

Speech by Halvard Lange to the Norwegian Parliament (28 April 1962)

Caption: On 28 April 1962, Norwegian Foreign Minister, Halvard Lange, delivers a speech to the Folketing in which he expresses his wish to see Norway accede to the European Economic Community (EEC).

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[...]

' The starting point for our negotiation must be that it could be not realistic to ask for changes in the text of the Treaty of Rome, apart from those changes which are a natural consequence of new countries joining the Community. Nor should this as such be necessary. The regulations of the Treaty of Rome are on the whole formulated with sufficient flexibility that it should be possible to find interpretations and arrangements within this framework giving satisfactory solutions to our problems.

This proposal means that one on the Norwegian side accepts not only the aim of co-operation as formulated in the Treaty of Rome, but also accepts the institutional framework of the Community.

[...]

The fact that among the member countries it is just the smaller states like Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg which are the strongest advocates of co-operation in supranational forms should, I feel, give us food for thought. Their argument is that only through institutions where the rights of each individual member are secured by " law " can the small countries have real influence. In a society where the rights of the individual are not based on law the right of the strongest will prevail. This is the consequence if each insists on his sovereign rights.

I for my part have no doubt that the trend in international co-operation is towards co-operation in what is usually labelled " supranational " organs. Personally I think this word is not quite apt. The point is to develop an international grouping where the rights of each state are secured in a constitution valid for all, big and small. This is the real hallmark of the rule of law and we have introduced it in our national states.

But it is a long way to go to a universal society based on the rule of law.

[...]

Having said this, I want to repeat and stress that it is not realistic to expect great powers today or in a foreseeable future to leave the decisions in more important political questions to supranational organs.

The political co-operation between members of the Community will therefore in practice and in all essential issues be co-operation between sovereign governments as we see it in the other international organizations of which we are a member.

If I should give any forecast about the future trend it must be that the pressure to establish supranational organs will come from the small countries. It will be in line with the inherent logic of events that it is the small who seek protection by the law, by a set of rules where the Community binds the strong as well as the weak. The strong ones usually like this the least.

[...]

The Government has therefore been carefully examining the question whether ties between Norway and the European Community could in any way hurt or create difficulties for our relations with Finland or in some other way could splint Nordic co-operation from within. The Government does not feel that there is any such risk.

[...]

I have found it correct in this speech to concentrate on the political factors. This I have done not only because the economic factors will be dealt with by the ministers of the respective ministries concerned. I have done it also because in my opinion the political factors carry at least as much weight as the economic.

In this matter it is less than ever possible to draw a clear line between economics and politics.

On the political side a major question for me is this :

Can we, in the light of our fundamental national interests, consider an alternative which leaves our country outside the development now under way and which is leading to a new constellation, a new community of the countries of Western Europe, a community which for the first time in modern history also includes Great Britain ?

In my view such an alternative is out of the question and I cannot understand the arguments upon which this view is based. In this I include all those who in reality want us to stand aside, but conclude by saying that we should seek association. There are not a few who do this.

Less than any other country with which we can compare ourselves is it right for Norway to stand outside... '

[...]