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POLICY STATEMENTS

38/75. EUROPEAN MEMBERSHIP: THE PRIME MINISTER'S VIEW

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Mr. Harold Wilson, Prime Minister,
at the annual dinner of the Con-
federation of British Industry, in
London on May 20, 1975:

The Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Wilson, speaking at the annual dinner of the Confederation of British Industry, reminded his audience that emotionally he had always been a Commonwealth, rather than a European supporter.

"Unlike many here, I have never been emotionally a European man. As a Commonwealth man, I cannot disregard the spontaneous decision -- 'unsolicited' as Prime Minister Manley put it -- of 32 other Commonwealth Heads of Government to make a statement saying that every Commonwealth country wanted Britain to stay in the Market. Indeed some were pressing ... the view that British membership was of value in encouraging the Community to be more outward looking towards the rest of the world..."

The Prime Minister went on to suggest that it was "the middle opinion" people in Britain who would judge the Common Market on the practical level who would be decisive in the referendum vote.

"But there is ... a large body of opinion of less doctrinally committed public opinion which was prepared to be favorable to entry, now still more prepared, three years after, to remain in the Market. It will be their voice which will be decisive in the referendum... What I think middle opinion will particularly regard as the touchstone

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for their judgement will be not so much the legal construction of the Market, the Treaties, the judicial powers and functions of the Commission, but how the Market is actually working, in practical down-to-earth terms -- literally bread and butter terms."

And the record of trade with the European Community for 1974 showed what a valuable market it was for Britain.

"In 1974 the EEC took more than one-third of our exports, more than the rest of Western Europe and North America put together and in the most recent three months the value of our exports to the other members of EEC increased by 4 percent on the previous three months at a time when exports to North America fell by 5 percent and to Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Japan taken together by 9½ percent."

But the Prime Minister was anxious to make clear that in his view Britain's present economic problems would not be automatically solved by the referendum decision whether it is for or against remaining in the Community, but that outside the task of solving them would be much greater.

"Let no-one in the referendum campaign, in the hubris of the hustings, claim that either remaining in the Market or leaving the Market, will solve Britain's economic problems. Neither will. The fault, and therefore our solution, lies not in European stars, in or out, but from now on in ourselves. But ... Britain's prospects of solving our own problems in our own way ... will be made immeasurably more difficult, in the circumstances we have to live with, if the British people vote for the severance of Britain from the Community."

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