

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS AT THE ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION

BY

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PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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Wednesday, 23rd November 1983

EMBARGO : 12 hours

Your Excellency,

It is a pleasure for my colleagues and myself to welcome you here at the Commission and it is with great interest that we look forward to our exchange of views on subjects which occupy and preoccupy us.

Since you were here last in 1979 - at the time as the parliamentary leader of the major opposition party - the political and economic situation in Europe and the world in general has continued to evolve at a rapid pace. Political and economic difficulties and uncertainties have continued to mount. Under these circumstances it is more important than ever to safeguard this island of relative stability that the Western half of our continent represents.

We must pursue our efforts along two lines : the reinforcement of the Community and the development of cooperation with our European partners.

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The world-wide economic crisis, which has often led countries to become inward-looking, has undoubtedly severely strained the cohesion of the Community. It resisted nonetheless.

Faced with difficulties we must act in common. This requires a political, economic and financial effort. Thus the Community is obliged to assure its financial base, take up the challenge of enlargement and reinforce the cohesion of its internal market.

At times our European partners have wondered about the consequences that the strengthening of the internal market will have for them. Let me make a general remark in this regard. This action is an obligation resulting from the Treaty - and a vital necessity ! It is only a united and strong Community that can play its part in maintaining and strengthening a liberal world economy. It is therefore in the interest of all those who support such a system, that the Community should reinforce its own foundations. The full implementation of the internal market which is the primary goal of the EEC Treaty, should therefore not be looked upon as
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On the contrary, we feel that the strengthening of the internal market will in general be of considerable benefit to our EFTA partners. Nonetheless, I want to stress that we are ready to discuss with you the reciprocal and autonomous efforts that might be made by both sides in this context in order to perfect the existing European free trade system.

But, I believe our joint interests extend well beyond the limits of cooperation within Europe. We share a common approach to the great issues which beset international economic relations and most particularly, the problems of multilateral trade. Not surprisingly therefore, we often find ourselves on the same side of the argument in the debates of the GATT, the OECD and wherever international trade is at issue.

As you know, the Community, in common with others, has recently given much thought to ways in which we can best give concrete expression to

the commitments made

the commitments made at Williamsburg and at the last OECD Ministerial meeting to "halt protectionism and as recovery proceeds to reverse it by dismantling trade barriers. As part of our effort, the Commission has now proposed a package of measures to the Council involving an acceleration of the Tokyo Round tariff reductions and the removal of most of the remaining quantitative restrictions on imports from the least developed countries.

Mr. Prime Minister,

Ten years ago we established the formal basis for our present relations. The Free Trade Agreements that were negotiated in 1973 were considered by some to be the second best solution. Nonetheless, they have served as well and we feel that they are a fair and equitable answer to the needs of both sides. They provided a framework for a smooth transition to free trade and proved at the same time flexible enough to allow us to cope with the profound changes in the economic climate we have known since then.

Now we must strive to consolidate and develop our free trade relations to our mutual advantage.

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The agreements not only provided a solid basis for our commercial relations, they served as well as a starting point for our cooperation in many areas beyond the agreements.

We have established contacts in numerous fields without limiting the autonomy of decision of either party. It began with consultations on shipping where the concertation of our positions helped to defend our common interests against inequitable and protectionist treatment by third parties. It has since then developed to economic and monetary matters, energy, industrial policy, development aid and environment protection, just to mention a few. This is proof of Norway's political will to pursue an active policy towards Europe and of the Community's willingness to widen the scope of our relations wherever it is in our mutual interest.

It is evident that energy questions play an important part in our relations. The first oil crisis which began almost exactly ten years ago underlined the importance of stable and secure

supplies. I therefore

supplies. I therefore note with satisfaction the development of oil and gas deliveries from Norway to the Community and believe that we should continuously examine the possibilities of furthering this evolution.

Your Excellency, looking back over the past ten years I feel that we can be satisfied with the evolution of our relations. But we must - and we will - continue our efforts to reinforce our cooperation, because it is only our solidarity that will permit us to revive prosperity on our continent.