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Safeguard of interests demanded

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ropean Common Market. The Draft Treaty provides for procedures which clearly establish how the Nordic Countries should act, if one, several or all of them obtain membership of or other solutions with the Common Market.

Thus, extended Nordic cooperation will not stand in the way of Denmark's efforts to be-

come a member of the EEC. Denmark maintains its unconditional application for membership simultaneously with Great Britain and we expect that negotiations will be opened simultaneously between the Common Market and all applicants for membership.

In most Western European countries there has been a grow-

ing understanding of the necessity of extending the Common Market and creating a large European market. We believe that the coming years will bring a comprehensive European solution, and I am convinced that Nordic cooperation, which will be developed anyway, will fit usefully into the wider European framework.

Safeguard of Interests Demanded

Interview with Kåre Willoch,
Norwegian Minister of Commerce and Shipping, Oslo

QUESTION: Mr Willoch, Norway has always regarded the formation of a Nordic Economic Union with scepticism. Your government has shown a reserved attitude on the question of the planned Nordic Agrarian Market and Common Agrarian Policy. What would be the problems encountered by the agrarian sector of Norway, if such a Nordic Market would be established?

ANSWER: Firstly, I would like to remind you that we have already free trade in industrialised goods between the Nordic countries which participate in the work of EFTA. Nordic economic cooperation has developed very fast in most other fields as well. The Nordic countries have to a large extent developed their cooperation in a practical, business-like manner; so their cooperation is in many ways more far-reaching than the cooperation between other countries belonging to a similar regional economic grouping.

The share of the other Nordic countries in Norwegian foreign trade increased from about 16 p.c. in 1959 to 26 p.c. in 1968.

The rapid development of trade certainly proves the strength of the Nordic cooperation. It is not only a firm interest, but also a determined will in Norway to maintain and develop further Nordic trade and Nordic cooperation.

Another question is the form of the Nordic cooperation in the future. It is an oversimplification to say that Norway has always regarded the formation of a Nordic Economic Union with scepticism. What is true is that certain Norwegian industries have expressed doubts about a Nordic Customs Union partly because they expect that a common external customs tariff may have unfavourable economic effects on Norwegian production because such a tariff in certain instances is likely to mean increased duties on raw materials. All Norwegian industries are, however, in favour of enlarging Nordic economic cooperation.

It is well known that almost all industrialised countries are facing special problems in agriculture. They seek to solve the problems by various forms of support and protectionism in order to safeguard the living

conditions of their agricultural population. The Nordic countries agree that the extended cooperation, which they are aiming at, should take into account the special problems which the individual countries are facing due to different geographical, climatic and demographic conditions. The problems which Norway is facing in and among the Nordic countries are generally of the same nature as those the country is facing in a more world-wide context.

In particular, I would like to mention that arrangements which mean increased food prices could only be accepted as part of an overall solution which renders equal benefits in other fields.

As you will know, a Nordic committee of high officials has studied and reported on the possibilities of enlarging Nordic economic cooperation. The report of this committee clearly demonstrates that the Norwegian position in no way is a particular obstacle to progress in Nordic cooperation.

QUESTION: The fishing sector plays an important role in

the Norwegian economy. It is therefore quite understandable that your country is demanding minimum prices for fish used for consumption and a guaranteed price system for fish being manufactured. Furthermore, you have requested the creation of a Nordic Fishing Fund. How do you judge the possibilities to arrive at a Scandinavian compromise in this matter?

Fishing and Shipping Sector

ANSWER: The committee of high officials which has also drafted a Nordic treaty has reached agreement in principle on a scheme for stabilising prices paid to fishermen, but disagreement still exists on certain points. The possibilities for reaching final agreement on this sector is of course dependent on the overall question of how to enlarge Nordic co-operation in all fields. What is aimed at is a reasonable balance between concessions given and received by each individual country. It goes without saying that Norway will always pay particular attention to the question of solving the problems in the fishing sector.

QUESTION: Another important sector for your country's economy is shipping. Would the Nordic Economic Union have any considerable advantages for the Norwegian merchant marine and shipbuilding industry?

ANSWER: The Nordic countries, which are strongly in favour of a world-wide liberal shipping policy, feel that they should intensify their efforts to work against the alarming tendencies which are developing in favour of discrimination and bilateralism in international shipping. The proposals which the officials have made in their last report reflect this intention, but do not imply any major change in the

conditions for shipping and the shipbuilding industry.

Bridging of Industrial Difficulties

QUESTION: In the industrial sector, Norway fears that the establishment of a common tariff wall could result in a stronger control by foreign capital, mainly Swedish, of Norwegian companies. On the other hand, your government has always been in favour of EEC-membership. Do you believe that Norway would, as a member of the EEC, encounter easier competition and adaptation problems in the industrial sector?

ANSWER: The Norwegian rules and regulations concerning foreign investment, foreign ownership of land, etc., are well established and commonly felt as a necessity for safeguarding Norwegian interests. This is a matter of serious concern to Norway both in a Nordic context and as regards the question of Norwegian membership in the EEC. In the renewed application of 21st July, 1967, for membership of the EEC, the Norwegian Government has expressed the hope that it would be possible in the course of the negotiations to arrive at mutually satisfactory solutions on the special problems which Norway is facing due to the geographical position and the economic structure of the country.

If Norway acceded to the EEC, the conditions for Norwegian exports to the EEC markets would no doubt improve because we today maintain tariff barriers between Norway and the EEC countries. As I have already mentioned, no customs duties on trade in industrial products are maintained between the Nordic countries. Thus, there is a basic difference between membership to a Nordic Economic Union and to the EEC,

which we have to bear in mind during our future deliberations on European integration problems.

QUESTION: The economic ties between Great Britain and Norway are very close. Will the relations between these two countries have to undergo considerable changes if the Nordic Economic Union is established?

ANSWER: The answer is no. Free trade in EFTA will be maintained.

Prospects for EEC Membership

QUESTION: The European scene has undergone quite a few changes during the last months. Is Norway expecting a more rapid prosecution of its application for membership to the EEC, now that Mr Pompidou has become the new President of France?

ANSWER: It may be right to say that a cautious tone of optimism may be found to this effect. Recent statements made by European politicians seem to indicate that there is a growing understanding of the need to solve European integration problems. It is difficult to predict how fast the work for solving the problems will proceed, but I feel convinced that sooner or later we will succeed in closing the gap between EEC and EFTA, the two economic groupings in Western Europe. The Norwegian application for membership of the EEC remains unchanged. In the mandate given by the Nordic Prime Ministers for the work of the officials it is clearly stated that the cooperation among the Nordic countries should be formed and shaped in such a way that it would facilitate the participation in an enlarged European market. The Draft Nordic Treaty takes well care of the mandate on this point.