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Address to THE BRITISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOR BELGIUM & LUXEMBOURG

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There is incredulity on the Continent that the anti-Marketeers in Britain should regard withdrawal from the Community as a declaration of independence. In the countries which have had twenty years experience of the Community there is no political party or trade union movement which is against Community membership, and not a single Dutchman who feels less Dutch or an Italian who feels less Italian as a result of their country being in the Community.

If the British people were to say "No" in the Referendum, it would not be a day of national independence but a day of national disaster.

Fortunately all the evidence is that the British people are going to deliver a resounding "Yes" to staying in the Community when the Referendum day comes. The main cause for worry at the moment, as a massive shift in public opinion takes place, is that there may be too much complacency about the outcome and a low poll.

The reasons that have swung the opinion polls two-to-one in favour of Community membership are clear and comprehensible. For the first time since the Accession negotiations the great majority of Britain's political leadership are speaking with one voice and saying "Stay in".

It is true that the Labour Party, to which I belong , is still deeply divided, and there are sincerely held differences of view. But what is bound to influence the ordinary concerned but puzzled citizen, anxious to do the right thing in the Referendum, is the fact that all those Ministers with the heaviest responsibility for Britain's role in the world - the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer - are now convinced that Britain's place is in the Community, and they carry all the more weight because they began the period of renegotiation unconvinced that Britain should stay in the Community.

There are two compelling lessons to be drawn from the renegotiation. First, that the Community is flexible and friendly, and ready to find practical compromises to meet the problems of its members. Second, that for a country like Britain, where very existence depends on international trade, and which is uniquely vulnerable to world economic disorders, to leap alone into the dark would be an act of folly.

The renegotiation has shown how the Community really works. To try to understand the Community from reading the Treaty of Rome, which is the fatal fundamental error of the anti-Marketeters, is like trying to understand the game of cricket by reading the rule book.

By a striking coincidence the Referendum campaign will coincide with the 25th anniversary of the Schuman Plan. It is a timely reminder that the basic purpose in pooling the coal and steel industries that straddled Europe's frontiers was not - as critics in my Party sometimes allege - to make capitalism profitable; it was to make European war unthinkable. Today we think we are in trouble when we have a wine war or a cheese war. Happy the continent that wages war only with wine !

We take too much for granted the contribution the creation of the Community has made to European peace. It was the work of a remarkable generation of men, including Schuman and Monnet, who has sadly announced his retirement this week. We have lived far too long on the political capital of these great men.

Now there are new challenges requiring new responses as we face a fundamental shift in the world balance of economic power in favour of the producers of oil and other raw materials. Collective economic security has become as important as collective military security if we are to have peace and prosperity.

Together the countries of the Community can help to shape a sane world economic order. Separately they can do no more than engage in a squalid game of beggar-my-neighbour. The Community's present stage of development is as if the states of California and New York were bidding against each other with the oil producers instead of talking with a single voice through Washington.

A clear-cut result in the Referendum will give the Community a new opportunity for advance. I profoundly hope that, once the issue of membership has been taken out of the domestic political arena once and for all, Britain will join whole-heartedly in the development of a Community capable of playing its real role in the world.