

Statement by Anthony Barber (Luxembourg, 30 June 1970)

Caption: On 30 June 1970, the Luxembourg diplomatic Conference opens negotiations on the enlargement of the European Communities. Anthony Barber, UK Government spokesman, outlines to the Council of Ministers the British position towards the common market.

Source: Bulletin de documentation. dir. de publ. Service Information et Presse-Ministère d'Etat. 01.07.1970, n° 4; 26e année. Luxembourg. "Speech by Anthony Barber (Luxembourg, 30th June 1970)", p. 8-10.

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URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/statement_by_anthony_barber_luxembourg_30_june_1970-en-0c817dc4-c498-4b7d-9e67-a096711d98b0.html

Publication date: 28/08/2013

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Mr. Chairman,

I should like to begin by saying what a pleasure it is to be able to start our proceedings here in Luxembourg, and to thank the Luxembourg Government for the facilities and the hospitality which they are so generously providing today.

2. May I also tell you, Mr. Chairman, since this is I believe the last day of your term of office as President of the Council of Ministers of the European Communities, how much we appreciate all that you and your colleagues have done in the last six months to enable us all to meet together now? Since your historic meeting at The Hague last December, held at the initiative of the President of the French Republic, we have all moved along converging paths to Luxembourg.

3. I would also like to pay tribute to Monsieur Rey for all that he and his colleagues in the European Commission have done for the cause of a united Europe, and for the enlargement of the European Communities. I know all the member Governments of the Communities will miss him; and so shall we.

4. Mr. Chairman, before I turn to the substance of today's meeting, I hope that I may be allowed a purely personal word. After 20 years in political life, I can think of no greater challenge than to conduct these negotiations on behalf of Her Majesty's Government. I come now to the details of European affairs, but I have followed these matters for long enough to recognise, on the one hand, the great advantages for all of us if these negotiations succeed, but, on the other hand, our need to face up to the very real problems which, together, we shall have to solve.

5. None of us in this room knows whether we shall succeed – whether we shall ultimately be able to agree upon terms which are mutually acceptable. But at least we can say this. We meet today with goodwill on all sides and, I believe, with a determination on the part of all of us to do everything possible to reach a fair solution.

6. Nine years ago we began negotiations for membership of the European Communities. We entered those negotiations with high hopes, but they were not to be fulfilled. Then, in May 1967 the previous British Government applied to join. And now, today, I want my colleagues in the Communities to know that the new Government in Britain are confident that with goodwill these negotiations which are now beginning can succeed. Our task is, together, to work out terms which are fair. And if none of us loses sight of the compelling reasons for uniting and strengthening Europe – reasons which have grown stronger with the years – then fair terms will be found.

7. The fact is that none of us acting alone can gain the ends which we desire for our own people in terms of physical security or economic or social advance. Looking beyond our own frontiers, there are still dangers, and it is right that Europe should assume a greater share of responsibility for its own defence. That too is our joint concern.

8. And it is wholly unrealistic to separate the political and economic interests of Europe, because our place in the world, and our influence, will be largely determined by the growth of our resources and the pace of our technological development. Economic growth and technological development today require that we integrate our economies and our markets.

9. Europe must, of course, take full account of the views of its friends and allies in other parts of the world. But let none of us who is taking part in the negotiations lose sight of our common objective of European unity. And let no one who is not taking part think it could be in his interest that we should fail to achieve that objective. For given this base, we can not only hope for, but more effectively work for a closer and more fruitful relationship between East and West. We can do more to promote the growth of international trade. And we can make a fuller European contribution to solving the problems of less prosperous countries.

10. These are the reasons why we want a united Europe. We want Europe to prosper. But we do not seek prosperity for Europe alone, any more than you do. We believe with you that Europe still has its contribution to make beyond its own frontiers and we believe that Europe cannot make its full contribution unless the Communities are enlarged to include Britain.

11. The Governments of Denmark, the Irish Republic and Norway have also decided to apply to join the Communities, and we warmly welcome their decisions. We also believe that a number of European countries which do not join the Communities as full members will nevertheless have a valuable contribution to make to many of our common objectives, and that it will therefore be in the interest of all of us that these countries should find a mutually satisfactory relationship with the enlarged Communities.

12. Both Mr. Heath, in a speech last month, and the previous British Government have made it clear that we accept the Treaties establishing the three European Communities and the decisions which have flowed from them. I confirm that this is the position of Her Majesty's Government, subject to the points to which I now turn.

13. The list of questions which we wish to see covered in negotiations remains the same as those put forward by the previous British Government in July 1967. For Euratom and the European Coal and Steel Community we seek only a very short transitional period. Adaptation to the obligations of the European Economic Community will clearly require more time than that. And it would be unrealistic not to face up to the fact, at the outset, that there are some very difficult problems to be solved. Our main problems, as you know, concern matters of agricultural policy; our contribution to Community budgetary expenditure; Commonwealth sugar exports; New Zealand's special problems; and certain other Commonwealth questions.

14. The position which the previous British Government took in July 1967 was, of course, subject to developments in the Community in the meantime. Fisheries policy may prove to be one such development. In the field of Community budgetary arrangements, recent developments have made the problems facing our membership more difficult. As you know, our predecessors had looked forward to Britain's taking part as a full member in the negotiation of the financial arrangements for the period after the end of 1969. Had we done so, the resulting agreement would no doubt have made fair provision for us as it has for each of the existing members of the Communities. But we were not party to your agreement. And the arrangements which must in any case be agreed to enable a new member to take part in the budgetary provisions of the European Communities will constitute one of the crucial elements in the negotiation of which we are embarking. When the European Commission gave its Opinion on our candidature in September 1967, it was recognised that the existing financial arrangements would, if applied to Britain, "give rise to a problem of balance in sharing of financial burdens". I think it will be generally agreed that the new decisions have for us made that problem of balance more severe. And so we have to work together to find a solution to this basic problem which will be fair and sound for the enlarged Community and for all its members. If I appear to labour this point, it is only because, unless such a solution is found, the burden on the United Kingdom could not be sustained and no British Government could contemplate joining. Moreover, without such a solution, the whole basis of stability and confidence, essential to the further development of the Communities, would be lacking.

15. A few weeks ago Mr. Heath spoke about the future development of the Communities. He said that we shared your determination to go on from what has already been achieved into new spheres of co-operation beginning with economic and monetary matters, but at the same time laying the foundations for a new method of working together in foreign policy and defence. In all these problems, he added, we should seek to achieve solutions which are Community solutions. We welcome the moves which you have already made towards closer economic and monetary integration and are ready to play our full part. And there are other aspects of policy where we shall likewise welcome further progress; in industrial policy, in regional policy, and of course in the field of technology where we are already working together, but where so much more could be done once the Communities had been enlarged.

16. I have said enough today to show you that the new British Government is determined to work with you

in building a Europe which has a coherent character of its own. If the Communities are to develop; and if we are to find Community solutions to our common problems, we shall need the machinery to take the decisions. That means sharing in the continued development of effective institutions – effective to do those things which our joint experience shows to be necessary and advantageous to all. That has always been our practical approach to institutional change. What matters – to you and to us – is that our objectives are the same, and we no less than you, will want the institutions to match those objectives.

17. I have said that we accept the Treaties and their objectives. But it is not simply a question for us of accepting what you have done. Like you we look to the future. As the Commission recognised in its Opinion of last October, the accession of additional countries will be of great value for the Communities both in their internal development and in the exercise of increased responsibilities in the world.

18. I have referred to the main points which we wish to see covered in negotiations. We hope the negotiations can be kept short and confined to essentials. I am told that the problems which you have been discussing for the last six months in preparation for these negotiations are very much the same as ours. So these are common problems for us and for you – how to enable an enlarged Community to function most effectively for the advantage for all. Our wish is to look together in the spirit of the Community for solutions which in the worlds of the Commission's Opinion of 1969 will ensure the cohesion and the dynamism which will be indispensable in an enlarged Community.

19. Mr. Chairman, after many years we now have the opportunity to realise together a Europe which has a coherent character of its own. We have the same defence interest; our political interests are growing every day progressively closer. As we develop new policies together we shall, as I have said, find it natural to develop the institutional machinery which we shall need to execute those policies. If we can together succeed in the negotiations now begun then, as Sir Winston Churchill said, there will be no limit to the happiness, to the prosperity and glory which Europe's people will enjoy. So let none of us spare any effort in these negotiations. Inspired by goodwill and united by so many aims and hopes and interests, this time we can succeed.

20. Mr. Chairman, in view of the importance of this meeting I am arranging for the text of my statement to be made public in the United Kingdom.