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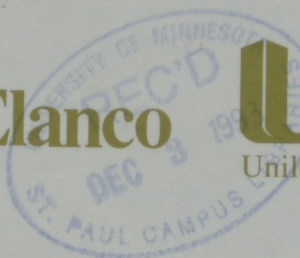
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Closing Address

The Rt Hon John Gummer MP

Thank you very much Mr Chairman. I am most pleased to be here. I won't disguise from you that what I have to say will be slightly different as a result of the tempestuous changes of the past few days. This does give me an opportunity, and I hope you will feel not an excuse but a reason to say something rather more detailed and more precise about the future of Europe. Particularly, to consider that future in regard to the Eastern European countries.

First of all, may I say how very enthusiastic I am about this initiative of the Centre for Agricultural Strategy. There is no doubt in my mind that we have a fundamental responsibility to ensure that, now the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have chosen the path of freedom, we who have been defending it and urging it for so many years, must make it possible for them to make the change. I am always conscious of the terrible legacy of Marxist socialism. I spent some time earlier this summer in the Baltic countries, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, countries which have been part of the Soviet Union since they were annexed. Apart from the remarkable experience of meeting those who had kept the faith throughout that period, and I mean that literally, the thing that struck me more than anything else was that of all the great empires in history Marxism has left nothing worthwhile at all. There isn't even a road - even Hitler left roads if nothing much else. But not a road, not a factory, not anything about which you could say 'that good wouldn't have happened if it had not been for that evil empire'. It did not leave anything and is the biggest 'con' on the intellectual elite of several generations. It was a system which destroyed rather than created, which diverted and distorted rather than enhanced and encouraged. And I don't think any of us should underestimate the real battle which these nations have to

fight to emerge from this all-enveloping system. It shielded people from realities and left them in a wholly artificial position. When the history of this century has to be written, and the horrors of dictatorship are recounted, there will also be a review of what has been left behind. Distorted economies with huge centralised factories, systems of distribution which are impossible to sustain, food chains which have no reality, based upon wholly artificial structures: these will be seen as some of the terrible prices exacted by a system invented by a man with little practical experience of the world, who foisted upon us a heresy which unfortunately it has taken many years to expose.

So I have no doubt that we who have sought to propose the free alternative have a kind of responsibility and opportunity which is rarely given to a generation. That's why we have involved ourselves in this in the Ministry of Agriculture, not just as a Ministry but, in the case of many of us, personally. I think I ought to say that there are in the Ministry and in industry outside very large numbers of people who have involved themselves in this matter not because they had to, not because they saw a business opportunity, not because they were told by the Minister that they ought to, but because they really recognised that they had a role to play and that this was the moment in history in which they had to play it. I can think of several major companies who have made decisions in the Eastern and Central part of Europe which are not based primarily upon their interests and their shareholders' demands. They arise from a real understanding that unless we take those decisions and play that part, then we will have betrayed a generation who relied upon us.

So I am pleased that you should have taken this opportunity to insist upon this discussion. Had this not been today, I might well have discussed what you have talked about, summed it up, passed on a few *bons mots*, and a few phrases might have appeared in such august organs as the *Farming News*. However, I want to say something much more fundamental, I want to say something about the Europe into which we hope to welcome Central and Eastern countries because these last few days have brought home to us as at no time for many a long year, the dangers of believing that the future can be left to national battling and a nationalistic approach. There is no future if we descend again into that inability to act collectively which so marked the twenties and thirties of our century. If I dare say so, Mr Chairman, you will know that more clearly than I. Here we are, a country which learned in the most appalling way what it was to face a Europe divided, unable to operate together, prey to individual, nationalistic decisions and now today we are faced with so many who insist that we should return to that. I have read today's newspapers, which are a miserable sight - miserable because they have not bothered to learn a single lesson from the last sixty years. The headlines and the comments belong to those who have no idea that our future, our peace, our prosperity, our chance in the world depends upon Europe being united, on Europe being able to stand together and on Europe being able to see that the world listens to us, and doesn't roll us over. That Europe does not come from party points against this government or that

government, it comes from an understanding that either we work together or we re-create the horrific tensions, divisions and ultimately the disasters which beset us in earlier decades. We have not emerged from the Marxist era only to embrace the nationalism which has destroyed us in the past. We are now at the crossroads. We either choose the kind of unity which enables us successively and sensibly to welcome into our community the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, or we say over these next few weeks that all that has been achieved since the Treaty of Rome can be jettisoned merely because of the temporary effect of speculators and their desire to move the money markets to their own advancement.

Only two years ago, everybody was telling us to join the ERM because it was the only way of supplying the discipline which was necessary even in our mature democracy to see that we fought against inflation. Only two years ago we were told that 51% of our exports go to countries which have an inflation rate lower than our own. And what the ERM has done is to enable us to make a bigger and faster and more effective move towards control of inflation than could ever have been possible outside. Anybody who denies this should look somewhere else in Europe - at Sweden which to defend its currency had to increase its interest rates to 750%. Outside the ERM, without that common feeling, there was no chance of providing the sort of stability which Europe desperately needs if it is to compete in the world and to ensure that its voice is heard and that it does not become subject merely to the dictates of those in the North Atlantic Free Trade Area.

We are so short-sighted and so unable to learn the lessons. But our present situation was inevitable, for the sums of money passing across the exchanges were so large that not the combined resources of all the countries in the EMS, all of whom worked together to support our currency could avoid what the speculator demanded. We have suspended our membership of the ERM but it is a suspension which will be removed the moment that conditions are satisfactory for us to return. And that is right, because there is no way of continuing permanently our battle against our own discrimination against ourselves, which is what inflation is, without the security and solidity of a European mechanism.

And these few days are going to be crucial for us in other ways too. On Sunday the French will vote on Maastricht. I don't want anyone to be in doubt as to what the British Government's hope is. It is that the French will resoundingly vote 'yes' to Maastricht, because what Maastricht does is to put the European Community on a new course. It does not destroy what has been achieved but emphasises that which we most want to emphasise. First that Europe's unity will be built upon Europe's diversity. It is not necessary to remove the variety and the difference between the countries in order to achieve the solidarity of unity. What is needed is to build on that variety, but accept that there are some things that can only be done jointly if we are to do them at all. Sovereignty is enhanced by an extension of common action and not diminished, for if we have no common action the sovereignty may remain in the national states, but our ability to turn that

sovereignty into power is non-existent.

What Maastricht does is to give us the power to use the sovereignty that we have in a communal sense, whereas without it we have no ability to turn sovereignty into effective action at all. We have the sovereignty to go to war with the United States if we wish, but we do not have the power. The question always is what our sovereignty is in terms of power. We can only do what we have the power to do. Maastricht enables us, through the principle of subsidiarity, to ensure that nations make their own choices about what they want to do within those areas where they can make those choices, but that where it is necessary to act together, then Europe can act together. And secondly Maastricht begins the great process of ensuring that we as Europeans are both able to act collectively in world affairs and able to make our individual contributions which our history, our language, our culture and our religion make possible. And thirdly, Maastricht gives us the opportunity to ensure that instead of a centralising, homogenising Europe, we have a diffusing, harmonising Europe. A wholly different concept - the harmonisation which is necessary for the single market but the diffusion which is necessary for a democratic single market. And so if the French say 'no', we will have denied ourselves the great opportunity to change the direction of the Community from a centralising force to one much closer to that which Britain has always sought. I have stuck in my mind a comment by a French banker who said he was going to vote no; when asked why, he said 'because we haven't got the deal that Britain negotiated'. The fact is that what Britain demanded was exactly the balance which Britain needed and which I believe Europe needs. Even so I hope that banker will vote yes, for in the end that is the Europe we will get. That which we have demanded will be certainly that which the French will achieve and a yes, a massive yes, to Maastricht will help the building of a Europe which we need.

But that Europe will be deficient if it is not able to draw to itself those countries which were once part of its commonality and which were, wholly artificially, excluded (entirely because of the activities of that sad German immigrant, for whom the British Library did so much harm). We need to bring in those who have been for so long excluded and if you look at the agenda of the United Kingdom Presidency of the EC, it is an agenda which emphasises the importance of the expansion of the Community. Not only that we shall start with those countries like Sweden and Finland, like Austria and Norway, who seek membership from within the Western nations, but also that we should prepare ourselves to make it possible to receive with open arms Czechoslovakia and Hungary, Poland and the Balkan states. But we are, as I said, at a crossroads. We could destroy all that we have worked for, undermine and make impossible the construction of people like Adenauer and the great founders, the men who made the Rome treaty work. We could deny and betray them. We could say to the memory of Jean Monnet 'We can't live up to what you proposed.' But we could also take this opportunity of turning the narrow association of Western Europe into a wider grouping of the whole European family. A family with the same culture, the same history and the

same religion, a family which still has something important to say to the rest of the world, a family whose values have enlightened and enlivened all that is best in civilisation, a family which is not to be consigned to the past but which could be the real creator of the future. I am patriot enough to deny the proposition that Britain no longer has anything to say to the rest of the world. I am patriot enough to say that what she has to give can only be given within the Community of European nations and what Europe has to give cannot be given unless Europe can first draw to herself those who have been excluded through no fault of their own, but through an alien philosophy that has so little to do with our common culture and our common inheritance.

And so today, I make no apology for closing this conference on a note of hope. We must not yield to the temporary problems of international finance and speculation, the local national difficulties so exemplified in that horrific concept of the referendum, the passing cynicism of nations towards all that they have created since 1945. I believe that we will rise above all that and be strengthened by our experience to build a Europe which is able to speak to the whole world. And to speak from a strength not just of a rich man's club, not merely of those countries who have benefited from freedom for all the years since the war, but from the strength of unity with those who have only just made that choice, and for whom the transition is extremely painful, but who have not lost and will not lose the idealism which will carry them through. That Europe, a Europe which stretches from the Atlantic Ocean far into the east of the continent and from Scotland way down to the south of Sicily, that Europe will be a Europe which will bring back to the world values and standards which the world sorely needs. We who are concerned with agriculture, a word not far removed from culture, must make sure that Europe can be created.