

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY • EUROPEAN COAL AND STEEL COMMUNITY • EUROPEAN ATOMIC ENERGY COMMUNITY

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EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES' PRESIDENT URGES GREATER POLITICAL UNION

WASHINGTON, D.C., September 20, 1967 -- Jean Rey, President of the European Communities Commission, in his first appearance as chief executive of the Communities before the European Parliament at Strasbourg, France, today called for a fresh political "élan" in Europe and a pragmatic but dynamic approach to political union.

Mr. Rey, in what might be likened to a state-of-the-union message, officially introduced the new European Commission and its program to the Parliament. During his address, he announced that the Commission at the end of September would declare itself in favor of opening negotiations with Great Britain and other European countries applying for Community membership.

The new 14-man Commission replaces the separate executive bodies of the three European Communities: the Economic Community (EEC or Common Market), the Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), and the Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The European Parliament is the assembly for the Communities.

Tribute to Outgoing Executive Bodies

Since it was the single Commission's first appearance before the European Parliament, Mr. Rey paid tribute to the three separate executives it had succeeded -- the ECSC High Authority, the senior European institution, whose presidents extended from Jean Monnet to Dino Del Bo; the Euratom Commission under presidents from Louis Armand to Pierre Chatenet; and the EEC Commission under Walter Hallstein. He paid a special tribute to Mr. Hallstein for his incomparable contribution to the building of Europe.

Mr. Rey then defined the functions of the single Commission which were, first, to exercise the responsibilities of the previous executives under the existing treaties. At present, he said, there were many urgent and important questions facing the Commission: to find a solution to the ECSC's coal problems; to determine the future work of Euratom and in the meantime make provisional arrangements to conserve this Community's scientific and technical gains;

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and, to pursue the EEC's common policies to achieve, above and beyond the customs union, the full economic union for which its Treaty provides.

Secondly, the Commission would have to grapple with problems raised by the enlargement of the Community -- first and foremost, the negotiations with Great Britain. While unable to anticipate the contents of the report which the Council of Ministers had asked the Commission to submit to it by September 30, Mr. Rey did say that the Commission would declare itself in favor of opening negotiations with Great Britain and the other European countries concerned. In the report the Commission would indicate the lines on which solutions should be sought, Mr. Rey said.

Common Tasks to Be Undertaken

New tasks now face the Commission, Mr. Rey said. The merger of the executives had made it possible to initiate new projects and expedite others. Among the matters he mentioned were a common energy policy (facilitated now that responsibility for coal, oil and nuclear power was concentrated in a single organization); industrial policy, which now needs as much attention as was formerly required by agricultural policy; research policy, and regional policy. He said the Commission also proposed to see that the Community's social and labor policy received more attention than it had in the past.

Finally, Mr. Rey pointed out that the European venture was in need of a fresh political "élan". The merger of the executives now, and of the three Treaties in the near future, afforded an opportunity which must be seized promptly. He deplored the present contradiction between the great strength of the Communities which had overcome crises and difficulties, and the complete lack of even the first element of a true political union of the Six. This new élan would depend upon the strengthening of the Community's institutions, he said, and this is what the Commission intended to do. It would also require constant cooperation between the Community institutions and between the Commission and the governments of the member states. This approach had proven effective in the past, he said, particularly in the formulation of the common agricultural policy and in the Kennedy Round.

Pending the member states' agreement on the bases for true political union, he said the Commission wanted to approach specific tasks pragmatically, and thought this approach might help to bring together still widely divergent attitudes. He mentioned as an example problems in the Middle East. The European Parliament has already deplored the absence of a political unity in Europe which could have contributed to solving the development problems in that part of the world.