

STATEMENT BY MR RICHARD BURKE, MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, LONDON, 12 MARCH 1980 : CHANNEL TUNNEL (10.A.M. LOCAL TIME)

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

MAY I BEGIN BY THANKING YOU FOR COMING HERE THIS MORNING AND IN ANTICIPATION FOR LISTENING TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY ABOUT OUR INTEREST IN A CHANNEL LINK. THE INTEREST WHICH HAS BEEN MANIFEST IN A NUMBER OF ARTICLES ABOUT THE COMMISSION STUDY OF THE CHANNEL LINK DURING THE PAST FEW WEEKS HAS BEEN AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO ME AND A CONFIRMATION OF THE VIEW THAT I HAVE CONSISTENTLY HELD, NAMELY THAT A FIXED LINK ACROSS THE CHANNEL IS OF FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE IN THE COMMUNITY CONTEXT.

I HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY ENCOURAGED BY THE ATTENTION SHOWN TO OUR ATTEMPTS TO DEVELOP A COMMUNITY POLICY FOR TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE BECAUSE IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THIS HAS BEEN AN AREA THAT HAS BEEN UNJUSTIFIABLY NEGLECTED. IT IS PATENTLY OBVIOUS THAT FROM AN ENGINEERING VIEWPOINT BORING A TUNNEL THROUGH TO FRANCE POSES NO MORE DIFFICULTIES THAN EXTENDING THE JUBILEE LINE OUT INTO LONDON'S DOCKLANDS : AGAIN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE ITALIAN MAINLAND AND SICILY CAN BE TACKLED AND SOLVED.

THE REAL INDICENT OF TRANSPORT POLICY IS THAT THESE GREAT GAPS IN THE FABRIC OF THE COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SYSTEM EXIST LONG AFTER THEIR SOLUTION POSED NO INSUPERABLE PROBLEMS.

WHEN I CAME TO THE COMMISSION ALMOST FOUR YEARS AGO NOW, AND EXAMINED MY TRANSPORT PORTFOLIO I WAS IMMEDIATELY STRUCK BY THE LACK OF PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT NETWORK THAT THE COMMUNITY NEEDS TO MATCH ITS SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC GROWTH. IT WAS CLEAR THAT ALTHOUGH MAJOR PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE IN SOME AREAS THERE STILL EXISTED A LARGE NUMBER OF REAL BOTTLENECKS THAT HINDERED FREE AND EASY CONTACT BETWEEN MEMBER STATES.

////

FOLLOWING AN ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM I BECAME CONVINCED THAT MEMBER STATES DID NOT FIND IT EASY TO ARRIVE AT SOLUTIONS FOR THESE PROBLEMS, THERE SEEMED TO ME TO BE GOOD GROUNDS FOR LOOKING AT THE POSSIBILITY OF THE COMMUNITY TAKING A ROLE IN THE SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS.

OUR POLICY DOCUMENT ON TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE WHICH CARRIES THE TITLE OF "A TRANSPORT NETWORK FOR EUROPE" WAS ACCEPTED BY THE COMMISSION LAST NOVEMBER. THIS DOCUMENT SETS OUT TO SHOW THAT THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE HAS AN INTEREST TO BECOME INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRIMARY ROUTES FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAFFIC. THIS INTEREST IS IN NO WAY INTENDED TO SUPPLANT THE NATURAL PRIMARY ROLE OF THE MEMBER STATES BUT RATHER SEEKS TO ADD TO THE EXISTING PLANNING MACHINERY IN A USEFUL AND CONSTRUCTIVE WAY. I WOULD LIKE TO DRAW YOUR ATTENTION TO TWO PARTICULAR ASPECTS OF THE PROPOSALS, WHICH SOME PEOPLE HAVE BEEN FLATTERING ENOUGH TO CALL THE BURKE PLAN, WHICH I CONSIDER TO BE ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL :

FIRSTLY THERE IS THE NEED TO COORDINATE PLANNING. THIS IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT AT THE PRESENT TIME BECAUSE IN EVERY MEMBER STATE THERE IS A PRESSURE ON RESOURCES AND IT IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL THAT WHAT IS AVAILABLE IS USED TO MAXIMUM BENEFIT. TO ENSURE THAT THIS HAPPENS WE MUST SEE THAT EXISTING ASSETS ARE USED TO MAXIMUM ADVANTAGE WHATEVER COUNTRY IS INVOLVED AND FOR ALL THE MODES OF TRANSPORT. I BELIEVE THAT THERE IS AN IMPORTANT ROLE FOR THE COMMISSION IN PROVIDING THE JOINT FORUM TO EXAMINE NATIONAL PROGRAMMES TO WATCH THAT THEY TIE IN WITH WORK IN OTHER COUNTRIES AND ARE RELATED TO GENERAL TRENDS IN THE COMMUNITY AND THE REST OF THE WORLD.

SECOND MOVING ON FROM PROGRAMMES TO ACTUAL PROJECTS, THE COMMUNITY HAS EVERY INTEREST TO SEE THAT PROJECTS WHICH COULD CONFER WIDE BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY OVERALL ARE IMPLEMENTED. TO DO THIS IT NEEDS THE POWER TO AID THOSE PROJECTS THAT ARE MORE VALUABLE TO THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE THAN THE MEMBER STATE THAT HAS TO PAY FOR AND CONSTRUCT THEM.

FOR THIS REASON I ATTACH PARTICULAR INTEREST TO THE REGULATION BEFORE THE COUNCIL TO PROVIDE THE COMMUNITY WITH THE NECESSARY INSTRUMENT TO AID PROJECTS OF COMMUNITY INTEREST.

YOU MIGHT BE ASKING WHEN AM I GOING TO COME TO THE QUESTION OF THE LINK. WELL I AM COMING TO THE RESULTS OF OUR STUDY IMMEDIATELY. BUT AS SO MANY OF THE ARTICLES ON THE STUDY HAVE ~~FAILED~~ TO SPELL OUT THE CONTEXT OF THE WORK I THOUGHT I HAD TO TR

FAILED TO SPELL OUT THE CONTEXT OF THE WORK I THOUGHT I HAD TO TRY TO GET THIS POINT ACROSS. ESSENTIALLY I SEE THE CHANNEL NOT SO MUCH AS A SPECIAL PROBLEM BUT RATHER A TYPICAL EXAMPLE OF THE NEED FOR A COMMUNITY POLICY TO HELP SOLVE SIMILAR DIFFICULTIES THAT ARE FOUND IN ALL MEMBER STATES. FOR THIS THE COUNCIL WILL HAVE TO PASS THE PROPOSED REGULATION ON FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND THE CHANNEL LINK IS ONLY AN EXAMPLE ALBEIT A GOOD ONE, OF THE ADVANTAGES THAT SHOULD COME FROM COMMUNITY ACTIVITY IN THIS AREA.

I WILL NOT GO INTO THE RESULTS IN DETAIL, YOU ARE WELCOME TO ASK QUESTIONS LATER. RATHER I WILL TRY TO DRAW OUT WHAT I SEE TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT CONCLUSIONS FROM THE RESULTS.

FIRSTLY AND MOST IMPORTANT TO ME, THE RESULTS PROVIDE CLEAR EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE ARGUMENT THAT I HAVE ADVANCED THAT THE PROJECT WILL BENEFIT THE COMMUNITY OVERALL. OBVIOUSLY, THE MAJOR BENEFICIARIES WOULD BE THE UK AND FRANCE BUT WHEN THE BENEFITS IN TERMS OF INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY, TRADE ETC ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT THE OTHER MEMBERS ALSO REAP BENEFITS. THE NET EFFECT WOULD BE THAT THE TUNNEL OR A BRIDGE WOULD MAKE THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE BETTER OFF AND EVEN IF THE UK AND FRANCE WERE TO RECEIVE AID FOR THE PROJECT THE BENEFITS TO THE OTHER MEMBERS COULD OFFSET THIS AID.

SECOND THE STUDY DID NOT NOR COULD IT COMPARE OR RANK THE DIFFERENT PROJECTS LOOKED AT. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT ALL THE PROJECTS SEEMED TO PASS THE CURRENT TEST SET BY THE UK TREASURY FOR SCHEMES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR. THIS SHOWS AGAIN HOW NECESSARY SOME NEW INITIATIVE IS IN THIS AREA.

IT IS OBVIOUSLY NOT FOR THE COMMISSION TO TELL THE UK OR FRENCH GOVERNMENTS WHAT ACTION THEY SHOULD TAKE. HOWEVER, A FEW GENERAL POINTERS EMERGE FROM THE RESULTS. I HAVE MENTIONED ALREADY THAT IN TERMS OF THE TREASURY'S USUAL ANALYSIS ALL THE SCHEMES EXAMINED, THAT IS THE SINGLE TRACK TUNNEL, THE DOUBLE TRACK TUNNEL AND A BRIDGE, SEEM TO PROVIDE A SATISFACTORY RATE OF RETURN. I SHOULD PERHAPS ADD THAT THE COST ESTIMATES FROM THE PROMOTERS WERE USED HENCE THERE WOULD NEED TO BE AN EXAMINATION OF THESE BEFORE A DEFINITE ANSWER CAN BE GIVEN. THIS BEING SAID IT IS CLEAR THAT THE SINGLE TUNNEL PROJECT OF BR AND SNCF HAS CERTAIN PARTICULAR ATTRIBUTES. IT IS THE LEAST COSTLY, HAS THE HIGHEST RATE OF RETURN OVERALL AND CAUSES THE LEAST DISTURBANCE TO THE ENVIRONMENT. HOWEVER, IT DOES NOT DO MUCH FOR THE CAR OR

////

LORRY. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES A COMMON SENSE SOLUTION WHICH TO ME SEEMS TO MERIT ATTENTION IS TO LOOK AT THE SINGLE TRACK TUNNEL AS AN INTERIM SOLUTION WHICH WOULD IN ANY EVENT BE JUSTIFIED AS A LINK BETWEEN THE TWO RAILWAY SYSTEMS. A LONGER TERMS SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF VEHICLE TRANSPORT WOULD NOT BE COMPROMISED BY THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SINGLE TRACK TUNNEL AS IT COULD LATER BE EXPANDED INTO A DOUBLE TRACK TUNNEL OR FIGURE AS PART OF A BRIDGE/TUNNEL SOLUTION.

WHAT ACTION DOES THE COMMISSION NOW PROPOSE TO TAKE ?  
WELL I HAVE ALREADY EXPLAINED TO YOU THAT THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS HAS BEFORE IT A DRAFT REGULATION THAT WOULD ENABLE THE COMMUNITY TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL AID. THAT AID MAY TAKE THE FORM OF STRAIGHT GRANTS, SOFT LOANS OR LOAN GUARANTEES. WHICH FORM ASSISTANCE SHOULD TAKE WILL DEPEND ON THE PARTICULAR CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROJECT IN QUESTION.

THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY HAVE SHOWN THAT THE COMMUNITY GENERALLY WOULD BENEFIT FROM THE SCHEME HENCE THIS IS THE PROOF FOR THE COUNCIL THAT THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL IS BOTH NECESSARY AND USEFUL. I AM INDEBTED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT FOR THE STRONG SUPPORT THEY HAVE CONSISTENTLY GIVEN MY PROPOSAL. I HOPE THAT MINISTERS WILL CONSIDER THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY NOT ONLY IN RELATION TO THE LIGHT IT THROWS ON THE NEED FOR A CHANNEL LINK BUT ALSO THE EVIDENCE IT PROVIDES THAT COMMUNITY ACTION IS JUSTIFIED.

IF MY HOPE IS REALISED THAT THE COUNCIL WILL SOON PASS THE REGULATION IT WILL BE FOR THE UK AND FRANCE TO CONSIDER WHAT ACTION THEY WANT TO TAKE ON THE PROJECT. IF THEY DECIDE TO SUBMIT THE PROJECT TO THE COMMUNITY WITH A REQUEST TO CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY SHOULD ENSURE THAT A DECISION CAN BE REACHED RAPIDLY. IT APPEARS TO ME THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF COMMUNITY AID MIGHT BE A CRUCIAL FACTOR IN DECIDING WHAT ACTION FOLLOWS. IN THIS SITUATION THE NEXT MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS IN JUNE WILL CERTAINLY BE AN IMPORTANT DATE FOR THOSE WHO THINK LIKE ME THAT THE PROVISION OF A RELIABLE LINK ACROSS THE CHANNEL IS LONG OVERDUE.

~~may i terminate~~

MAY I TERMINATE ON A POINT WHICH I KNOW IS OF INTEREST TO A NUMBER OF YOU AND WHICH NUMBER OF YOU AND ABOUT WHICH SOME OF YOU HAVE ALREADY WRITTEN. THAT IS THE PLACE, IF THERE IS A PLACE, WHICH THIS PROJECT HAS IN THE CONTEXT OF RESTRUCTURING ////

THE BUDGET. QUITE CLEARLY THE FINANCE FOR MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE WILL OF ITS NATURE LEAD TO THE SORT OF RESTRUCTURING WHICH PEOPLE IN THE UK AND SOME OTHER COUNTRIES HOPE FOR IN TIME. BUT IF I GUESS CORRECTLY YOUR QUESTION IS MORE IMMEDIATE. WHAT ROLE HAS THE PROJECT IN THE CONVERGENCE DISCUSSION, THE BRITISH BUDGETARY CONTRIBUTION ISSUE WHICH IS TO BE TAKEN UP AGAIN BY THE HEADS OF GOVERNMENT WHEN THEY MEET AT THE END OF THE MONTH. WELL, REGRETABLY IT IS NOT MY FUNCTION TO MAKE A STATEMENT ON THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE. BUT PERHAPS I MAY QUOTE FROM THE COMMISSION S DOCUMENT WHICH WILL BE ON THE TABLE AT THAT MEETING. I QUOTE FROM PAGE SEVEN OF THAT DOCUMENT

THE COMMISSION SUGGESTS AN APPROACH BASED UPON A NUMBER OF SPECIFIC PROGRAMMES IN WHICH THE COMMUNITY COULD PARTICIPATE AND FROM WHICH IT COULD AS A WHOLE DRAW BENEFIT. THESE SHOULD IN THE FIRST INSTANCE BE DIRECTED TO SPECIALLY DISADVANTAGED REGIONS OR PROBLEM AREAS. PROGRAMMES FOR REGIONS OF COMMUNITY-WIDE INTEREST SUCH AS NORTHERN IRELAND, OR FOR THOSE SUFFERING FROM SPECIAL INDUSTRIAL PROBLEMS OR FROM REMOTENESS, COULD PROVIDE AN APPROPRIATE FRAMEWORK FOR A SCHEME OF EXPENDITURES BASED ON ARTICLE 235. THESE PROGRAMMES COULD IN CERTAIN CASES COVER EXPENDITURE ON SUCH SECTORS AS THOSE MENTIONED IN THE COMMISSION S COMMUNICATION OF 21 NOVEMBER 1979 (EXPLOITATION OF COAL RESOURCES, MEASURES TO PROMOTE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE), AS WELL AS THOSE DESIGNED TO LINK THE UNITED KINGDOM MORE CLOSELY TO THE REST OF THE COMMUNITY AND TO FACILITATE INTRA COMMUNITY TRADE.

I LEAVE IT TO YOU TO INTERPRET THE FINAL PHRASE OF THAT QUOTATION/

END OF TEXT