

Letter from Daniel Serruys to Duncan Sandys (Paris, 3 March 1948)

Caption: On 3 March 1948, Daniel Serruys, President of the French Section of the Independent League for European Cooperation (ILEC), sends to Duncan Sandys, British Conservative MP and President of the International Committee of the Movements for European Unity, a letter in which he notes and deplors the differences between the British and French notions of European economic unification.

Source: Archives historiques de l'Union européenne, Florence, Villa Il Poggiolo. Dépôts, DEP. ME Mouvement européen. Préparation du Congrès de l'Europe devant se tenir à La Haye du 07 au 10/05/1948, ME 1184.

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Letter from Daniel Serruys to Duncan Sandys

Paris, 3 March 1948

Dear Mr Sandys,

I felt that it was my duty, as well as a pleasure, to go to London to attend the Coordination Committee meeting, whose agenda seemed to me to involve a number of important issues on which decisions would be taken. Unfortunately, four days ago, I came down with the flu that has been going around Paris, as did the rest of my family, and so I shall be confined to my home for three or four days.

I especially wished to comment on the economic studies that have been carried out simultaneously in London and Paris.

There appears to be a fundamental difference between the conclusions of the work carried out by the Economic Committee in London, as sent to me unofficially, and the stance taken by all the rapporteurs whom I engaged in Paris to study the exact same issues.

Whereas the British economists propose a European economic union achieved by means of lengthy adjustments and painstaking compromises, in such a way that the customs union is the end result and not the starting point, my colleagues in Paris, fully aware of the tiniest difficulties and of all the sensitive issues associated with the implementation of such a union, believe that the British viewpoint has been overtaken by events and that the British Foreign Secretary implicitly indicated as such during the final stage of the negotiations with the Benelux countries.

By contrast, the French viewpoint is intentionally in line with that expressed by Paul-Henri Spaak, which seeks to develop methods and procedures here and now that, based on the principle of an economic union established at the present time, will make it possible to put aside and, subsequently, resolve — in both the quickest and most appropriate way — problems whose complexity requires further consideration or less hurried negotiations.

In my colleagues' view, it is the political state of Europe that dictates the choice of economic doctrines and methods. They are aware that, whilst taking into account all requirements of a technical nature, we must, above all, be guided by the requirements of urgency. The note that I am sending you for your British colleagues' use is the outcome of a compilation of the various reports that have been submitted to us to date.

The difference in position rather than doctrine that it reveals might, moreover, be discussed at the meeting of the Economic Committee that I shall ask its chairman, Paul van Zeeland, to convene in Brussels next week. I wanted to put you in the picture because, given that the issue to be discussed at this meeting involves political considerations, the Joint International Committee, of which you are president, will most certainly be called upon to express its views.

Please accept my apologies for my enforced absence and my very best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Serruys

P.S. Mr van Zeeland has just called to propose that the meeting of the Economic Committee be held on Saturday 13 March in Paris.