

Debates in the Bundestag on the Werner Plan (Bonn, 6 November 1970)

Caption: On 6 November 1970, Karl Schiller, Minister for Economic Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), emphasises before the Bundestag the connection between monetary and political union in Europe and stresses the significance of the Werner Report.

Source: Verhandlungen des deutschen Bundestages. 6. Wahlperiode. 77. Sitzung vom 6. November 1970. Stenographische Berichte. Hrsg. Deutscher Bundestag und Bundesrat. 1970/1971, Nr. 74. Bonn. p. 4294-4297.

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Last updated: 05/07/2016

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Dr Karl Schiller, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs: Mr Speaker! Ladies and gentlemen! Reference has been made here in this debate — especially by our colleague Mr Barzel — to the connections between economic union and political union. Ladies and gentlemen, I should like to say just a few words to demonstrate that the report by the Werner Group on economic and monetary union already includes strong elements of political unification and, indeed, to a much greater extent than had been assumed here.

(Applause from the government parties.)

There are several specific points in this stage-by-stage plan that show exactly how closely linked economic union and political union are. It is important to bear this in mind when — as Mr Barzel in particular has done — we speak here of a separate plan or a stage-by-stage plan aimed at political union. If we do not see the other element, Mr Barzel, we could very easily find ourselves planning in a vacuum.

(Dr Rainer Barzel: You surely cannot try to deny the fact that the report itself underlines the need for increased cooperation!)

— I shall come to these points in just a moment, and what I intend to say will demonstrate to you what has already been stated in the report.

Mr Barzel, you said: fewer words and more deeds! The Werner Report represents action, and this government is involved in it.

(Applause from the government parties.)

We should all do our utmost to ensure that this action will bear further fruit from 1 January 1971.

The reasoning behind this stage-by-stage plan for economic and monetary union is quite logical, and it may be formulated as follows: monetary union alone, i.e. in itself and as an abstract idea, would be demolished completely if there were divergences in policies within the Community and in the individual Member States. Monetary union therefore requires the firm foundation of harmonised economic, financial and monetary policies. Part of such economic policy harmonisation is the willingness to make progress towards political cooperation and towards expanding the institutions with parliamentary scrutiny, and this is all built in to the report.

In this regard, the most important aspect, I believe, is the very precisely outlined intermediate stage or the series of intermediate stages. This is the stage that I described in the negotiations as the stage of transition when powers are transferred to Community organs, which would, in turn, be expanded. This would involve a move towards binding directives and decisions in Community economic policy and further development of the institutions.

On the subject of parliamentary accountability, the report is very clear, and we, the representatives of the Federal Republic, placed great emphasis in the Group on the fact that the following should be built in to this report and that a conclusive statement should be made on this intermediate stage and the transition to the final stage:

The transfer to the Community level of the powers exercised hitherto by national authorities will go hand-in-hand with the transfer of a corresponding Parliamentary responsibility from the national plane to that of the Community. The centre of decision of economic policy will be politically responsible to a European Parliament. The latter will have to be furnished with a status corresponding to the extension of the Community missions, not only from the point of view of the extent of its powers, but also having regard to

the method of election of its members.

This is a key statement from the Werner Report. And, without this key statement, the Plan cannot function. It is all in there, ladies and gentlemen!

And another thing, the report by the Werner Group states, firstly, that there must be a parallel relationship between the progress in monetary and in economic policy and, secondly, that there must be a parallel relationship between the gradual relinquishing of national autonomy and the simultaneous development of Community powers,

(Dr Hans Apel: That is exactly the crux of the matter! That is the key to the whole issue!)

and, thirdly — and this has all been stated in the report already — a parallel relationship between the development of Community decision-making organs and the development of parliamentary scrutiny at Community level. This is all built in. And, fourthly — this has been exceptionally important for us in this context, and the formulation of the sentence that I am about to quote is a very clear expression of the German style — the text reads:

These transfers of responsibility represent a process of fundamental political significance which implies the progressive development of political cooperation. Economic and monetary union thus appears

— and I think this is a good analogy in the report by the Werner Group —

as a leaven for the development of political union, which in the long run it cannot do without.

Development towards economic and monetary union as a leaven for political union, that is the crux of the matter, ladies and gentlemen! Here, in this report, it is stated that development towards economic and monetary union, and development towards political union, inherently interact with one another.

Deputy Speaker Dr Hermann Schmitt-Vockenhausen: Will the Minister take a question from Mr Blumenfeld?

Mr Erik Blumenfeld (CDU/CSU): Minister, may I therefore conclude from what you have said in the words that you have just quoted that the Federal Government and you personally, as the Minister with responsibility here, will urge that this paper by the Werner Group should not be watered down, either by efforts of the Commission or by one of the other governments?

Dr Schiller, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs: In answer to this question by my colleague Mr Blumenfeld I can give a resounding yes.

Deputy Speaker Dr Schmitt-Vockenhausen: Will the Minister take a supplementary question from Mr Freiherr von und zu Guttenberg?

Mr Karl-Theodor Freiherr von und zu Guttenberg (CDU/CSU): Minister, having heard you say that there is an interaction process between the Werner Plan and the progress towards political union — something that we also support — I should like to put this question to you: would it not then make sense to take up the suggestion made by the leader of the CDU/CSU parliamentary party and devise another stage-by-stage plan as a way of achieving political union?

(Applause from the CDU/CSU.)

Dr Schiller, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs: Mr von Guttenberg, I should like to respond as follows. I have attempted to demonstrate that the plan to move in stages towards economic and monetary union does already include elements of political union. I believe that this is the correct and the realistic way forward. In my opinion, political union will not be created by a quite separate plan or series of plans; political union will not be created in a test tube. I do not believe that would be the right way at all. I am of the view — and that is the idea that is set out here — political union may develop only in the fertile soil of the Economic Community, that it may flourish — as Mr Moersch has already indicated — only on the increasing convergence of the material interests of the individual Member States. That is an extremely important catalyst for political union.

Deputy Speaker Dr Schmitt-Vockenhausen: Will the Minister take a question from Dr Wagner?

Dr Carl-Ludwig Wagner (Trier) (CDU/CSU): Minister, do you not think that this expectation or hope that political unification will grow on the fertile soil of increasingly close economic union is in fact not confirmed by past experience? Would you not concede that, although economic union may well improve the conditions for political union, the achievement of such political union requires specific acts of political will and specific political decisions that then certainly do resemble a stage-by-stage plan, like that outlined today by Dr Barzel?

(Applause from the CDU/CSU.)

Dr Schiller, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs: You would be correct if this economic and monetary union were something that would come about automatically in the world of economics. But there is no question of that. This plan has been constructed in such a way that new decisions are taken in stages and that political decisions are indeed taken on the basis of experience acquired, and — and this is all included in the report — of what needs to be in place or has already been put in place with regard to political conditions, e.g. extension of parliamentary scrutiny or transfer of political powers from national authorities to Community authorities. This is clearly stated as the prerequisite for the transition from one stage to another, especially for the important transition from the first stage to the second. This time — because the plan is designed to prevent it — it cannot happen that purely economic progress is made and that, at the same time, politics fall by the wayside. This time, there is such a close link, a conditional link at the decisive points, that politics will keep up. That is the difference compared with what has gone before.

Deputy Speaker Dr Schmitt-Vockenhausen: Will the Minister take a supplementary question from Mr Freiherr von und zu Guttenberg?

Mr Freiherr von und zu Guttenberg (CDU/CSU): Minister, would you please note that our question is not based on the fact that the Werner Plan did not include political developments and consequences.

(Dr Schiller: That's more like it!)

— we know as well as you do that it is not a question here of integrating business and economics, but it is political conditions for the economy that have to be integrated —

Deputy Speaker Dr Schmitt-Vockenhausen: Will you please ask your question?

Mr Freiherr von und zu Guttenberg (CDU/CSU): — and would you please note that our question is whether the Werner Plan, the substance of which is the internal politics of Europe, should also be accompanied by a stage-by-stage plan to achieve agreement on a common foreign policy for Europe?

(Applause from the CDU/CSU.)

Dr Schiller, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs: My dear Mr von Guttenberg, this plan from the

working party that put forward the report under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Pierre Werner is not only a plan for European internal politics, it also addresses the outside world. It implicitly provides much information — and that goes without saying when we are talking about monetary policy — about the economic relationships of this unified Community vis-à-vis the outside world.

(Heckling from Mr Freiherr von und zu Guttenberg.)

— Now, I am coming closer to the point that you raised and I will say this: now that the Foreign Ministers have taken the first steps with their decisions about the consultation procedure, what is stopping them, if they have reached a certain point in their joint discussions and if we have made progress in the areas of economic and monetary union, from also adding the relevant foreign policy elements in turn? The aspect to which I most object here is that you want to construct the separate automatic mechanisms of a step-by-step plan to move towards political union. It is my opinion that this Werner Report indicates a better course. Political union that does not grow out of the material union of economic interests would be a delicate plant and would wither away. A plan for political union that is not based on progress in other areas — and it would only be logical if this plan were to be developed at each stage for the next one — a separate plan of this kind for the political area as such, Mr von Guttenberg, would remain nothing more than a piece of paper, in my opinion, because it would not, as has happened here, be closely linked with the merging of the economic, financial and monetary interests of the Community. This seems to me to be the realistic route, the route that we tried to take before but that this time is much more closely and more clearly linked with pragmatic steps towards political union, necessary steps taken from stage to stage. You do not need a blueprint for a stage-by-stage plan in foreign policy as well.

Deputy Speaker Dr Schmitt-Vockenhausen: Will the Minister take a question from Dr Apel?

Dr Apel (SPD): Minister, are you prepared to also point out to Mr von Guttenberg that we already have a stage-by-stage plan in which the decisions made on political cooperation are appraised after two years and, to the extent that a first stage has been achieved, it will be followed by a second stage, which can then include much of what you, Minister, have just referred to?

Dr Schiller, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs: I shall be pleased to draw the attention of Mr von Guttenberg to this. And, what is more, I should like to say again that this approach — if I may put it that way — this attempt to establish a new linkage between economic and monetary union and political advances is also a good thing, in as far as it gives each of the Member States the opportunity to regard certain of their own economic conditions as fulfilled or not fulfilled and thus also to take political action accordingly. I would like to indicate just one aspect that we repeatedly have to throw into the balance: if, at the transition from the first to the second stage, the economic target of stability that we want has not been achieved, we cannot do much politically in that situation either. We would then first have to ensure that more happened in the area of stability. This process benefits the protection of our own interests and is also particularly beneficial to our target of stability and growth in the Community.

(Applause from the government parties.)

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