

Statement by Harold Wilson (London, 9 June 1975)

Caption: In a statement to the House of Commons on 9 June 1975, British Prime Minister Harold Wilson comments on the results of the referendum on whether the United Kingdom should remain part of the European Communities.

Source: Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons. Official Report. First session of the Forty-Seventh Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Twenty-Fourth year of the reign of her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Dir. of publ. Hansard. 1974-1975, n° 893; fifth series. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office. "European Community (Membership)", p. 29-31.

Copyright: Crown copyright is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office and the Queen's Printer for Scotland

URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/statement_by_harold_wilson_london_9_june_1975-en-b5957a65-a835-4c13-b081-4f604798a9f8.html

Publication date: 13/09/2013

Statement by Harold Wilson (London, 9 June 1975)

[...]

With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement.

As the House knows, last Thursday the British people voted to stay in the European Community.

What has impressed all of us, and no less our friends in Europe, the Commonwealth and more widely, has been not only the high turn-out and the clear and unmistakable nature of the decision, but also the consistent pattern of positive voting over almost every county and region of the United Kingdom.

It is now almost 14 years since the British Government first applied in July 1961 for negotiations to join the Community.

The issue of membership has cut across party lines, and the Government recognise the deep sincerity with which views have been held on both sides. The debate is now over. The two tests set out in our manifesto of successful renegotiation and the expressed approval of the majority of the British people have been met. The historic decision has been made. I hope that this House and the country as a whole will follow the lead which the Government intend to give in placing past divisions behind us, and in working together to play a full and constructive part in all Community policies and activities.

I am well aware that the period of renegotiation and the referendum has been difficult for other members of the Community. I pay tribute again to the constructive spirit in which they have dealt with our renegotiation proposals. In his statement to the Council of Ministers in Luxembourg on 1st April last year, at the outset of renegotiation, my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that, if we were successful, there would be

“a firm basis for continuing British membership of a strengthened Community”.

I now say to our partners in the Community that we look forward to continuing to work with them in promoting the Community’s wider interests and in fostering a greater sense of purpose among the Member States.

I would also wish to say to our friends and allies in the Commonwealth who made clear their hope that we would remain within the Community — and to all the developing countries — that we shall hope to bring even more to our relationship with them following the clear decision of the British electorate last Thursday.

I have already made clear the Government’s general approach to Community policies. But it also follows from the decision to remain in the Community that this country should be fully represented in all the Community’s institutions. I have said that if renegotiation succeeded and if our recommendation was endorsed by the country we should feel it right that this House should be fully represented in the European Assembly. A recommendation to this end will now be made to the Parliamentary Labour Party.

The House will have noted the statements by the General Secretary of the TUC and the Chairman of the TUC International Committee making clear that the TUC is now likely to enter fully into the work of the Economic and Social Committee of the EEC and to work with the European Industrial Labour Movement in a way which can only mean strengthening the trade union movement throughout the Community and here in Britain.

What we can achieve in our attack on both the economic problems we face at home and wider world economic problems depends basically on the efforts which we ourselves make. But, with the uncertainty over our membership of the European Community at an end, we can continue our efforts with greater

confidence to find solutions to the great problems, both domestic and international, which confront us.

The decision will also, I am sure, give confidence to those overseas who have been considering plans for investment in Britain. There are signs that this is already happening.

The improvement of our own economic situation and our contribution to a more equitable world economic order can best be made from a settled position within the Community. We now have that settled position, and we are determined to make a success of it. But our future will continue to depend on what we are prepared to do by our own efforts, our skill, our technology — and our restraint, a restraint which demonstrates our concern for the interests of those members of our national community least able to help themselves.

[...]