

'A united Europe' from the Luxemburger Wort (13 February 1948)

Caption: On 13 February 1948, the daily newspaper Luxemburger Wort describes the supportive stance taken by the federalists towards European unification and sets out the main issues involved therein.

Source: Luxemburger Wort. Für Wahrheit und Recht. 13.02.1948, n° 44; 101e année. Luxembourg: Imprimerie Saint-Paul. "Geeintes Europa", p. 1.

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A united Europe

The idea of a federation of European states is not new. It has been in the air, so to speak, for a hundred years. However, whenever someone wanted to make a serious, practical attempt to turn this idea into reality, what had appeared so obvious and within reach always faded away to nothing. Aristide Briand, for example, was greatly dismayed when he experienced this in Geneva. However, the fact that the idea is brought up again and again, and that serious politicians devote themselves to it, is surely enough to prove its value and its relevance to the current situation.

It has, of late, received new impetus from the difficulties of our time and perhaps stands closer to realisation than we think. Winston Churchill, Ernest Bevin, Paul van Zeeland and many other figures held in high regard internationally in political and economic circles see closer links between European states as the only salvation for our continent. Yesterday evening, in a speech for Abraham Lincoln Day in Boston, Thomas Dewey, Governor of the State of New York and Roosevelt's erstwhile presidential opponent, declared that Europe needed to take a new road and the first step on that road had to be the revival of European economic production. In particular, however, Europe needed unity, for so long as the continent was split into more than 20 individual states, it was certain to attract the attentions of an aggressor time and again. If, however, free Europe were to be merged into one large federation, it could become a bastion of peace. Dewey added that the 16 States participating in the Marshall Plan had, together with West Germany, approximately double the population of the United States of America and, in addition to their importance for Western culture, enjoyed substantial material resources.

The only question that remains is whether the countries of Europe will, through voluntary cooperation, at last be able to exploit these resources for their own benefit and to serve the cause of peace. We recall having attended a conference here in Luxembourg at the beginning of January when delegates of the Geneva-based European Union of Federalists spoke convincingly about the need to move towards a united Europe. This Union of Federalists wanted to take the first step towards realising their idea and, for the first time, summoned a European Parliament, which is to sit in The Hague from 7 to 10 May. Yesterday, the first refusal to take part in this 'European Parliament' was received, from the British Labour Party. Responding to a parliamentary question from Winston Churchill, Emanuel Shinwell, the Labour Minister, explained: 'The party executive feels that the question of European unity is much too important to be left to an unrepresentative conference. The planned composition of the congress seems to us not altogether ideal, especially as the number of private individuals who have been chosen as participants according to some unknown procedure deprives the congress of the opportunity to be seen as a truly representative event.'

While the Labour Party is not altogether wrong on this point, there is absolutely no need to put the brakes on the work of the Union of Federalists. At most, the Union should take this as its cue to return to its original and really only legitimate area of activity. For if the Union of Federalists has done enough to impress on the people the urgent need for a united Europe, then the official politicians will have no particular difficulty in making the dream a reality.