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Conservatives
in the European Parliament

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New Parliament

The elections are now long over but the new Parliament only met for the first time on Tuesday, 14th July. That is because Members from 2004/9 arrived to shake hands with the President and to receive a medal & scroll to commemorate their service – of whatever quality that might be! Indeed they remained MEPs up to midnight on Monday 13th July. In that interim period between the Count and the first Parliamentary Session, all Members have spent considerable time finding or changing offices, employing staff, signing vast quantities of paperwork and generally getting themselves together.

It is a massive administrative operation and, somewhat surprisingly, all seemed to work quite well. Sadly though, my office move in Strasbourg resulted in the theft of a camera, some money and 7 Kit-Kats(!) - presumably by the removal staff. I will be recompensed but it is extraordinary that we can spend 30 million euros on security for both Brussels and Strasbourg and yet be unable to prevent petty theft in a supposedly secure office!

New President

Anyway, the new Parliament's first task was to elect a President and although there **was** an election, the result was a foregone conclusion as the major parties had agreed on the preferred candidate.



Jose Manuel Barroso greets new EP President Jerzy Buzek

This is Jerzy Busek, the former Polish centre-right Prime Minister and a really rather special person. He gave a good account of himself in his speech and took firm control of the session after his election.

New Group

Now, of course, many of you will be aware that Conservative MEPs have taken the lead in setting up a new grouping in this 2009/14 Parliament. It is called the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR) and comprises us, the Polish Law and Justice Party, the Czech ODS Party – as the bulk of the membership – and a selection of individual colleagues from Latvia, the Netherlands, Belgium, etc. Time will tell as to whether we can all bond together but we have set out with good intentions and a firm desire to make things work.

Sadly, we experienced an immediate hitch. The ECR puts up – as do all the groups – a slate of candidates for various Parliamentary positions and the first of these was for one of the 14 Vice-Presidents of Parliament. Our nominee was a Pole and expectations were high that he would be elected. Unfortunately, one Conservative MEP, Edward MacMillan-Scott, who served as a Vice-President up until 2009, disagreed with this candidate and, being unable to gain any support from within the new Group, stood as an independent with Socialist, Liberal and EPP support. As Chief Whip, I warned him as to the consequences of defying the commitments that had been made by, and on behalf of, David Cameron, especially if his candidature damaged that of the ECR. He ignored my strictures, did indeed defeat the official Conservative Party Candidate and, as a result, lost the Party Whip. He may also lose his Party Membership. For a former Leader of the Conservative MEPs and with many distinguished years as a Conservative MEP, it is a sad end to a career.

New Committees

In conjunction with the present Leader, Tim Kirkhope, I have just completed the complicated task of allocating Committee and Delegation places to colleagues. A quart into a pint pot isn't the half of it! Understandably, everyone believes that their claims to preferment are better than that of anybody else but with a limited number of seats on each committee, we have had to put national and Party interests first. Every MEP is entitled to a full membership of one committee and a substitute membership of another but the permutations can be very complicated. Conservatives will have nothing like the influence that we had in the last Parliament as we are now in the fifth largest group rather than the first. But we have gained the Chairmanship of the Internal Market Committee (Malcolm Harbour MEP) - which is important to delivering the Conservative agenda - and also the leadership of the Canada Delegation. I am on the Foreign Affairs Committee and the USA Delegation and, as the Chief Whip, holding myself in reserve for any other Committee on which we are inadequately represented.

European Parliament Election

This epistle should not end without a comment on both the European and County election results. The first was an excellent conclusion to a campaign which inevitably was troubled by the Westminster expenses saga and the intervention of UKIP & BNP. On a low turnout, the Tory vote held up very well in our traditional areas and we achieved victories in Constituencies which are vital to victory in the forthcoming General Election

I am very privileged to be the No. 1 MEP in our region, as the Conservative Party topped the poll overall, but the re-election of Saj Karim and Jacqueline Foster with me is an especially satisfying result. We must thank the remainder of the team of Tory Candidates, in particular Alex Williams who just missed success as our No. 4. The downside of all this was the effect of a poor turnout of Labour voters, thereby letting in a BNP MEP. We have to accept that he was democratically elected but I shall have no truck with him. I hope you all do the same.



Our Excellent No.4 - Alex Williams



Count Speech

County Elections

The victory in Lancashire was very sweet. After 28 years of Labour control, to win with such a large majority was a mammoth achievement and deserved plaudits resounded during David Cameron's brief celebratory visit. We did very well in Cumbria against difficult opposition, which showed itself in Westmorland & Lonsdale, but the success of becoming the largest group and leading the new administration is tempered by the loss of former Group Leader, Tim Stoddart, together with the likes of Jack Richardson and Alan Bobbitt. All who lost deserve our grateful thanks and all who won – on both Councils – deserve congratulations. As always I stand ready to help in any way possible.



DC at County Hall

Thanks!

Finally, can I offer my personal thanks to all who participated in and supported both campaigns, especially when I was laid low for a few days by a

mystery virus. It was a great victory for all concerned and you played a significant part in the continuing campaign to win Government at the next General Election.

Enjoy the summer holidays!

Paul Atkins
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