

in our domestic law which are necessary to implement that Treaty. By doing this, we fulfil the obligations which we accepted in that Treaty; and we are then enabled to exercise the rights of our membership in full. This is a logical and clear consequence of events, consistent with our intention stated last June and consistent with the normal procedures of the House.

The vote last October came after more than a decade of negotiations; after a long period during which hon. Members had reflected on the matter and had discussed this thoroughly with all the various interests involved. When the time came for the vote, there was a free vote on this side of the House—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]—Yes, there was; and there was, in effect, a free vote on the benches opposite. Now we have moved to the next stage in the proceedings.

The Leader of the Opposition said this afternoon that he did not propose to raise again the basic issues. I agree. I believe that outside this House there is no desire now to reopen the debate of principle. The Leader of the Opposition did not wish to raise basic issues. Overwhelmingly the desire now, the decision of principle having been taken—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]—is for us now to take the opportunities which are open for ourselves and for Europe.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) discussed questions relating to the working of a democracy. The successful working of a parliamentary democracy depends on two factors. The first is the need for Parliament to take clear and coherent decisions on the main questions of principle and on the measures required to put them into effect. That is what we are proposing tonight. The second is the need for Parliament to equip itself to question and, if necessary, challenge the way in which the decisions are administered. These are the two essential things for Parliament.

Right hon. and hon. Gentlemen opposite will be misjudging the interests of this country if they seek to obstruct this Bill, as the hon. Gentleman suggested they would, with a whole series of minor objections.

Mr. Russell Kerr (Feltham): Minor?

The Prime Minister: I shall be dealing with the major issues shortly. [Interrup-

tion.] The hon. Member for Ebbw Vale was allowed to develop his thesis. I wish to develop mine.

The last thing the people of this country and the business community want is a continuation of uncertainty. The same is true of our friends abroad, and in particular those countries which will have special relationships with the Community. I believe, therefore, that this House—we are discussing the duties and responsibilities of the House of Commons—has a duty to show that it is clear and consistent in the decisions which it takes.

Mr. Gwynoro Jones (Carmarthen): And is sovereign.

The Prime Minister: The Leader of the Opposition raised three particular points—New Zealand, sugar and fisheries—and while I do not wish to go into them in great detail—[Interruption.]—like him—I shall comment on his querying of the unanimous voting or use of the veto which is involved. The three questions carry us far into the future.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Willesden, West): Is 1975 that far into the future?

The Prime Minister: The Leader of the Opposition must surely agree that we cannot go into Europe and take decisions unilaterally, on our own. The question, therefore, if one is dealing for example, with fisheries as far ahead as 1982, is how we can best protect our rightful interests. If it is to be done on a majority decision, then there is a possibility of being out-voted. But if it is a question of a unanimous decision and we have the right of veto, then we have the ability to protect our essential interests. [Interruption.] With respect to hon. Gentlemen opposite, we have the right of veto.

It is important for the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues to realise that other countries also have special interests which they wish to protect. It is because of this situation and the rights which each Member has that it is possible to reach an accommodation on arrangements of the kind we require. If the right hon. Gentleman has doubts about this, he should recognise that the whole history of the Community shows that, in practice, this is what has always happened.