

Address given by Pauline Green on the appointment of Jacques Santer as President of the Commission (Strasbourg, 21 July 1994)

Source: Débat au Parlement européen sur la nomination de la Commission Santer- Strasbourg: Parlement européen - Division de l'audiovisuel [Prod.], 21.07.1994. Parlement européen, Strasbourg. - VIDEO (00:03:50, Couleur, Son original).

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Last updated: 04/07/2016

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[Miss Green] President, Prime Minister Santer did himself some considerable good by his excellent oration just now, and I congratulate him. I have to say, however ... I have to say, however, that the President-in-Office really is in no position to accuse us of causing a confidence of crisis in this House. If ... if there is a confidence of crisis in the European Union as a result of this nomination, it belongs firmly and squarely at the door of the Council, President-in-Office, and not with this Parliament. At Corfu, 11 countries agreed on a nomination. One did not agree. The use of the veto is acknowledged to be to protect national interest. Will somebody explain to me what the British national interest was in rejecting Jean-Luc Dehaene and accepting Jacques Santer? President, that's the crisis we're talking about. We're talking about a crisis with our electorate, which is not being created by us but which we saw demonstrated at the European election when people didn't come out to vote, didn't understand and didn't know. And that's because of the sort of wheeling and dealing that we have seen in the last few weeks. We have got to open up this process. This is not a statement about Jacques Santer's acceptability to us — of course that is not in question — in many ways he is a respected European; we give him credit for that. This is about the political procedures and the political future direction of the European Union, and our role in influencing it. And I say this: the Group of the Party of European Socialists will vote against the nomination that has come forward in this way. I outlined ... I outlined our great criticisms of the procedure earlier, so I don't intend to do that again. But I'll tell you what: there is in this House a majority, despite the Group opposite who presently feel obliged to take this position, there is a majority in this House that this procedure is unworkable, is unacceptable, is undemocratic and is dishonest. And I think those of you who believe that with us should vote with us against this nomination because the procedure undermines this Parliament, it undermines our Union. The Council chose to accept that veto. They could have come here to this House, as you said President-in-Office, and said: 'Look, this is where we've got to. What do you say about it?' You didn't; you chose to use other means. There isn't a real commitment to clear, continuing, ongoing consultation; what we have seen is stage-managed consultation. We want proper consultation. I take on board what you've said about the future, President-in-Office; we will hold you to that. We want consultation and we want proper consultation and continuing consultation. Whatever the result today, whatever the result, it is clear that this procedure is unacceptable. It doesn't do democracy justice; it undermines the fundamental nature of this Union. We on this side of the House, we in this Socialist Group object to the use of this system for the selection and nomination of a candidate for the most prominent position in the European Commission, and we will vote against on that basis.