

Extract from a speech made by Mr Albert Borschette,  
Member of the Commission of the European Communities,  
at Diekirch on 3 April 1976

---

The idea of setting up a Directory in the Community has for some time been a very vexed issue.

What is meant by this term which, in French history at least, awakens no great or glorious memories?

Politically speaking there are four large and five smaller countries in the Community.

In economic terms, however, there are only two major powers and even they are not of uniform strength.

But seeing that the Community is no longer making progress, and without going to the trouble of analysing the underlying reasons for this - lack of political will and uncontrolled use of the veto - the view taken is that, in its external dealings, the Community must speak with one voice, but that voice must belong to a major power. Internally, it is said, the voices are too discordant and interests too divergent to allow each country to continue to have its say. It is therefore for the major powers to take the decisions, leaving the others to benefit from their wisdom and strength, particularly in the economic sphere.

Such a system is the complete antithesis of a Community.

The word Community implies that all work together to formulate common decisions. There is no question of giving the smaller Member States the same number of votes as the major powers. Weighting of votes is one of the original features of the Treaty of Rome.

The right way to get things moving again is not to create a Directory, but to abandon the harmful rule of a unanimity in favour of the principle of a qualified majority, whereby each country can vote as it wishes, even if its vote does not have the same weight.

- 3 -

The term Community implies solidarity: yet how can there be solidarity without participation in decision-making, how can there be solidarity if decisions are imposed and how can such decisions give the politically or economically weak countries a firm guarantee that their interests will still be protected in a Directory composed of the strong and powerful countries.

The Community's main achievements are that all countries, from the biggest to the smallest, sit at the same table, that agreements between the large countries do not harm the small ones and that small countries are not made to pay for differences of opinion between the large ones.

To replace the Community, which stands for participation and solidarity, by a body within which the members would form alliances on the basis of power and strength, would be not only a step backwards but also, in the not too distant future, a move towards destroying the most original political creation, the greatest source of optimism since the Second World War.

I say this not as a national of the smallest country in the Community, but as a citizen of a Europe impregnated with a Community spirit and a feeling of solidarity. As such I cannot subscribe to the idea of first and second class citizens, or accept the idea of the dangerous and, ultimately, suicidal balance of power game beginning all over again.

If the Community is recognized today by the whole world, it is not because it consists of a few large powers - they depend, in fact, on the

Community for their strength - which must eventually recognise that the Community as a whole can assume a role in world affairs, which can no longer be taken by any one Community country by itself.

I do, however, see one great hope for the future -- direct election of Members of the European Parliament. In 1978 every European citizen will be called upon to elect Members directly to the European Parliament. If there is to be an election, there will have to be election campaigns and manifestos. In two years, therefore, every citizen of Europe will have a hand in shaping Europe's policies in line with his own ideas.

It is to be hoped that, by then, all the Community countries will have granted young people over the age of eighteen the right to vote.

It is also to be hoped that, by then our political parties will have sorted out their views on Europe and abandoned once and for all the paradoxical attitude of supporting progressive policies at national level and the most backward form of nationalism at European level.

It is true that a directly elected European Parliament would have only limited power. Real power, however, is not given: it must be taken.

In his report the Belgian Prime Minister could not propose the qualitative leap forward which would lead to a true decision-making centre, a European Executive, because such a proposal was doomed to be rejected by certain governments. Only a directly elected European Parliament can now pave the way for such a leap forward.

And it will do so, for if it does not, it will be condemning itself. How many of us would go to the trouble again of electing men and women the sum total of whose activities after five years in the European Parliament would be a list of Opinions on Commission proposals and resolutions on Council Decisions.

For this reason I firmly believe that, in spite of all the difficulties and sordid quarrels of self-interest and in spite of all the setbacks and hesitation, we can in the next decade offer young people a worthwhile Europe with a human face, which will live up to their hopes and expectations.