

Note from the French Directorate of Economic and Financial Affairs (Paris, 12 October 1960)

Caption: On 12 October 1960, Olivier Wormser, Director of Economic and Financial Affairs at the French Foreign Ministry, writes a note in which he outlines the position of the United Kingdom in the context of economic relations between the Six and the seven Member States of EFTA.

Source: Ministère des Affaires étrangères ; Commission de Publication des DDF (sous la dir.). Documents diplomatiques français. Volume II: 1960, 1er juillet-31 décembre. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1996. 870 p. p. 495-496.

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There are a number of signs that can help us understand the British Government's real position on the quandary between the six EEC Member States and the seven members of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA).

The Commonwealth Finance Ministers' Conference, held in London on 20 September, has virtually tied the hands of the British Government. The UK partners' reactions to economic circumstances have been harsh, judging from the declarations made by the New Zealand Finance Minister and the Canadian Trade Minister, which were published in the press. On the political front, however, the most interesting piece of news so far is the Canadian suggestion that, if the UK and the Common Market were to reach an agreement on a customs union, the Commonwealth would be disbanded and, at the same time, prospects for Canada to remain genuinely independent would be dashed. Canada's destiny would then be to function as a province of the United States.

The German Government has asked the Netherlands Government to send its experts and help it find a way to solve the issue of the EEC and EFTA. A middle-ranking Netherlands Government expert travelled to Bonn to say that he had no ideas to offer and that his Government was not actively searching for a solution. Another Dutch expert reported that Ludger Westrick had said that the Anglo-German plan for relations between the EEC and EFTA had no foundation. But the German expert entrusted with drawing up the plan has said that, to date, he has put nothing down on paper.

The Netherlands Government has challenged the Convention, annexed to the Treaty of Rome, on the Association of the Overseas Territories and has supported the claim that the independence of African states invalidates Part Four of the Treaty of Rome. In so doing, the Netherlands Government is probably in fact conveying the British Government's real position. The British Government would like to see the end of the tropical products preferences introduced by the Common Market for the previously dependent territories of France and Belgium. That would please Ghana, Nigeria and other overseas territories into the bargain. In addition, a senior British civil servant has stated to the *Financial Times* that it may well take the EEC and EFTA years to arrive at an arrangement.

Not so long ago, the British appeared to be in a hurry to begin negotiations, but now they seem to be avoiding them. That is so because, first of all, the British are upset at reactions from the Commonwealth and at the intentions of their partners in the Stockholm Treaty — Switzerland rejects any idea of monetary union. A further reason is that influential groups in London are hoping that the Common Market will become bogged down. The political problems being raised between France and Germany are enough to stir up those hopes. In addition, London is seriously wondering whether the EEC's attitude to agricultural issues will cause it to lose the support of the Americans from which they have, to date, benefited. The talks on the common agricultural policy in Brussels have not yet provided any prospect of a positive solution acceptable to GATT, and the mood in the six delegations that are discussing agricultural issues could well sour relations with the United States.