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**SPEECH BY MR. RICHARD BURKE, MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION OF THE
EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want first to thank you very sincerely for inviting me here today. To be asked to address the Association of European Journalists is an honour which I cherish. It is also an opportunity to ask what I hope will be some relevant questions about where we are going, and where we have been.

For you here today are journalists with a commitment. You are committed to European Union, to, as I think your charter says, "the integration of Europe on a democratic base." I share that commitment, and particularly the insistence on the democratic character which must attach to all we do.

Friends can talk to friends with candour about shared ideals. It is in that spirit that I would like to ask here some possibly troublesome questions as to what we are about. I want to begin with a matter of terminology, of its nature rather tedious, but I think requiring close examination. My question is this: What do we mean when we speak of "Europe", of "good Europeans," and the "building of Europe." We mean, I suggest, something rather specialized and private. We mean the development of the institutions deriving from the Treaty of Rome to the point where they will assume the character of a federal

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(or supranational authority.)

or supranational authority. Our "Europe" exists in aspiration rather than in fact. It is a design superimposed in the mind's eye over the actual European States, or the grouping of states, which exist now.

It is, of course, in the nature of specialists and enthusiasts that they develop a private language for the things which preoccupy them. Unfortunately this can make it difficult for them to establish satisfactory contact with the world outside, with the great ranks of the uninitiated.

When we speak of "Europe" we do not mean the ordinary Europe of everyday experience. We do not mean the Europe of the man in the pub or the man in the metro, and he will often find it difficult to catch our drift.

He does not think of "building Europe" because he will assume that Europe was already built some time ago. It may now be due for a little restoration. But building? Well, he will think, hardly that. Nor will he find the idea of "becoming European" a very interesting objective, because he will tend to echo the sentiment of General de Gaulle: "The moment that I became French, I became European."

As for the Treaty of Rome and its institutions, the man in the metro may have heard of the Treaty - and valiant efforts have been made this year to ensure that he has - but he is, I would guess, not greatly excited by what he has heard.

What does excite him? Obviously, prices, taxes, jobs, transport, pensions, the value he gets in goods and services. Now, as it happens, most or all of these things are touched in some way, and often critically touched, by Community policy. But the ordinary citizen scarcely knows this, and when he does he is apt to assume that the impact of the policy is for the worst. Only if the citizen happens to be a farmer is he likely to have a precise and balanced view of the Community's role in his vocational or business life.

But there is something else that people care about, more deeply, I think, than about prices or the other things. They care about identity - where they belong, who they are. Here too the Community is a shadowy presence. Identity will normally express itself in national terms.

For in Europe still most of us think of ourselves first as Germans, Italians, Irishmen. There is, as yet, no primary European identity that can match the power of the traditional loyalties.

For myself, I find nothing deplorable in this. It would indeed be an impertinence to deplore a set of values which millions of people freely hold without, as a rule, injuring their neighbours in the process.

But many of you will, I am sure, accept that in the circles where we move, in the community of European enthusiasts, it has for long been commonplace to denounce nationalism as a perverse growth to be eradicated at almost any cost. It has even been assumed by some that only those who have been entirely purged of national feeling are worthy to participate in what we call the "building of Europe."

This view was more prevalent in Community circles fifteen years ago than it is now, but it still lingers. It seems to me, looking back to those early years, that the polemical assault launched then against nationalism was a great mistake, and that the detestation of the nation state which inspired the polemic sometimes bordered on the irrational.

A horror of nationalism in the founding fathers was certainly understandable to some degree, given the nature of World War II. But it was wrong to judge it only by its worst excesses, and to suppose that it might easily be overcome.

For the fact is that nationalism has proved a durable force in political life. It has now, I think, begun to decline in Europe, though not elsewhere. But it is still cherished, in one form or another, by millions who are no worse than you or I. This is a fact with which we must cope, and I don't mean by moralizing.

I argued last week in Brussels that the chief effect of the extreme federalist arguments of the 1950s and 60s was to mobilize the defenders of the nation-state, to the eventual detriment of the community. In the same way, I would argue, the characteristic "European" propaganda against nationalism serves chiefly to separate the relatively small circle of Community believers from the great mass of the unconverted and the half-converted.

For the people still imbued with an essentially national feeling are not, on the whole, "living in the past," as they are regularly scolded for doing. They are often rather emphatically living in the present. What, after all, are the formative European experiences of the past quarter-century? I would say, for a short list, the German miracle of recovery, the British loss of world power, the establishment of the Fifth Republic, the Italian crisis, the nightmare of Northern Ireland.

What do these events have in common? That they are of profound importance, and will be as far as the mind can reach into the future. That they changed the lives of the populations that lived through them. That those populations experienced them intensely in a national framework, and perceived them in national terms, because there was no other way to perceive them. That the involvement of the

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(European Community....)

European Community, institutionally defined, was in some cases slight or non-existent.

It seems to me that these events, and a few others, constitute the "real history" of Europe in recent times. To the extent that this history does not feature in our discussion as "good Europeans" of our situation, the discussion is defective.

How far, then, does it feature? I mentioned the Fifth Republic, and earlier I mentioned in passing the founder of the Fifth Republic. I did so in all trepidation, because I have learned already during my short time in Brussels that conversation in European circles is likely to remain agreeable so long as one avoids mention of General de Gaulle; but that once his name has been admitted good sense and good humour are liable to vanish.

But I cannot avoid him, because he looms so large in the real history of our times. To discuss the last twenty years without him would be like discussing modern Ireland without reference to Eamonn de Valera - whose name, of course, often occasions a similar collapse of civility in otherwise decent company.

But I notice that many good Europeans have a way of carrying on their discussion as if De Gaulle had never existed. I notice too that in the Commission building in Brussels you will search in vain for his portrait, though many others who are deemed to have assisted the development of the community are to be found there. Among them, quite properly, is Konrad Adenauer.

But was it not one of the proudest achievements of Adenauer's great career that he was de Gaulle's partner in the Franco-German Treaty of Friendship? Was he not even happy to acknowledge that he was the junior partner? And is not that Treaty, and the special relationship that flowed from it, one of the main buttresses of the European Community? Yet in the loose talk of some "good Europeans" de Gaulle is a wrecker, and only that.

It was certainly a wreck that he found when he came to power in 1958. Yet he succeeded in rebuilding a strong and stable France. Does anyone doubt that this was a contribution to the European Community? Or would they prefer the Fourth Republic?

I do not of course mean to suggest that de Gaulle was in any sense a friend of European Union as I wish to see it. He made his position on that brutally clear at all times. He also reserved a special vehemence for his criticism of Commission policy in the early sixties.

But after all it is now twelve years since the crisis of the empty chair, and eight years since de Gaulle ceased to be President of France. It is surely time that Europeans - in our sense - admitted his achievement as a suitable topic for discussion, and perhaps for instruction. All the other Europeans, in the ordinary sense, are doing it all the time.

I am not sure what the historians of the next century will have to say about the relative contributions of de Gaulle and Jean Monnet to our period. If by then a federal Europe has come into being M. Monnet will be justly celebrated as the visionary of an idea whose time had come, and its first strategist; while de Gaulle may represent no more than the sunset, brilliant or lurid as you see it, of an idea which had run its course.

But it is quite clear that if the question were asked today, which man looms larger in the popular mind; which name stirs more hearts; there is only one answer possible.

Except, that is, in certain "European" circles where de Gaulle remains an inadmissible topic. How absurd it is that in the real world his political followers can form, in the European Parliament, a durable alliance with the governing party of Ireland, impeccably committed as it is to the European ideal, while in the theory of certain professed custodians of that ideal de Gaulle is an aberration best forgotten!

He is to be forgotten, as I understand it, because he opposed the Commission in certain respects, and because everything he did was done, passionately and without a hint of shame, for the nation state into which he was born.

I must confess that I can only describe this attitude of many "good Europeans" as sectarian. Since this is a word which for some reason I keep running across in various walks of life, I had better explain what I mean.

Our "good European" friends are sectarian in their insistence that there is only one allowable way forward, which is their way; and that all who do not instantly renounce the nation state and seek the supranational road are to be cast out.

Such an attitude can kill the Community as surely as prolonged recession or institutional paralysis. I would prefer that we were ecumenical instead of sectarian, and accepted that there are as many roads to union as there may be to salvation. This means, I believe, accepting that the whole European experience since the war has to be assimilated and put to use, even those parts of it which were troublesome at the time. In this way the gap, between our "Europe," specialist and even elitist as it sometimes is, and the real Europe of the people can begin to be closed. And it is above all in the directly-elected Parliament that this can be done.

The great importance of the Elections is that for the first time they will install the democratic process directly in the European institutions themselves. Until now these institutions have been sustained on every side by the democratic order - but always obliquely, at one remove. The people have spoken, but only to those who sent us to Brussels and Luxembourg.

They have not spoken directly to us. Now they will do so. That will in time change all the institutions, in ways we cannot predict.

But first, it may be said, before we contemplate these changes, let us be sure the election is actually held. I agree that there is still a nagging uncertainty about the date of these elections, but not, I think, about the fact that they will happen. The position at the moment is that eight of the nine Member States have either completed the necessary legislation, or will have done so within a few months.

The exception, of course, is Britain, and here indeed a doubt does persist about the timing of elections. But I for one was greatly encouraged by Mr. Callaghan's message to his Party Council the other day. We must accept, however, that he still faces major difficulties in making his "best endeavours" work for the deadline of next May.

A sizeable number of M.P.s in the House of Commons still oppose the Direct Elections, even though the lingering questions about Britain's membership of the Community have at last been set aside. I must say here that I can understand an advocate of British withdrawal urging a boycott of the elections. But I cannot at all see the point of accepting membership, however reluctantly, and then opposing the extension of the democratic process in a system which is so often assailed as secretive and bureaucratic. The sceptics, even the obstructionists - if there are any - in the new Parliament, will

have the same rights there as the most ardent federalist, provided they are returned by popular vote.

What sort of Parliament will it prove to be? In several important ways, it will resemble the present one, building on its strength and experience. We are honoured here today by the attendance of President Colombo, and it is my pleasure to pay tribute to the remarkable achievements of his presidency, and of those of his predecessors.

Certainly I know how valuable we in the Commission find the advice of Parliament, and how formidable its criticisms. I marvel at the dedication of its members, who face severe handicaps, especially in the matter of their dual mandate. I think I can say that this Commission has had a particular concern for the needs of Parliamentarians. Indeed only two days ago President Jenkins and I presented to our colleagues a paper reviewing all aspects of Commission-Parliament

relations and making recommendations in regard to them. With due allowance for the essential autonomy of the institutions as established in the Treaty, I shall, as member responsible for relations with Parliament, seek still closer cooperation between the institutions in the future.

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But we are also aware - and I know that President Colombo shares this view - of certain weaknesses in the present Parliament which tend to obscure its achievements. The dual mandate, the dual or treble location, the complexity of procedure - borrowing as it does from several different parliamentary traditions so that it takes time before any individual can feel quite comfortable with it - the great technicality of certain debates, the equal technicality required in defining the budgetary powers, the fact that much of the best debate takes place in committee and is unreported - all these elements contribute to an image of parliament which is opaque, confusing and lacking in immediacy.

I would add, with the present audience especially in mind - that Parliament also suffers from relative neglect by the media. There is a problem of underpublicity, which compounds all the other problems.

But of course the underlying weakness of the present assembly lies in its mandate. Since this is indirect, at best resembling that of an upper house in a normal legislature, a senate which must yield supremacy to the popularly-elected chamber below, the Parliament has been limited in its potential.

That limit is now about to be removed. Other limits will remain, but the treatment of Parliament's radical weakness - namely, its lack of a democratic mandate - is the most positive step that could be taken now. And, I believe, it is the most positive step forward taken by any of the community institutions for many years.

What kind of Parliament will it be? I foresee it as representative, demanding and ambitious. It will command the close attention of the European public, as its predecessor often cannot do. It will possibly give a hard time to the Commission, and this I think we will welcome. For the Commission is, or ought to be - as President Jenkins has said - a political body. But politicians, if they are to function healthily in our society, need democratic involvement and scrutiny. The Commission has been starved of this, but Parliament will now supply it.

I suppose Parliament may also give a hard time to the Council, and this I would not object to either.

But its main function, I hope, will be to serve as the forum where the future of all the European institutions will be debated and worked out. I see the Commission and the Council making their cases there, debating with Parliamentarians on every important step they take, and, perhaps directly with each other too. Mr. Tindemans said in his report almost two years ago that the role of the directly-elected Parliament would be decisive in the development of European Union. It is in this way that I see the Parliament fulfilling that role.

But, it may be protested - it usually is - this Parliament, of which you hope so much, will have no more powers than the existing one, and these are not very impressive. It is true that we can foresee no expansion in the powers of the assembly, at least in its first electoral term. For myself I do not find this at all a matter for gloom.

It seems to me that the tacit agreement to limit the growth of Parliamentary power, for a time at least, was a fair price to pay for getting the elections now. And since there are important sections of opinion in at least two community countries which feel great misgivings about this question of power, I feel it would not have been right to expand the formal role of Parliament within the institutions at this stage.

In any case I am convinced that without any addition to its existing powers the influence of Parliament will be transformed. For its influence will arise, not from any adjustment of the treaties, or any concession by the member states, but simply from the fact of its democratic mandate.

But here I offer a word of warning. The strength of that mandate, the influence deriving from it, the possibility that the Parliament can play a transforming role among the institutions, all depend, as I see it, on one thing - that is, the level of popular participation in the election. In the effort to secure a high turn-out, I suggest, all of us here have a critical part to play. If the turn-out is good, we shall all be winners; if poor, we shall all have lost, no matter what share of the votes our party may gain.

The success of these elections will enhance the legitimacy of our institutions and re-launch the Community after a prolonged period of setback. More particularly, as I have tried to argue today, it will begin the process of ensuring that the Europe of the experts and the enthusiasts will at last coincide with the Europe of the people.