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E-NEWSLETTER

President Barroso Returns to Office

On September 16th Jose Manuel Barroso was re-elected by the European Parliament to serve as the 11th President of the European Commission. He received a clear majority of votes.

However, many MEPs – including myself - are disappointed by this choice and strongly believe that Barroso failed to perform effectively over the past five years, particularly in terms of the challenges that we face with the global economic crisis and on social policy.

The Socialist Group will now use the time between his election to the election of the Commission to press him on the posted workers directive, equal pay for equal work,, a legally binding social impact assessment, to give good portfolios to socialist candidates for commissioner and to award the High Representative on Foreign Affairs to our political family.

Campaigning for social justice and jobs, reforming the financial markets, and steering the UK out of the recession are high up on the political agenda for Labour in Europe. The harsh reality of the recession is that the most vulnerable people are being hit the hardest. Labour in Europe take no vows of silence and will work tirelessly to tackle the global economic crisis. I will play a full part in pressing for these aims on the internal market and economic committees as we make decisions on financial reform. The Scotsman covered Barroso's re-election - <http://news.scotsman.com/world/Barroso-wins-second-term-as.5654342.jp>

Energy Programme for Recovery

Today millions of people – across the world – are affected by a whole host of global problems, which ultimately require global solutions. There are no 'Scotland-only' solutions to these global problems. In recent years, the EU has taken the lead in the fight against climate change and it remains one of the top priorities for the parliamentary term 2009 – 2014 and beyond.

A fundamental part of the EU's economic recovery plan is the creation of the Energy Programme for Recovery (EEPR). For the period 2009 – 2010, nearly £4 billion (£3.5bn) will be spent on key energy projects, namely the construction of gas and electricity infrastructure, off shore wind farms and the advancement of carbon capture and storage.

It is clear that EEPR has the potential to help Scotland, and the rest of the UK, meet its climate change targets, and will go a long way toward helping the country emerge stronger from the economic downturn.

It is crucial that we continue to work together with our European partners in order to mitigate the contribution of CO2 emissions to the global warming crisis and develop an integrated and effective European energy policy. The UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen this December will provide the EU with the opportunity to advance efforts in the fight against climate change.

Regional Europe

The social disparities between regions in Europe are significant. European Regional Policy is in line with the priorities set by the EU for economic growth, job stability and improving living standards for all. The European Structural and Cohesion are the main financial instruments for supporting the social and economic re-structuring of regions across Europe. The European Social Fund - one of the EU's Structural Funds - was set up to improve employment opportunities in the EU and to equip the workforce with the skills needed in order to participate fully in a global competitive market. The European Regional Development Fund deals more specifically with 'physical' investments; namely infrastructural changes and enterprise development.

Scotland has received European funding for over twenty five years. Although the UK is one of the richest countries in Europe, some of our cities continue to have pockets of deprivation amongst the worst in Europe. The re-generation of Glasgow has been partly made possible due to financing from the EU. Labour in Europe firmly supports that communities all across the UK have prospered and thrived due to European funding. It is vital that political representatives all across the board – from local to national – continue to voice the need for more European funding in areas that need it the most. Although the EU faces a severe East-West poverty gap, it is vital that Scotland and the rest of the UK do not miss out on EU funding.

When is a National Conversation Not a National Conversation?

On September 8th, the SNP held their National Conversation showcase in Brussels.

Holding a national conversation in Brussels is by its very nature curious. With Belgium's current political divisions and that fact that it did not have a government for a year, would suggest this would be the last place to hold a national conversation. After cancelling two seminars, one on the financial crisis and the other on climate change the only event which was held at Scotland House was on independence. Whilst Scottish workers are losing their jobs, Scottish families are losing their homes and Scottish pensioners are losing their savings, I cannot understand why an opportunity to influence key policy makers in Brussels who are making decisions which will impact on Scottish people, was squandered in order for the Scottish Government to talk about ripping Britain apart. We need unity not division, we need to help people, not ignore the real concerns of people in Scotland which are employment and security.

<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/2009/09/07/alex-salmond-blasted-over-700k-cost-of-independence-referendum-86908-21653811/>

All in the Days Work

September has been a busy month with my new committees. In the first week back I spoke on issues to protect local government to supporting jobs in the Scottish financial sector. I was privileged to host the Swedish Presidency reception for the Parliament Magazine which I edit and introduced as our guest speaker, former MEP now Europe Minister for Sweden, Cecilia Malmstrom.

In Strasbourg I met with EU Commissioner Borg, along with representatives from the RSPB and Bird Life International, to discuss the need for urgent and decisive action on seabird bycatch which kills 200,000 birds a year, some of whom are facing extinction.

I also met with another Commissioner Vassiliou along with 4 of the other Scottish MEPS to discuss the introduction of compulsory sheep tagging. The main driver behind the introduction of electronic identification devices (EID) was the outbreak of Foot and Mouth in 2001. However there are genuine concerns about the cost of EID when it will not actually improve accuracy over sheep numbers. The meeting was informative but the directive will have to be implemented. The only chance will be to illustrate to the Commission that the implementation is not going to work. This issue will not be going away.

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