

Mr Adam. — Mr President, I am sorry to disagree with the rapporteur on this issue, because I understand his views and I agree very substantially with what he says. But there is a very, very important issue here. We have worked very hard to prepare this report and to get an opinion of this Parliament for the next Energy Council meeting. That is our main job. We really must not give the Council an opportunity to get off the hook. Although I respect the rapporteur's views and support him, I do hope we shall vote today, give the Council our opinion and deal with the other matters later on.

President. — Mr Adam accordingly proposes that we should not follow the rapporteur's wishes.¹

IN THE CHAIR: MR ESTGEN

Vice-President

4. Housing in Northern Ireland

President. — The next item is the report by Mrs Fullet, on behalf of the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning (Doc. 1—181/82), on

the proposal from the Commission to the Council (Doc. 1—851/81) for a regulation instituting a specific action on behalf of housing in Northern Ireland within the framework of an integrated operation in Belfast.

I call the rapporteur.

Mrs Fullet, *rapporteur* — (FR) Mr President, I am not at all worried about defending this report at the end of the morning on the last day of the part-session, because I know there is no likelihood of being beaten by the British Conservatives. Far from it. They will see that we don't bear grudges.

It is in recognition of the seriousness of the socio-economic situation in the Belfast area and because we think the European Community should help Northern Ireland to tackle its problems that the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning has approved the Commission's proposals to build a first batch of 700 houses in Belfast.

As the committee's rapporteur on this subject, I have realized how urgent it is to start a specific operation to

improve housing in Northern Ireland. However, the Commission's present proposals are part of an integrated operation in Belfast.

We on the parliamentary committee have linked the two. We unanimously agreed that it was strange, to say the least, that we were being asked our opinion on the building of housing that was part of an integrated operation, as we are not entitled to give our opinion on such operations because, ultimately, they do not involve very stringent criteria as regards the choice of site, the timetabling or the supervision of coordination.

We preferred to amend the Commission's text, and the Commission will feel free to reject the amendments on the grounds that we perhaps strayed a little from the point. But I think we did so in full awareness of the facts.

I should like to give you the Commission's definition of an integrated operation. An integrated operation is a coherent set of public and private schemes in a limited geographical area to the implementation of which the national and regional authorities in the Member States, and the Commission itself, contribute in a complementary manner. In order to achieve this object, the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning considers that it should be for the recipient to prove the additional and complementary nature of the Community contribution in relation to the national expenditure.

The parliamentary committee also calls for a general framework to be set up for these operations, providing, in particular, for Parliament to monitor their implementation — unless the two integrated operations run so far are only experimental and exceptional. However, if, as I expect, the Commission receives a lot of requests for operations of this kind, then some sort of framework has to be established.

This is what we tried to outline in the report. Otherwise, the Commission would have had to state in its proposal that the scheme was a specific one for housing — which would have opened the door to other possibilities in this Europe of ours. We have made a political stand, as we are accountable for public money.

I should like to stress that no Members have tabled amendments. The only amendments are those suggested by the committee, which unanimously approved them. This is why I think there is no problem about everyone in the House today voting for this report.

(Applause)

President. — I call the Socialist Group.

Mr Hume. — Mr President, I will be very brief and not detain the House. I should like to thank Mrs Ful-

¹ For motions for resolutions entered in the register under Rule 49, see the Minutes.

Hume

let, not only for her report but for the speed with which she has produced it and brought it before this House.

This issue is of particular interest to my own area — Northern Ireland — and arises originally out of a resolution by this House to which the Commission has responded by offering some funding for housing in Belfast. I can only emphasize what Mrs Fuillet has already said, that it is absolutely essential that this Commission expenditure should not only be additional to government expenditure in Northern Ireland but also be seen to be additional. Therefore, we should monitor it in this House.

I should also like to thank the committees of the Parliament for expediting this matter, because we want to get the funds urgently onto the streets of Belfast where we have such a serious housing problem. Again, my thanks to the rapporteur.

President. — I call the Group of the European People's Party (Christian-Democratic Group).

Mr O'Donnell. — Mr President, we in this group fully support the proposal for specific Community action on housing in Northern Ireland within the framework of an integrated operation in Belfast. I would congratulate the rapporteur on her excellent report and commend the Commission on the initiative taken.

The case for Community action in relation to housing in Belfast is a compelling one and has been very well outlined by the rapporteur and in the Commission document as well. My colleagues and I who visited Belfast last October as members of a delegation from the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning were fully briefed on the housing situation in Belfast and left in no doubt about the magnitude of the housing problem there and of the total inadequacy of existing policies and strategies to deal with it. It was made quite clear that if this problem was to be tackled effectively, a new approach and new strategies were urgently needed, and that Community aid was an absolutely vital element. In the exceptional economic and social circumstances of Northern Ireland, housing must form a key element in the formulation of a coherent and integrated development strategy for the region, because job creation must be linked with improved living conditions.

There is therefore, as I said, a compelling case for Community action. There is no doubt whatsoever that Community aid would do much to accelerate housing construction in Northern Ireland and also have beneficial effects on employment and on many sectors of activity linked with the building industry. The formula proposed, one of joint action by the Commission, the local authorities and the government, is a good one and I have no doubt whatsoever that, if properly

applied and in particular if the principle of additionality is fully respected, it may well produce dramatic results.

I am pleased therefore to support the proposal and sincerely hope that it will achieve its object.

President. — I call the European Democratic Group.

Mr J. D. Taylor. — Mr President, representing Northern Ireland and the city of Belfast in this House, I want, first of all, to thank you, Mr President, and the Members of the House for agreeing to our request to have this week's agenda amended so as to include this specific item on housing in the city of Belfast.

I would also like to congratulate Mrs Fuillet on the work which she has done both in our Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning and in the report which she has so ably presented to the House this morning.

The issue of housing in Belfast arises from our earlier debate in June 1981, when Parliament agreed that the Community should seek means of assisting Northern Ireland and especially in the area of housing. Of course, we pointed out then that the worst housing was in the city of Belfast itself. It is well recognized that housing in Belfast is the worst throughout Western Europe and three times as bad as the average for large cities elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

As Mrs Fuillet and Mr O'Donnell have said, these conditions have been seen on the ground by members of the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning, who came to Belfast last year at our invitation. Individual Members of this House have come at my personal invitation and, of course, Mr Giolitti and other Commissioners have also been to Northern Ireland. They have not only seen the bad housing conditions, they have noted that they exist both in the large, deprived Protestant areas of Belfast city and, of course, in the Catholic quarter of the city as well.

What we are talking about, therefore, is the building of an additional 750 houses this year in the city of Belfast. At the moment the government only has proposals to build 2 000 in Belfast this year. Therefore, this is a major increase — it will represent a 33% increase in the number of houses to be built in Belfast this year. That does not go far enough to meet the compelling problems that exist in the city, but none the less it is a contribution from the Community which we throughout Northern Ireland and especially in the city of Belfast appreciate.

There was a time in the late 1960s and early 1970s when we were building upwards of 15 000 houses per annum in Northern Ireland. But since the removal of devolved government and the introduction of direct