uncoupling from factor nature. The uncoupling from factor labour destabilizes the economic process, while uncoupling from factor nature does just the opposite.

Behind a step by the German government that would appear to be not very substantial in material terms there is a major move toward reform. But the frequent and public criticism shows that the German government must make this reform even more understandable. Perhaps we have to approach the matter in a more comprehensive manner and, for example, explain why factor labour is so expensive in today's economic process.

For slogans such as “ending the phase of modest wage demands” could be misunderstood.

As I have said, I fully favour more cash in the pay envelope, not by making labour costs more expensive, but above all by lowering government entitlements.

When society in its entirety becomes more modest in terms of its demands on the state – from subsidies paid to industry to the indiscriminate number of visits to multiple physicians – then and only then can the pay envelope grow. There is no other way than to explain the interrelationships of such phenomena over and over again. Citizens realize that our country needs reforms. We must tell them where and why so that they understand that reforms occasionally require sacrifices, but at the same time they open up greater prospects for the future. And this greater future must be clearly visible, understandable, and perceptible for all individuals. Thus, instead of speaking about the burdens of environmental policy, we must talk more about the opportunities.

VI. I am delighted that there are far sighted businessmen who are working on concretely uncoupling economic growth from an increasing exploitation of nature by means of specialized products and/or special production methods. I congratulate the awardees and the magazine Capital for retaining this good idea.

Preserving the natural basis of life in connection with the renaissance of the properly understood social market economy can by no means be the task of a Red/Green government alone, nor can it be the task only of the government.

Rather, it is the responsibility of all of us; for this reason we need the competence, the initiative, the creativity, and the good will of all of society’s forces.

I began my remarks by calling attention to a pamphlet published anonymously two hundred years ago. What Thomas Robert Malthus wrote had an enormous impact. The crisis in the relationship between labour and nature, which he described as insoluble, was one of the major reasons for the enormous wave of migration from the British Isles.

Flight was a possibility only then; today our only way out of the crisis in the long term is to overcome the problem by creative solutions.

As an economics professor, Malthus had rather radical views. I have always considered very thought provoking his thesis that the only kind of productive consumption is the destruction of wealth.

But that is something for you to think about on your way home; I will save my remarks on this topic for another day.”