereas the National Health service, unemployment, the old trusties came out. I think this is also something I should have said before, that because we're comparing to the actual referendum result we've re-percentaged leaving out the 'Don't knows'/ the Undecided, and it really split about 35 or 40 per cent 'Out', 30 per cent 'In' and 30 per cent 'Don't know'/ Undecided. So I don't think that ought to be overlooked, because there was this mass who were undecided. I was just checking my report to Lord Wilson of 12 May 1975, when we had 35 per cent of our sample that I described as being 'immovable pro-market', 13 per cent 'immovable anti-market', 'movable pro market' 20 per cent, 'movable anti-market' 10 per cent and 'undecided' 22 per cent. In the event, I believe, the turnout was 74 per cent, so most of the undecided, the 'don't knows', were 'don't votes', so we were dealing with the ones who were movable and immovable.

BROAD:
Turnout was about 65 per cent.

WORCESTER:
Yes, that's right. So your 22 per cent undecided would have been largely amongst those who didn't bother to vote, so your 'Don't knows' were actually your 'Don't cares' anyway. But because of the low salience that's why the fulcrum, the leverage was obtained on the Government renegotiating the terms and strongly urging Britain to stay in.

BUTLER:
I think we now move to discussing what happened in 1975. Do people have a sense of 'if only!' as they sit around this table. Could either side have done better? Did the campaign and the campaign decisions make a difference? To give one example, there was a sense that Britain in Europe would look much better if it was headed by someone from the Labour side, but Roy was in the Cabinet and a Cabinet minister couldn't make his position clear when the renegotiation was going on. So there was the question (which Ernest Wistrich knows a lot about) of whether the Ministers should put their heads above the parapet when the 'Yes' campaign got launched. In fact the upsurge came with the Government endorsing the negotiations and urging a 'Yes' vote, bringing an increase in popular support. Did much happen between April and June of '75 under the impact of all the efforts of all you gentlemen around the table here?

WORCESTER:
Can I just say, to put it into perspective. Reading from a memo on16 May, 'The public opinion findings have consistently shown over the years that the Common Market has a low salience to the British public; what usually concerns them is prices and the cost of living. At the beginning of the referendum campaign prices were said to be an "anti"-market issue, so the theme of the campaign must be, if it can be said, that the Government will have a better chance of keeping prices down if we stay in the Common Market than if we go out. Polls have shown that over the last six weeks, (this is dated 16 May, so back to the 1 April), public opinion has remained remarkably consistent, two-thirds intending to vote "in" and one-third intending to vote "out".' I would just say that our tracking polls, nine of them throughout the campaign, show that the anti-market forces won the campaign because it started at 70/30 and it ended at 67/33, so if anything the anti-Market forces narrowly won the campaign.

BUTLER:
Bill, did you feel that you lost the campaign?

RODGERS:
No, I mean we're talking about two different things really. Can I just view the question of how people moved to a position, whether it was 70 to start with and then 65 later. I think the view I always took was that once people focused their minds they would see it differently, the analogy was of a

marriage with a husband and wife who argue and disagree, but when it comes to the point they decide they'd rather stay together. I think that the point about withdrawing rather than entering was very important, as people's minds focused, they would say they would rather stay with what they've got now rather than come out, and I don't think I was very surprised by the move, at least up to the beginning of the campaign. The other point, if I may just return to something we talked about earlier, and that you might want to return to later, David, in terms of its later effects: the 'Yes' campaign was really extraordinarily impressive and heavyweight, and it began, I think, to have its impact before the campaign formally began. If I'm right in saying, and Roy rather endorses this, that it was in 1972-1973, that the Labour campaign began to put itself together. Then there were the media breakfasts, which John Harris will remember, which began in 1970-71. What we had was the campaign for the Labour Party for Europe, the campaign for the Conservative Party for Europe, the campaign for the Liberal Party for Europe, all these going along in parallel, and then on top of that, a much larger cross-party campaign which, if Ernest won't mind my saying so, outflanked the European Movement (and Ernest wasn't very happy at the time, for good reasons perhaps), but it really enflanked and encompassed the European Movement and effectively took it over, and that was an extraordinarily powerful campaign. I've never seen one better financed, better organised, more efficiently equipped, and I think that had a very important impact even before the campaign began.

JONES:
Before we come to this question of the campaign, can we look at why there was this sort of lull. It was simply because the Government had promised to renegotiate, and they gave a very clear impression to the Trades Union Congress that they would be able to renegotiate the Rome Treaty, because we were concerned about prices rising under the Common Agricultural Policy, about unemployment that we thought might grow, and we were concerned about legislation, that they had taken from Britain the right to legislate on our own interests. The fact that we were given an impression that there was going to be a renegotiation certainly tended to lull the campaign from the 'No' side, at least where the Trade Union Congress was concerned. The Trade Union Congress was opposed but it was opposed in the sense that okay, if you can renegotiate then that's fine, but certainly we're not satisfied with terms as they were, as we'd entered under Heath.

SHORE:
Quite, that was fairly clear when we began the run up, in the April period, to the referendum campaign that no fundamental negotiation had taken place and that it was in fact merely a re-packaging. Sean has given one of the reasons that the argument tended to swing, less dramatically however, given the figures we've had, than I had previously assumed, one of those reasons was that of course we had this unique experience of sky-high food prices in the world market. I remember being involved in the negotiations

with Australia for a sugar deal and we couldn't even get them to agree to £600 a tonne for Queensland sugar at that time, because the scarcity was so great and the Japanese market was supplying them with so much. That of course immediately put a shadow over all that had been said previously about the riotous expenditure and high prices of the CAP. So the CAP argument was substantially demolished by an almost unique world event of soaring food prices and soaring raw material prices. But I think there are three other factors which come very much to the heart of the thing. Number one, of course, is quite simply, the role of the media. The role of the media in this referendum campaign was unbalanced almost beyond anything in my political lifetime, in two senses; one, I cannot think of any other issue on which the whole of the press had been united in favour of one side of a great national debate, and none on the other; secondly, we had actually the appalling irresponsibility of the BBC, lending itself to these partial media breakfasts in order to stimulate and advise upon how the 'Yes' campaign would win. The BBC, which should be the very symbol of rectitude and fairness and balance in terms of representing different points of view. So that's issue number one. Issue number two was the gross disproportion in the financing of the two campaigns; we've already heard about the double-page ads from British Leyland and others who were convinced we were going to sweep the European market, but in terms of the official accounts, as they were given, what did the 'No' campaign have to spend? £125,000 granted by the Government, plus, I think, about £18,000 from outside sources.

JONES:
£8,000. £133,000 in total.

SHORE:
Compared with, to my certain knowledge, £1,300,000, i.e. ten times that amount, which was available to the 'Yes' campaign. Therefore there was a gross disparity, quite apart from the disparity in the press itself. The third issue, and a very important issue indeed, and which I don't think Vernon has touched on sufficiently in his paper, is, that looking back on it, who actually told the truth, or who got nearest to the truth about these issues at the time of the referendum? How honest were we all being about the fundamental issues involved, and I think that's something that we ought to turn our attention to as well, and we have before us the raw evidence of the 'Yes' pamphlet, the 'No' pamphlet, the Government pamphlet and I think we've got to consider all these things.

HARRIS:
Having been involved in the pro-Europe campaign to a degree, we became increasingly concerned whether we were, in fact, truly identifying moves in public opinion. Day after day there were news stories relating sometimes to prices issues, sometimes to other issues, but never did the poll figures appear to change and they remained very nearly constant until polling day

itself. Secondly, there was, in fact, a fairly substantial amount of work which went on before the second 1974 General Election between the pro-Europeans in the Labour party and the then Government, partly through an organisation called the European League for Economic Co-operation, which became eventually an highly important organisation as far as Britain in Europe was concerned, and of which Con O'Neill, previously of the Foreign Office, came to be the Director-General. There was a substantial degree of co-operation because at this stage we believed that there was going to be a referendum if a Labour Government was returned. A point on which I agree with Peter Shore is that I think that looking back on it, anybody would find it immensely difficult to remember what, in fact, was successfully renegotiated. If someone sitting around this table could actually identify an example I'd be genuinely interested, because I do not believe that most of us on the pro-European side of the Labour Party believed that it was anything other than a cosmetic exercise in the first instance, even if the Prime Minister didn't do well in the negotiations that took place. A point on which I disagree with Peter Shore, I think we are all wasting our time if we start having an argument about who told the truth and who had been proved right. Surprisingly enough, those of us who took the pro-European side might feel that we merit the honour and those who took the contrary view would obviously feel the opposite; so I hope we're not going to spend too much time on that because we would be trivialising the issues.

NAIRNE:
Three points. First, that as to speech drafting the Prime Minister did most of it himself. My clear recollection is that the Prime Minister was extraordinarily frank with the House about the extent to which, in the renegotiation, we'd fallen short, and the way in which we possibly could, or should have, achieved more; he was quite open about that. The second point, very much bearing out what's been said here, I think, is that there was a very influential remark, quoted by David Butler in his book,[4] a much publicised remark by Christopher Soames, 'This is no time for Britain to be considering leaving a Christmas club, let alone the Common Market.' That was the underlying feeling that many people had, I think. The third point is that if you're talking about referendums in the future, I think that the radio point, the BBC point, is important. It was a struggle to be able to report accurately to the Cabinet whether things were being done in a properly balanced way; there were certainly trouble and difficulty. From my own recollection I wouldn't put it quite as strongly in the critical sense as Peter Shore has, but I wouldn't argue with him about there being difficulty.

BOGDANOR:
On the point that Peter Shore and John Harris made about truth; truth is a many sided concept but it does seem to me that the Community was sold by the pros in 1975 as an economic and commercial arrangement, although some people, certainly Ted Heath amongst them, knew that it was much

more than that, that the dynamic behind it all was political union. Were these points actually put to people, that they were involved in a substantial transfer of sovereignty if they voted 'Yes'? My memory of it, is that these points were not put across for the very obvious reason that if they had been the 'Yes' people might not have won; but I merely ask the question.

BODY:
May I follow up what Peter Shore said about the media, because there's a great difference between a referendum in a small country such as Denmark and a comparatively large one like the United Kingdom. If you have 10,000 activists in, say, Denmark, and I've watched this in three referendums in Denmark, you can get your message through quite easily, if you have 10,000 in the United Kingdom they get lost, it's just hopeless, so you have to win the media over, and that is something we failed to do. I'll give you two or three examples of how the media behaved; at the very beginning of the campaign two agents of the CIA came to see me in the House of Commons. They were Anglophiles and they were very upset at the way the CIA was going to interfere in the referendum campaign. They said a new station head was going to be appointed who was not a normal CIA man, he was well known in the federalist movement and they were going to intervene in different ways, and they produced a great wodge of documents to substantiate what they were saying. Well, I read it through and it seemed very hot stuff and I showed it to one or two others and they agreed. No newspaper would publish it, I took it around, it was quite authentic, they were not willing to interview the two CIA agents or anything. In the end I was reduced to *Time Out,* which then had a very small circulation, were willing to print the whole story with these serious allegations, serious allegations about how the money was raised and so forth, and there was not a challenge to their account in *Time Out,* although it was very serious. The other is concerning Jack Jones and me. *The Times* had run a series of articles, all advocating a 'Yes', and I got through to *The Times*, saying would they have an article putting the other point of view? They agreed, and I drafted the article and Jack agreed with it. It was a time, if I may say so Jack, when the Transport and General Workers Union was not very popular with *Times* readers, and of course the article didn't go in under my name, just Jack Jones' and the trade union point of view, which was not the point of view of our campaign. The third example was that we did throw down the challenge to the newspapers to find one economist of stature willing to argue the economic case, and none of the articles that we had available were published. John Vaizey, did produce an article for *The Sunday Telegraph* and it was a rave account of what the economy was going to be like in the next twelve months or two years; and it was a very persuasive article but at the end there was a short paragraph saying all this is subject to whether we stay in the European Community, and that if we stay in then all these calculations will be falsified and the picture will be quite different. When the article was published that last paragraph was cut out and John Vaizey, I do remember, was very upset about it, because there was a

distinguished academic putting a serious case and a major caveat was deleted.

JOHNSTON:
I was only going to make two points arising from what we've just heard. It's actually not true that it's terribly easy to inform a small community like Denmark. Bob will know, because he studies these things, but my clear recollection is that two weeks before the first referendum in Denmark there was a poll that established that 23 per cent of the population had not one clue what Maastricht was, far less the complicated arguments and propositions within it. The second point therefore, which is related, is that while I think we've been discussing the background to the referendum, the way it was done, the way it was arrived at, it should be recorded that there remained, at the moment of our going into it, a great many people who didn't want to have a referendum at all, and certainly didn't think, as contained in the paper, that you reserved this for constitutional issues. Constitutional issues are the most complicated issues, and the idea that you give the most complicated decisions to the people who know least about them, I think, is a peculiar one.

JENKINS:
First the media point. It's perfectly true, of course, that we had the overwhelming majority of the newspapers on our side; it's the only campaign I've ever fought where that's been so. It was not totally unanimous; you did have the *Daily Express* and the *Sunday Express*, and the *Morning Star*.

BODY:
Not the *Express* by the time of the referendum, they changed their minds.

JENKINS:
You'd moved them over, had you, by that time? However, I agree that this was a handicap from your point of view and if I'd been in the opposition I'd have felt resentful about it. What is the case, however, is that the BBC with ITN following, was totally impartial, and they were impartial, if I may say so, because I told them to be. They came to me and they did suggest that maybe the coverage, their original idea, ought to be in accordance with the vote in the House of Commons, and I said that won't do at all, you must have equal time. There was equal time and as a result I then found myself in the curious position in my other capacity as president of the Britain in Europe campaign of being bitterly complained to by Ted Heath, Willie Whitelaw and other people that they were given no coverage at all, when minor pipsqueak figures were portrayed on television night after night after night, in the early stages of the campaign. There was an equality of coverage that produced that reaction, but nonetheless it was the case that the press were, for the first time in my experience, strongly on our side. On the political/economic point, I know there's a general view that we sold it

purely as an economic thing, but I do not agree with this view. When the campaign was over, Ted Heath and I, who probably had more and larger meetings than anybody else, talked about this and we both agreed that throughout the campaign the issue that really seized people's attention, when one was talking to them, was the political issues of Britain's orientation in the world. They were relatively bored by the small-change economic issues, but this is really what gripped people's attention and this is my very strong recollection of the big 2,000 audience rallies we had, it was on the politics, which was always certainly central to what I said and to what Heath said.

HARRISON:
A brief comment first on the position vis-à-vis the media and television in particular. Neil Marten and myself twice made very strong, and we felt, very well-researched complaints, personally, to the head of the BBC, concerning their treatment of the campaign. I cannot now unfortunately lay my hands on the evidence we produced, my memory is that there was an academic at the University of Glasgow who was researching the coverage of the whole campaign. We felt that ITV was certainly much more even-handed, we met the heads of ITV at the same time, and we felt on this issue that ITV coverage was much fairer. The main point I'd like to say a few words on is this. Several have made it clear that we should be dealing principally with the facts, with the agreed facts concerning the referendum in retrospect, the meaning that those facts convey for any future conduct and any future possible referendum. I think therefore that Peter Shore is absolutely right forcibly to remind us all of the total imbalance in the matter of funding for the organisation of the campaigns. He's given the ball park figures but can I remind you, and I'm saying this with some feeling because as the Director of the National Referendum Campaign my nose was rubbed in this several times a day, we were simply unable, in any sense, to conduct a national campaign. Can I tell you, and the figures are all here in this official Government publication, that for example, on advertising and public relations, the pro-campaign, Britain in Europe, spent nine times as much as the NRC. In payments to speakers, for their efforts, the 'Yes' campaign spent 65 times as much as the 'No' campaign. Here is the crux of it, the Britain in Europe campaign spent on organisation, the fundamental core of your ability to wage a campaign, 600 times as much as the National Referendum Campaign. I could go on; the number of people employed to serve the campaign, the 'Yes' campaign employed 163 people, the 'No' campaign had six. Now the imbalance on this and all other aspects of organisation was so complete that I don't think that with any rational re-evaluation of the events it can be overlooked. If you could add to this, as Peter and others have already addressed, the equally great imbalance of the coverage of it in the national press, payments from all of British industry, none to the 'No' campaign at all, add to that the fact that the Government itself and the Conservative Party were totally committed to the 'Yes' campaign, I think you have to face this much more fundamental question,

which is this: if a Government decides, in its wisdom, that an issue is of such special nature and of such great importance that it needs to be put to the people in the form of a referendum for their decision, that carries with it an obligation, in my view, on the part of the Government to ensure that the case for both sides, or all sides, is evenly put, and that the population, the ordinary voters, who perhaps don't give a damn, are given the opportunity, in an even-handed fashion, to look at the evidence for themselves and to determine their own position. This, quite transparently clearly, did not happen in this referendum campaign, the people of Great Britain were, never, ever given an equal opportunity to assess the merits of the campaign for Britain coming out. I think that for any possible future referendum the clear message is that any Government must have that moral obligation to ensure that the population is equally well-served in terms of information and must order the character of the referendum with that point in mind.

BUTLER:
Could you clarify the £125,000? Why was £125,000 the basic minimum?

NAIRNE:
I can't remember why that was the figure fixed. We did consider whether we could possibly control the expenditure, but I really think it would have been exceptionally difficult to do.

JONES:
One thing the TUC wanted to do was to try and get an evenness in the newspapers, as has been said, all of the national newspapers were pro. We suggested that the Government should approach the Newspaper Publishers' Association, or whatever it's called, but that wasn't done, the result was that we did get that imbalance in the press. The other aspect of imbalance was the fact that to every home went the paper of the 'antis', the paper of the 'pros', and the paper of the Government, which was also pro, so it was two to one. And if you read the Government statement, I think, if anything, it was more pro than the statement of Roy and his colleagues. They were saying all sorts of things; they were saying there was 'a threat to unemployment in Britain from the movement in the Common Market towards an economic and monetary union, this could have forced us to accept fixed exchange rates for the pound, restricting industrial growth, so putting jobs at risk, This threat has been removed'. I hope you bear that in mind. They also said 'the Council of Ministers not the Market officials should take the important decisions. These decisions can only be made if all the members of the Council agree. The minister representing Britain can veto any proposal for a new law or a new tax if he considers it to be against British interests. Ministers from the other Governments have the same right to veto . . .' and so on.

NAIRNE:
The Government statement did go to a divided Cabinet to consider.

JONES:
I'm simply saying that if you're talking of a even playing field it wasn't very even.

STEWART:
I'd like to dissent from what Bob Harrison has said. I agree with you entirely that the money was terribly imbalanced, but the money was a reflection of the 'Yes' case in industry. I mean industry was putting up what I thought was £2 million.

HARRISON:
£1.4 million.

STEWART:
I did the advising on trade policy, but I did see it for four months build up and there was no organisation. How could you organise the thing? There were one or two other anti groups too, who didn't really want to collaborate very much. If we'd had more money than £125,000, it wouldn't have been very easy to spend it, you could have put more newspaper advertising and things like that, but the limitations were limitations of organisation. Don't forget the Labour Party, who might have organised, were denied, the Labour Party organisation were not allowed to whisper during the campaign, so the 'Yes' people had two expert political parties, lots of outside organisations and a great deal of money, and there was no way in which the 'No' campaign was going to beat that.

BUTLER:
The oddity is that, underlying all of this, Bob Worcester's figures showed that the 'No' campaign won, that is to say, there was no improvement in the net support for the 'Yes' position during the time of active campaigning, which, after all, lasted only really five weeks in May and June. Obviously preparatory things had been done, the media had been primed, but as for actual campaigning on the ground, which was anyway pretty thin, nothing much had been done by 'Yes' or 'No'.

WORCESTER:
Can I just speak to Roy and John and Peter, first to say that Roy may have had the people with great enthusiasm at his individual meetings but Peter is absolutely right it was prices, prices, prices that were exercising the mass of people on the ground, 99 per cent of whom never went to a public meeting. We asked, and I reported on May 16, the issues that people say others will think about when they decide how will they vote on the referendum, using a projective technique, not asking how they themselves, but how they thought others would decide, because we know that's a better way of doing it. Generally, prices and the cost of living got 58 per cent, food prices specifically got 37 per cent, unemployment got 15 per cent, and

sovereignty and independence got 9 per cent. So that's the frame of reference, and my memorandum said, 'after prices, way after prices, comes unemployment, it should be a minor theme in my view but it should be used in the same way as the food prices issue, that is, to stress that it will be much easier for the Government to keep unemployment down if we remain in the Common Market than if we come out. We must not scatter our shots; let the opposition talk about sovereignty, independence, Britain's role in the world, defence etc. If they spend two days on this and three days on that between now and the 5 June this is the best thing that could happen to us.'

RODGERS:
There are two different questions; one is, what exercised people, as Bob said, to vote one way or another, and the second was a question that I think was asked, did the 'Yes' to Europe campaign refer to the political issues? Now, on that I'm sure that Roy is absolutely right. I can't remember using the word sovereignty in any speech that I made, and I can't honestly say whether I heard it in any that Roy made, but in terms of a political context I still have, on one of my old suitcases, something that says 'No more war'. Now, that was a huge simplification, it may be said, but the question of no more war and what lay behind it, was the political context in which, I think, we did our campaigning. Can I just say one thing on the question of resources, although I don't want to intervene in the dispute between Bob Harrison and Sean Stewart about whether the campaign had enough money or not, but I know I have a note somewhere, and I thought that both campaigns should have a quarter of a million. It's interesting that Pat Nairne doesn't know how the figure was arrived at, but I do share the view, that there ought to have been, because of the huge disparity of the resources outside, there ought to have been a larger sum of money made available to the 'No' campaign.
But after that the 'Yes' campaign certainly put in a great deal of time to the business of raising money, indeed, at that time twenty years ago political parties were very bad about doing this, they were highly unsophisticated about money raising for a campaign. 'Yes to Europe' was highly sophisticated from the beginning. Of course there were more potential donors, but if there was a huge disequilibrium, as your figures quite rightly show. I think that some of that disequilibrium could have been offset by a more concerted and better campaign to get the money, as after all, if at least a third of the voters wanted to say 'no', then a third of the voters were potential contributors.

SHORE:
I do want to comment directly on that and what Roy said as well. I'd accept that there was a political element, and quite a strong one, in the 'Yes' campaign. It's one that, frankly, wasn't heard by many who are now very vociferously critical of the European Community and the Conservative Party. They didn't hear it, and they heard only the economic message, but there was a political message, and that political message was about, above

all, if you like, the 'soft' political issues; 'Are you in favour of peace in the future? Are we going to avoid repeating the great historical errors of this century? If we don't do this Britain will be alone and isolated as a second-rate, middle-ranking power'. These were the words, I seem to remember, being used at the time, but they didn't close in on the constitutional issue and nowhere did the 'Yes' campaign state that the objective of the whole thing was ultimately to create a federal Europe, and that the first instalment of that was in fact to proclaim the supremacy of European law over the law of Parliament. There was no mention of that anywhere, and no mention, frankly, of the fact that we didn't have a veto; we had qualified majority voting on an ever-growing area of Community affairs, admittedly extended massively by Mrs Thatcher in the Single European Act. Nevertheless, that was the trend and drift of it, and we on the 'No' camp did actually identify this issue and the issue of self-government, a very important one, in the campaign as well as the economic issues.

BUTLER:
I wonder if I can turn to those who were actually at the coalface of the campaign, Tim Bainbridge, Roger Boaden or Tom Spencer:. When they were organising things down on the ground, was there any development in the national mood? Did the issue of sovereignty come into it significantly?

BOADEN:
I was going to make a point earlier, really to follow on from what Peter was saying about the broadcasting. He may remember I passed to him, at some stage in the campaign, monitoring reports from Conservative Central Office and he was very impressed, and said that the Labour Party had never had anything quite like this. There was, at that particular point in time, a very good broadcast monitoring team working for Conservative Central Office monitoring every single programme that had political content, news bulletins as well. They were monitored on an hour by hour basis right through the day and night, and it's very, very interesting, and certainly it's my recollection that the coverage of the campaign was a great deal more even than some people might suggest. In terms of current affairs both on TV and radio there was a parity. In terms of news bulletins, of course there was a level of activity from the 'Yes' campaign that was greater than the level of activity from the 'No' campaign, and so in terms of news bulletins there was a disparity, but that was just a measurement of what was going on on the ground, and although you may argue that you didn't have the resources to hold meetings there's nothing to stop a lot of those meetings being held by those who supported one side as against the other. I do think that's a point, so to speak, that needs to be put into this argument because that monitoring process showed there was a great deal more coverage for the 'No' campaign than was suggested by Peter Shore and Bob Harrison.[5]

JONES:

Can I just correct you there. There was a lot to stop us holding meetings; we hadn't got the money to pay for them, that was the reason. We had demands from all over the country for meetings for the 'No' campaign, but in many cases we hadn't got the wherewithal to provide for the cost of the hall, the transport of the speakers, etc., which the pro side had. But I would like to discuss what might be done to avoid a similarly imbalanced situation in the future. For example, is it not possible to say to the press that during the period of run up there will be an even coverage? The press was much more imbalanced than radio or television.

HARRISON:
The point has been made twice by my colleagues; news opportunities, and my colleagues will know this far better than I do, come very costly, and sophistication in terms of presentation etc., is an extremely costly business in today's world. I have to repeat that the 'Yes' campaign spent £140,000 just on organisation. If we had had £140,000 I will tell you we would have made a significantly greater impact on the awareness of people. That point is too important to overlook.

SPENCER:
I think I was the second person hired by the Britain in Europe campaign; I look back on it, no doubt, with slightly rosy spectacles, as being an organisational miracle, given that we started by sweeping up the rat droppings in the Piccadilly building, and it all looks very smooth in retrospect, but it didn't feel like that at the time, but there were undoubtedly areas in which it did have an impact. I can't resist the temptation of paying tribute to Sir James Goldsmith and his excellent chairmanship of our food campaign, when he showed quite extraordinary style. It wasn't just the price of world food; Jimmy Goldsmith and the other industrialists were extremely creative in finding arguments to justify the CAP. So I would accept that organisation did have a serious impact because there were a lot of people applying themselves intelligently, cogently and continuously over those four or five months. The second observation I want to make is about this question of whether the political choices were put before the people. Now, that is of current relevance because the accusation I heard, especially in my own currently sad party, is that we voted to stay in a free trade area. That's the accusation, and it's not true. It's not true if you read the material, it's not true if you listen to the speeches, and having watched the internal culture of Britain in Europe, it wasn't true of those from all three parties leading the campaign. In fact, I would go so far as to say this was the moment the British establishment told the truth about Europe, and did confront people with the fact that there is no alternative to our membership, that this is about peace and war. It says a lot for the durability of luggage that I've still got luggage with stickers on it that say, 'Never again' and 'Support your local continent' and a variety of other things that came out of the youth campaign. There was a very hard core of

political message, that this was about peace and war and not just about the 1975 economy.

BUTLER:
Ernest, didn't you feel you were being pushed out of the campaign a bit, because people were frightened the European movement was too bloody federalist?

WISTRICH:
First of all let me say, we trained something like 800 speakers by the time of the referendum, we held over 10,000 meetings, addressed at every locality possible and the training and the brief that was given was not economic. It started with the political message and it continued to do that as part of the whole campaign, so although there may have been some nuances as to whether Wistrich wasn't too federalist, but that in itself did not affect the broad political message which was advanced.

WILLIAMS:
Could I say that I can't see that it's reasonable for anybody sitting around this table to say that the positions taken up by either side and by the Government were any different from the documents which they gave to the public. This had specific assurances, delivered to every house, for the first time in this country. If you read that, it's all gone down the drain. There is no point arguing about it, saying the Government was saying this and that, it was actually written there and sent to every household. If that has all been torn up, then we've got a complaint. Secondly, if you read these two documents, what the 'Yes' camp said, they don't talk about federalism, they talk about food prices being very high and all the things I mentioned. If you read this, it talks about the danger of European federalism, etc. I would take sides on that, I think. I would say that nearly everything that document say has turned out not to be true. Why can't we actually look at the official documents from both sides and keep them for the record?

BUTLER:
Roy, do you have a guilty conscience about anything you said or did in deceiving the public back then?

JENKINS:
On these broad issues, not remotely, no.

RODGERS:
No, but can I just come back to this question about federalism? You asked a question of Ernest Wistrich, and Ernest gave an oblique reply, I think. It's wrong simply to say that if this was the other way round the 'anti's' might argue that we gave the game away, that we were federalist. I wasn't a federalist then, and nor am I now. I simply believed that there were good political reasons for Britain being in Europe, good economic reasons, and I

think that was the position of a number of people who were extremely active in the campaign. If we didn't talk about federalism it was because we thought that Europe was dynamic and that it was much too early to guess the direction in which it was going to move, we couldn't predict the future, we were simply judging it on the merits of history and of that very moment.

NAIRNE:
This is precisely my own recollection. I mean, the argument then, as it very often is today, was are you going to be part of the argument and participate, or are you not? That was certainly a point made in the 'Yes' campaign.

HARRIS:
I think that we have to accept that a number of people were influenced by totally different issues, other than the three leaflets that went to everybody's house. I think I agree with what Vernon Bogdanor said right at the beginning, I think people were influenced to a very substantial degree, by who was on which side in this controversy. I think it became a dominating issue. I remember talking to a very senior public servant, who told me it was, in his view, inappropriate for him to vote in any General Election. He told me he proposed to do so on this occasion. He said you've only got to look at who is on which side in this controversy and the issue to him, and I suspect to many others, was a simple one. I think we have to recognise the reality of that. We can all re-examine the contents of the three documents, but I do not believe that prices, which came up higher, was a dominating issue. I remember we spent a lot of time on this at our press conferences, because we had to as we were being attacked by the 'antis', who said that if we stayed in the Community prices are going to rise sky high. Mrs Castle, it may be remembered, was sent off to France to look at how high prices were in France, and we sent one of our staff off to Norway to demonstrate how high prices were in a country outside the European Community. Of great relevance was the line up on both sides and also the belief that it would be exceptionally dangerous thing, at a time of substantial economic difficulty, for Britain to go outside the European Community.

JONES:
Are we to think that Lou Harris is a bigger vote-winner than the *Sun*, who won the last election?

BUTLER:
I think we can acknowledge that the *Sun* did win the last election, but I think it's just worth quoting a private Louis Harris survey for Britain in Europe in April 1975. Among the twenty really well known political figures involved, each of the thirteen pro-marketeers drew a positive reaction. Six of the eight anti-marketeers had a negative one, and the most notable,

Enoch Powell, still excited more dislike than anyone except Tony Benn and Ian Paisley.

BOGDANOR:
I think someone said that one cannot exaggerate the state of fear which existed in Britain in the mid 1970s. In 1974 the abyss seemed to be opening up. What had seemed to be a civilised society seemed to many to be under threat. People were asked in the election, by Ted Heath, who governs. They were asked to decide. They did not, they did not give either side a majority in the election. There was a state of fear which I think persisted right up until 1979, and perhaps afterwards. It is difficult to imagine now, but people felt that the ground was shifting under them.

JONES:
I think you're really moving away from the influence of the press, the popular press in particular does have a very considerable influence; they're now claiming, and I think it's true, that they had a big influence then. Whatever you say about the influence of individuals, the fact is that something ought to be done, or ought to have been done then, to ensure a more even field in the presentation of material, and certainly if you're going to have two to one going in to every home, then that has an effect. Surely if the Government is for, then there should be a Government statement and an anti statement, not the development of unevenness based on money. The Government position ensured a two to one situation throughout, plus the overwhelming influence of the newspapers and a little bit more from the TV and radio, but not quite as much.

NAIRNE:
I can see how it might look to Jack Jones now, but at the time what the Government was seeking to do in their own statement was to set out the results of the renegotiation. That's what they sought to do, and they may have, looking back on it, have made an uneven job of it, but the statement did actually come to the Cabinet to consider before it was published. I wanted to mention this one anecdotal point; it does rather bear out what other people have said. I remember listening to a Cabinet Minister saying, the day after the referendum result, outside the Cabinet room, 'I went to my constituency and an old lady said to me, "I don't like this Community, but I voted to stay in for my grandchildren." '. I think that's also part of this argument, that it was no moment to come out of it. So, whatever the press was saying, there was a feeling, especially among quite old people, of not wanting to come out of the Community.

SHORE:
It's more a sort of political, constitutional point. It was very unusual to have the leaders of all three parties, particularly the Government and opposition, actually agreeing on a major policy and recommending that to the nation, also, I think doing it at a time when in spite of considerable party political

disputes on other issues, and in spite of a period of great national difficulty. Political leaders had more authority, I suspect, in the mid 1970s, than they have in the mid 1990s; and it would be very interesting for the future whether, in fact, all three party political leaders, as would seem to be the case, are still at one about the 'ever closer union', and whether they would carry the same authority in recommending such a view to the nation as their predecessors did in 1975.

NAIRNE:
It's a pity that Barbara Castle isn't here at this point because I turned up her memoirs last night and she quotes a very relevant story to that. One lady said to her about the campaign, 'Well, I've heard what you've said, but Mr Wilson takes a different view'. I think it was another important factor.

JENKINS:
One thing you've got to bear in mind when dealing with the three pamphlets is that we thought that the Government fought a mealy-mouthed campaign. We thought they were very weak and quiet. We thought that both Wilson and Callaghan were, Callaghan almost more than Wilson. Callaghan made three quiet, but quite well-judged speeches, in my view, looking back, from the point of view of influencing Labour voters but they stood very much aside from us and took no part in the all-party campaign. Could I, because the object of a thing like this is not so much to have old arguments which won't be resolved, but to try and find shafts of light, so could I ask Jack a very mischievous question? We've heard so much about the poverty, with which I sympathise to some extent, but a great issue has been made of it, it was desperate poverty in the 'No' campaign. Why didn't your Union give them some money?

JONES:
I didn't have the authority to give them any money over and above that we initially subscribed. Anything in the political fund was very much directed to the political parties.

JENKINS:
But couldn't you have subscribed on a scale to double their resources?

JONES:
I'm not sure what the newspapers would have made of that, a trade union delegate . . .

JENKINS:
I don't think they would have made anything of it.

JONES:
There's still the need to have some agreement with the press.

JENKINS:
There's the need to have some control of your executive, but you were never aware of that, if I may say so.

WORCESTER:
On 15 March *The Economist* did a piece that said a Government recommendation to stay in would persuade an extra 20 per cent or so of the voters to support continued membership, most of them Labour voters. At the beginning of May when asked do you think the Prime Minister, Mr Wilson, is in favour of staying in or getting out, 74 per cent said staying in, 15 per cent said getting out, and 11 per cent said they didn't know. By the end of May 84 per cent knew that he was for staying in, 8 per cent said getting out and 8 per cent said they didn't know. You may think, Roy, that the Government played a mealy mouthed campaign, but where it was visible was in *The Mirror* and *The Sun*, because the target segments, women, D, Es and Scotland with *The Record*, read those papers, and so did the 18 to 24-year olds. Those were the four target segments that one identified for the Government campaign and they went after them where they could catch them.
The second point is back to John Harris. The only way you can really tell what's happening in the electorate, which appeared to be more or less 67 per cent in favour throughout, is in panel studies, and the only panel study that was done going back to the same people was the one I did for Mr Callaghan and Mr Wilson, and that showed that 14 per cent changed their minds, though they balanced out more or less equally between splitting for the 'in' and 'out'. John Gilbert made 'anti' comments on the 'Today' programme and this was one of the things I reported to the campaign, and Mr Callaghan said 'get the Chancellor for me on the phone.' The next day, he came in and he was absolutely explosive, and he said, 'Don't tell me the Foreign Secretary can't speak to the Chancellor on the telephone. I don't care if he is in Paris, they have telephones in Paris, and you get him on the phone'. Denis Healy was ducking him for two days; then John Gilbert was muzzled after that.

BUTLER:
I want to move to constitutional issues and to pick up Jack's point from a few moments ago, but first I don't think that Robin Williams and Richard Body have had adequate chance to say whether they have any wistfulness, apart from the shortage of money, about how the 'No' campaign used its resources to increase its support.

WILLIAMS:
Well, it used its resources, leaflets, etc. It probably couldn't have done anything differently from what it did.

BUTLER:

But there was a campaign strategy? You had a very wide group of people. There were some people who wouldn't sit down with Enoch Powell, and that was a handicap.

WILLIAMS:
Benn wouldn't. There was that difficulty, yes.

BODY:
Can I just say about the trade unions? We were trying to keep the trade unions quiet, and Clive Jenkins turned out two or three times, but he was very conscious that he might be losing support for us, because at that time there was great anti trade union feeling. I hope that Ernest Wistrich won't contradict me on this, but there was a great fear being created about the Soviet Union and their allies over here, and there was an inference that those of us in the 'No' side were 'fellow travellers'. Tony Benn, in particular, was vilified, in a way which I think was absolutely atrocious, by the press. He was producing some very powerful constitutional arguments, he wrote a very serious piece for one newspaper, all borne out now, which rejected it, and the only journal that published it was *The Spectator*. I remember having to say, well, yes, he is on our side, but not really, that sort of thing. I would like that bit to be recorded because it played a big part, because I do agree with what John Harris said, that many people were influenced by the kind of people on either side. The extremists were 'No'; the 'nice moderates', the future Social Democrats, all these nice people were 'Yes', and they were safe.

STEWART:
Can I add to that by saying the Civil Service, I thought, was intensely disloyal. Peter Shore was my Minister: most of my colleagues thought he was a 'fellow traveller'; and Benn was regarded as a Communist. You wouldn't believe it would you? In the whole of Whitehall, at the middle level, there was fear all over the place, and the 'antis' were being labelled as Communists and 'fellow travellers'.

BUTLER:
Could I now move to a slightly different theme? Looking back on the referendum, irrespective of one's position as to whether one wanted 'Yes' or 'No', was it a good or a bad thing that it happened? Does one think, historically, what a pity we got ourselves into this mess, of dealing with a great issue, by this particular constitutional device. We could move on to whether we should do it in the future. But actually, when looking back on the events of 1975, Bill, 'boo' or 'hurrah'?

RODGERS:
Well, not 'hurrah', but I think it was probably right. I was very much opposed to it, as so many people were; and it certainly didn't settle the issue. I did think that it would, that once we'd had the referendum it would

all be over, and that successive Governments would really make the most of our membership of the Community. That didn't happen and that's been a great disappointment. But I think if there had been no referendum, there would have been even less stability, at least we can look back and say that at some point the British people voted two to one to stay in. That is my instinct now, but I was against a referendum then, and in general I'm not enthusiastic about the idea of referendums. You've got to have a very plain question and it's got to be a very major issue.

JOHNSTON:
I agree with that completely. It's noticeable that people have been repeating again and again that somehow or other people weren't told this, that, or the next thing, although on the European Community there was more information available than on almost any other subject that was under political discussion. There was almost the assumption that the politicians all the time had to spoon feed them details, there was no responsibility resting with the electorate to go and find things out, strangely enough.

SHORE:
I think it was essential to have a referendum, and for the most basic political constitutional reasons. We are, as a country, unusually vulnerable to those who wish to make major constitutional change. We have no written constitution, we have no built-in mechanism requiring a particular size of majority votes. You could abolish Parliament with a majority of one, and we're getting very near to doing that at the present time, but it really is a situation in which, unlike all other countries, you can do anything in Britain provided you have a majority and provided you have no scruples. Now, what was happening with Europe was a massive transfer of power and authority and legitimacy and law-making from the elected representatives of the British people to other institutions that they don't control in Europe. That's the heart of the thing, and to do that without getting, I use the words of the time, 'the full hearted consent of the British people', when it didn't even appear in anyone's election manifesto, because all three parties agreed on the same course; to do that without consulting the British people would have been an outrage. Therefore it did give a certain minimal legitimacy to what had been done.

JENKINS:
Well, my position is a mass of paradoxes on the referendum. I resisted it extremely strongly, to the extent, to put it bluntly, of gravely damaging my own political prospects. I then enjoyed the campaign more than any other campaign I've ever fought, but, if I'm honest, I cannot totally disentangle that from the result. If I look, slightly more objectively, I think that it was, in the short term, patching over a difficulty for the Labour Party, but in the medium term was fissiparous for the Labour Party; and I think it also, in the short term patched over a difficulty for the Cabinet, but in the medium term was gravely weakening of Cabinet Government as it had been known

before. All the openness of Cabinet Government now, where everything is leaked immediately and things of that sort, is in great contrast with the position that prevailed before. To give one example, in 1952, over six months there was a raging battle in the Cabinet as to whether sterling should be freed from the Robot scheme, which never leaked at all to the press. It was a totally different climate from that point of view. I think it's been gravely weakening of Cabinet Government. It had a substantial effect, if you like, on the split in the Labour Party, and therefore my position is a mixture of paradoxes.

BUTLER:
Pat Nairne, as a neutral civil servant?

NAIRNE:
The agreement to differ was leading to more and more difficulties. Luckily it came to an end with the campaign. I think that any historical perspective has got to take account of the fact that there was an overwhelming result one way or another. The Cabinet never took a view as to whether they were prepared to accept a simple majority, they never put their minds to that. If it had been a very close thing indeed, then I think all the split would have gone on. For my part, I've been very puzzled in recent months, by those who have proclaimed that to go for a referendum would be a unifying element for the party in power.

JONES:
I don't think you can run away from the idea of a referendum on an issue like this, or even a major modification, like the Maastricht Treaty. Not necessarily from the people around this table, but clearly now the political trends are moving and a substantial number of Conservative MPs might be asking for a referendum. I don't think you can escape it because people would say, well, we've had one before, we've had one on Scotland, we've had one on Wales; there's another one promised on Scotland and we're entitled to have our say on this issue which can affect our future much more than a lot of the decisions taken by Government. So I think you're stuck with it now, and it's probably right to be stuck with it.

HARRISON:
What happens when the public, as demonstrated by opinion polls, care more about hanging than about Europe. Would you then favour a referendum on hanging?

JONES:
Up to now Parliament has said 'no'. I agree with Parliament on that.

WORCESTER:
Just to leave you with a thought, for what it's worth, that British public opinion as of last month, in the study we did for the Joseph Rowntree

Reform Trust, shows that 77 per cent of the British people would prefer to adopt a referendum system whereby certain issues are put to the people to decide by popular vote. Indeed, 77 per cent also believe that it would be a good idea if the British people could force the Government to hold a referendum on a particular issue by raising a petition with signatures, from say one million people.

BOGDANOR:
So far the only form of referendum we have had is one on something that has already been endorsed by Parliament. Parliament has never endorsed the restoration of capital punishment. Russell Johnston is obviously right, that there was a great deal of information about Europe, but in the 1970 Election, as Peter Shore has said, the voter who was against Europe had no means of making his or her opinion known, unless by chance there was an anti-Europe candidate in their constituency. If one looks at the other referendums we have had, the devolution referendums, the Scottish result was ambiguous, but the Welsh rejected devolution by a majority of four to one. Now, three of the four major parties in Wales were for devolution, the Secretary of State for Wales said there was a great demand for it, but there clearly was not. Would it have been right not to have held that referendum, to have imposed devolution on Wales, although the vast majority did not want it? This is the question the Labour Party may have to face after the next election.

BOADEN:
I was interested in Peter Shore's particular comment. I wonder what his position was in May 1967, because it seems to me that it would be much more relevant to have had a referendum on that decision by the then Labour Government to open negotiations to enter the European Community, rather than to have the debate after we had entered the Community, on a matter that had been decided for three years. Actually, as was pointed out earlier, the referendum was not on anything, in reality, because the renegotiation meant very little, there had been very little renegotiation of major substance, so surely the earlier part must have been more important.

SHORE:
It did mean a good deal more, as I recall it, than the 1967 resolution, which was approved by Parliament by an overwhelming number, which simply gave the Government permission to enquire whether there were terms on which we might be able to join the European Community, it really was a pre-negotiation vote, And until negotiations had taken place it really couldn't possibly have been taken as a binding commitment to what came out, that's why it gave us a huge majority.

JENKINS:

We'd have felt a bit silly if we'd had a great referendum campaign and then Europe had turned us down.

WILLIAMS:
The value of the referendum campaign is that we've got a clear statement of what the Government promised, we've got a clear statement of what 'Yes' promised, we've got a clear statement of what 'No' promised. We would never have had those statements; the fact that they may have been torn up, but they actually are in history as a clear statement of where everybody stood.

ANGEL:
Because the referendum is a novel idea it's tested against some ideal standard, and people say, ah but people don't answer the question, they deal with personality rather than policy, that the media is one-sided; and there's more money on one side than on another. One feels that some of these arguments apply to some of the procedures that we've been using for years, but that we've got so used to them that we don't notice them. It does seem that this referendum did achieve a degree, for a while anyway, of commitment to a decision, which probably wouldn't have been as strong without it. One wonders what the position of the argument now would be, if there hadn't been a referendum.

BROAD:
I don't agree with John Harris and Roger Boaden that the 'renegotiated terms' were merely cosmetic. For the most part this was true, but the final issue raised, relating to the potentially very heavy net British payments into the Community budget, was of longer-term importance. The renegotiation did, at least, put that issue squarely onto the Community agenda, so that when it became a reality, towards the end of the Callaghan Government, the 1975 agreement could be activated.

BUTLER:
It's very interesting that going round the table, no one has said the referendum was a bad thing. They've said that at one stage they weren't happy that it happened. Is there anyone here or in the audience that feels that it was a pity it ever happened, that it was a mistake?

HARRISON:
Can I just put on the record, in answer to your question, my recollection is that in all of the meetings of the committee of The National Referendum Campaign, I never heard one voice of criticism of the fact of the referendum. I heard no statement of regret. I think, unanimously, people respected it as the means of deciding this issue. I think that was true of all the elements in the National Referendum Campaign. If I may take up the point made by Vernon Bogdanor and Russell Johnston, about the availability, Russell said, as never before, of the amount of information. I

don't deny that for a minute. There was a great profusion of very good information. My point, and I'm sorry to be repetitive, is that to get that information to people, in a form that they accept and look at, you need very considerable finance. I'll remind you again of the figures. The poor NRC spent £40,000 on printing leaflets. The Britain in Europe Campaign spent £265,000. On advertising the Britain in Europe Campaign spent £611,000, the NRC spent £64,000. Our decisions within the NRC committee were repetitively simply saying here is a paltry few thousand pounds we've got left, how do we get the most out of them? And we were talking about peanuts, because already, out of those two items of printing and advertising, over £100,000 out of a total budget of £133,000 had gone. Our ability to get the information to the people was severely constrained.

BUTLER:
I think that I did promise Jack Jones that before we ended we'd have a brief word about the future, but before that there's one prior thing. I would like a little bit of counter-factual history, a little 'iffyness'. Just assume that the outcome of the referendum had been, as Vernon suggested, 51 per cent 'yes', and that Scotland and Wales and Northern Ireland had voted 'no', what would have happened? It was a big gamble, this referendum. I was talking with Anthony Benn the night before the vote, and he said, knowing I was pro-Europe, 'You may win the thing, but you will win at the expense of disuniting the United Kingdom'. It was a powerful point (although it was actually refuted by the next day's figures). What do people think about what would have happened if there had been a half and half result?

BODY:
Well the status quo is what always happens. If a proposal for a major change is split, you don't jump into the dark.

BUTLER:
The major change would be 'staying in' you mean? It was asking for a revolutionary action. In fact, the 'No' vote was the revolutionary one, not the 'Yes' vote.

SHORE:
Well, we're used to the idea that if you have a majority of one, you have a majority, and I don't think people would seriously dispute the result of a majority, however small it is. They may well have in the backs of their minds the prospect of some future engagement, but not exactly on the same grounds.

RODGERS:
It would have gone back to Parliament, though I'm not sure how, but it would have had to go back to Parliament.

BUTLER:

Can I press this just a shade further, what if the vote had been 49 per cent 'Yes' and 51 per cent 'No'? What, Roy Jenkins, would your judgement be of the history of Britain in June 1975?

JONES:
It seems a waste of time thinking about what might have been.

JENKINS:
I don't know, I don't know.

BUTLER:
Do you think the Government would have felt so snubbed with a small majority? Would you have had to make Peter Shore or Tony Benn Prime Minister since they'd have won the referendum?

JENKINS:
But that didn't happen, you see. It is a very iffy question. I wouldn't like to say, partly because people who said they were, mistakenly or not, against those who were advocating the 'No' vote, which is part of the reason that it didn't happen. It's very perverse to say would they have become Prime Minister as a result of a vote that didn't take place, because of that factor, among others.

NAIRNE:
Although we knew that the Government position had always been that they would have to defer to Parliament, we had very properly prepared full contingency plans, as far as we could, on the basis that the vote would be 'No'. We went, the Cabinet Secretary John Hunt and I, to have a talk with the Prime Minister the night before the referendum, and he wasn't interested, he took the view that clearly it was going to go 'Yes'.

JENKINS:
And what were the contingency plans?

NAIRNE:
Well, that you couldn't carry them all that far is the short answer to that. You could immediately prepare a plan about the statement the Foreign Secretary would immediately have to make in Brussels. That's step number one. What, secondly, are the issues to be considered in Cabinet? We would have roughed out how the Cabinet would deal with it. In spite of everybody's assumption that, quite clearly, the pressure of the media was such that the 'Yes' supporters were bound to win, that certainly was not the assumption at the top of the Cabinet Office.

BUTLER:
If we could just ask people to make any statements they have about the lessons for the future, not about whether there should be a referendum now

about a current issue, but about the conduct of referendums. There was a splendid 100-page report, written by someone in your office, Pat, on the referendum, on the actual administrative arrangements.[6] If we do have another referendum, we can go and look at the actual details and some of the headaches involved. There was all that nonsense about central counting. The most obvious problem, as Bob and Jack have been raising, is the question of funding and guaranteeing the 'No' side adequate funds...

JONES:
It's not only that. First of all, instead of having three statements there should be two; pro and anti. Secondly, there should be equal space and time in the media during the period of the campaign, and that should be agreed by all parties, including the newspapers.

HARRIS:
There's no practicable way in which the newspapers would agree on any issue, let alone to say, well, we're having a referendum, and that being so we shall refrain from expressing our own view, notwithstanding the fact that the future of the country is clearly involved. Can I just make another brief point at this stage, on this issue. First of all the central reason for the referendum was to maintain the unity of the Labour Party. On that it failed. Within a few years there was a separate political party and that, in my view, was clearly related to the referendum campaign. And the second issue is, when one comes to the wider question of referendums on other issues, this should be remembered: at no time did the inner core of ministers, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, and probably the Chancellor, ever consider their relationship with the umbrella organisations. In fact, the Government were obviously generally supportive of the Britain in Europe Campaign, but there was no close relationship between those two; indeed there was substantial tension, because what in fact you had was a group of Ministers meeting at Number Ten, believing they were making decisions, whereas in reality they made no decisions whatsoever, because the Labour Party as an organisation was not involved in the campaign, and of course, they had no way in which they could exercise their influence, other than by talking to people, informally, in the Britain in Europe campaign. At no stage had the enthusiasts for this course of action ever considered what, in reality, their relationship with their favoured umbrella organisation was going to be. Indeed we had a major argument over it at the final stage of the campaign, when the Foreign Secretary decided he would like to appear on the final Britain in Europe television broadcast, and I was told by an Under Secretary in the Foreign Office, that the only way he could do this was to do a ministerial broadcast right at the end, nothing to do with the Britain in Europe television programme, but a separate straight to camera piece. I said there was not the slightest prospect of the BBC agreeing to do this. I repeat, that the reason for this was, that although senior ministers had come to the conclusion that the referendum was highly desirable, they had never, at any stage,

considered what, in fact, their direct relationship with the Labour Party was actually going to be.

WILLIAMS:
You can't in a future referendum tell the newspapers what they're going to publish, but you can ensure that the publications issued to every household, at the public's expense, are evenly matched and not two to one. So that could be done in the future, and you could also do something more to ensure that the finances were not so unevenly weighted.

BAINBRIDGE:
We've been talking about the referendum rather than the renegotiation, but surely the device intended to unite the Labour Party was the renegotiation, not the referendum? Once you've got a renegotiation you've got to process it some way, you've got to get an answer to your renegotiation of so-called 'Tory terms'. I certainly wouldn't want this meeting to conclude without going back to your question of whether or not it was a good thing. As a way of starting Britain's membership of the Community, the renegotiation, with the referendum that followed on from it, was a thoroughly bad thing.

NAIRNE:
Isn't it all academic to look backwards? If we're going to have a referendum, it will be in the next few years, on Maastricht and a common currency; the conditions in which that will be fought are tremendously different. There's no cold war, the press are not unanimous in favour of integration - far from it. There was the television programme last night, when the, so to speak, undecided voters came out at five to one against further integration into Europe. Industry is not going to be united in favour, so you're going to have completely different propaganda, and you'll have a completely different funding situation, because quite a lot of money, I think, will be found by people who are opposed to a federal Europe, and so one's got to look at that aspect of it.

SHORE:
I just want to add this point; to me the essential purpose of a referendum is to meet a constitutional gap in our arrangements, and you have to consult the people if you're doing something dramatic to their powers. But thinking about the effects of the Government of the time, I don't think it led to any lack of coherence of that Government. Having dissenting ministers was a quite extraordinary constitutional event, but it really didn't lead, in my judgement, to any change in the relationships that we had with each other, or with the Prime Minister. The only minister who may well have forfeited something was Tony Benn, who was moved from Industry to Energy; but really there was a very strong case, quite apart from anything to do with Europe, for moving him from Industry to Energy. That, I'm sure, was the strongest motive for moving him in Harold Wilson's mind. Not only did it end the argument between ministers in the parliamentary party, and

among the Labour movement in the country, for the rest of that Parliament. It certainly did. But it didn't even influence, in any way, Harold Wilson's successor, Jim Callaghan, when he came to be Prime Minister; there was no question of settling scores about those who had opposed him during negotiations, and those who had been on his side. So it really didn't damage relations between colleagues in Government, and the coherence in the Government from 1976 onwards was quite remarkable, even given the immense strains that followed the 'winter of discontent' at the very end of that Government.

NAIRNE:
I just thought it right to come back for a moment to the point that's been so strongly made, that it is wrong to have three pamphlets. If you have a situation where a Cabinet is divided - for some referendums in the future that may not be the position - but if the Government is divided, then it does have to state its own position. What Harold Wilson said himself, and he put his signature to this, at the beginning of the Government pamphlet, was 'We explain why the Government, which is after all still responsible, after long, hard negotiations are recommending to the British people that we should remain a member of the European Community'. He, incidentally, went on, 'we do not pretend, and have never pretended that we got everything that we wanted', but the point was that the Government did feel that there had to be a statement by the Government, which had been put, in the parliamentary debate that preceded all this. I think that's unavoidable when you've got a split in the Cabinet.

BOGDANOR:
In the 1975 referendum, the political class as a whole was in favour of remaining in Europe, and people followed that cue. In the next referendum in 1978-1979, most of the political class were for devolution. Margaret Thatcher at that time was thought of as outside the consensus, and many Scottish Conservatives were in favour of devolution. But the authority of the Government had fallen so much that people voted against it. I think the authority of Government is even lower now than it was then, and perhaps still falling, therefore the lesson I draw from it, is one for the European Movement: that the European Movement ought to take its case to the people much more than it has in the past. It has relied a bit too much in the past, on having the support of the members of what one might call the political class. That seems to me to be no longer enough. For that reason I agree with Paddy Ashdown; I think he is one of the few on the pro-Europe side who actually welcomes a referendum as a chance to try and attract support, which is not there at the moment, for the development of Britain's role in Europe. I think that one problem which pro-Europeans face is that the authority of the political class, to which most of them belong, is much less now than it was twenty years ago.

BODY:

That's been borne out in France.

SPENCER:
The two lessons I draw from it; one, that it's a disaster for the people trying to manage party unity. Anyone who thinks that this is a easy option for managing party unity should study the Labour Party experience closely, not just in the six months before the referendum, but in the two years before and the six years afterwards. Secondly, I am reminded by this discussion, how appallingly difficult it is to communicate even large messages, and what a nightmare it would have been if we had been trying to debate amendments to a treaty. If you must put a question to the people, and maybe you have to in every generation, maybe in retrospect it was a necessary endorsement of our membership, it has to be in terms of a question of 'In' or 'Out', it can't be 'do you approve of amendments to article 37b?'. This is what the Danes found, that it's no good sending them the amendments to the Treaty of Rome without sending them the Treaty, and even with the Danes, if you sent them the Treaty they would revolt. I really don't see this becoming a regular event. It might, if we're forced into it in the late 1990s, be a question of whether we should stay in, but it's got to be in those sort of big terms, not in the detailed ones.

JOHNSTON:
Peter Shore complains that we have to have a referendum because our non-constitution allows the Government, with a majority of one, to do what the hell it likes. My answer to that is to have a constitution, like every other country in Europe. I've personally never found it difficult to defend the position of the parliamentarian against the referendum, in front of an audience. I've never found this difficult at all, even if the audience disagreed with me on that particular point. The large support which Bob Worcester indicated exists now, 77 per cent in favour of referendum among the public at large, must be related to the reputation of Parliament at the moment. It has to be, and I think every referendum you have reduces the significance of Parliament. Nobody has mentioned either, that referendums, in all the experience in other places, (and there are plenty of them, Switzerland being the most glorious example), are profoundly reactionary, negative things. They produce the 'don't let's do it' reaction.

Notes
1. Conservative MP for Banbury
2. Common Market Safeguards Committee
3. National Referendum Campaign
4. D. Butler and U. Kitzinger: *The 1975 Referendum* (Macmillian, 1976)
5. *Studies of the Impact of Radio and Television Coverage of the EEC Referendum* (BBC, January 1996)

6. *Referendum on United Kingdom Membership of the European Community* (HMSO, 1975)

References

Referendum White Paper (HMSO, 1975)
Referendum Act 1975 (HMSO, 1975)