

Statement by Labour's National Executive Committee on the referendum on the United Kingdom's accession to the European Communities (26 March 1975)

Caption: On 26 March 1975, at a Special Labour Party Conference on the national referendum concerning the European Communities, the Labour Party expresses its opposition to the United Kingdom's continued membership of the European Economic Community (EEC).

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Statement by the National Executive Committee for the Special Conference (26 March 1975)

The Labour Party and the Common Market

1. This National Executive Committee welcomes the Referendum on the Common Market and reaffirms the undertaking in the Election Manifesto that the Government will accept the results as binding.
2. It recalls the statement of the 1972 Labour Party Annual Conference, which has formed the basis of our policy through two General Elections that
"if renegotiations are successful, it is the policy of the Labour Party that, in view of the unique importance of the decision, the people should have the right to decide the issue through a General Election or a Consultative Referendum. If these two tests are passed, a successful renegotiation and the expressed approval of the majority of the British people, then we shall be ready to play our full part in developing a new and wider Europe."
3. The Government has now announced to Parliament and to the country the results of its renegotiations on the specific items listed in the Labour Party's February Manifesto, namely; the results of renegotiations as they affect the Common Agricultural Policy, the Community Budget, Economic and Monetary Union, the powers of Parliament, the interests of the Commonwealth and the developing countries, and our opposition to harmonisation of the Value Added Tax. The National Executive Committee appreciates the efforts of all those Ministers involved in the process of renegotiation.
4. The National Executive Committee notes the view of the Government that these negotiations have now been taken as far as they can go and that the outcome of the renegotiations leads the Government to recommend that Britain should continue as a member of the European Economic Community. However, a majority of the National Executive Committee believes that the terms, even as renegotiated, do not satisfy Britain's requirements and therefore opposes Britain's continuing membership of the Common Market, and so advises the Special Conference.
5. The National Executive Committee welcomes the decision of the Prime Minister to recognise the uniqueness of the forthcoming decision by the British people by allowing Ministers publicly to differ from the Government's assessment. In so doing the National Executive Committee believes that the Prime Minister has given a lead both to the Party and to the country. We recognise the sincerity of the views held by both sides in this great debate.
6. The National Executive Committee believes it is up to each individual citizen, whatever his political allegiance, to make his own decision as to where Britain's true interests now lie. It is important that the issues should be clearly understood and the National Executive Committee welcomes the Government's decision to assist the two bodies which have been created to present their respective cases to the British people. As Democratic Socialists the members of the Labour Party will commit themselves to this campaign with conviction and with tolerance.
7. A majority of the N.E.C. recommends to the Special Conference of the Party that the Party should campaign, along the lines of the General Secretary's memorandum, for the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Common Market and should invite our fellow citizens to join us in this campaign; but recognises that the Referendum allows every individual to express his own point of view and that in the interests of the unity of the Party the right of dissent accepted, on the initiative of the Prime Minister, by the majority of the Cabinet to those who disagree with their decision should be extended similarly by the majority of the N.E.C. to individual members of the Party, the N.E.C. and the Party staff.
8. Whatever the outcome of the Referendum the Labour Party will stand ready to continue the task of

building a fairer and more just society on democratic socialist lines here in Britain, and will encourage wider co-operation among the peoples of Europe and the world.