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Strasbourg, 20 January 1987

**STATEMENT BY VICE-PRESIDENT LORENZO NATALI ON
BEHALF OF THE COMMISSION
ON THE ELECTION OF SIR HENRY PLUMB
AS PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

423.02

Mr President,

It is both an honour and a privilege for me to take the floor in this House on behalf of the Commission, to welcome your election. Let me say, Sir, that we both have ten years of European service behind us. It has been a long and exciting time - a third of the life of our Community - during which we have had many opportunities - institutional and otherwise - for encounter, dialogue and cooperation. And during that time, no less to my colleagues than to myself, you have personified the proverbial British pragmatism, which works so well when successfully combined with an ingrained commitment to an ideal. That very commitment which has made of you a stalwart supporter of Britain's membership of the Community and has consistently inspired your endeavours in this House.

Your election today sets the seal on the integrity of your commitment. The Commission, looking ahead to the crucial deadlines in the months to come, welcomes this event convinced that, under the impetus of your Presidency, Parliament will continue to play a decisive part, remaining true to its great traditions and to its role as the foremost exponent of the will of the European people.

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The democratic ceremony that we have witnessed here today also takes on an altogether special meaning in the light of the new institutional dimension conferred by the endorsement of the Single Act. Reaction to the scale of the reforms was mixed: for some, they did not go far enough; for others they constituted as much in the way of concessions that the Member States were prepared to make. The Commission has, for its part, consistently declared its intention to regard the Single Act as a dynamic compromise: a tree to be judged by its fruit as each new graft is applied. The acid test will no doubt be the actual use of qualified majority voting in the instances provided for by the Single Act. But the outcome will also hinge largely on application of what is termed the cooperation procedure, designed and adopted to enable Parliament to play a more important part in legislative proceedings and in the revitalizing of European integration.

Over the last few months your House has been doing a fine job in adapting its procedures and operations to the new institutional rules. The Commission, in the person of my colleague Peter Sutherland, has been attentively following your efforts on this front. And it will be more than a willing partner now that the time has come to implement and try out the new cooperation procedure. We all fully realize that the success of these reforms for the good of the Community will in fact depend on the extent to which our respective institutions can sustain dialogue and collaboration while safeguarding their specific prerogatives.

Using a hefty measure of flexibility and pragmatism we shall have to find ways to make good any deficiencies in the rules until such time as the procedural machinery can run on auto-pilot. Both are inevitable and essential ingredients of a process of democratization whose ultimate and implicit objective is the consolidation of Europe and the institutions that take the decisions for it. I am sure that, with you at the helm, Mr President, this House will not fail to uphold and renew its commitment to this process, whose potential - still unexplored - can, and we all hope will, improve our Community's institutional image.

Please let me conclude, Mr President, with a warm and affectionate tribute to Mr Pierre Pflimlin. We all appreciate the dynamism, wisdom and unswerving dedication with which from the outset - consistent with the ideals he has always set himself throughout his long political life - he has upheld and enhanced the dignity and prerogatives of the current Parliament, the linch-pin of the European venture.

His example and his presence will, we are sure, continue to spur and hearten each one of us as we advance in defence of the cause that unites us all.