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Trade Union Matters

Catherine Stihler MEP

European Parliament's New Socialist President



Martiz Schulz

This month in Strasbourg, the former Social Democrat Group Leader, German MEP Martin Schulz, was elected President of the European Parliament. Elected in the first ballot with a majority, his mandate will run over

the next two and a half years. I was delighted to see a Socialist victory in this important ballot. As chance would have it, out of over 700 MEPs I was called to be a teller for the election, but as I had my baby, Andrew, with me for the vote, I had to decline; however, Andrew received a kind round of applause from my fellow MEPs.

Mr Schulz made his first speech as President on his election, stating,

"We want to listen more to the people. And this is the place where the interests of the people are repre-

sented. Here representatives of the European people are sitting. This is why I say: 'Citizens, who you have given us your confidence in a direct vote, you can expect us to fight for your cause'. I know this and am proud that all Members in this House consider themselves as advocates for the people".

For the next six months, Mr Schulz's Presidency will run alongside the Danish Presidency of the Council of Ministers. During this time, the Danish Government will organise and lead the work of the Council.

6 WAYS TO KEEP IN TOUCH

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Britain Paying the Price for Cameron's Mistake



As last year drew to a close and at a crucial moment in European Union history, Cameron's veto to block a new EU Treaty has left the UK isolated in decision-making on key matters concerning the EU. However, working to resolve the Eurozone crisis

has been of the highest priority for Labour MEPs, and I have continued to work with my European colleagues to seek strategies to stimulate growth and job creation in this very difficult time.

In response to the financial crisis there has been a wave of financial regulation coming through the European Parliament. Labour spear-headed tough new EU laws this year on bankers' bonuses, a ban on sovereign debt and curbing derivatives. With Labour's

support, 2011 set the ball rolling for a complete overhaul of the financial sector and saw the European Parliament officially adopting a position on a 'Robin Hood Tax'.



Advanced economies need to restore fiscal sustainability through credible

consolidation plans. Slamming on the brakes too quickly will hurt the recovery and worsen job prospects: it is imperative that we do not forget the social implications of austerity-only policies. Long term issues regarding jobs and growth must be considered at the helm of decision-making. We cannot afford to abandon citizens in hard times in favour of savage cuts. The focus must remain on job creation and supporting our public services.

Trade Union Matters

Breast Implant Crisis 'Could have been Prevented'



Homage to Catalonia:

Fighting Nationalism at Home and Abroad

In a rare opportunity to learn from our Catalan Cousins on combatting nationalism, I am delighted to be **welcoming two leading Catalan Socialists** to speak at our Scottish Labour Party Conference fringe event.

Please join us at **Conference** in the Dundee Hilton Hotel's **Discovery Suite** at **5.30pm** on **Saturday 3rd March** to learn how they fight nationalism and to share common experiences.

Many thanks to UNISON and Labour Movement for Europe Scotland for their support in hosting this fringe.

The current crisis over the insertion of potentially faulty PIP breast implants has highlighted the need for their registration and tougher regulation, which I have been campaigning on for years.

In 2003 I first got support from fellow MEPs after I wrote a report for the Parliament recommending a Europe-wide database where patients could find out where their implant was manufactured and the what it was made of. This crisis has shown there is now an

urgent need for the Commission to ensure such a register is established. With a register, former patients would now know where their implant came from. It is estimated that up to 4000 PIP Implants could have been used in Scotland alone. Too many women are now uncertain as to whether they might be at risk, having been let down by the companies manufacturing the implants: these private firms are walking away from their moral obligations to help those involved and without a regis-

ter, it is difficult to establish who is suffering. These companies claim not to have the resources to remove implants, but were perfectly happy to make money from selling a sub-standard product to women at the outset.

Spanish newspaper 'El Pais' has written about my campaign. The link to the article can be viewed on my website at www.cstihlermep.com. My 2003 report can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/zazAnD>.

Amazon ban small businesses from trading

This month I was appalled to discover Amazon banning any company from doing business on its site if they sell goods for a cheaper price elsewhere.

'I'm asking the European Commission to look into this, as Amazon is potentially breaking competition rules.

As a member of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee, I'm con-

cerned that consumers will suffer from a poorer choice of goods. If sellers aren't allowed to vary their prices, they will stop offering their goods to Amazon, making it harder for consumers to find what they want.'

Amazon charges its sellers 15% of each sale plus a monthly fee of £30. Sometimes it's cheaper for sellers to sell through their own

websites because there aren't any fees attached; however, access to consumers on Amazon can often make a quick sale.

'Amazon is distorting the market. They are placing sellers in an impossible situation, preventing them from getting the best bargain and inflating prices using bullying tactics on small businesses.'

What is Salmond hiding on Europe?

It's disgraceful that the SNP have failed to establish a coherent line on EU Membership in the Independence debate.

In May 2011 I submitted a Freedom of Information request, asking the Scottish Government whether they had received legal advice on the status of an Independent Scotland's EU membership. It struck me

that the Government were so laid back about automatic EU entry that they must have the evidence to back up their assertions. However, they refused to answer my question on the grounds of 'public interest'. Following this, I requested an internal review and have now taken an appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner. Since then, the SNP have made various

differing assertions on EU membership: even their politicians are unclear as to their line on this issue. It is ridiculous to suggest that providing clarification on such an important point is contrary to public interest. With the Government unwilling to be clear with the Scottish people, it remains our responsibility as Labour representatives to seek the truth.