

## **Environment and climate change to be tackled at EU level**

Climate change and environmental degradation, two of the major problems facing Europe and the World today are challenges best dealt with at the continental and global level. Pollution respects no borders so unless we come together in trans-national partnerships we will never find real solutions. This is why the European Parliament has resisted an attempt by European Union (EU) Environment Ministers to divert 80% of the LIFE+ Budget. Member States had wanted the budget decentralised to subsidise their own spending. The purpose of the environmental LIFE+ Programme is to combat climate change, improve the environment and promote the use of sustainable resources. The LIFE+ Programme will guarantee funding of €1.9 billion over the next seven years for these and similar projects and will influence EU policies in cleaning the air and soil and halting the degradation of our biodiversity.

## **2007 Budget gets first reading**

Labour MEPs were active in promoting our priorities in the 2007 Budget debate. Labour voted against all tobacco subsidies and against Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for suckler cows used in the production of veal and battery raised chickens. On bull fighting we were successful in voting to make sure that any EU funding for beef cattle does not go into the pockets of people who raise bulls for bull fighting. On the positive side we voted to increase development aid to Asia and Africa. Labour representatives also called on Parliament to ensure that MEPs only get their travel expenses at cost price, rather than at the present set amount system.

## **Labour backs Spanish peace process – Tories vote against**

After some impassioned debate MEPs in Strasbourg narrowly adopted a resolution led by the Socialist, Liberal, Green and the European United Left Groups supporting 'the peace process in Spain'. Backed by Labour MEPs, the motion won by ten votes with the British Conservatives voting against. The motion expressed solidarity with the victims of terrorism, supports the fight against terrorism and supports the peace initiative undertaken by the Spanish democratic institutions in the Basque Country. The motion also welcomed the decision to fight terrorism by the force of democracy. Cameron's Conservatives backed an alternative resolution tabled by the Right in Europe, which rejected the continuation of the dialogue and the search for a peaceful solution. It was sad to see the Spanish Conservatives turning their backs on the very wise words of their own former Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, who in 1998 said: "For peace, and it is the right thing to do, we must open our hearts to hope and forgiveness. In our fight for peace, we will do our best with the best wishes and help of everyone". What a pity the Conservatives could not capture that spirit but the Spanish were appreciative of Labour support.

## **Tories vote against measures to protect female immigrants**

Female immigrants to the European Union today are subjected to 'double discrimination' due to the combined scourge of sexism and racism. Fifty four percent of all immigrants into the EU are women. A report on the role of immigrant women in the EU has been debated in the European Parliament in Strasbourg. To the shame of the British Conservative Party, and the 'female friendly' David Cameron, the Tory MEPs voted against several amendments which aimed to strengthen support and protection for immigrant women from violence, enslavement and sexual exploitation.

## **Human Rights Act – Cameron meddles at his peril**

The leader of the British Conservative party has been told that any meddling with the Human Rights Act would jeopardise the UK's position in Europe. Each of the 46 Member States of the Council of Europe has incorporated the freedoms of the Convention on Human Rights into its legal system. If a future Conservative Government should persuade European/British Parliament to repeal the Human Rights Act and replace it with a British Bill of Rights, the new measure would have to provide effective remedies for breaches of the Convention, otherwise the UK would be isolated and inevitably found to be in breach of Article 13 of the Convention. Compliance with the Convention is a condition of the membership of the Council of Europe and the European Union.

## **EU plea for improved breast cancer care**

Every year 275,000 women in the European Union are diagnosed with breast cancer and the wide discrepancy in care and treatment standards they receive is simply unacceptable. I voted in favour of this resolution that calls for Europe-wide standards for early detection and treatment of the disease. Breast cancer patients often suffer discrimination in the workplace and I hope that following Parliament's overwhelming vote the European Commission will now draft a Charter for the protection of breast cancer patients in the workplace. I believe that if

the European Parliament's resolution was fully implemented we could improve the quality of life for surviving cancer patients significantly and reduce the estimated 88,000 deaths every year in the EU from breast cancer by as much as 35%, thus saving the lives of 30,000 women every year.

### **Independence, inclusion and rights for people with disabilities**

Around 50 million Europeans – almost 10% of the population – have some form of disability and one in four have a disabled family member. A recent Parliamentary report said that improving access to public transport and making websites more usable are two vital steps in tackling unemployment amongst disabled people. The European Parliament is playing an active role both as a legislator and an employer. Traineeships are very popular in the Parliament. A recently launched scheme has earmarked resources to recruit more trainees.

### **'Homecare Europe' to be launched in Brussels in December**

Across all of Europe the key to enabling vulnerable people to remain in their own homes with dignity and independence is the development of high quality Home Care Services. Within Europe, each country has developed a range of services to meet each countries needs. Homecare Europe will be a meeting point where member states can learn from the other and share best practices.

Parliament pushes for better use of inland waterways

Europe's inland waterways have a capacity equalling 10,000 trains and 440,000 trucks making them an efficient, reliable and above all environmentally friendly transport system. A special action plan aims to reinvigorate these waterways by addressing issues such as start-up funding, innovation and workforce training. The Clyde, Forth, Thames, Severn and Mersey, among others, provide a network by which modern vessels can reach the major towns and cities of Britain. The plan was adopted in the European Parliament last month.

### **EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT FORUM GLASGOW**

**The next European Parliament Forum will be held at 10 am Saturday 11 November 2006 at the offices of the Transport and General Workers Union in 290 Bath Street Glasgow. All Labour Party members are welcome.**

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