Excerpts from the statement made by Walter Hallstein (Brussels, 19 May 1958)

Caption: Excerpts from the statement made by Walter Hallstein, President of the Commission of the European Economic Community at the inaugural meeting of the Economic and Social Committee held on 19 May 1958.

Source: Some comments on the European Economic and Social Committee - ESC inaugural meeting. [ON-LINE]. [Brussels]: Economic and Social Committee, [25.03.2002]. Disponible sur http://www.ces.eu.int/pages/en/docs/misc/speeches/comments_on_esc_en.pdf.

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Excerpts from the statement made by Mr W. Hallstein, President of the Commission of the European Economic Community at the inaugural meeting of the Economic and Social Committee held on 19 May 1958

On behalf of the Commission of the European Economic Community, may I warmly welcome you to Brussels for your inaugural session. The Commission of the European Economic Community acknowledges the importance of the tasks awaiting the Economic and Social Committee, the scope of its role in organising the European Common Market and in formulating an economic viewpoint common to all Europe. One thing is certain. The implementation of the Treaties of Rome will radically change the wide range of economic and social conditions. It is precisely during this transitional period, during these various stages that the national economies of the Six must adapt to the new situation and leaders must keep abreast of new methods of production and new ideas. As part of this transformation process, the Economic and Social Committee will provide expertise and must be able to help overcome the difficulties which will arise.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Rome Treaties give the Economic and Social Committee a strong position, by stating that the Council and the Commission <u>must</u> consult the ESC in all cases provided for in the Treaty.

As you can see, although it is not a parliament, the Economic and Social Committee is nonetheless, by virtue of the role it is called on to play, more than just a simple group of experts.

And it can now be said that your Committee is thus, in a certain respect, already participating in making new laws for Europe, insofar as its voice is influential in the drafting of regulations which will be enacted in each of the Six for the purpose of implementing the European economic constitution – the Treaties of Rome.

The members of your Committee, whilst representing professional groups, or rather the professional classes, are not delegates from particular interest groups, but are accountable only to themselves and to the European Community. We have high hopes of seeing the natural tensions between social and professional groups eased in your Committee. Your mission is also to discuss our common problems from a technical point of view and you will thus become a group to whom those responsible for implementing the Treaties can talk without having to focus on the specific interests of each nation.

May I state here that the Commission will interpret the Treaty undertaking to consult the Economic and Social Committee on the issues in question to mean that a vote of this Committee will be considered as an essential part of our deliberations.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Economic and Social Committee, which is meeting here today for the first time, assumes a considerable part of the responsibility for the destiny and future of 165 million people. Its opinions can have a definite impact on the future shape of Europe. We all want closer economic and political cooperation and greater fulfilment for our continent.

Although the Economic and Social Committee's direct areas of activity are economic, technical and social, I am sure it will also contribute to building this better future, this new force.