

## **THE SINGLE EUROPEAN ACT: THE CHALLENGES FACED BY THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

Well the challenges came because suddenly, in the Single European Act – with people, goods, services, capital moving freely through Europe, that is the whole concept of it – it was really a new vision, and with the vision I think came the realisation by Members of the European Parliament that we were growing up. From being just a talking shop – and that is exactly what the Parliament was in the early days – with very little influence, particularly in the major areas like agriculture, budget and so on, there was a realisation that here we are, we are part of this now. The Parliament responded and responded very positively to this sort of development.

That, of course, moved on then to the further responsibility of the Parliament for codecision, for joining together with both the Commission and with the Council of Ministers on many aspects of great importance; again a realisation that you are growing up. Once a parliament gets that further responsibility, then they take it seriously and probably make more wise decisions than otherwise, where if it did not matter [then it could be a question of] ‘well we can say what we like’. So therefore it was a very welcome development.

But then, when it becomes more related to the politics of the business, then I think the response at national parliamentary level was one of concern: ‘what is this, are they taking away powers from us, the national parliaments?’ That still exists today very strongly in the Parliament here in London. But it is part of it and that has to be political. And so you have got the administrative side of this within the Parliament, and related to the Commission and related to the Council of Ministers, and at the same time you have it within, it therefore does become a political entity. When people say we have lost our sovereignty, well we did not lose our sovereignty, we pooled our sovereignty in 1973, as far as Britain is concerned, and others before that. The only failure we made was not getting in at the beginning. I think it was something that was happening, you know, as evolution – some people might have thought it was revolution but it was not, it was evolution. It was gradually moving and it was then a question of responding to it and being that one step ahead, so that you are preparing at the same time for it. Therefore, what mattered to the Parliament at that time was to show the Commission and to show the Council of Ministers that we were a responsible body.