

MESSAGE FROM  
THE PRIME MINISTER  
FOR THE  
CONSERVATIVE GROUP FOR EUROPE'S GALA ANNIVERSARY DINNER

"If we open a quarrel between past and present, we shall find that we have lost the future" was the counsel of Winston Churchill in 1940. It is also appropriate advice on the tenth anniversary of Britain's accession to the European Community for it is a matter of profound regret to me that much political energy in our country is still devoted to the hoary question of whether we should be 'In' or 'Out'. That question was settled by Parliament in 1972 and ratified by an overwhelming majority in the 1975 Referendum. We Conservatives must not allow ourselves to be deflected into an arid debate about the past and away from our purpose, which is to build a strong and enduring Community and to improve Britain's position within it.

The past ten years have been intensely difficult ones for the world economy and for the countries of Western Europe in particular. Thus it is hardly surprising that the reality of membership has not always lived up to the expectations which we formed during the economically relatively easy years of the 1960's. However, our access to the Community market and the cooperation which has been fostered with our partners have been even more central to maintaining our prosperity than they would have been had the economic climate been more clement.

Community membership is a vital component in building a stronger British economy. The common market of 270 million consumers is essential for our industrial development providing as it does economies of scale in the high technology sectors and attracting much needed American investment into this country. The Ten also form the strongest trading bloc in the world, enabling us as part of this group to have far greater influence in international negotiations than we could hope to have alone - an important factor in facing growing protectionism.

A superficial glance might suggest that the Community is constantly at odds with itself. On occasions we have had to adopt a very tough stand with our partners in order to achieve an equitable deal for Britain.

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However, to see only disputes is deeply misleading. The shared interests and common values which bind together our Ten, soon to be Twelve, European states within the Community provide a secure foundation on which we are engaged in constructing a relationship of cooperation between nations unique in history. The world around us is far too dangerous and uncertain for us to allow our internal differences to undermine the unity we have already achieved, nor to bring stagnation to our Community.

Conservatives are not blind to the Community's shortcomings and much still remains to be done to ensure that the Community lives up to its full potential both at home and in the outside world. The unity of Europe as a force for peace, freedom and democracy is a goal for which I pledge my Government to work and in thanking the Conservative Group for Europe for its efforts to promote this goal I look forward to the next ten years of Britain in Europe.

Margaret Thatcher

January 1983

cc Edward Bockhorn

PRIME MINISTER

1. Attached is a draft message and self-explanatory note from me about the Gala Dinner to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Britain's entry into the European Community. *Amey mt*
2. Also attached is a long extract from a speech by Edward Heath which you will see from the passages marked, was not friendly or helpful. He made this last night.

*Sally*

*pp* Derek

13th January 1983