



## PRIME MINISTER GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLAND

Middagstale for det diplomatiske korps i Oslo, 8. juni 1994

Your Excellencies  
Honoured guests,

Tradition provides expectation and a sense of continuity amidst change. It is a pleasure once again to welcome you to this now well-established traditional dinner to honour the Diplomatic Corps of Oslo. Tradition also seems to suggest that - in the absence of a coherent opposition - this dinner is hosted by a government of the Norwegian Labour Party.

We are pleased to receive you here in Olav V Hall which the Government is using for the first time tonight. Until now it has only been used by the organization "Friends of Akershus Castle". Tonight our idea was to invite "Friends of Norway". So we thought of you. And if there is anybody here who have not yet made friends, you can correct that in the course of the evening.

It is not solely because we want to make your lives as diplomats in Norway interesting that we will have a referendum on EU membership this fall. There is no need for anybody to tell you how important that decision will be, not least if it is clear that Austria, Finland and Sweden have decided to join.

Harold Wilson once said that the "feel-good-factor" of England winning the football World Cup in 1966 helped securing a comfortable Labour victory in the elections that year. Even if we have high hopes for our team in this year's World Cup, I am not going to rely entirely on a similar effect.

Instead, we shall consistently make the point that Norway belongs at the head table when Europe shapes its political future.

This is what you will hear as we approach the 28th of November: As member of the Union, Norway will speak as much as we will listen. We believe that the Union must thrive on change and respond to people's hopes and beliefs about their own future.

The Union would become sterile and technocratic without such sensitivity to cultural and regional characteristics. The Union is not a union of traders and brokers, but of people, struggling in their daily lives, paying their mortgages, providing for their children. Caring about jobs, education, and pension schemes, worrying about crime, violence, environmental threats and about the shrill voices of intolerance.

It would be unfortunate if we put people off by lavish use of words. The Maastricht Treaty is not a poem and will not win the Nobel Prize for literature. Legalisms distort and obstinate legalisms distort absolutely

Amidst the avalanche of views and news it is our challenge to present how the Union is now more explicitly confronting our arch-enemy No. 1,

unemployment. In the fight against unemployment, price stability is an effective weapon, but we must not describe price stability as a goal for its own sake.

We cannot ask an unemployed young person to vote for the Union because of price stability, or a fifty-five year old who fears for his job to vote for the Union because we need more competition? No, price stability and competition are but some of the instruments by which we must create jobs and opportunity.

I see the Union as Europe's modern contribution to the civilization of inter-state relations. Its members will reconcile the reflexes of the sovereign nation state with new principles of shared sovereignty and solidarity. This is a future which cannot be confined by a configuration determined by the Cold War.

The EU is the future framework for lasting and stable European prosperity and democracy. In this situation I feel it must be very difficult to argue along the line that Europe would be a better place without Norwegians.

Global progress will depend on Europe's ability to to organize itself and assume its obligations in a world where European languages are spoken in even the most remote corner. A better organized world requires a better organized Europe.

It is this future which the Government will explain and present, as many times as need be. This attitude that we strive to carry across will of course require all our efforts. Given the overwhelming welcome expressed by the European Parliament, and the parallel polls in Norway indicate that some people agree with Groucho Marx, who said that "I will not be member of a club that will accept me as a member".

I wish you all some exciting months. We promise to keep you busy. It will probably be unnecessary to reissue circular letters to embassy staff such as the one of Bismarck's foreign office which read: "The gentlemen and clerks of the foreign office are kindly requested to assume their daily duties in their offices before lunch-time at the latest".

I propose a toast to the Diplomatic Corps of Oslo.