



THE RT. HON. SIR ROBERT ATKINS MEP
Representing the NORTH WEST of ENGLAND

Contact Nos: 01995-602225 (H)
07770254444(M)

01995-605690 (Fax) 0032-228-45373 (Brussels)

E-Mail: ratsmep@sir-robertatkins.org

www.sir-robertatkins.org



Conservatives
in the European Parliament

Newsletter Edition 73

July 2010

All Change!

The end of June is a handover time for the six-month rotating Presidency of the European Union – not to be confused with the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (Mr. Van Rompuy), the Presidency of the European Commission (Mr Barroso) or the Presidency of the European Parliament (Mr. Buzek). We have a plethora of presidencies and to which President Obama would make his mythical telephone call is for anybody to guess! However, the first one changed hands from Spain to Belgium on July 1st and representatives of both Governments were in Strasbourg last week to address Parliament.

Spain

During the Spanish tenure, British Tory MEPs have conspired to make a series of pointed interventions on their Ministers about the disgraceful activities of Spanish local authorities in relation to expatriate housing in that country – not just British, by the way – and we have had some success in registering Parliament's annoyance at the Spanish Government's inability or unwillingness to redress the problems. The campaign continues.

Belgium

As to the Belgian Presidency, we have a problem. There is no Belgian Government and unlikely to be one for the foreseeable future! Following their recent General Election there were such a multiplicity and variety of parties elected that no one grouping can create a majority. So, temporary leaders assume the Premiership and/or Ministerial roles and one never knows who will turn up to address Parliament or their place in the political spectrum. If ever there was an argument against multi-member PR, Belgium is it!

Aces High!

I was involved in a fascinating couple of meetings last week to do with Preston's bid to become European City of Sport in 2012. There is an European organisation called ACES, founded by a wealthy Italian professor and now backed by EU funding, which

seeks to encourage towns, cities and capitals to commit themselves to elevating the status and practice of sport within their boundaries. A team of “inquisitors” from various countries came to Preston for two days to examine the city’s bid and I was wheeled out to do my bit. And success followed the presentations, so Preston was awarded the title for 2012 which coincides with the Olympic Games in the UK and the Preston Guild Merchant – and that happens only every twenty years. Congratulations to all concerned!



The ACES team

Foreign Affairs

We have been examining and discussing the vexed issues of Gaza and Afghanistan in the Foreign Affairs Committee, with various representatives of various factions together with EU Commissioners and some Ambassadors. There are Members with very definite, uncomplicated views – "Pull out of Afghanistan NOW!" or "Israel must stop all terrorists!" but many - and I include myself here – prefer to listen to the arguments and the information and then to reflect on their significance. Clearly they are both issues of complexity and controversy and decisions ought to be taken sooner rather than later if they are to be resolved. But one thing is certain, the European Parliament cannot solve the problems. We can only focus attention on them and encourage Ministers to act.

The Coalition

I have listened to the views of many Party members over the last few weeks, especially about the Government coalition.



With William Wragg - Chairman of Hazel Grove

Conclusions are mixed but broadly supportive. Some feel that the Prime Minister made too many concessions to the Liberals, some are delighted with those concessions and some think that he made the best of a difficult job. There is no doubt that the general public like what they see – if we are to believe the opinion polls – but I suspect that may change when the cutting starts. Everyone appears to be in favour of the necessary cuts so long, of course, as it does not affect my particular project! Well, I am afraid that it will and we had better be aware of that from Day 1. This is not going to be easy but unless the remedial action is taken, the future for our successors will be even more bleak.

Hols!

The Summer Recess is now not far away and the much-needed break imminent. I shall be cruising the North West canals on my narrowboat and watching a lot of cricket. I hope you all enjoy your holidays and come back refreshed in September.



Ratty

Rory Atkins
→