

11 September, 1967

Remarks at a Press Conference held by

M. Albert Coppé, Member of the Commission of the European Communities,

Montreal, Canada.

---

Current Problems

The fusion of the European Communities' executives (the High Authority of the Coal and Steel Community, the Commission of the Common Market, and the Commission of Euratom) and the Councils of Ministers became a reality last July sixth.

Fusion has changed the external aspect of the Communities by placing all activities under the responsibility of a single Commission. It has also given us the opportunity to change basically the framework of our Communities. The new European Commission has devoted its first weeks of work to this task. Our single administration now comprises a staff of ten thousand.

The new Commission is an heir to the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community which had been responsible for administering a common market for coal and steel, the two economic sectors wherein European integration began 15 years ago. The oldest of the three Communities provided us with valuable experience and an impressive list of achievements. It enabled us to modernize Europe's coal industry which is still going through serious structural difficulties and to more than double the Community's steel production. To do so, the High Authority carried out a policy of aid for investment and for scientific research and a policy of reorganizing markets for coal and steel. In the social sphere, the results were positive: within thirteen years, the High Authority had enabled 275,000 miners to move into jobs in other expanding sectors of the economy through its financial program for readaptation.

.../...

The new Commission has also inherited the mantle of Euratom which had developed in the nuclear industry sector a European research policy. Euratom has developed throughout the Community a number of joint research centers wherein 2,500 European scientists from the six member nations work on common research projects. It also has special research and development agreements with several third countries including Canada. Through Euratom's efforts, the Community will be able to cover 10 per cent of its total energy needs through nuclear power by 1980.

Finally, the new Commission takes over the tasks of the Commission of the European Economic Community which had laid the foundation stones for a general common market in the past 10 years. The EEC Commission's tariff disarmament had brought internal tariffs down to one tenth of their original level. The Commission had also made a significant achievement by establishing a single agricultural policy for the six member nations.

Among the tasks which the new Commission must carry out is the removal of all fiscal and regulatory obstacles standing in the way of full common market. It should be said that 1967 has already seen real progress made toward the establishment of a common fiscal policy. By the first of July, next year, tariffs among the Six will be completely eliminated and a common external tariff will be in force; thus, a full customs union will be born. The new Commission, aware that the Communities are the world's largest exporters and importers, realizes that it must maintain a liberal trade policy. This has already been confirmed by EEC tariff cuts made in the Kennedy Round GATT negotiations. However, the new Commission regards these negotiations only as the first step toward still further liberalization of trade.

The Commission also faces new tasks. The extremely rapid economic expansion (more than 5 per cent annually) of the Common Market since its creation has also created new regional problems in addition to existing ones such as in southern Italy. For example, they include problems created by the rapid industrialization of agricultural regions, the economic modernization of areas with inefficient and out-moded industries, and those created by the establishment of the Common Market itself - such as regions at the frontiers of the member states.

.../...

There is no member state in the Communities without some regional problems. Fortunately, we have already had some experience and success in the readaption of certain under-productive mining and steel-making regions. These experiences will be valuable to the new Commission in attacking other regional problems.

In the field of scientific research, the new Commission intends to increase its activities, based upon the experience of Euratom in the nuclear industry sector and of the Coal and Steel Community in the coal and steel sectors. The new Commission is fully aware of the role it must play in this area.

In spite of the many positive aspects and achievements of the Communities, we fully realize that certain sectors need more attention. I mention particularly the areas of transport, social affairs, monetary policy, and energy policy. It is important that the Communities' development takes place in various sectors at the same pace.

Finally, we must seriously consider the enlargement of the Communities. Until now, the Common Market has, in addition to its Association with the African countries and Malagasy, established close association ties with Greece and Turkey. At the present, the Communities are faced with urgent requests for accession by several countries. These requests seem to demonstrate the success of the European undertaking of the Six. It is in the best interests of the European Communities to find a happy solution to problems raised by these membership requests. The question of the United Kingdom's accession is now being fully discussed in our Commission. Thus, I must refrain from saying more about the subject at this moment - as much as I would like to give you my personal opinion.

Withall, we hope to progress gradually and pragmatically toward the ultimate object of our efforts - political union. The approach we have chosen, which consists of widening our common approach and common policies in more and more sectors, is not the most rapid means for reaching our goal. But we do believe it is the most certain and realistic approach.

-----