

Address given by Jacques Santer during the debate on the appointment of the Commission (Strasbourg, 21 July 1994)

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[Jacques Santer] Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I shall be brief, following the long discussion that took place this morning. However, I could not forgive myself if I did not thank all those who spoke this morning for the kind remarks that they made about me and for other observations that they made afterwards. I was also very touched by everything that was said about my country. On the other hand, as I emphasised this morning, we find ourselves participating in a procedure laid down, for the very first time, in the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty. It is perhaps an irony of fate that the person who introduced this new procedure, in assuming the Presidency at that time, should now be sanctioned by those to whom he wished to give more powers. We are therefore currently participating in a well-defined procedure of which today's proceedings are just the first stage; the stage where you decide on a person, the person nominated by the European Council to assume the Presidency of the future Commission. The second stage — for it is not the procedure that is in question today, although we are well aware that procedural issues are frequently more controversial than substantial — the second stage will require you to approve the investiture of the Commission by means of a vote of approval based on a detailed programme to be drawn up by the Commission, by the future Commission, and which will be submitted to you. You will have to take a decision on this programme and on the body that will have to implement this programme. That will be the second stage, and believe me from now until then I shall listen attentively to Parliament, and, as I say, I shall also be listening to active elements in the various Member States, with the clear aim of drawing up a programme that will respond to the aspirations and expectations of the citizens, the citizens of Europe.

This morning I outlined some themes, some bearings, that will guide the future Commission, in the event of your giving me the opportunity, of course. My first concern, and I stressed it this morning, is to regain public support after the clear divide that became manifest during the 12 June elections between the politicians, i.e. us, and the general public — our citizens. That is our first task. The man in the street must again put his trust in this Europe that we are building. And do you really believe, ladies and gentlemen, that it is in the interest of the European citizen to see an interinstitutional crisis unfold now? This is not the message that it expects from you, that it expects from us as the Commission or that it expects from the Council, either. We must set out to respond to the expectations of our citizens and therefore address the real problems, those that exist here and now, namely the problem of unemployment, the problem of the environment, the problems that I outlined this morning. This is the problem and this is the message that must be sent by the newly-elected European Parliament, such as it is constituted right now. I believe that this is what the man in the street expects, what our citizens expect, from us, from all of us, from you and from us, just when, following the European elections, a new, freshly elected Parliament has been constituted and has elected a distinguished President; at this time, a response to current problems is expected. Secondly I should like to say this: We have drawn up a programme, we are going to draw up a programme and we shall submit it to you — as I have told you — and you will be able to take a decision on the basis of this programme for a new parliamentary term. It is the first time that you will have to take a decision on a five-year legislative programme. This too is a novelty; it is an innovation that you should regard as such; one enabling you to make a contribution to defining the objectives and guidelines for the Community over the next five years. You will do so by means of a vote of approval.

However, I can guarantee you this: I agreed to be proposed as the candidate for the future Presidency by the European Council in the interest of Europe. I did not put myself forward as a candidate, as I have said, but as soon as I had arranged a meeting between the eleven other representatives and the Heads of State or Government meeting as the European Council, I made a commitment just as I have made a commitment — with firmness and determination — in all the other posts that I have accepted and shall continue to accept. What I want to say is that I wish to become, with your help and your support, a strong President at the head of a strong, consistent and determined body in order to carry out successfully this programme as you have approved it, as you will have approved it in December. I believe that, if we work together, we shall be able to contribute to a step forward, a new departure for the Community, in support of which we are all committed.