

Inaugural address given by Walter Hallstein at the constituent meeting of the Commission of the European Economic Community (16 January 1958)

Caption: Inaugural address given by Walter Hallstein, President of the Commission of the European Economic Community, at the constituent meeting of the Commission on 16 January 1958.

Source: Procès-verbal de la première réunion de la Commission tenue le 16 janvier 1958 à Val Duchesse (Bruxelles), CEE/C/9 f/58 (rév.) mb, Annexe II. Bruxelles: Commission de la Communauté économique européenne, 05.02.1958. 7 p. "Discours inaugural prononcé par Monsieur Hallstein, Président de la Commission Economique Européenne, lors de la première réunion constitutive".

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Walter Hallstein's inaugural address to the constituent meeting of the Commission of the European Economic Community on 16 January 1958

I hereby declare open the first meeting of the Commission of the European Economic Community.

Article 157(2) of the Treaty establishing the Common Market stipulates that:

‘The Members of the Commission shall, in the general interest of the Community, be completely independent in the performance of their duties.’

Let us therefore perform the first duty assigned to us under the Treaty by making the following declaration:

‘We hereby give a solemn undertaking that, both during and after our term of office, we shall respect the obligations arising therefrom and, in particular, our duty to behave with integrity and discretion as regards the acceptance, after we have ceased to hold office, of certain appointments or benefits.’

Gentlemen and colleagues,

In solemnly pronouncing these words, on behalf of us all as the Treaty requires, we acknowledge the essence of the obligations that we shall henceforth share.

By the ‘essence’ of our obligations we mean the fact that we serve Europe — Europe, rather than specific interests of any type whatever, be they national, professional, economic or personal.

Herein lies the difficulty of our task, yet here, too, is what endows it with a very special dignity.

We are the servants of the great ideal of European unity, which has found new and broader expression in our Community and in Euratom, alongside the working reality of the European Coal and Steel Community which has now been in operation for some years.

We know that the ongoing process of uniting Europe will not end here, so, at the same time, our work will serve to promote new development.

Among the institutions of the European Economic Community, our Commission is one of the most markedly supranational in character.

Yet its work will come to fruition only if it cooperates effectively with the other institutions, in particular with the Council of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly.

This is the path that we are resolved to take, both in the spirit of the Treaty and in a spirit of genuine comradeship.

It is our heartfelt wish that the organs of public opinion will follow our work with critical interest and help us to invest these new ideas with substance and abundant vitality.

Gentlemen, we meet here as a collegiate body.

Sadly, not all our members are in attendance today.

Mr Rasquin, our colleague from Luxembourg, is absent because of ill health.

We regret that he cannot be with us, and we wish him a speedy recovery.

Since we are a collegiate body, our success depends on our giving the following undertaking:

Our efforts must, in the truest sense, be collective efforts.

Let us work in a spirit of healthy comradeship and friendship.

And let us begin our work with a keen sense of reality, with real determination and with the innermost conviction that the task that we have set ourselves is a great and noble one.