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NORWEGIAN LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE: DECISION TO APPLY FOR EC MEMBERSHIP

## SUMMARY

1. CONFERENCE VOTES BY 182 AGAINST 106 TO SUPPORT A NORWEGIAN EC APPLICATION. NORWEGIAN SPECIAL INTERESTS IDENTIFIED BUT NO ECHO OF DANISH CONDITIONS. WAY CLEAR FOR MRS BRUNDTLAND TO DELIVER APPLICATION IN WEEK OF 23 NOVEMBER.

2. TELEGRAM FOLLOWS ON MRS BRUNDTLAND'S WITHDRAWAL FROM PARTY LEADERSHIP AND OTHER ASPECTS OF CONFERENCE.

## DETAIL

3. THE NORWEGIAN LABOUR PARTY'S BIENNIAL CONFERENCE VOTED ON 8 NOVEMBER TO ADOPT A PROGRAMME DOCUMENT WHICH EMBODIES THE INTENTION TO APPLY FORTHWITH FOR EC MEMBERSHIP. THE VOTE OF 182 TO 106 MEANS THAT SOME 35% OF DELEGATES WERE OPPOSED, AS AGAINST ABOUT 30% AT THE TIME THEY WERE SELECTED IN SPRING 1992.

4. IN HER KEYNOTE SPEECH ON 5 NOVEMBER MRS BRUNDTLAND PRESENTED FULL INVOLVEMENT IN THE EC AS A DEBT NORWAY OWED TO SOCIALISM, TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND TO HERSELF. NO 'NORDIC ALTERNATIVE' REMAINED, AND EEA MEMBERSHIP ALONE WOULD NOT ALLOW NORWAY TO INFLUENCE KEY DEBATES AND DECISIONS ON EUROPEAN ARCHITECTURE, INCLUDING THE TREATMENT OF THE NORTHERNMOST PARTS OF EUROPE AND RELATIONS WITH CENTRAL/EASTERN EUROPE AND RUSSIA. IT WOULD GIVE NORWAY NO SAY IN THE EC'S EVOLVING AGRICULTURAL POLICY AND ITS EXTERNAL PROJECTION EG IN THE GATT TALKS. YET NORWAY'S OWN PROSPERITY AND THE SOLUTION OF SUCH PAN-EUROPEAN PROBLEMS AS GROWTH, EMPLOYMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND SECURITY WERE CRITICALLY DEPENDENT ON EFFECTIVE, BINDING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION.

5. THIS PRESENTATION OF THE ISSUES, DESIGNED INTER ALIA TO MARK THE DIFFERENCES FROM NORWAY'S ILL-FATED DECISION TO APPLY IN 1972, EFFECTIVELY SET THE KEY FOR THE DEBATE WHICH REMAINED CALM ALMOST TO THE POINT OF ANTICLIMAX. EC OPPONENTS TOOK SOME EXTREME ISOLATIONIST POSITIONS BUT NO MOVE WAS MADE TO FORMALIZE THEIR RESISTANCE IN THE SHAPE OF A BREAK-AWAY GROUP. ATTEMPTED AMENDMENTS TO THE PARTY PROGRAMME AIMED MAINLY AT DEFERRING THE EC DECISION RATHER THAN SETTING A CLEAR ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY.

6. THE PROGRAMME DOCUMENT IDENTIFIES THE FOLLOWING SPECIAL AIMS AND INTERESTS FOR NORWAY IN ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS:

- THE MAINTENANCE OF CONTROL OVER NORWAY'S NATURAL RESOURCES
- 'GOOD SOLUTIONS' FOR THE PRIMARY PRODUCTION BRANCHES (AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES) AND FOR REGIONAL POLICY
- GREATER RECOGNITION BY THE EC OF EMPLOYMENT AND WELFARE GOALS IN ITS ECONOMIC POLICIES, AND A GREATER ROLE FOR 'SOCIAL DIALOGUE' AT EUROPEAN LEVEL. BUT 'THE EC SHOULD NOT HARMONISE GENERAL WELFARE POLICY'
- GREATER EMPHASIS ON THE ENVIRONMENT IN ALL FIELDS OF EC POLICY: NORWAY SHOULD SUPPORT THE COMMISSION'S 'AMBITIOUS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME'
- FURTHER PROGRESS IN THE DEMOCRATISATION, DECENTRALISATION AND OPENNESS OF EC DECISION-TAKING
- BETTER REPRESENTATION FOR WOMEN IN EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS.

7. THE PROGRAMME STATES THAT AN AIM OF NORWAY'S APPLICATION SHOULD BE TO 'ACHIEVE FULL INFLUENCE IN EUROPEAN COOPERATION ON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY'. AN AMENDMENT AIMING TO WEAKEN THIS AND STOP SHORT AT ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP OF WEU WAS DEFEATED. GENERALLY, THE DEBATE LACKED ANY DIRECT REFERENCE TO DANISH-TYPE RESERVATIONS ON EUROPEAN UNION AND A SPEECH BY A DANISH GUEST (RASMUSSEN) SUGGESTING NORWAY OWED DENMARK ITS SUPPORT WENT DOWN BADLY. IN THE MARGINS THE BRITISH (TOMLINSON), SPANISH AND ITALIAN LABOUR PARTY DELEGATES ARE REPORTED TO HAVE ARGUED STRONGLY AGAINST THE DANISH APPROACH.

8. THE PROGRAMME SPECIFIES THAT THERE WILL BE A NATIONAL REFERENDUM ON THE NEGOTIATING RESULTS. (THE NATURE OF THE REFERENDUM IS NOT FURTHER QUALIFIED AS 'BINDING' OR 'ADVISORY': THIS WILL DEPEND IA ON THE OUTCOME OF CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS TO BE DISCUSSED SEPARATELY IN THE STORTING.) MRS BRUNDTLAND SAID IN HER KEYNOTE SPEECH THAT 'IF WE ARE TO APPLY FOR MEMBERSHIP IT IS

BECAUSE WE WISH NORWAY TO BECOME A MEMBER - WE WISH THE OUTCOME OF NEGOTIATIONS TO BE ONE THAT WE CAN RECOMMEND AND THAT THE PEOPLE OF NORWAY WILL ACCEPT'.

#### NEXT STEPS

9. MRS BRUNDTLAND WILL ADDRESS THE NORDIC COUNCIL AT AARHUS TODAY ON NORWAY'S DECISION. SHE IS EXPECTED TO MAKE A STATEMENT TO THE STARTING ON 16 NOVEMBER, FOLLOWED BY A DEBATE ON 19 NOVEMBER, WHICH WILL OPEN THE WAY FOR HER TO PRESENT A FORMAL APPLICATION TO MR MAJOR AS CHAIRMAN OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL IN THE WEEK OF THE 23RD. THE GOVERNMENT HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER TO MAKE IT A 'ONE-LINE' APPLICATION OR TO REFER TO THEIR SPECIAL CONCERNS IN THE TEXT: INDICATIONS AT THE CONFERENCE WERE THAT MRS BRUNDTLAND STILL FAVOURS THE FORMER OPTION AS GIVING NORWAY MORE CREDIBILITY AND MORE FREEDOM OF PLAY.

#### COMMENT AND LONGER-TERM OUTLOOK

10. MRS BRUNDTLAND HAS COAXED HER PARTY OVER THE FIRST HURDLE WITH CONSUMMATE SKILL AND MINIMUM LOSSES. THE INTERNAL OPPOSITION WERE WRONG-FOOTED BY HER EMPHASIS ON TOUGH NEGOTIATIONS TO PRESERVE NORWAY'S INTERESTS, AND BY THE WAY SHE MANAGED TO DE-DRAMATISE THE 'MERE' DECISION TO APPLY - WITHOUT LEANING OVER SO FAR AS TO PUT NORWAY'S SERIOUS INTENTION IN DOUBT. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HER WITHDRAWAL AS PARTY LEADER, AND THE WAVE OF SYMPATHY IT BROUGHT (SEE SEPARATE REPORTING TELEGRAM), HELPED TO RULE OUT ANY SERIOUS REBELLION FROM THE FLOOR.

11. THUS FAR, THEREFORE, THE SPECTRE OF 1972 HAS BEEN KEPT AT BAY. BUT THE TOUGHEST TIMES ARE TO COME. THE LABOUR PARTY WILL HAVE TO KEEP ITS NERVE AND ITS UNITY THROUGH AN AUTUMN 1993 ELECTION WHERE IT IS BOUND TO LOSE FURTHER VOTES AND SEATS ON A PRO-EUROPEAN PLATFORM: THROUGH THE PARTY CONFERENCE OF 1994 WHICH COULD COINCIDE WITH THE CRUNCH IN ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS: AND THROUGH THE EVENTUAL REFERENDUM. MRS BRUNDTLAND, CONTINUING AS HEAD OF GOVERNMENT, WILL BE PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR NEGOTIATING TOUGHLY ENOUGH TO KEEP DOMESTIC DOUBTERS ON SIDE, BUT NOT SO TOUGHLY AS TO MAKE AGREEMENT IMPOSSIBLE AND ALLOW THE 'NO' CAMP PLAUSIBLY TO CALL FOR WITHDRAWAL. SHE HAS SET IN PLACE AN ESSENTIALLY PRO-EC NEW PARTY LEADERSHIP, BUT THE SEPARATION OF PARTY AND STATE FUNCTIONS WILL CREATE NEW DEMANDS AND PERHAPS PROBLEMS OF COORDINATION WITH THEM.

12. BEFORE THE CONFERENCE SOME PARTY AND MEDIA COMMENTATORS WERE SUGGESTING THE LABOUR LEADERSHIP COULD GET THE VOTE IT WANTED ON EUROPE, BUT AT THE COST OF LABOUR'S NEVER AGAIN BEING THE LARGEST

PARTY IN NORWAY. LAST WEEK'S OPINION POLLS, SHOWING A FURTHER FALL IN LABOUR'S SUPPOORT TO ABOUT 25% AND OPPOSITION TO THE EC AT 55% NATION-WIDE, GAVE THIS SOME CREDENCE. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF THE SUCCESSFUL STAGE-MANAGEMENT OF THE CONFERENCE AND ITS 'FAIT ACCOMPLI' EFFECT CAN REVERSE THE TREND, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY. BUT EVERYTHING MRS BRUNDTLAND SAID AND DID CONFIRMED THAT FACED WITH THE CHOICE, SHE WOULD DO WHAT SHE THOUGHT THE RIGHT THING FOR NORWAY RATHER THAN FOR HER OWN PARTY. THE BIG QUESTION IS HOW LONG IT WILL REMAIN HER CHOICE, AND WHETHER A FUTURE LABOUR LEADER WILL HAVE THE SAME PRIORITIES.

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