

AN AMERICAN VIEW OF THE MAASTRICHT REFERENDUM

S.E. L'AMBASSADEUR JAMES LOEWENSTEIN,
WASHINGTON D.C.

My impression is that the prevailing view of experts in the field is that Maastricht is a poor treaty — badly drafted, internally inconsistent, unintelligible and impractical. Furthermore, it cannot be implemented “à onze”, and there seems to be no guarantee that, considering the trend or opinion in Denmark since the referendum, the Danes would agree to it in a further referendum, no matter what future concessions are made. Indeed, it seems fair to say that were the Treaty put to a referendum in Germany and the U.K., the opponents would prevail. There is a growing sentiment in these countries, as well as obviously in France, that it is time to call a halt to the power of the Brussels bureaucracy and that if the “democratic deficit”, not only of the level of the Commission but at other points in the E.C. process, is not attached now, it will be too late to do so in the future.

137

Aside from the substantive issues of the Treaty, for the French there are additional questions of an internal political nature. The first is why a referendum? The Assembly and the Senate have voted. The Treaty of Rome was never put to a referendum. Neither was the Single European Act. Why Maastricht hence? The French feel themselves manipulated. By voting yes for Maastricht, for what else are they voting... for Mitterrand, for the Socialist, for the further division of the opposition. By voting no, do they wish to join forces into the Communist Party and the Front National.

Hence the conundrum of the Maastricht vote. A no vote would certainly mean the end of the Treaty. It would not mean the end of Europe. Specifically, it would not mean the end of the single market which enters into force on January 1, 1993 with or without Maastricht. If Maastricht is defeated, it would certainly be replaced eventually by some other measure, designed to move the E.C. along to a further stage, just as the WEU arose from the ashes of the EDC (another important measure never put to a referendum but defeated by an Assembly vote).

But eventually is where the problem lies for in the period between the shock of the defeat of Maastricht and the evolution of whatever would replace it, a multi-speed Europe will undoubtedly develop, and in that multi-speed Europe, just as in a unified Europe, the most powerful force will be Germany. A multi-speed Europe is, by definition, not a unified Europe. Hence, it is not a Europe which will tie Germany to the other E.C. members to nearly the same degree. A Germany more on its own, less tied to Europe, with greater freedom in the respect to economic and foreign policies would suit the Germans. But would it suit the French. Indeed, should it suit the French ? And that question, it seems to me, is the real issue in the Maastricht referendum. Yet, paradoxically, it is the least discussed.