

Address given by Mr Andriessen on the occasion of the
25th Anniversary of the EEC Treaty, 25 March 1982
THE HAGUE , 25 March 1982

THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

I trust you will forgive me for coming straight to the point and dispensing with the rhetoric that usually goes with anniversaries. Rhetoric would hardly be appropriate today. Not because of what has been done in the last twenty-five years - that remains an unparalleled achievement - but because of the uncertainty surrounding the future of European integration.

Europe is in many ways the victim of its own success story. Political impoverishment, European pessimism, the escapism of the "small is beautiful" philosophy and narrow-minded nationalism, and miles and miles of European red tape are all symptoms of the decadence of the European welfare state.

The growth of the Community has been stunted for some time. The economic crisis is proving to be a handicap rather than a challenge to joint action.

We all agree that we have so far managed to weather the storm only because of the common market.

We all agree that economic recovery will elude us if we try to go it alone.

We all agree that the grave problems facing us (employment, energy, inflation) demand a joint response.

We all agree that Europe should speak with one, resolute voice in politics, economics and trade.

And yet, we cannot come up with the decisions!

We are in a paradoxical situation: we are dragging our feet, we don't believe in the future of Europe, but at the same time we know that only a joint European approach can safeguard our prosperity and our freedom.

There has been no shortage of ideas. The European Commission has not remained idle. Its Mandate proposals point the way to a European breakthrough. There is the joint German-Italian initiative (the Genscher/Colombo Plan). The French have tabled a "plan de relance". Only recently the Commission submitted proposals for a further strengthening of the EMS. And the European Parliament has demonstrated that it, too, has a fertile mind.

So we have an abundance of proposals to act on.

But when it comes to taking the decisions, or to paying up for that matter, the picture looks very different. The European decision-making process is firmly bogged down. And that is the root of our present problems.

The European Communities are, for all their faults, an economic and legal reality. There is no way back. Yet we lack genuine political commitment to Europe, and we have lost our European identity. Europe consequently appeals less and less to the man in the street, even now he can elect his own European Parliament.

As the economic situation gets worse this lack of political commitment is proving more and more pernicious. We are in a dangerous impasse. We must mobilize all political forces in Europe to break out of our indecision. If we fail, continuing political erosion will lead inevitably to economic disintegration, with all that that entails for employment and prosperity. Anyone who puts forward employment schemes today but at the same time blocks the Community process is making a fatal mistake; in the long run he will achieve the very opposite of what he is setting out to do.

The economic crisis has only got worse in the last few years. The unemployment figures are eloquent enough.

The economies of the Member States are following a divergent pattern, as present tensions within the EMS clearly show.

The row about the British contribution to the Budget has been a brake to real progress for some years. This British problem weighs as heavily on the decision-making process in other fields as it did two years ago. And the longer we wait the harder it will be to resolve it.

At a time when political and economic problems have been getting worse in Europe and in the rest of the world, the Member States have been too busy counting their pennies! In doing so they have taken a heavy responsibility upon themselves. The time has come for less book-keeping and more politics. Otherwise the man in the street will lose all interest in Europe, because he will no longer understand it or believe in it.

There is nothing insoluble about the problem of the British contribution to the Budget; all we have to do is make up our minds to solve it. We cannot afford to keep the brakes on. And it is senseless to postpone a decision on farm prices just because of that one problem.

As far as the Commission is concerned, we are at the end of our political tether.

Our current proposal is, in a sense, our final offer. It is five to midnight; time is running out. If the Governments of the Member States fail to come up with a solution by 3 April we shall have a grave political crisis on our hands.

It is just not good enough to go on putting off the urgent reforms the common agricultural policy needs.

Nor can we simply postpone the further development of other policies or new attempts to revitalize our Community.

Our mandate proposals of last year, which incorporate these three elements in a structured policy, is a blueprint for action waiting for someone to implement it. You could call it a three-year plan, but a plan needs someone to carry it out. What does this plan aim to achieve? Let me remind you:

- the internal market needs to be strengthened;
- economic and monetary solidarity needs a new stimulus;

- certain areas of the common agricultural policy need to be reformed precisely in order to preserve its basic principles;
- the problem of the British contribution needs to be solved.

This is the first condition on which further development of the Communities is predicated.

But there is more. Further enlargement of the Community means that we can no longer turn a blind eye to the problem of increasing own resources. A European Community in full development cannot simply be equated with the Member States. New policies mean more money, bearing in mind that new European policies can supersede national policies.

In an enlarged Community solidarity will have to be tangible. The need for new own resources seems entirely self evident to me.

Whether the system should be changed is another matter. The question raised by the Dutch State Secretary, Mr Van Der Broek, about the principle of political consensus is highly relevant in this context. That is the second condition!

But if we are to implement policies, and pay for them, we must begin by demonstrating that we are ready, willing and able to make decisions at Community level. This means more than just tinkering about with procedures and mechanisms. That may help to remove administrative obstacles. We need more than just the recognition of the Commission's role. We need more than a return to majority voting, no matter how important that is. We need to find a greater unity of political perception. To regain our former "elan" we need a new political commitment.

Let us not forget on this anniversary that European integration has, from the very beginning, been a political idea. Today, 25 years after the signing of the Treaties of Rome, we find that if we aim for economic integration alone we will miss the target of European integration in the true sense of the term.

Community affairs, political cooperation and security policy will have to be placed more and more firmly within a single political framework.

That is the third condition!

The fourth condition is a greater involvement of the European citizen in Community affairs.

Europe has to be given some substance for the man in the street. Why is he not told that the restructuring of the steel, textile and shipbuilding industries is increasingly decided on at Community level? Why does he only hear about the negative aspects? We need issues to motivate the electorate. This is clearly a job not only for Ministers and for Members of the Commission but also for MEPs and the political parties (at national and European level).

The European elections in 1984 must not fall flat. That would be a serious collective indictment of all those involved in European politics.

Which brings us to the democratization of the decision-making process. Here again, we are in a paradoxical situation. As a result of direct elections, the European Parliament has largely been divorced from the national Parliaments. National parliamentary influence over Community policy has declined, but the powers of the European Parliament have not been increased in its place.

Such a situation cannot be allowed to persist. The European Parliament is right to object to it; it personifies the impatient European demand for more democracy.

These, then, are some of the conditions on which the future development of the Community depends.

But we must not overlook the present. Day-to-day policies are also important: the management of agricultural markets, steel policy, competition and the internal market, commercial policy - these are all of great importance for prosperity and employment.

As the situation deteriorates, it becomes harder than ever to justify violations of those policies. In particular, any departure from the principles of the free movement of goods and free competition is tantamount to a beggar-my-neighbour tactic.

To safeguard employment in the long run, European industry must be competitive. Our policy with regard to government aids to industry therefore pursues two objectives simultaneously:

maintaining a free common market and promoting a healthy competitive industrial base with the long-term capacity to hold its own against firms outside Europe.

National and Community policies should be coordinated to tackle the problem of unemployment. There is a great deal that we can do, provided we establish a number of economic and political priorities.

Brussels cannot create jobs out of nothing, any more than the national governments can. But by coordinating policies and by coordinating incentives in growth industries, a joint European approach should be capable of brightening the outlook for all those who are seeking work but not yet finding it. It is not for nothing that the next European Council will be spending most of its time discussing precisely these problems.

For grass-roots Europe these are the things that matter. The Community can do something about it. The Community must do something about it. We have the means. The question is, do we have the political will?