

Comments made by Belgian Socialists (30 July 1951)

Caption: On 30 July 1951, the Belgian delegation asks all the Socialist Members of Parliament of the Six to debate the implications of the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) with a view to the establishment of a common position during the parliamentary debates concerning the ratification thereof.

Source: Archives historiques des Communautés européennes, Florence, Villa Il Poggiolo. Dépôts, DEP. Fernand Dehousse, FD. FD 127.

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Comments of the Belgian delegation on the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (30 July 1951)

1. — Because the Treaty has been signed by the Ministers of the six contracting states, and taking into account the technical difficulties which any amendments to the text of this Treaty would involve, the Belgian delegation considers that the most appropriate method of removing any doubts arising from the interpretation of the clauses of the said Treaty is for each of the six Socialist parties to ask its own government precise and identical questions and then jointly to compare the answers which they have received.

Precise and identical answers would unequivocally define those points on which there is consent between the contracting parties and would thus be of essential significance for subsequent interpretations of the Treaty.

By contrast, differing answers would be politically highlighted in national parliamentary debates.

2. — In addition, the Belgian delegation believes that close contact should be maintained between the Socialist Members of the parliaments of the six countries during the parliamentary debates which will be taking place in each of those countries. It suggests that contact should be established through a group of twelve Socialist MPs, with two Members being appointed by each of the six Socialist parties in question. Those twelve Members would correspond directly with one another, thereby providing and receiving all useful information on the current debates.

This would be an interesting attempt at international Socialist cooperation. It goes without saying that such a procedure would not involve any constraints upon the conduct of the Socialist parties in question, which would remain fully independent in determining their attitude towards the Treaty.

3. — Finally, the Belgian delegation believes it would be useful for the six Socialist parties concerned to publish a joint declaration before the parliamentary debates begin. The declaration would lay down the essential conditions to be met by the European Coal and Steel Community in order to ensure Socialist agreement to its establishment.

Those Socialist parties which are in favour of the Community would see in such a declaration a series of precise details to be provided by governments so as to enable Socialists to give their full agreement to the Treaty.

Those Socialist parties which are opposed to the Community could at least admit, while retaining their hostile position, that, if governments complied with the conditions, the Treaty, while still not acceptable, would be improved in terms of its practical effects.