

Address given by Edward Heath when presenting the Seventh Annual Report of the Council (London, 5 June 1962)

Caption: The Secretary-General circulates a note containing the text of the address given by Edward Heath, Chairman in Office of the Council of Western European Union (WEU), during the eighth session (first part) of the WEU Assembly on 5 June 1962. As he presents the Seventh Annual Report of the Council, Heath emphasises the utility of the political consultations within WEU for the establishment of closer relations between the United Kingdom and the European Communities. As the representative of the British Government, Heath also confirms that his country wishes to play its full part in the development of the political structure of the European Community, which will be strengthened by British accession.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. Secretary-General's note. Eight session (first part) of the Assembly. C(62)91. 6 p. Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://www.anlux.lu>. Western European Union Archives. Secretariat-General/Council's Archives. 1954-1987. Relations with non-member countries and other international organisations. Year: 1962, 01/12/1955-30/06/1962. File 350.00. Volume 1/2.

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SECRETARY-GENERAL'S NOTE

Eighth Session (First Part) of the Assembly

The Secretary-General circulates herewith, for information, the text of the speech made on 5th June 1962 to the Assembly by the Chairman in Office of the Council, Mr. Heath, when presenting the Seventh Annual Report.

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9, Grosvenor Place,
London, S.W.1.

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Presentation of the Seventh Annual Report of the Council
to the Assembly by Mr. Edward Heath, Chairman in Office
of the Council, and Lord Privy Seal of the
United Kingdom Government
5th June 1962

"Mr. President, as Chairman in Office of the Council I have to introduce the report which the Council is called upon to present in accordance with Article 9 of the revised Brussels Treaty.

This gives me the opportunity of saying how glad I am to address your Assembly. I do so with particular pleasure, because this Assembly has played such a notable part in bringing my own country and the members of the European Economic Community closer together. I am also very happy to speak under your Presidency, for we had the pleasure of welcoming you to London and of entertaining you during your official visit earlier in the year. I shall shortly be saying a few words, as the representative of the British Government, on the political developments now taking place in Europe, but I should, first, as Chairman, like to give you a very brief survey of the activities of the Western European Union during the past year, on the basis of the report which you have received from the Council.

The first chapter is devoted to relations between the Council and this Assembly. Those, obviously, have an effect on the psychological climate in which the work of the Western European Union is carried out. As in the past, some highly complex problems have had to be handled. There have been times when the points of view have been difficult to reconcile. The discussions on parliamentary control over defence matters provide an example. This sort of thing is bound to happen, because our institutions are founded on the concept of the free expression of opposing points of view. Moreover, there is the added complication that these defence problems are primarily handled by governments in the North Atlantic Council.

There have been a number of contacts at different levels between the Council and the Assembly during the past year. My own impression, from the work I have seen, is one of growing co-operation between these two main bodies of the Western European Union. On the great issues that confront us, the views expressed by the Assembly have done much to nourish the debates in the Council, and I am sure that that two-way movement of ideas has been beneficial.

A further chapter in the Council's report is devoted to general political questions. This Assembly has always held that as the Council is the only organic link between the United Kingdom and the six member States of the Communities, it is the most suitable forum for political consultation between the governments concerned.

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The Council has, indeed, provided a meeting place where governments have held detailed discussions on many political matters of common interest. These consultations derive much of their value from the restricted size of the meetings and, in general, from their confidential nature. Personally, I would like to pay a tribute to their value.

I do not feel that I need go into detail concerning the conclusions of the report dealing with military activities, in particular of the Armaments Control Agency and the Standing Armaments Committee. Considerable space has been given in Chapter 3 of the report to the activities of the Agency during the past year. I would however remind you that the Council, acting on a NATO recommendation, has revised Annex III of Protocol No. III of the Treaty dealing with the list of naval weapons which the Federal Republic of Germany undertook not to manufacture on its territory. As the Assembly knows, this list has been revised in order to take account of technical developments since the Treaty was signed.

I cannot conclude this brief survey without mentioning the new building in which we are now meeting. I would like to take this opportunity of expressing to the French Government our warm thanks for all the assistance they have given to the Organisation and for the speed and efficiency with which the work has been carried out.

Mr. President, I would like now to say a few words, as the representative of the British Government, about the political side of our relationship with Europe and the political purpose which influenced our approach to the Community. Representatives of the Assembly will probably recall the statement I made to the Council in London on 16th April last. I said then that we wished to play our full part in the political construction of Europe and that we were convinced that we had much to contribute to it. I emphasised that the British Government wanted to see the development of a strong political and economic Community, composed of the countries who were full members, whose voice would be heard increasingly in world councils and whose influence would make itself felt more and more.

I used the following words, which I would like to quote to you:

'The Community will be in a position of leadership, an aggregate of power within the free world standing shoulder to shoulder with the United States. Such a Community is going to have opinions on many subjects, perhaps on most subjects.'

In making this statement, I wanted, in the first place, to show unequivocally the British Government's interest in the development of an effective European Community in which the United Kingdom would play a part. I also felt that it would

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be helpful to my colleagues in the Council here, then engaged on the task of drawing up a text for political co-operation, to know what our position was on the various aspects of the problem. It was clear, I think, from my statement that our thoughts have been moving very much on parallel lines with those of the members of the Community.

We were after all faced, as possible future members of the Community, with the same problem as they were, namely, the problem of balancing the ideal against the practical. It is a question of how fast and by what stages we should develop the forms of closer political co-operation in Europe.

I do not believe that there are any fundamental divisions here. As you know, however, it has not yet been possible for the six Governments to formulate an agreed text and the consultations which we expected have not yet taken place.

Naturally, we shall want to play our part in shaping a political structure for the Community which we hope to join, and we have assurances that we shall have full opportunity for this when the time comes.

Meanwhile, the Brussels negotiations go forward. We are now embarked on the delicate and difficult task of finding solutions to the complex problems involved in the possible accession of the United Kingdom to the Treaty of Rome. I am sure that you would not expect me to comment on the negotiations in detail, but I would say this: our decision to enter into them was a landmark for us. We did not take the step lightly. We fully recognised the consequences which it must involve for our country and we were conscious of its significance for the future economic and political development of Europe.

In my opening statement in Paris last October, I said this:

'Faced with the threats which we can all see, Europe must unite or perish. The United Kingdom being part of Europe, must not stand aside.'

We have, therefore, approached the negotiations in Brussels with our eyes open and with a practical programme of work in view. Our object is to find solutions appropriate to a Europe broadened and strengthened by our accession. To this end, we are prepared to make changes in our own existing arrangements, to accept the structure of the existing common tariff and to participate in the common agricultural policy. We have found no major problems of principle for us in the provisions of the Treaty of Rome governing the Economic Union. We are convinced that our accession can bring to the Community itself new opportunities and new strength both in Europe and the world outside. As Europe's strength grows so do her responsibilities. This, too, is a fact which this Assembly has always recognised; indeed, it has emphasised it in many of its reports.

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All our countries have historical links with many different parts of the world. These mark the achievements of our peoples over a long period. Today, these connections are particularly close. For the members of the Community they are reflected in the different forms of arrangement for which the Treaty of Rome provides. For the British people, they are embodied in the wide variety of ties - constitutional, economic and personal - which bind together the members of the Commonwealth. Each of us here is strengthened and enriched by these associations. In particular, both the Community and the United Kingdom devote a considerable amount of their resources to the development of the economies of those with whom they have these traditional bonds.

As I said to the Council in London:

'We shall, of course, retain our constitutional ties and the arrangements for consultation with the Commonwealth, which we have worked out. In my judgment these will be a source of strength to Europe. They will in no way prevent us from participating fully in the growth of a new Europe, and this in its turn will give fresh vitality to our Commonwealth connections.'

It is to the economic aspects of this relationship that we are devoting our attention in Brussels. No one in this Assembly will wish to challenge our determination to ensure that in the development of Europe in which we all hope to take part, the essential interests of the countries of the Commonwealth are safeguarded. We believe that by reconciling membership of the Community and our links with the Commonwealth we can the better help to realise Europe's full potentialities. We can do so only if the members of the present Community are ready, for their part, to move with us towards this common goal of a stronger Europe. We can, I am sure, count upon the support of this Assembly in our task.

The time may soon be coming when we shall have to face the question of fitting Western European Union into the new pattern of European organisation. I do not want to venture very far on this ground today. This is a question on which the Assembly will no doubt be expressing its views. They will be listened to with interest and they may well help to crystallise opinion.

We have no very clear-cut ideas on this at present and I suspect that the other governments concerned are in the same position. In fact, this is not a very good moment for governments to begin forming their views on this question. We must tackle the most urgent problem first. For the time being, Western European Union is well fulfilling its important rôle; and because it is doing its work well in this way we can let it continue as it is until the more urgent problems have been resolved.

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C (62) 91

I should like to end, Mr. President, by thanking you all once again for the contribution which you have made to the cause of European unity. This Assembly is a cross-section of the political life of the most important part of Western Europe. That you have never wavered in your view that Western Europe is not complete without the United Kingdom has been an encouragement and stimulus to the governments concerned. It has encouraged them in their search for that unity without which the nations of Europe may falter and fail in carrying out their mission in history."

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