

'The creation of a European Customs Union' from the Luxemburger Wort (16 August 1947)

Caption: In an article published on 16 August 1947, the Luxembourg daily newspaper Luxemburger Wort reviews the French proposal for the establishment of a European Customs Union in order to resolve some of Europe's economic problems.

Source: Luxemburger Wort. Für Wahrheit und Recht. 16.08.1947, n° 228/229; 100e année. Luxembourg: Imprimerie Saint-Paul. "Frankreich schlägt vor: Schaffung einer europäischen Zollunion", p. 1.

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France proposes:

THE CREATION OF A EUROPEAN CUSTOMS UNION

as the only solution to the continent's economic difficulties

PARIS, 16 August. (AP). According to Hervé Alphand, Head of the French Delegation, a European customs union is the only solution to the continent's economic difficulties. He made this clear yesterday during the first official discussion of the proposal at the Paris Economic Conference. A reduction in the number of customs barriers in Europe is absolutely essential.

Steps towards a customs union should be taken, even if its actual realisation is only possible in stages and could take five, ten or even fifteen years. France has already considered forming a customs union with Italy and will carry this out independently of the decisions reached by other states.

Mr Alphand's explanations followed the statement concerning the customs union by the British delegate, Sir Oliver Franks, who said that England was unable to make rash decisions during the last weeks of the Paris Economic Conference due to its special position in the Commonwealth. However, he recommended the formation of a working group, which should thoroughly consider all angles of the plan for a customs union. The working group should also establish to what extent the inclusion of British overseas territories into the customs union would be feasible. In his speech, which lasted for over an hour, Sir Oliver Franks referred to England's particular difficulties as a power both inside and outside Europe. Before England could enter a customs union with one or more European countries, decisions would have to be taken relating to the inclusion of products from the Commonwealth in the union and the availability of European products in the Commonwealth. In the meantime, Europe's best prospect would be a provisional agreement between two or three nations to form a customs union after a fixed time period of several years.

Hervé Alphand explained that France fully appreciated England's special position, and thanked the British delegate for his fundamentally positive standpoint. The working group suggested by Sir Oliver Franks would be extremely beneficial, and in addition all or at least some of the sixteen countries participating in the Economic Conference should submit statements of their intentions regarding a customs union.