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MEP Contact Newsletter

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Kirkhope condemns German plan to revive EU Constitution

Timothy Kirkhope, Leader of the Conservative MEPs, has emphatically rejected proposals put forward by the German EU Presidency to revive the moribund EU Constitution in some form by 2009.

Debating with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Mr Kirkhope said: *"Surely now is not the time to kick-start a divisive and inward-looking constitutional debate. Rather, it is time for Europe to move forward with practical cooperation in the fields of climate change, economic reform and the fight against poverty in the developing world."*

Chancellor Merkel told MEPs that she intended to secure agreement by the time of the EU Summit on 21-22 June 2007 on a road map *"to enable the constitutional process to move towards completion"* by the time of the 2009 European elections. *"Failure would be a historic let-down,"* she said.

But the Conservative MEP Leader highlighted recent remarks by the former President of Germany, Roman Herzog, who wrote in a German newspaper that most people had a generally positive attitude towards Europe, but *"at the same time, they have an ever increasing feeling that something is going wrong, that an untransparent, complex, intricate mammoth institution has evolved, dissolved from factual problems and national traditions, grabbing ever greater competencies and areas of power; that the democratic control mechanisms are failing: in brief, that it cannot go on like this."*

Mr Kirkhope said that when Herr Herzog said he was concerned at the centralising forces in the EU and the lack of national democratic control over what happens in Brussels, *"I think he spoke for many of us."*

"David Cameron has said that we want the EU to confront its failings. Returning to the constitutional debate will demonstrate that it has not done so. It will simply reinforce a sense of alienation with Europe. There is much that the nations of the European Union can do working together. Now is not the time to engage in yet more constitutional navel gazing." ■



Party Leader David Cameron MP and Timothy Kirkhope, Leader of the Conservative MEPs

Cameron calls for "3G Europe"

David Cameron has called for a '3G Europe' in his first major speech on the EU.

Speaking to the inaugural conference of the Movement for European Reform in Brussels, Mr Cameron set out his case for a 3G Europe that focuses on globalisation, global warming and global poverty. He said reform was needed if the EU *"is to be fit for the challenges of the new century, not stuck haggling over the debris of the last."*

"Those who will succeed in the 21st century will be those who can adapt, who can respond quickly, who can innovate. The modern world places a premium on diversity over uniformity. It forces a focus on results over procedures," he said.

The Conservative Leader made clear that the Conservatives should not lead a retreat from the Union and said it was right to celebrate the Treaty of Rome as the European Union marked its 50th anniversary. However, he made clear his opposition to the EU Constitution and backed a UK referendum if the proposal is ever finally proposed.

He declared: *"If the nations of Europe are to live up to their responsibilities in the face of globalisation, global warming and global poverty, we have to change the way we operate. I believe that today we are starting that change. For a new spirit is awake in Europe. The spirit of the 21st century: fresh, dynamic, flexible and outward looking."* ■

More influence for Conservative MEPs

January 2007 marked the mid-point in the current European Parliament's term. At this point MEPs vote for a new President of Parliament and a series of elections and negotiations occur over other important posts within the Parliament, such as the Chairmanships of committees.

In theory, the presence of new Romanian and Bulgarian MEPs as of 1 January 2007 meant that most national delegations would have access to slightly fewer posts than previously. However, as a result of tough negotiations and increasing support for a reform agenda, Conservative MEPs have been able to secure some crucial and influential positions.

Timothy Kirkhope MEP, Leader of the Conservative MEPs, said: "I am extremely proud of the achievements of Conservative MEPs. The outcome of mid-term negotiations for Parliament and Group posts clearly demonstrates the talent of our Delegation and the esteem in which Conservatives are held by other parliamentarians. Combined with the reshuffle I have carried out within the Conservative Delegation, I am confident that we are now in an excellent position to sharpen our political effort and exert increased influence over a range of forthcoming issues in the Parliament in pursuit of our reform agenda."



Neil Parish MEP

Chairman of the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee. Conservatives are long-standing advocates of the need to reform the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). In the next few years the EU will embark on a thorough review of how it spends its budget, of which currently almost half (nearly £40 billion annually) is spent on the CAP.



Philip Bradbourn MEP

Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs. The current German Presidency of the EU is pressing for greater EU involvement in police co-operation, migration policy and border control and several EU countries want to abolish national vetoes in this area. Conservatives favour co-operation between countries on these issues but not EU one-size-fits-all harmonisation.



John Purvis MEP

Vice-Chairman of the Economic Affairs Committee. The Economic Affairs Committee scrutinises and amends legislation on financial services and banking that can have a major impact on the City of London.



Timothy Kirkhope MEP

Vice-Chairman of the Constitutional Affairs Committee. The current German EU Presidency is committed to setting a timetable for reviving the EU Constitution by the summer. Conservatives oppose the Constitution and are determined to express this view strongly as Liberal Democrat and Labour MEPs, support the Constitution. There is no UKIP member of this committee.



Edward McMillan-Scott MEP

Vice-President of the European Parliament. As well as acting in a 'deputy speaker' role in Parliament sittings, Vice-Presidents jointly decide on internal Parliament matters so this role is crucial to the Conservative MEPs' on-going campaign to abolish European Parliament meetings in Strasbourg. Mr McMillan-Scott has special responsibility for relations between the European Parliament and national parliaments.



Struan Stevenson MEP

European Democrat Vice-President of the EPP-ED Group. The European Democrats is made up of the British Conservatives and the Czech ODS Party, who are allied to the EPP-ED Group but do not share the EPP view on constitutional and institutional matters. Under a deal agreed in 2004, the ED must have a Vice-President of the EPP-ED Group. Mr Stevenson has special responsibility within the group for matters relating to agriculture, fisheries and the EU budget.



John Bowis MEP

EPP-ED Co-ordinator on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety – co-ordinating the activities of centre right MEPs on this committee and promoting concerted but proportionate action to improve environmental protection.



Giles Chichester MEP

EPP-ED Co-ordinator on the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy – co-ordinating the activities of centre right MEPs on this committee which scrutinises legislation on matters of vital importance to British business. Giles is Chairman of the Inter-Parliamentary Delegation for relations with Australia and New Zealand.



Philip Bushill-Matthews MEP

EPP-ED Co-ordinator on the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs – co-ordinating the activities of centre right MEPs on this committee and promoting the Conservative policy of cutting red tape and burdens on employers, not least through returning control of labour market regulation to national parliaments. Philip is also Treasurer of the Conservatives in the European Parliament.



Malcolm Harbour MEP

EPP-ED Co-ordinator on the Committee on the Internal Market – co-ordinating the activities of centre right MEPs on this committee and promoting a Conservative approach to opening markets, removing obstacles to trade within the EU and reducing red tape and regulation.

King for Reform in Europe



Sir Robert Atkins MEP

Deputy Leader and EPP-ED Co-ordinator on the Committee on Petitions – co-ordinating the activities of centre right MEPs on this committee which is one of the most important ways in which citizens can formally raise their concerns with the EU, and have done so on subjects ranging from wasteful European Parliament meetings in Strasbourg to the collapse of the Equitable Life company.



Robert Sturdy MEP

EPP-ED Co-ordinator on the Committee on International Trade – co-ordinating the activities of centre right MEPs on this committee and promoting Conservative arguments for free trade and open markets, benefiting developing countries in particular.



Nirj Deva MEP

EPP-ED Joint Co-ordinator on the Committee on International Development – co-ordinating the activities of centre right MEPs on this and promoting the Conservative approach of ensuring that EU funds are allocated to help the poorest people in the world while fighting against inefficiencies, fraud and delays in aid payments.



Charles Tannock MEP

EPP-ED Deputy Co-ordinator on the Committee on Foreign Affairs – co-ordinating the activities of centre right MEPs on this sub-committee and promoting the Conservative approach of practical co-operation within the EU on foreign affairs where appropriate but opposing an EU foreign policy.



Geoffrey Van Orden MEP

EPP-ED Deputy Co-ordinator on the Sub-Committee on Defence – co-ordinating the activities of centre right MEPs on this sub-committee and promoting Conservative opposition to moves towards an EU army.



Jonathan Evans MEP

Chairman of the Inter-Parliamentary Delegation for relations with the United States – overseeing relations between the European Parliament and the US Congress and promoting a positive approach to co-operation with the USA, especially over trade and security matters.



Richard Ashworth MEP

Conservative Chief Whip in the European Parliament. ■

Liberal Democrat MEPs press for even bigger EU Constitution

Liberal Democrat MEPs recently elected committed federalist Andrew Duff as their leader.

Mr Duff is a vocal and determined supporter of the EU Constitution. Last October published a report entitled: "Plan B: how to rescue the European Constitution." In it, he argued that the EU should retain the core parts of the existing text, but grant the EU new powers over economic and social policy, environmental issues and energy policy to show that the concerns of citizens were being addressed. At the end of February, he launched a further pamphlet setting out these proposals in detail.

In a letter to 'LibDem' news, his predecessor Chris Davies MEP made it clear that policy on the Constitution had been an important issue in the LibDem MEPs leadership contest. He wrote: "Andrew Duff is one of the authors of the draft European Constitution so it is natural that he should strive to keep it alive. As he beat me decisively in our recent leadership election, it is fair to assume that his views are strongly held by the party's MEPs but they are not universally so." (LibDem News 9 February 2007). ■

Labour Chaos Over Home Affairs Veto

Conservative MEPs highlighted Labour's disarray over proposals to abolish national vetoes over EU law-making in sensitive areas such as crime and policing. Labour appeared to be split three ways when Labour MEPs voted in favour of the proposals. Home Secretary John Reid pledged to maintain the UK veto and Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett refused to take a clear position on the issue.

Conservative Spokesman on Justice and Home Affairs Philip Bradbourn said: "The Home Office says no, the Foreign Office says maybe and the Labour MEPs say yes. Policy on the veto is in utter confusion. By contrast, Conservatives have been absolutely consistent on this matter. Harmonisation of laws in this area is a flawed approach. It denies our police and security services the flexibility and adaptability they need. Co-operation between Member States should be the way forward." ■

New Far-Right political grouping formed in the European Parliament

Earlier this year, a group of far-right MEPs announced that they had agreed to set up a political grouping in the European Parliament, called 'Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty'.

UK South East Region MEP Ashley Mote has become a Vice-President of the Group. Mote was elected in 2004 on the UKIP list, but later had the Whip suspended when it emerged he had failed to inform the UKIP leadership that he was awaiting trial on charges of housing benefit fraud.

The new group is led by Bruno Gollnisch, a member of Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front Party, who has recently been found guilty in the French Courts of Holocaust denial. It includes MEPs from Austria's Freedom party, and the Belgian Flemish separatists, Vlaams Belang, as well as Alessandra Mussolini, grand-daughter of the Italian Fascist dictator.

According to BBC News Online, Mr Mote believes the new group will be 'good for the Parliament' and the electorate, and argued that it would be 'difficult to imagine any MEP' disagreeing with the principles of the group.

UKIP's attempts to distance themselves from Mr Mote were undermined when he wrote to a local newspaper saying that: *"I am enjoying good working relations with many UKIP branches across the region and have every intention of continuing to work with them whenever the opportunity arises."* ■

Conservative MEP wins support to scrap rising levels of waste



Conservative MEP Caroline Jackson is piloting through new legislation designed to bring about reductions in the amount of rubbish Europeans produce.

According to the European Environment Agency, each year every man, woman and child in the EU produces about 3.5 tonnes of waste and this figure has been consistently increasing over the years. Unless action is taken, by 2020, the

OECD estimates, we could be generating 45% more waste than we did in 1995. Dr Jackson's report proposes stabilising waste at 2008 levels through a series of improvements to waste management systems and reductions in waste production. One proposal in particular will see greater efforts made to produce energy from waste. It is hoped her report could shape the next 50 years of EU policy on waste management. ■



Over 1 million sign Strasbourg petition

The www.oneseat.eu petition promoted by Conservative MEPs at the Party Conference in Bournemouth last year, and signed by David Cameron, achieved well over its target of one million signatures.

It has now been forwarded to the European Parliament's Petitions Committee.

Conservative spokesman on Petitions Sir Robert Atkins said: *"Conservative MEPs have campaigned for years for an end to the practice of holding monthly European Parliament meetings in Strasbourg. It costs taxpayers at least £130 million annually. This is simply not acceptable and I will do all I can to ensure that this petition brings maximum pressure to bear on those that decide to force them to abandon Strasbourg meetings once and for all."* ■

