



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 65

September
2009

Canal Ramblings

The recess is now long gone and memories of a very damp August just that. I potteded about on a narrowboat, seeing parts of our region from the entirely different perspective of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal. Whether at rural Rufford or urban Burnley, the combination of industrial history and native flora & fauna demonstrates the great attractions of England.



Afghanistan

One comes down to earth with a bump at Manchester airport on a Bank Holiday! Returning to Brussels for the first meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee, I resigned myself to the congestion and delays of the holiday season and inevitably arrived late at Parliament. There were a number of issues that had built up through the summer but Afghanistan was the most important. I intervened upon a somewhat complacent Commissioner who was implying that the Presidential election result was broadly acceptable and told her in no uncertain terms that she was wrong. The 2500+ cases of deliberate fraud - on all sides - but predominantly attributed to Karzai's supporters makes a complete mockery of the legitimacy of his 'victory' and is a betrayal of British soldiers who have lost life or limb in the protection of a democratic

ideal. I understand and support the need to be in Afghanistan but this election must be taken to a second round and more closely monitored. Only then can the winner's mandate be acceptable.

ECR

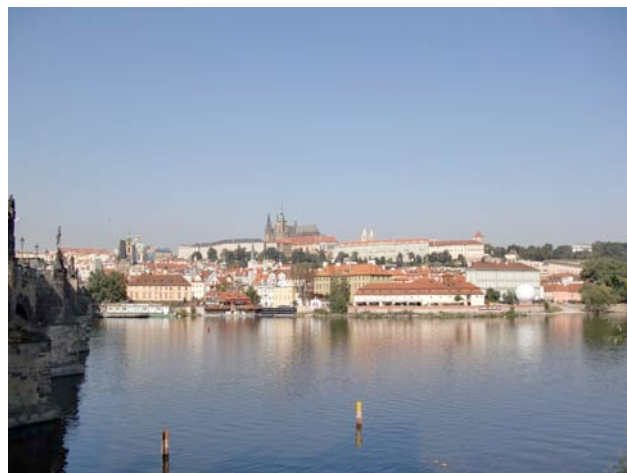
Our new group has a new logo (shown below) and it required a committee to decide upon it. I make no comment whatsoever, except to record that 50% of the Members like it and 50% do not!

We are gradually getting to know the various members of the ECR, representing as we do 8 member states of the European Union out of the 27, and inevitably the British contingent is fairly dominant, with 27 MEPs out of the 55. Most of the Committee Co-ordinatorships fall to us and about 60% of the staff appointments so we are well placed to create an acceptable Parliamentary agenda.



Prague

With the imminence of a tight General Election in the Czech Republic, we had a special 'familiarisation' Group Meeting in Prague recently which received huge local publicity. I have never visited this historic city before and I was greatly impressed by the obvious improvements in the infrastructure and the well-being of the residents since communist rule only 20 years ago. The Czechs never cease to remind us of their democratic traditions before communism and clearly they are delighted to be where they are today in the European Union - and doing well despite the economic downturn. There is also much to see on the tourist front but, sadly, that will require another visit as Parliamentary duties kept me in the conference centre for the three days that I was there!



The President Speaks

The new President of Parliament, Jerzy Buzek, made his inaugural address to Members last week and spoke of his pride at being the first to achieve his exalted position from a former Iron Curtain country. He was, of course, Prime Minister of Poland (1997-2001) and a longstanding opponent of communist rule in his country. He endured all the restrictions and difficulties of being a democrat under communism and made some very telling points about freedom of speech, toleration of different political views and the importance of free trade. His tenure of office should prove interesting.



Schools Rugby

Eighteen years ago, when I was a Minister in Northern Ireland, I sponsored a trophy for a regular rugby match between the schools of the Province and Lancashire. The event alternated between both places and this year it was at Fylde RUFC, with Lancashire defending its hold on the crystal rugby ball. It was a very tight game with Ulster just winning by 28-26 and I was delighted to be able to present the trophy in person. The result is immaterial. The game, the rivalry and the friendships that the fixture creates and the enjoyment of all concerned are what count and so it was with this year's event.



1984 - Again?

As President of Garstang CC, I presented a number of well-deserved awards to many youngsters last week at an end-of-season evening. I shook some hands, patted some backs and was in the middle of a gathering of some boys and girls. What would Mr. Brown's new plan to force up to 14 million innocent parents, family friends or - in my case - cricket-lovers to be 'checked for a questionable past' do to an event like that. There was much irritation - anger even - expressed by many parents and coaches and it is quite clear that this proposal is really over the top. I speak to youngsters in schools on a fairly regular basis and I shall refuse point blank to accede to this Orwellian diktat if required to do so. Children will be the losers all round and that is reprehensible.



Commission President

Parliament re-elected Mr Barroso as President of the Commission at the Strasbourg session last week, in the teeth of opposition from a Socialist/Green/UKIP/Communist alliance. The 55 votes of the ECR sealed it for him and whilst we do have differences with him - the Lisbon Treaty for example - he is a former Conservative Prime Minister of our oldest ally, Portugal, and his general approach to a market economy etc. is welcome.



Barroso and Buzek

The Ashes

Finally, I cannot let the summer pass without applauding the England cricket team for regaining The Ashes. Everyone who enjoys the Great Game was pleased and it gave us a bit of a lift at the end of a damp and economically dismal August.

Robert Atkins

