



European Communities  
Commission  
Press Release

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THE CONSEQUENCES OF BRITISH WITHDRAWAL

The following are extracts from a speech given by the British Commissioner, Ivor Richard, at the Annual Congress of the European Movement, held at the Royal Commonwealth Society, 10.30 am, Saturday 28 November.

"Let me say straight away that the proposal for Britain unilaterally to withdraw from the European Community is a recipe for economic and political disaster. In my view if it was to happen it would lead to one of three consequences:

Britain would either drift into becoming an economic banana republic trying to maintain a siege economy and providing its people with a continuing declining standard of living; or it would become the 51st state of the United States; or it would be forced to join COMECON.

None of these in my view is an attractive or a desirable prospect."

"...for Britain unilaterally to leave the Community would be an act of major international illegality ... Even if the possibility for unilateral withdrawal did exist, it could only be carried out legally after all the possibilities for solving problems arising in a member state have been exhausted ..."

"... If Britain were to withdraw unilaterally from the Community it would be a violation both of Community law and public international law."

"I recognise of course that Britain cannot be stopped from leaving the Community if Her Majesty's Government so resolved but I must point out that the first consequence of the Labour Party's policy would be to force the British Government to act illegally. In this regard Tony Benn stands in great danger of becoming the Ian Smith of Europe and just as Smith's illegal UDI brought disaster to Rhodesia, so will Benn's UDI cause terrible trouble to the United Kingdom."

"Britain leaving the Community will plunge it into crisis and Britain will be held responsible for that crisis. I consider that the Community will receive the news of Britain's withdrawal with the same pleasure and enthusiasm as Michael Foot received the news of the Crosby by-election."

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