

EMBARGO: 20.15hrs.  
21.11.1974

SPEECH BY DR. P J HILLERY, VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION  
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, PROPOSING THE MOTION  
"THAT THE COMMON MARKET IS IN THE INTEREST OF THE COMMON MAN"  
AT A MEETING OF THE OXFORD UNION ON THURSDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 1974 AT 8.15.PM

Summit discussions are being prepared in difficult days for the European Community. Not the least of these difficulties is Britain's current reassessment of membership of the Community. Little might seem more topical than to debate this motion tonight, and yet it has a strangely dated sound.

A motion for debate is always a form of shorthand. The problem about the terms "the Common Market" and "the Common Man" is that they are inadequate symbols for complex ideas. They are terms whose meaning has been so moulded by history that it is hard to give them life.

When I go on later to review briefly the history of the European idea I hope it will become clear to you that the concept of the Common Market was never intended to be more than a passing phase in the achievement of a wider vision. Even as it stands to day, the European Community is much more than a Common Market. There can be no final judgement of its significance in the history of Western Europe and the world until its development is completed or abandoned.

My dislike for the term Common Market is matched by my dislike for the term Common Man, though the formality of this debate will compell me to use both. In the history of ideas, the Common Man was that man of straw on whom the thinkers of the Age of Enlightenment tested their favourite hypotheses. My Common Man is a creature of flesh and blood who has little time to sit back in an armchair to savour an argument. It is to the credit of most of the great philosophers, however, that they felt that obligation to match their visions to an image of the Common Man. Our contemporary European vision must focus likewise on the needs of people.

People need a dream. They look for something more than protection from the random disasters of war and economic collapse. The peoples of Western Europe seek from their political structures both security and vision. No national government can prove its capacity to meet such requirements. The Community experiment must be given a proper opportunity to prove itself. Its historic aspiration has been to offer something more than peace and prosperity.

#### RETROSPECT:

It is less than three years since the negotiations which made possible the accession of Ireland, Denmark and Britain to the Community were completed. I had at that time a clear picture of the Community I wanted to join. It was a picture inspired by the preamble to the Treaty of Rome and the vision of the Community's founding fathers.

The EEC and its two sister Communities were born out of the devastation of the last war. The founders were determined that Europe should never again become the cockpit of the world. They aspired to a unity in Europe - that "ever-closer union among the European peoples" of which the Preamble to the Treaty of Rome speaks - which would make war in Europe impossible ever again. With a unique blend of idealism and realism, the Community founders realised that this objective of European unity would be achieved only by means of a series of practical, concerted measures. "A united Europe", Robert Schuman said "will not be achieved all at once, nor in a single framework. It will be formed by concrete measures which, first of all, create a solidarity in fact".

France, Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries undertook in the creation of the three European Communities to take these "concrete measures". In the case of the European Coal and Steel Community the member States set out to pool their coal and steel resources in a single market. They saw the establishment of this Community in the context of the safeguarding of world peace by constructive effort and in laying the foundations of a broader and deeper community among peoples long divided by conflict.

EURATOM was established for the purpose of creating a major nuclear industry within the Community and in the awareness of nuclear energy as an essential resource for peaceful progress. Then, in the establishment of the European Economic Community, the founder members set as their aim the creation of the ever-closer union among the European peoples to which I have already referred. The EEC was seen as laying the foundations for this union.

It is often the case in any <sup>4</sup> long-term undertaking that an initial success makes it more difficult to achieve the final objective. I believe that the long-term objective of the founding fathers of the Communities was to find an alternative to that interpretation of nationalism which had led to recurrent war in Europe. Although the threat of recurrent war seems to have been averted the temptation to <sup>seek</sup> salvation in strong national leadership persists. The problems of today's world have, however, the same global dimensions as yesterday's wars and the temptation to draw back from Community solutions is a dangerous one. The treaty establishing the European Economic Community carried, parallel with the desire to end war, the realisation that the countries of Western Europe are no longer large enough for the economic welfare of their populations.

#### DEVELOPMENT:

Working from the treaty base the member States of the EEC set about developing Community policies to ensure the economic and social progress of their countries. They accepted as an essential objective of their efforts the constant improvement of the living and working conditions of their peoples. They committed themselves to reducing the differences existing between the various regions of the Community and the backwardness of the less-favoured regions. The achievement of balanced trade and fair competition within the Community and the progressive abolition of restrictions in world trade - these too were tasks which the member States set themselves. They also recognised their obligations jointly to help in the economic and social progress of the developing countries.

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In this latter recognition - and indeed the real achievement which has flowed from it - lies further proof that the Community was not designed to focus exclusively on its own security and welfare. As a Community the sum of its contribution and work for the developing world has been much more than the sum of national endeavours. The Community shares with ordinary people the ability to look to wider horizons and the human needs of others, even in times of crisis.

While my primary objective tonight is to ask you to focus on the dream and to urge on you the importance of that vision to the future development of the Community its policies and its peoples, this is perhaps a good point to put on record what Britain's participation in the Community's economic and social policies has meant in the two years since the enlargement of the Community from Six to Nine members. And here I must speak as the Commissioner responsible for Social Affairs.

Britain as a country with special economic problems has a great deal to benefit from through membership of the Community. The benefits with which I am familiar are directly in the interest of men and women who are in the front line of hardship at times of economic recession.

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Take the Social Fund, for example. The purpose of the Fund is basically to provide practical help in the form of cash to help member States to develop their facilities for worker re-training. Our interest is not in telling member States what they must do. Instead it is to help them finance the means to provide better work opportunities for their people. In our view, the UK is one of the priority regions for this kind of assistance and this is reflected in the fact that about 30% of Social Fund assistance went to the UK last year. I suspect that a similar proportion will go again this year from a Fund whose resources have been increased in real terms.

Apart from financial assistance, many of the policy proposals I have been able to pioneer are explicitly designed to meet the practical problems of ordinary people in today's world. At this moment, for example, Commission proposals submitted to the Council of Ministers include:-

- a recommendation for a 40-hour week by the end of 1975 and a minimum 4 weeks' holiday by the end of 1976. This proposal, if accepted, would ensure that by the mid-seventies certain minimum standards would exist throughout the Community - from Scotland to Sicily.
- a proposal asking member States to bring in greater protection for workers in the case of mass dismissals.
- a proposal to protect the interests of workers when mergers and takeovers are being planned. Our view is that mergers, however justified on economic and financial grounds, cannot and must not interfere with the negotiated rights and conditions of workers affected by such mergers.

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- a proposal to legally provide for equal pay for men and women. It is our view that wage discrimination should be legally stamped out in all member States. The next step is to enlarge the area of action to end other forms of discrimination both in access to jobs and to training.

### THE FUTURE:

Almost every member of the Commission can point to similar progress or potential in his area of responsibility. My central theme tonight is, however, that the continuance of such progress and the realisation of the Community's enormous potential depends on that drive for achievement which can only come through the renewal of the vision which launched the initial experiment.

It was an encouragement on joining the Commission to find there, in the governments of the original Six, and in the staffs of the Communities, men and women whose sense of opportunity and challenge had survived almost fifteen years and was still as real as my own. With them, I still see the possibility of the emergence of truly Community institutions giving political leadership in the name of all the peoples of the Community. The day that possibility is no more - when the Commission's inspiration will be irretrievably bureaucratic and the Council's aspiration irredeemably inter-governmental - only then can one say that the vision is gone and that the Community was an interesting cul-de-sac in the history of Western Europe.

That moment is not yet. As we approach another Summit conference the institutional debate is alive and kicking. Council, Commission and Parliament are aware of the need to improve their effectiveness and their inter-relationships. This life gives hope.

### FINALE:

Recent trends in public opinion in Britain, provoked apparently by the possibility of a referendum on continued membership of the Community, fit into a pattern of public opinion throughout the EEC. Particularly in the Six founding states and in Ireland, researchers have found a fundamental conviction that the Community has a major contribution to make towards the solution of the crucial political and economic questions that face us all in these difficult days of global change.

The extent of the problems of inflation, energy supply and economic organisation facing the world today gives me hope that the Common Man's understanding of what is important - and what is not - can find its expression in a new Community consciousness, a return to the European dream of the Community founding fathers.

Patrick Pearse asked himself this in 1915 of Ireland:

"O wise men riddle me this. What if the dream comes true? What if the dream comes true?"

I ask the same of the European Community today. The Common Man needs a dream. The dream is Europe, the Common Market is one of its instruments. I am happy to propose the motion.