

Speech given by the Rt. Hon. J. Enoch Powell MP on 29 December 1976, probably in London

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((The first half of the speech is taken from first half of speech given originally in Gloucester on Friday, 29th October 1976, with adjustments in this transcript below))

(Opening Applause)

I should like to pay a compliment to the Prime Minister, I am sure this will not be disagreeable to him at a time when there are more brickbats than bouquets in the air around him. It cannot, it is true, be an unqualified compliment; but I trust it will not be despised on that account.

In the days before 1974, James Callaghan was one of the doughtiest opponents of Britain's membership of the Common Market. He made many fine speeches exposing the disadvantages, both moral and material, which would attend upon that fateful - though, happily, reversible - step. He voted solidly through the session of 1972 against the European Communities Bill - an Act still on the statute book un-amended - which made our entry possible by stripping the British Parliament of its historic right to be the sole source of legitimate power in this realm. What is more, he indicated the minimum requirements of Britain's interests that must be met if we were to remain associated with the Common Market, and he made no bones about declaring that they were incompatible with that crucial section of the 1972 Act which abrogated Britain's political independence.

Hopes therefore were high among patriotic Britons when in March 1974 none other than James Callaghan became Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. And it is at this point that the complimentary allusions which I am making have to be qualified - indeed, very severely qualified. Yet I will draw, as best I can, the kindly veil of palliation over the dismal interlude which followed. Backed though he was by a large majority of his Cabinet colleagues (as Harold Wilson has revealed in his recent book), constrained and strengthened though he was by his own words and actions of previous years, the Foreign Secretary succumbed in little more than two months to the mephitic atmosphere of the Foreign Office. His single-handed determination proved insufficient to make head against the serried mandarin ranks which had closed around him. He was overborne and made captive by those who were determined that parliaments and politicians might come and go, but that this island should remain a predestined province of the new super-state of Western Europe.

It is not my intention to harrow your feelings by recalling in detail the dismal and even disgraceful story of the year which followed. I hasten onward to the more hopeful present; for scarcely had the deluded voters recorded albeit a minority vote at the referendum for re-affirming the renunciation of Britain's political and parliamentary independence, when one class of the community after another discovered by practical experience that their interests had been betrayed and their credulity had been practised upon. Every promised and predicted benefit was swiftly replaced by an evident disadvantage or disaster. British industry found the expanded market was a bonanza for their competitors.

British commerce discovered that their trading surplus with the rest of the world was swamped by a deficit with Europe. The farmers found they had exchanged the decisions of their own government for the ruthless exploitation of the Common Market ruled by others to their disadvantage. The fishermen became aware that Britain's right to defend her fishing grounds had been surrendered in advance. Above all, the consumer, the housewife - and among consumers, the poorer consumers, in whose budget food bulks largest - learnt that they had been deceived. They had been told that before Britain there stretched the prospect of a world of scarcity, a world of higher prices, a world that would no longer have a surplus to sell to Britain, and that they ought to be grateful to take refuge in the safety of Europe, where supplies would be safe and guaranteed and priced upon the whole at levels advantageous in comparison.

Of course, it was the opposite that happened. As the electorate had been warned by those to whom too few would listen, the world market speedily resumed its normal complexion, which for a century and a half had made Britain the crossroads of the oceans and given her people the highest standard of living of any industrial nation of the Old World. Listen to what the Consumers' Association had to say not long ago "Butter in the E.E.C. is 270 per cent of the world market price, skimmed milk powder 330 per cent, beef around 200 per cent and wheat around 150 per cent". I wonder how many electors would have voted *Yes* in 1975 if those figures had been before them then?

However, I must come to that compliment - a genuine compliment - which I promised the Prime Minister. I recently asked him a question in the House of Commons "would it not," I enquired, "be of great assistance and satisfaction to the T.U.C. and the public generally if this country were able to buy food at advantageous prices in world markets?" He didn't do what nine Politicians out of ten would have done. He didn't beat about the bush and talk about security of supplies and world scarcities and countervailing benefits. He came straight out. "Yes," said he, "I think it would", he replied. "It was always one of the weaknesses of our entry into the Community that the Common Agricultural Policy does not suit our requirements." (hear, hear) They are words of truth, which deserve to be displayed in Whitehall in letters ten feet high (laughter). It is, as the Prime Minister correctly stated it, a permanent truth and not a temporary conjuncture the very principle of the Common Agricultural Policy, which is the foundation, the French pre-condition and the one functioning reality of the E.E.C. to date, is a regime of self-sufficiency and high prices as a matter of deliberate policy, a regime totally incompatible with the requirements of a densely populated highly industrialised island nation.

It is something that the E.E.C. cannot change and will not change, which is why I must part company with the Prime Minister when he continued "That's why we must pursue in the Community with some, though not all, other member countries a policy of getting substantial reforms over a period." If it had been possible to get what is called "reforms" but really means a reversal of the whole principle of the CAP, we could have got them during the so-called renegotiation over which James Callaghan himself presided. Then at least we had some leverage, as we could make it a condition of our continuing membership now we have none - not until we are prepared to make our own terms regardless of whether the rest say *Stay or Go*.

I will prove the same fact another way. We should in 1975, if we'd been outside the Community, have paid £800 million less for the food which we imported. And in 1976 that figure would have been much higher. Now you will have heard that those good, kind people in the Common Market are paying us what is described as a "subsidy" towards keeping the price of our food below what it would otherwise be, by the device, known as the "green pound", of pretending that the exchange rate of the £ sterling is much higher than it actually is. It is estimated that this costs them some £350 million -

probably more - a year though, incidentally, Britain is still a net contributor to the E.E.C. after all else has been taken into account. Of course, they grumble - but they pay. Why do you think they are prepared to do that? I will tell you. It is because it is worth all that and a great deal more to them to keep the British market imprisoned inside the high-cost self-sufficient Common Agricultural Policy of the E.E.C.

For they know that in a year or two's time, when the transitional period is well and truly behind us, all this facade of green currencies can be dismantled and we shall have to accept what the reality of our membership means - when, for instance, as the Food Industries Council estimates, butter will rise to double its present price, and that's in real terms, not just in terms of inflation. No wonder the other countries are determined to pay through the nose, if necessary, to keep Britain as a Community milch cow, somewhat as the ants keep the green aphid (laughter). The last thing that they have the slightest intention of doing is to permit Britain to resume her position as a world-buyer - and incidentally - a world supplier.

I have been talking this evening about the price of butter and suchlike. But throughout this whole debate from the very beginning I have stated my conviction that the question of Britain and the E.E.C. is not a question of the price of butter. I repeat that now. It is a question of the national existence and independence of Britain itself. The whole business of food prices and the Common Agricultural Policy is a symbol and a specimen of the degradation of Britain from a nation to a province so that our laws and government and policies are no longer to be, in the Prime Minister's words, "what suit our requirements". We were threatened that we could not feed ourselves unless we gave up our freedom. Now we find that we have given away our freedom but the ability to feed ourselves is taken away from us. The lesson which has been taught to the British electorate since it made its grave but recoverable mistake is that in small things and in great things alike there is no future for the British people which they will find tolerable except as a sovereign, self-governing nation state. (Applause)

((The Second half of the speech is from the first half of the Saturday 16 Oct 1976 speech in Bromley, with adjustments in this transcript below))

Let there be no misunderstanding they can regain that status, that future, if they will. There is a gratifyingly neurotic tone creeping into the voices of those who proclaim, with an insistency which belies conviction, that the future national status of the United Kingdom - or rather its permanent loss of national status - was settled once and for all by the referendum in 1975. The owners of those voices would fain deny or forget the Government's official statement, made at that time that after the referendum "continued British membership will depend upon the continuing assent of Parliament." For all the anguish of the Europeanists, it becomes more evident with every passing month that the issue of Britain inside or outside the Common Market is not just one live issue among many but is the central political issue of coming years to which all roads in politics lead back.

The battle over Britain's national existence and parliamentary independence is a battle which will be fought through to the bitter end, however long it lasts. It is a battle in which no Quarter will be asked and none will be given. It is a battle in the course of which all other political lines and links will continue to be overrun and broken, as it surges one way or the other. It is a battle in which the bitterest foes of the past will stand together and the closest of old alliances be destroyed. I say these things in no spirit of bravado. They are cold and sober deductions from fact, the fact that the fight is about the continued existence of the nation itself, an issue to which by definition all other Political issues and causes whatsoever must be subordinated, as to the greater which subsumes the less.

In wartime Conservatives and Socialists - nay Tories and Communists - sank their past differences and postponed their future divergent ambitions to fight together for the survival of the political nation. It is so again, but this time with the added bitterness for many that the cause of national independence has been deserted and renounced by the very party in the state which they had been accustomed to regard as synonymous with it. A man who wishes the United Kingdom to remain a part of the European Economic Community, and who thereby commits himself to this nation becoming one province of a European state, can be as honourable as the next. I have never denied that, provided that he openly acknowledges and professes the consequences of his opinion. He can be filled with benevolence towards his fellows and genuinely convinced that as individuals the peoples inhabiting this territory would enjoy important advantages as European provincials which they cannot have as British nationals. But one thing he cannot be. He cannot be a patriot; for the basis of his action and intention is the conviction that this country is no longer, or ought no longer to be a nation state whose people acknowledge no external human authority and owe no higher secular allegiance.

The acceptance of the principle of a directly elected Community assembly means one thing; it means that the Community becomes a state. It ceases to be, like other international or supranational bodies a combination or cooperation of states, all deriving their authority separately from their respective peoples. It becomes a sovereign entity in its own right, deriving its authority directly from the whole population. If anyone wishes for illustration, I invite him to imagine what would be the implications if the Assembly of the United Nations were directly elected by the peoples of the United Nations on the uniform electoral basis. That would indeed mark the creation of a world state.

Look at the scene from below, from the point of view of the individual elector. He, along with his fellow electors, has sent a representative direct to the parliament of that institution to which the U.K. Parliament has ceded comprehensive powers of legislation, taxation and expenditure and to whose law it has given primacy over the domestic law of the United Kingdom. If some matter arises where the actions of the Community involve his interests or wishes, where will he go? He will go to his representative elected - for that very purpose to an assembly to which all the proposals of the Commission are submitted and which can directly call before it the members of the Commission to argue and to explain. He will not go to his representative in the provincial assembly at Westminster, who can act only indirectly through the British member of the Council of Ministers and who would be told very smartly by the British minister in Parliament that all these matters were dealt with in thorough detail and successive stages by the elected European Assembly and its committees. What business, he would be asked, was it of his (who had merely stood for the British parliament) to try to debate it all over again or to interfere with the matters exhaustively studied and settled by those properly mandated for the very purpose? In any case, the British minister at the Council is a member of a team which decides collectively, and can be less than ever bound by the views and wishes of local parliamentarians elected upon local issues.

Those, therefore, in parliament who vote for the institution of direct elections from the United Kingdom to the Assembly of the Community will be voting to confirm that extinction of the United Kingdom as a nation, and to re-affirm that determination to make it a province of a European state which was implicit in the act of British membership itself. The battle for and against the survival of the British nation will be fought again upon that battlefield... this time it must be won.

(Final Applause)