

## Joint statement by the United Kingdom and New Zealand (Wellington, 6 July 1961)

**Caption:** On 6 July 1961, the United Kingdom and New Zealand issue a joint statement giving an outline of the discussions between Duncan Sandys, British Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, and his New Zealand counterparts, on the implications of the United Kingdom's possible membership of the European Communities.

**Source:** Commonwealth Consultations on Britain's Relations with the European Economic Community, Statements on talks between the British Ministers and other Commonwealth Governments. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, July 1961. 22 p. (Her Majesty's Stationery Office Cmnd. 1449). p. 7-8.

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**Last updated:** 01/03/2017

## New Zealand, Joint statement issued in Wellington

**6th July 1961**

1. The Prime Minister of New Zealand, Mr. Holyoake, and other New Zealand Ministers have during the last four days had discussions with the British Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, Mr. Duncan Sandys.
2. Mr. Sandys explained that British Government were concerned about the future consequences both economic and political of continued division in Europe and were therefore re-examining their relationship with the European Economic Community. Before determining their attitude they were seeking views of other Commonwealth Governments.
3. New Zealand Ministers stated that while they supported the objective of economic and political unity in Europe they had to have regard to the effects of possible developments upon New Zealand's economic well being. They emphasised that their agriculture, which was New Zealand's basic industry, had been developed to supply the British market and that New Zealand's economy was highly dependent on the sale of foodstuffs in that market at remunerative prices. They therefore stressed the grave consequences for New Zealand's economy if Britain should join the Common Market without having taken steps to protect New Zealand's vital interests.
4. Mr. Sandys assured them that the British Government fully understood the dependence of New Zealand's agriculture on the British market. At the same time it had to be recognised that even if Britain did not join the Common Market New Zealand might in any case be faced with difficult problems in finding outlets for its increasing agricultural production. There were limits to the British Market. Mr. Sandys said that the British Government had not yet come to any decision whether or not to enter into negotiations to join the Common Market and would not do so until the views of all Commonwealth countries had been fully considered. He made it clear that in the course of any such negotiations the British Government would seek to secure special arrangements to protect the vital interests of New Zealand and other Commonwealth countries and that Britain would not feel able to join the E.E.C. unless such arrangements were secured.
5. New Zealand Ministers made it clear that they could not at present see any effective way of protecting New Zealand's vital interests other than by maintenance of unrestricted duty free entry. Mr. Sandys explained the difficulties of reconciling unrestricted duty free entry into Britain for all New Zealand's exports with the concept of the Common Market and said that it might therefore be necessary in any negotiations to explore other methods of securing comparable outlets for New Zealand exports. New Zealand Ministers said that while adhering to the views they had expressed they would be willing to examine any such alternative methods for protecting New Zealand interests which might emerge in the course of negotiations. Until specific proposals had been put forward they would necessarily have to reserve their position.
6. Mr. Sandys gave an assurance that if Britain entered into negotiations with the European Economic Community the New Zealand Government and other Commonwealth Governments would be closely consulted on all matters affecting their interest before and during the negotiations and that arrangements would be made for the results to be thoroughly discussed with them before the British Government took any decision to join the European Economic Community.
7. New Zealand Ministers welcomed the assurances that Mr. Sandys had given, namely that the New Zealand Government would be closely consulted before and during any negotiations, that in any such negotiations the British Government would seek to secure special arrangements to protect the vital interests of New Zealand, that Britain would not feel able to join the European Economic Community unless such arrangements were secured and that the results of any negotiations would be thoroughly discussed with the New Zealand Government before the British Government took a decision to join the European Economic Community. In the light of these assurances they informed Mr. Sandys that they would understand it if, after considering the views of Commonwealth countries, the British Government should open negotiations with

the European Economic Community. In that event New Zealand would be prepared to participate in the subsequent consultations envisaged.