



*European Communities
Commission
Press Release*

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before SATURDAY, MAY 12, 1979, 12.00 HOURS.

Extracts from an address given by Mr Christopher Tugendhat,
EEC Commissioner responsible for the Budget, to a Conservative
Rally held in Perth, Scotland, on Saturday, May 12, 1979.

The New Government

The early statements by the new Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher and her foreign secretary, Lord Carrington, that they regard an improvement in Britain's relations with her European partners as a priority indicate a positive approach to European affairs which must benefit both Britain and the whole European Community.

The Community is going through a period of change, of adaptation, and of re-assessment. It is vital that Britain should be in the mainstream of developments helping to mould the shape and direction of that change. A constructive British policy could provide the shot in the arm which the Community needs to restore the sense of common interest and common purpose which has suffered somewhat in recent years. For just as Britain needs the Community, so the Community, if its development is to be balanced and soundly-based, needs vigorous and positive British participation.

It should not surprise us that the party which aspires to be the national party of Britain should also be the party of Europe.

Our European partners understand that the British Government's commitment to the Community is based on the belief that a strong and successful Community is itself a British interest. They know that the Conservative Government will fight strenuously on behalf of British interests. They are, however, confident that this will always be within a Community framework. I am sure that this is the best way to make progress both on behalf of the United Kingdom, and for the benefit of the Community as a whole.

Direct Elections

The excitement surrounding the general election has in the UK largely overshadowed another major event in the life of the Community - the first direct elections to the European Parliament on June 7.

An election giving 180 million voters in nine European countries the opportunity to elect representatives to the same parliament provides a very vivid illustration of how far Europe has come since the war. It will provide for the first time directly accountable representatives charged exclusively with scrutinising and influencing the affairs of the European Community. This extension of democracy in the affairs of the Community will, I believe, provide a firm foundation for much greater public trust in the Community's institutions and greater understanding of its policies.

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The European Parliament has great potential but if its potential is to be fully realised I believe it will have to conduct itself with considerable skill, relying on a pragmatic and evolutionary approach rather than on grand constitutional designs.

The effective exploitation by the Parliament of the power to demand information, and the moral authority it will carry when expressing the views of a large majority of its members could lead to it exerting a greater influence on the Council of Ministers and the Commission than its limited formal powers (particularly with regard to the former) might lead one to expect.

The important thing now is to start the European Parliament along the right road; the direction taken by the first directly elected Parliament is clearly of crucial importance for its successors. And the election in four weeks time provides the voters with the opportunity to take the first step.

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