

ADDRESS BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE ROY JENKINS, PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

LUXEMBOURG - TUESDAY 11 JANUARY 1977

Today is both an intimidating and a moving occasion for me. Over a long span in national politics I have devoted much of my energies and invested most of my political capital to and in the cause of European unity. I have done so instinctively because I felt it in my bones to be the most worthwhile cause to which a European citizen could apply himself. But I have constantly been able to fortify this instinctive belief with the intellectual cement of seeing in detail how few problems we are any of us able to solve on a purely national basis.

Despite this deep, long-standing and active commitment to the European cause, I have never worked closely within the institutions of the Community. I recall a remark of Winston Churchill's. When asked what was his relationship with the Church of England, he said:

"I could hardly be called a pillar of the church. I am more in the nature of a buttress. I have supported it from the outside."

This being so, I now enter the portals with some humility towards those who have long worked within, but also with the complete commitment and determination which is necessary in order to undertake any great job.

I am also aware of coming from outside in another sense. I am the first President from a country which was not, alas, present at the creation of the original Six. Britain may still in some ways appear remote from the heart of Europe. But Britain is now decisively a part of the Community, the decision confirmed by an overwhelming public vote 19 months ago. It was the most recent great popular victory won by the European cause. That should not be forgotten either in Britain or elsewhere. I do not, however,

intend to be a British President. I intend to be a European President. I do not of course wish to deny my national origins. Anyone who attempted to do that would be a narrow man, with at least one dimension lacking. He would also be a foolish man, particularly at a time when the desire for local cultural identification, erupting within national states but in no way necessarily contradictory to the broader European concept, is taking on a fresh force throughout many of the Community countries.

We are all of us in large part a product of our national cultural linguistic and political background. That is one reason why we are able to talk about the richness and diversity of Europe. As a result we all want our countries to benefit from the success of the Community. But here we are at a delicate hinge. To wish to benefit from the success of the Community is a good thing. But what is quite different and highly undesirable is constantly to try to strike a narrow arithmetical balance as to exactly how much day-to-day profit or loss each country is getting out of the Community. The Community is not a betting-shop or a lottery-stall into which one takes one's stakes and hopes to come away with more than one went in, but knowing always that the pool is fixed, that nothing can be created therein, and that a gain can therefore only be at the expense of another member's loss. Such a narrow approach would soon recoil on the head of any nation, rich or poor, which attempted to live by it. The Community can and must be more than the sum of its parts. It can create and give more than it receives, but only if the Member States, peoples and governments alike, have the vision to ask what they can contribute, and not just what they can get.

I also come before you as a politician, a Minister intermittently over a span of 12 years, a parliamentarian continuously over a span of 29. I do not think that is a bad thing. The Commission should be a political

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rather than a technocratic body, constantly aware of the public impact of its proposals but combining vision with practicality, efficiency with humanity. The diversity of our backgrounds and experience will strengthen and broaden our ability to do the job before us.

The Commission must also work most closely with the Parliament. No doubt we shall have disputes, but we are on the same side. Although we have thought it right in this Commission to designate a Member with Special Responsibilities for Relations with the Parliament, we should all have close links with the Parliament, and be prepared to answer to you for our various responsibilities. We should none of us shelter behind an intermediary. Apart from the Commissioner with Special Parliamentary Responsibilities, the Budget Commissioner, as has been historically the case with evolving Parliaments, may well develop an especially close relationship. His portfolio demands a concentration of attention. That is why we have not associated it with a totally disparate one, as was previously so. But the lead in relations with the Parliament must be given by the President. I shall endeavour to give that lead, and to establish close relations with the political groups within the Parliament. We are a coalition Commission, as is wholly right, at least at the present stage of development. I shall therefore need to be a coalition rather than a partisan President. I shall be a partisan only for the unity of Europe.

I attach the highest importance to the prospect of direct elections. Europe is a political enterprise, which we have so far endeavoured to advance by mainly economic means. It is concerned with the hearts of men and women and not merely with the management of packages. Let us manage the packages well as we have mostly but not invariably done in the past, but let us never forget the purpose and the objective. We must therefore greatly welcome the introduction of this new political dimension of universal suffrage. For the target date to be missed would be a major setback. The responsibility on any country which impeded this development would be heavy and damaging.

/The election

The election of the Parliament will not in itself, give greater legal powers. But it will have greater moral authority. I believe that the best contribution that the new Commission can make towards this beneficent transition, which will make a dramatic divide in its four-year lifespan, is to anticipate it: to get used to treating the present Parliament as it will treat the new one. I intend from here forward to inject into our consideration of any proposal we put forward to the Council the systematic and serious consideration of whether it is one for which we can reasonably expect the support of a majority in this Parliament. So, allowing for the pull of leadership as well as the response of democracy, do enlightened national governments behave. We will do the same.

I have emphasised the high priority I intend to give to Parliament. This, the first occasion on which I address you, is the right moment to make that emphasis clear. But I shall also be addressing you next month on the occasion of the presentation of the Programme of the Commission. That speech is obviously the one in which I should go into the detail of the policies which the Commission intend to pursue. Nonetheless, I should like, at this time, to set out some indication of the direction in which I believe both the Commission and the European Community should be pointing.

I most naturally start with the distribution of portfolios in the new Commission.

In taking the decisions of the night of 6/7 January, the Commission has sought both to give emphasis to some developing and crucial policy areas, and at the same time to try to bring, where possible, greater coherence to certain key functions.

First, all the information activities of the Commission have been brought together under my authority as President. It is, I believe, of fundamental importance, especially in the lead up to Direct Elections,

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that the informative role of the Commission should be seen to have and receive a single clearly collegial sense of direction and purpose.

→ This can best be done by the President, and I am determined to try to ensure a vigorous presentation to the public of the Commission's activities.

Secondly, over the lifetime of this Commission, the Community will be making decisions about those countries which seek membership. This is a key task and the questions inherent in the further enlargement of the Community are so important that we have thought it right to make it a priority task of one Commissioner. But we have not approached the creation of this portfolio for special responsibilities solely on the basis of a single policy issue. There is a real need for a senior Member of the Commission to be in a position to take on and concentrate on a wide and changing range of vital ad hoc issues of this sort.

Thirdly, the portfolio for Employment and Social Affairs provides for a greater concentration on the problem of unemployment, especially of structural unemployment, which confronts all member countries, even the most economically successful of them. To ensure that the Commissioner responsible for these tasks can operate on broad enough canvass, we have linked the Tripartite Conference with this portfolio.

Fourthly, there is the closely related issue of the manner in which the various financial instruments available to help correct imbalances within the Community are administered. There has been too great a tendency to see the various Community funds in isolation one from the other. The policy in relation to them should be seen and coordinated as a whole.

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Finally, we have decided greatly to reorganise the area of the Internal Market and Industrial Affairs by bringing the existing Directorates General together and placing them together under the authority of a single Member of the Commission. Industry throughout the Community is undergoing a sustained period of rapid structural change and it is therefore important that the Commission services dealing with industry should be brought under one hand and organised as rationally as possible.

These are the principal changes in the shape of the portfolios by which we have sought to emphasise the priorities as we now see them. But there is one other aspect which, although it is most clearly embedded in a single portfolio, is a theme which should run through all Commission responsibilities. The Community is designed to protect and advance the interests of all its citizens. Policies to safeguard the producer need to be balanced by policies to safeguard the consumer. That balance has not always been struck in the past. This means that we should give greater weight to the protection of the consumer as well as to that of the environment in which we all live. The Common Agricultural Policy can serve as an example. In the difficult times which lie ahead, the Commission must work to maintain and improve the Common Agricultural Policy. But I believe we can best do this by showing clearly that it can serve the common good in providing stable supplies of food at reasonable prices as well as stable markets for an efficient European agricultural system.

In short, we must seek to ensure that the Europe of the Community, and especially the Commission which is its servant, is seen to have, and has in fact, a human face which individual citizens in Member States can both recognise and trust.

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The previous Commission under the dedicated leadership of François-Xavier Ortoli, has had to operate for three quarters of its mandate under the pall of the most discouraging economic weather which we have known for a generation. In this climate they have brilliantly defended the citadel. They have even with great courage and skill made some successful forays out of it, particularly, but not exclusively, in the area of relations with the outside world, both developed and developing. But essentially they have had to live in winter quarters. I do not yet feel any benign stirring of the breezes of spring. But what I do feel is that there comes a time when you have to break out of the citadel or wither within it. That time is now very close upon us. Nor are the omens necessarily unpropitious. The Member States have recently gone too much their own way.

They cannot possibly congratulate themselves upon the result. One aspect of the result has been a greater sense of apprehension, a greater sagging of hope, than Europe has experienced since the beginning of its post-war resurgence. Out of this morass they may be more inclined to listen to Community proposals for the future, provided they are cogently, firmly and selectively presented. And across the Atlantic we have a new President who has made it clear in his public statements that he is anxious to work in partnership with Europe as a Community. But what this will mean in practice and how effectively we can have a ^{canal} ~~good~~ relationship across the Atlantic will depend essentially on how seriously we take ourselves as a Community. Our own attitude is a pre-requisite for the reactions of others.

The logic of working together must be clearly argued. The 25 years up to the end of 1973 were among the most stable, prosperous and hopeful in the whole long history of this continent. But there is a paradox about this achievement. Precisely because we became so prosperous and enjoyed such a degree of political stability, we came to take them for granted

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to forget that the foundations on which they rest are in reality extremely fragile. And we may forget also how our prosperity and stability were achieved, and in forgetting, behave in ways which will put their continuation in jeopardy.

The truth is that the prosperity and stability which Europe enjoys today is in large measure due to the vision and statesmanship of those who created the European Community in the late forties and fifties.

But if our children are to enjoy comparable prosperity and stability in the 1980s and 1990s this generation will have to display the same vision and statesmanship as did our predecessors. It is easy today to think in terms of anniversaries. It is 30 years since the first stirrings of the modern European Movement. It is 25 years since the Coal and Steel Community took up its tasks in this City of Luxembourg. It is 20 years since the signature of the Treaty of Rome. It is also easy to praise the great names of the past, and praises they certainly deserve.

Yet I believe that our duty today is not to invoke history, but to start once again to make it: not to praise famous men by sitting idly on the scaffolding of the half-finished building and drinking toasts to those who laid the foundations so well. The best tribute we can pay to them is not to praise them but to emulate them, to get on with our job and add at least another storey to the building. We cannot live indefinitely on the triumphs of half a generation ago. If we do this, we will ensure that the idea of Europe means nothing to the hearts of the young and is only an evocative evening memory in the minds of the middle-aged and the old.

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We are indeed at a potentially dangerous junction of generations. Those who made the Community were mostly well-advanced in life, but they were sustained by a great wave of European enthusiasm amongst the young, to whom the conflicts and the suspicions and narrow nationalisms of the past were not merely repugnant but almost incomprehensible. It was the older generation who had been brought up to hate and distrust those whom they had fought who found it difficult to bury the past. Now, if we are not careful it may be the other way round. It is the young who will yawn at Europe and only their elders who will remember its great message.

That would be a most dangerous balance for the future. We must be determined to avoid it. And that can only be done by showing that Europe has a direct relevance not only to the mechanics of our economies but to combatting the uglinesses and frustrations and injustices of everyday life; and relating it too to the transcendent purposes of world peace and human freedom. We must graft the idea of Europe into the lives of its people. No matter how technical are the proposals which come before us, the prior question we must ask ourselves is: "How will this improve the lot of the European citizen? How in particular will it affect those whose future seems purposeless and unrewarding? Will it make them more content at work? Will it indeed give them a better chance of finding work? Will it give them the framework for more satisfaction in life away from work? Will it make the individual citizens feel that this Europe of ours is not just an affair of professional politicians but is a better place to live in, and thus attach the citizens to its higher purposes, not as an abstraction, however noble, but as a continuum, extending from world influence to job opportunity?"

/To underpin

To underpin this public impact we must of course endeavour to end the growing divergence of the economies of the Member States. This cannot be done overnight or by simple decree. And it certainly cannot and should not be done by asking the strong to become less strong and less effectively managed. It is no part of our business to promote an equality of weakness. Common disciplines and learning from success are an essential part of the philosophy of convergence.

But on this basis we must, like any civilised community, help the weaker members. This is in the interests of the strong as well as the weak, for if the weak were to fall by the wayside an essential part of the foundation of unity on which the strong have built their prosperity would be destroyed. Nor should we be too surprised that divergencies have arisen. We would have been singularly lucky if they had not. What greater unity in the world, from the Roman Empire to the United States of America, would ever have been created if divergencies were regarded as a recipe for despair? The test is how we face them. Help for the weaker members, provided they are also prepared to help themselves, is one of the distinguishing signs of the existence of a community. It applies to the community of the family. It applies to the community of the state. And it must apply to our Community of European nations. The larger the Community, the easier it is for the weaker areas to be neglected. We cannot do this without ultimately destroying the Community.

And in all our activities we must remember our underlying political purposes. Our means are largely economic. But our end is and always has been political. It is to make a European Union. It is to preserve and fortify our peace and liberty. It is to restore to Europe the influence in the world which we have so wantonly thrown away in a

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generation of European civil wars. Much has already been accomplished. However great may be our present difficulties they are as nothing compared with the problem which confronted those who had to build afresh out of the rubble and bitterness of the late forties.

Let us not bemoan too much. But let us at the same time be aware of the size of the stakes. The values of justice for all, individual freedom and intellectual integrity, which were the norms of a civilised society, and to which can now happily be added a sense of social fairness, are now genuinely at risk. There are not many countries in the world which can be counted upon to sustain them. We represent about half of that number. If our Community cannot be made to work, what can? If we, among the richest and certainly among the most favoured and talented of the populations of the globe, cannot learn to work together, what prospect is there for humanity? Or for a decent civilised life for ordinary men and women? There are the stakes and there are the issues. Let us approach them with an awesome sense of responsibility, but also with a courageous and determined optimism.
