

Speech by Ernest Bevin (London, 3 April 1946)

Caption: On 3 April 1946, at the opening of the Emergency Conference on European Cereals Supplies, the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, emphasises the importance of working together to put an end to food shortages in Europe.

Source: Emergency Conference on European Cereals Supplies held in London from 3rd to 6th April 1946. London: 1946.

Copyright: All rights of reproduction, public communication, adaptation, distribution or dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

The documents available on this Web site are the exclusive property of their authors or right holders.

Requests for authorisation are to be addressed to the authors or right holders concerned.

Further information may be obtained by referring to the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/speech_by_ernest_bevin_london_3_april_1946-en-14b8272d-604a-4a6f-a5cc-1ce09f459105.html

Publication date: 04/09/2012

Speech by Ernest Bevin (London, 3 April 1946)

"It is my privilege on behalf of His Majesty's Government to welcome this Conference to London. This is the widest European Conference since the war. It must also feel the advantage — as against other Conferences — that it is not concerned with politics at all; the fact that representatives of States which were neutral in the war or which fought on the opposite side are attending the Conference has no political significance. The Conference has come together to discuss a purely practical question and who is here and who is not here is unimportant.

As I see it the Conference has two main jobs. The first is to consider what steps the European countries can take to help tide over the critical period between now and the harvest. We are not here to discuss allocations of supplies. That is done elsewhere. We know that the allocations would not be large and we have to see what we can do to eke out.

If there are measures which one country has found effective, all should know them. If there are measures which may be unpleasant and which individual governments would feel reluctant to take by themselves we should consider whether they can be faced by all of us together.

The second main job is to see how the position looks for the period after the harvest, that is the crop year 1946/47. Estimates of the world food supply position for next year differ.

We agree, however, that this harvest will not see the end of our difficulties and one reason why estimates differ is uncertainty about the extent to which European agriculture will have recovered at this harvest.

If this Conference does nothing else it has given us a more precise picture of what we may expect from this year's harvest in Europe and it will have been worth while.

Perhaps a third task should be added. That is to consider measures which may increase effectiveness of agricultural production in Europe beginning with the autumn of this year.

This is a large agenda to cover in a short time. I hope that the Conference will get down to brass tacks and stay down, and not waste its energies in airy statements.

Europe is an important part of the world food problem because of the damage of the war but it is only a part. If we are to avert widespread famine we have got to act in the prairies of North America, in the paddy fields of Burma and Siam, and in the waters of the Antarctic. This Conference leads to the Food and Agriculture Organization Conference in Washington in May which no doubt Governments here represented will be attending. This Conference will do some of the spade work for the wider Conference.

I hope it will show to the world that the countries of Europe can take the lead in solving their own problems, and I trust it will lay the foundation for an ultimate permanent nutrition policy which would be a blessing to the peoples of the world and no mean contribution to the peace of mankind."