

Joint statement by the United Kingdom and the West Indies (11 July 1961)

Caption: On 11 July 1961, Lord Perth, British Minister for Colonial Affairs, and political representatives of the West Indies issued a joint statement on discussions concerning the economic implications for the Commonwealth of the United Kingdom’s accession to the European Economic Community.

Source: Commonwealth Consultations on Britain's Relations with the European Economic Community, Statements on talks between the British Ministers and other Commonwealth Governments. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, July 1961. 22 p. (Her Majesty's Stationary Office Cmnd. 1449). p. 21-22.

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Joint statement by the United Kingdom and the West Indies (11 July 1961)

The West Indies

Joint statement issued in Port of Spain, 11th July 1961

1. The West Indies under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister of The West Indies have had discussions with the Minister of State for Colonial Affairs, the Earl of Perth.
2. Lord Perth explained that the British Government were concerned about the future consequences, both economic and political, of continued division in Europe and were therefore re-examining their relationship with the European Economic Community. Before deciding whether to enter into negotiations with the Community they were seeking the views of the Commonwealth. The British Government had not yet come to any decision whether or not to enter into such negotiations and would not do so until views of all Commonwealth countries had been fully considered. Lord Perth gave the assurance that if Britain entered into negotiations the West Indian Governments and other Commonwealth Governments would be closely consulted at all stages.
3. West Indian Ministers stated that the question of Britain's entry into the Common Market was a matter for the United Kingdom to decide. While they indicated their appreciation of Great Britain's problems they pointed out that accession posed a serious threat to vital West Indies interests; agricultural products, particularly citrus, bananas and sugar and other products, particularly oil and bauxite. They insisted therefore that if Britain decided to join the E.E.C. these vital West Indies interests must be safeguarded and every effort be made to secure, as they would hope might be the case, the maximum advantages for the West Indies. The West Indian Ministers also stressed the importance of their trade relationships with Canada and insisted that should the United Kingdom decide to join the European Common Market every possible step should be taken to ensure that those relationships with Canada were not adversely affected.
4. Lord Perth assured them that the British Government fully understood the importance to the West Indies of their market in the U.K. He explained that Britain would not expect to be able to join the Common Market of the European Economic Community without some changes in the present arrangements for Commonwealth goods in the U.K., but this did not mean that the vital interests of the West Indies and others of the Commonwealth could not be protected. In this connection he made it clear that in the course of any negotiations the British Government would seek to secure special arrangements to protect these vital interests, and that Britain would not feel able to join the European Economic Community unless such arrangements were secured. The West Indian Ministers recommended special arrangements to meet the vital interests of the West Indies.
5. West Indian Ministers welcomed the discussion with Lord Perth as enabling both sides to appreciate the problems involved. They would understand if the British Government should decide to open negotiations with the E.E.C. provided that the interests of the West Indies are fully protected. In that event they stated that they would be prepared and would expect to participate in the subsequent consultations envisaged.