

## 'Act now on the Tindemans report', from Vision (February 1976)

**Caption:** In February 1976, in an article in the monthly economics journal Vision, Jean Rey, President of the European Commission, outlines the high hopes that he places in the political provisions of the Tindemans Report on European Union.

**Source:** Vision. The European Business Magazine. February 1976, n° 63. Geneva: SEPEG.

**Copyright:** (c) SEPEG

**URL:** [http://www.cvce.eu/obj/act\\_now\\_on\\_the\\_tindemans\\_report\\_from\\_vision\\_february\\_1976-en-3680bf51-0637-4ab8-98c2-5b9ca6ea5d25.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/act_now_on_the_tindemans_report_from_vision_february_1976-en-3680bf51-0637-4ab8-98c2-5b9ca6ea5d25.html)

**Publication date:** 15/09/2012

## Act now on the Tindemans report

The Europe of the Nine is doing much better than one tends to think. In the past year it has made significant political progress in four areas which proves that it is not locked in lethargy.

The single most important step forward was the lifting of the French veto on direct elections to the European Parliament. Giscard d'Estaing changed the French position on this and so opened the way for Europeans to elect their representatives from the spring of 1978. As a move towards the creation of a real European power centre it cannot be over-estimated.

The second event was the British referendum on Europe in June: the massive affirmative vote put an effective end to British talk of drawing out after only three years' membership. The lesson has been learned above all by those in Britain hitherto implacably opposed to Common Market membership: they realise that a page has been decisively turned.

Thirdly, there was the signature last spring of the Lomé Convention. This built on the earlier Yaoundé Conventions (1963 and 1969) and created trade links between the EEC and no less than 46 developing countries.

Finally, there was the Tindemans report in which the Belgian prime minister has recently presented his view on the state of Europe.

**A turning point.** The Tindemans report does not claim to present a definitive solution to the problems confronting the Community. Its author takes pains to point out that while he includes his personal (and prophetic) views on the future of Europe he preferred to stick closely to the mandate given him. Thus his report reflects the many different hesitations and objections of the various member states. However, that won't stop it from helping to clear the way ahead.

For, at a time when the world is passing from nation-state power blocs to continental blocs, one cannot accept that the EEC should remain deprived of a power structure capable of taking rapid and effective decisions.

It took five years for the Commission's regional policy to receive even partial acceptance. On industrial policy, discussions have been going on for six years without any solution being found. Had one been, it would have avoided many problems and crises in different sectors these past years. It would also have spared us the debacle of the famous 'deal of the century' over fighter planes. For the past ten, repeat ten, years Europe has been discussing a policy on European multinational firms. Finally, if the EEC had had an effective governing body in the autumn of 1973, it would have quickly adopted a common front and opened the kind of negotiations which could have spared it the ill effects of the energy crisis in which it has been wallowing.

**Test of European will.** So far, so obvious. The regular meetings of the heads of state and governments are a first attempt at having a Community executive which is more efficient and more solid than anything else so far. But such a 'managing board' solution, irritating for the small countries caught in the crossfire of disagreements among the big countries, is not what is wanted as a lasting solution. Instead we must look to a strengthening of the Community's institutions, creating new ones only if really necessary.

Tindemans proposes that the model should be the governing authority of the European Coal and Steel Community. He is right. Those were happy days when a European executive did not have to satisfy itself with making propositions and then waiting while member states ratified them; within its particular field, the ECSC authority had real power to take decisions.

This year will provide a decisive test of Europe's will to create a real executive working with an elected parliament. Nothing less than the future of Europe is at stake.