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Speech by Mr. Brunner to the European Parliament

Report by Mr. Osborn on the Commission's paper on Energy Objectives, 1985

1. The Commission document which is the subject of your report and the draft resolution which the Commission is proposing, are about quantified energy policy objectives. Sometimes I detect that such concepts have a frightening effect. The Commission is unrepentant in this respect. We aim to avoid vague generalisations over our policy priorities. Only a quantitative analysis of our present situation of the direction in which we want to move can help us, collectively and within each member state, to identify meaningfully our policy priorities.
2. The Council resolution of December 1974 which called for the establishment of quantitative objectives made it clear that these were to be regarded as guidelines for national policies, rather than binding limits or targets. It is in this spirit that the present Commission document should be approached. It sets out revised estimates and new targets for 1985 - a process of revision in changed circumstances which is essential if your objectives are to be realistic rather than mere shibboleths.
3. 1985 is now quite close; we are already starting work on forecasting and targeting for the longer term - up to 1990 and the end of the century. It is these periods which are going to be affected by the major strategic energy policy decisions we take in the next few years.
4. The proposed resolution imposes a tougher challenge on member states, than the expectations derived from their forecasts made in early 1977. The key feature is that within the same figure of overall demand as in the national forecasts, we are determined that the supply shortfall from the disturbing decline in expected nuclear capacity should not be made up by extra oil imports. Instead, our targets (Table 5, page 10) call for increased reliance on Community production, ^{of oil + gas} and increased use of coal.
5. We are asking member states to support a target framework for energy policy in which Community production of oil and gas should be 140 and 160 mtoe respectively, and in which coal burn should be 240 mtoe. These figures should be compared with the lower, or more loosely expressed ranges, to be found in the summary of national programmes.
6. These figures are not mere statistical niceties; they imply real and sometimes difficult action. I attach particular importance to the proposed target limit on oil imports of 500 m.tons p.a. This figure is entirely consistent with the 26 mbd IEA target for the IEA countries as a whole and which has already been agreed by eight member states.

I hope it can be fully supported by the Community in the Resolution now before you.

7. The target import limit is not an attempt to dictate, by implication, Community oil and gas depletion policies. That national prerogative is not in question. But it aims to focus our attention on a realistic target. It is not an easy target, but strong energy conservation efforts will make a major contribution.
8. Before going on to more detailed observations on your report, I should like to comment on the general energy background, against which the resolution must be judged. I share the concern strongly voiced in § 28 of your report about the decline in the resources being devoted to energy investment, at a time when the external outlook is far from reassuring.
9. So far as oil is concerned, the Community's imports are running at almost £ 140 m per day. Overseas oil supplies are not only insecure but an enormous burden on our balance of payments - even at present -day prices. Of course, the immediate oil supply and price situation now looks almost cosy. But let us ensure that no one is lulled into a false sense of security by the possibility of OPEC restraint - or even of a price freeze - in the next price review.
10. It is true that Alaskan, North Sea and Mexican production will ease the pressure on the supply side in the next few years. Beyond that, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that burgeoning world demand in the 1980's will have an inevitable, substantial and upward effect on real oil prices from the next decade onwards. To mitigate the consequences of that we have to maintain and intensify our efforts now, hence the importance of unwavering support for the policies in the draft resolution.
11. The resolution and your report both refer to the nuclear situation. The decline in the capacity forecasts for 1985 is now well known. We must get our nuclear programmes back onto path as soon as possible. This will be an Herculean task. It means working in an international context to solve technical problems and to guard against proliferation risks from the development of the fuel cycle. It also means satisfying legitimate public doubts on nuclear issues.
12. My aim has been to engage the public in rational debate to bring out the objectives and concerns of the various groups involved. This was the purpose of the open discussions on nuclear energy which I held two weeks ago in Bruxelles, with the valuable involvement of members of the energy and environment Committee of your Parliament. The dialogue is therefore now underway within this Community framework. Once people begin talking to each other, progress can be contemplated.

13. One point to emerge from the first round of the debate was the general recognition of the need for some nuclear power. The issue is therefore already not a crude "yes" or "no" question, but one of the scale, type and speed of nuclear developments. I hope for further progress from the next part of the debates - on safety health and the environment in January.

14. Votre projet de résolution que je puis approuver entièrement, est accompagné d'un rapport sur lequel je voudrais faire quelques commentaires.
15. Pour faire face à la réduction des ressources pétrolières dans les années 90 (point 20) la Commission a non seulement fait des propositions pour développer l'énergie nucléaire mais aussi pour intensifier le recours au charbon, au pétrole et au gaz produits dans la Communauté et pour utiliser l'énergie plus rationnellement. Elle propose dans son actuel projet de résolution de pousser cet effort plus loin que ce que se proposent les pays membres.
16. Votre rapporteur a raison de souligner (point 23) la nécessité d'assurer un approvisionnement sûr en uranium. A cet égard, la Commission se félicite du soutien que lui apporte le Parlement pour développer la recherche d'uranium dans la Communauté. Grâce à ce soutien, cette action a pu démarrer il y a deux ans et commence à donner des résultats significatifs, notamment dans des pays tel l'Irlande qui, jusqu'à présent, n'avaient pas prospecté leurs richesses en uranium.
17. Nous devons également veiller à assurer la sécurité de nos importations en uranium naturel. J'ai eu dans ce but des conversations approfondies avec les représentants du gouvernement canadien pour aboutir à un accord entre ce pays, grand producteur d'uranium, et la Communauté. Des perspectives favorables à l'aboutissement de nos négociations se dessinent.
18. Votre rapporteur estime que les propositions de la Commission sont insuffisantes en ce qui concerne l'énergie nucléaire (points 29-31). Ce reproche n'est pas justifié. La Commission s'est engagée en faveur du nucléaire. Je vous ai déjà parlé de son action pour informer objectivement le public. Elle a de plus présenté (ou présentera incessamment) des propositions sur l'implantation des centrales, le retraitement des combustibles irradiés, les réacteurs rapides, l'élimination des déchets nucléaires, le renforcement de la sécurité des réacteurs, le contrôle de sécurité, ~~l'implantation des centrales~~. Notre but est que toutes ces propositions permettent d'atteindre les objectifs fixés pour 1985: ~~400~~ ⁹⁰ GWe de puissance installée, ~~1000~~