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E-NEWSLETTER

Introduction

Hello and welcome to the December edition of my newsletter. Please feel free to pass this to friends, family and colleagues. If you wish to unsubscribe from this newsletter, please email me with "unsubscribe" as the subject header.

I would like to take the opportunity to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a prosperous 2009.

Thank you for your support,

Catherine

My View – The Working Time Directive

We are facing the worst financial crisis in 80 years and a recent figure indicates that there are an astonishing 18 million working poor in the EU.

On the 17th December 2008 the European Parliament is set to vote on whether or not to end the opt out clause from the Working Time Directive. The European Parliamentary Labour Party will agree its position on this issue on the 16th December 2008. The opt out entitles member states to introduce measures which allow individuals to work more than the maximum of 48 hours per week. I do not like the opt out. Workers can voluntarily sign an opt out; however, I fear that people may agree to this for fear of losing their job. My concern with the opt out is that many people are signing away their rights and working excessively long hours which could threaten their health and safety.

I support a modern Europe, with modern, flexible working arrangements. Working time arrangements must be flexible in order to meet the needs of both employers and workers. It is imperative that the EU continues to safeguard the protection of workers' right, particularly during a period of economic uncertainty.

Days Away From A Historic Vote

This month is likely to see the EU push through one of its most significant pieces of work to date: a new climate and energy package.

I am delighted that the EU has adopted a sense of urgency over a much needed climate change package. Over the past couple of months, the European Parliament has been busy preparing amendments and suggestions to the European Commission's original proposal. We are due to vote on these important issues between the 15th – 18th December in Strasbourg.

It is heartening to know that the vast majority of MEPs share my belief that decisive action is needed. The climate is changing and so must we. By next week the EU may well be committed to an 80% cut in greenhouse gases by 2050. Other features of the proposed European climate and energy package include measures to reduce car emissions and advancing the use of renewable energy sources.

Combating HIV/AIDS

On the 1st December the European Union marked the 20th Anniversary of World Aids Day. It saddens me that, despite increased awareness and a global response to HIV and AIDS, the number of people infected with the disease continues to increase in Scotland and within EU Member States. I am also shocked that almost half of all Scots diagnosed with HIV are being diagnosed too late which is preventing people from receiving the treatment they require.

On the 20th November 2008, the European Parliament - in an almost unanimous vote - passed a resolution which calls on the national governments and the European Commission to prepare a strategy on HIV to promote early awareness and early care for individuals living with AIDS. I am pleased that this resolution also calls for the reduction of barriers to anonymous testing measures which will help encourage people to take a test.

Putting a Stop to Elderly Abuse

On a recent visit to Lanark and Hamilton Constituency Labour Party (CLP), I was delighted to meet Lanarkshire local and former provost Harry Smith, aged 93 – who was particularly interested in the European Parliament's work on combating abuse of the elderly.

The abuse of older people is a significant global problem, and the conviction rate for abusers remains far too low. I visited the Lanark and Hamilton CLP in order to raise awareness of the problem and to spread the message that abuse is a violation of human rights and a European strategy is needed.

In order to safeguard the rights of the elderly, I will be contacting the Scottish government and Scottish Labour Party colleagues to ensure that they are aware of the campaign at the European Parliament, and I will liaise with them as to what can be achieved in Scotland.

The Plight of Scotland's Birds

I was appalled to discover that 34 birds of prey have been illegally poisoned in Scotland in the past year.

I am also extremely disappointed that crucial amendments to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) on bird protection were recently rejected by the European Parliament – amendments which had the full support of the Labour Party. It is a significant blow that the EU has not continued to support the banning of farmers and landowners from poisoning birds if they wish to continue receiving funding under CAP.

It is, however, a minor consolation that a Socialist group amendment involving the protection of farmland birds was adopted. This amendment allows EU Member States to establish or retain habitats to compensate for the loss of set-aside land and so reduces the effect of the loss of set-aside lands on biodiversity and birdlife.

2010 Constituency Trip

I regret to advise you that there will be no constituency trips organised in 2009. I know this will disappoint a lot of people. We are planning another exciting trip for 2010 and we look forward to seeing you there.

For more information or to register your interest, please contact Fiona Fairley on 01383 417 799 or email cstihlermep2@btconnect.com

Get in Touch

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