

Referendum on the European Community (Common Market)

Why you should vote YES

This is a statement by Britain in Europe NOT by HM Government

Why we should stay in the European Community

On Wednesday, 9th April 1975, the House of Commons approved, by 396 votes to 170, the Government's recommendation that we should stay in the European Community.

For years we argued: should Britain join or not? At last we did.

The question now is whether, after years of striving to get in, under both Conservative and Labour Governments, we should go through the agony of pulling out. This tearing apart would be a major upheaval. The main brunt of it would fall on Britain, but it would also damage the whole of the West, at a dangerous time in a dangerous world.

So the arguments against coming out are even stronger than were those for going in; that's why many people say "Yes" now who were doubtful in 1971. And hardly anyone has moved the other way.

Our case is not just a negative one—stay where we are for fear of something worse. It is based on the real advantages for Britain and Britain's friends of our staying in.

- It makes good sense for our jobs and prosperity.**
- It makes good sense for world peace.**
- It makes good sense for the Commonwealth.**
- It makes good sense for our children's future.**

Being in does not **in itself** solve our problems. No one pretends it could. It doesn't guarantee us a prosperous future. Only our own efforts will do that. **But it offers the best framework for success, the best protection for our standard of living, the best foundation for greater prosperity.** All the original six members have found that. They have done well—much better than we have—over the past 15 years.

"I believe that both the security and the prosperity of the country depend upon a Yes vote. Not to have gone into Europe would have been a misfortune. But to come out would be on an altogether greater scale of self-inflicted injury. It would be a catastrophe. It would leave us weak and unregarded, both economical/v and politicallv."

Roy Jenkins, 26th March 1975

Our friends want us to stay in

If we left we would not go back to the world as it was when we joined, still less to the old world of Britain's imperial heyday. The world has been changing fast. And the changes have made things more difficult and more dangerous for this country. It is a time when we need friends. What do our friends think?

The old Commonwealth wants us to stay in.

Australia does. Canada does. New Zealand does.

The new Commonwealth wants us to stay in.

Not a single one of their 34 governments wants us to leave.

The United States wants us to stay in.

They want a close Atlantic relationship (upon which our whole security depends) with a Europe of which we are part; but not with us alone.

The other members of the European Community want us to stay in.

That is why they have been flexible in the recent re-negotiations and so made possible the improved terms which have converted many former doubters.

Outside, we should be alone in a harsh, cold world, with none of our friends offering to revive old partnerships.

"I do not want to give any impression that the present Australian Government sees any advantage for Australia, for Europe or for the world in Britain leaving the Community—we regard European economic and political integration as one of the great historic forward movements of this century."

*Gough Whitlam, Prime Minister of Australia,
18th December 1974*

"Our Government recognizes the emerging fact (of Europe) and we applaud. We applauded last week in Brussels just as we applauded two years ago on the occasion of the entry into the Community of Britain, Ireland and Denmark."

Pierre Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, 13th November 1974

Question "Would you agree that if Britain does decide to withdraw from the Common Market it would be very much in the long-term interests of New Zealand?"

Answer "No."

Question "Why do you say that?"

Answer "I think that New Zealand's interest must in the long-term be in the strongest possible Europe and the strongest possible U.K."

Wallace Rowling, Prime Minister of New Zealand,
answering questions on 22nd February 1975

Why can't we go it alone?

To some this sounds attractive. Mind our own business. Make our own decisions. Pull up the drawbridge. In the modern world it just is not practicable. It wasn't so even 40 or 60 years ago. The world's troubles, the world's wars inevitably dragged us in. Much better to work together to prevent them happening.

Today we are even more dependent on what happens outside. Our trade, our jobs, our food, our defence cannot be wholly within our own control. That is why so much of the argument about sovereignty is a false one. It's not a matter of dry legal theory. The real test is how we can protect our own interests and exercise British influence in the world. The best way is to work with our friends and neighbours.

If we came out, the Community would go on taking decisions which affect us vitally—but we should have no say in them. **We would be clinging to the shadow of British sovereignty while its substance flies out of the window.**

The European Community does not pretend that each member nation is not different. It strikes a balance between the wish to express our own national personalities and the need for common action. **All decisions of any importance must be agreed by every member.**

Our traditions are safe

We can work together and still stay British. The Community does not mean dull uniformity. It hasn't made the French eat German food or the Dutch drink Italian beer. Nor will it damage our British traditions and way of life.

The position of the Queen is not affected. She will remain Sovereign of the United Kingdom and Head of the Commonwealth. Four of the other Community countries have monarchies of their own.

English Common Law is not affected. For a few commercial and industrial purposes there is need for Community Law. But our criminal law, trial by jury, presumption of innocence remain unaltered. So do our civil rights. Scotland, after 250 years of much closer union with England, still keeps its own legal system.

"I am proud to have been a member of the Cabinet that took Britain into Europe. At that time there were those who did not want us to join. I believe that many of them today have changed and now consider that once we are in, it would be catastrophic to withdraw."

William Whitelaw, 26th March 1975

Staying in protects our jobs

Jobs depend upon our industries investing more and being able to sell in the world. If we came out, our industry would be based on the smallest home market of any major exporting country in the world, instead of on the Community market of 250 million people.

It is very doubtful if we could then negotiate a free trade agreement with the Community. Even if we could it would have damaging limitations and we would have to accept many Community rules without having the say we now have in their making.

So we could lose free access not only to the Community market itself but to the 60 or more other countries with which the Community has trade agreements. **The immediate effect on trade, on industrial confidence, on investment prospects, and hence on jobs, could well be disastrous.**

"If we were to come out of Europe this summer I can see no other result except even fiercer inflation and even higher unemployment."

Jo Grimond, 26th March 1975

Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the less prosperous English regions will benefit if we stay in. We shall pursue our own national development area policies and continue to receive aid from the Community's Regional Fund.

Secure food at fair prices

Before we joined the Community everyone feared that membership would mean paying more for our food than if we were outside. This fear has proved wrong. If anything, the Community has saved us money on food in the past two years.

Why? Not just by accident, but because stronger world demand has meant that the days when there were big surpluses of cheap food to be bought around the world have gone, and almost certainly gone for good. Sometimes Community prices may be a little above world prices, sometimes a little below.

But Britain, as a country which cannot feed itself, will be safer in the Community which is almost self-sufficient in food. Otherwise we may find ourselves standing at the end of a world food queue.

It also makes sense to grow more of our food. That we can do in the Community, and it's one reason why most British farmers want to stay in.

"If we left the European Community tomorrow, we could not expect any reduction in the overall cost of our food as a result."

Shirley Williams, 27th March 1975

Britain's choice: the alternatives

- The Community is not perfect. Far from it. It makes mistakes and needs improvement. But that's no reason for contracting out.
- What are the alternatives? Those who want us to come out are deeply divided.
- Some want an isolationist Britain with a "siege economy"—controls and rationing.
- Some want a Communist Britain—part of the Soviet bloc.
- Some want us even closer to the United States than to Europe—but America itself doesn't want that.
- Some want us to fall back on the Commonwealth—but the Commonwealth itself doesn't want that.
- Some want us to be half linked to Europe, as part of a free trade area—but the European Community itself doesn't want that.
- So when people say we should leave, ask them what positive way ahead they propose for Britain. You will get some very confusing answers.
- There are also differences amongst those of us who say "stay in". Some of us are Labour, some are Conservative, some are Liberal, some are non-party.
- But we all agree on the fundamental question before us. The safety and prosperity of this country demand that we stay in the European Community. So do our duty to the world and our hope for the new greatness of Britain.

We believe in Britain—in Britain in Europe. For your own and your children's future it makes good sense to stay in.

“Are we going to stay on the centre of the stage where we belong, or are we going to shuffle off into the dusty wings of history?”

Edward Heath, 5th April 1975