



EUROPARL



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IN BRIEF

In September, the European Parliament debated a report on fundamental rights, which criticised the UK government for holding children in detention centres, such as Dungavel, for prolonged periods. A large majority of MEPs backed the position of SNP MSPs, calling on Member States to ensure that mainstream educational provision is guaranteed for all children in their care – including the children of asylum seekers.



Ian Hudghton MEP continues to undertake Question & Answer sessions at primary, secondary and further education classes. Ian is pictured above with P7 following a particularly lively session at Rothies Primary School.

Leaders of the National Farmers Union of Scotland recently met with MEPs including Ian Hudghton in Brussels. The deputation also lobbied Commissioner David Byrne to highlight the impracticality for Scotland's industry of EU proposals to require the double-tagging and manual recording of individual sheep.

EU CONSTITUTION DEBATED

A significant portion of the 2003 Annual SNP Conference agenda was devoted to policy debate and candidate ranking, in preparation for next June's elections to the European Parliament, with a major debate focussing on the recently published Draft Constitution for the European Union. The present Treaties of Rome, Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice, etc, etc, form a hideously complex jumble, decipherable only by the most enthusiastic of scholars and totally confusing to the general public.

In principle the SNP has welcomed the idea of having a single, clear and comprehensive text, a Constitution, which clearly defines not only the powers of the EU Institutions, but also the limitations on those powers.

Thanks to Neil MacCormick's input to the Convention, Scotland has had a voice in the drafting process to date. Now as the final crucial stage proceeds with 15 current, plus 10 new, Member State governments wheeling and dealing at an Intergovernmental Conference, Scotland will neither have a voice nor a vote. With the future status of the Common Fisheries Policy being wrapped up in the Constitution, and the experience of over 30 years of incompetence and betrayal by Tory and Labour/Liberal Unionists, it is deeply worrying that the UK government will again have the fate of our fishing dependent communities in its hands.

The SNP Conference resolution fully supported the stance taken by our Scottish, Westminster and Euro MPs to date – namely, that references which would entrench the Common Fisheries Policy in the current draft constitution are unacceptable, and must be substantially amended in the final document.

Next June, 10 new Independent Member States will be electing MEPs. Even more landlocked states will be eligible to vote in the Council of Fisheries Ministers, while Scotland devolved cannot.

The Constitution debate provides an opportunity to highlight the advantages which Scotland would automatically benefit from with Independent status. With Independence we would be entitled to double our number of MEPs. Only independence brings the right to negotiate and vote in the Council of Ministers, and only Independent Member States have the right to nominate European Commissioners.

SNP CONFERENCE - VOTE OF CONFIDENCE

SNP MEP Ian Hudghton topped the poll in a delegate vote at the SNP Conference in Inverness, which ranked the Party's candidates for next year's European Parliamentary elections. Commenting afterwards Ian said:

"I am very grateful for the support given to me in the ballot, from all parts of Scotland, and I look forward to leading this strong team of SNP candidates for Europe."

"The main issues in next year's campaign will be about Scotland's lack of adequate representation in the EU. At present Scotland is working at half strength in the European Parliament compared with similar sized independent Member States, and we have no voting rights in the all-important Council of Ministers. Only Independence can bring to Scotland the basic rights enjoyed by full EU Members."



PLOCKTON PUPILS VISIT MEP

A 26 strong party of Modern Studies pupils and teachers from Plockton High School undertook a marathon journey - by bus, train and Rosyth Ferry - to Brussels early in October to visit the European Parliament.

Sponsored by Ian Hudghton MEP, the group was briefed on the complex relationships between the EU Institutions, and had the opportunity to quiz a panel of MEPs on key issues.

In September, Ian Hudghton visited Plockton (pictured above) to preview the Brussels trip, and take part in a series of discussions on European Union decision-making, and the pros and cons of different voting systems.

CAT AND DOG FUR TRADE PETITION

MEP Ian Hudghton carried an extra piece of "hand luggage" to Strasbourg in October. He received a 7,500 signature petition calling for a complete EU-wide ban on trade in cat and dog fur from Fraserburgh animal rights campaigner Sandra Edwards, who had asked the MEP to deliver it to EU Trade Commissioner Bolkestein.

NO-SHOW FINNIE LETS SCOTLAND DOWN

SNP Euro-MP Ian Hudghton has called on the Scottish Executive to demand that the Scottish Fisheries Minister lead the UK's negotiating team in this December's vital EU Fisheries Council. The call comes after the European Council published information showing that land-locked nations due to enter the EU - such as the Czech Republic and Slovakia - attended October's Fisheries Council, whilst Ross Finnie was absent. Mr Hudghton said:

"It beggars belief that countries such as the Czech Republic and Slovakia - who aren't even in the EU yet - can attend vital fisheries meetings, whilst Ross Finnie sits at home. Scotland's fishing industry is facing an unprecedented crisis as a direct result of EU/UK mismanagement - yet all we see is Scottish Executive inaction."

WEST COAST RESEARCH VISIT

Ian Hudghton took part in a recent EP Fisheries Committee delegation visit to the Oban area, including a fascinating insight into the research work, including in the field of aquaculture, being undertaken at the Marine Science establishment at Dunstaffnage.

MEP MEETS WITH CBI SCOTLAND

A representative group of CBI member organizations from Scotland visited Brussels early October to brief MEPs on issues of concern. Ian Hudghton spoke to the group on topics including working time regulations, and the potential impact of a proposed new Chemicals Directive.

IAN HUDGHTON'S DIARY

20-23 OCTOBER

Plenary Session, Strasbourg

24 OCTOBER

Visit Glaxo Smith-Kline, Montrose

26 OCTOBER

North Tayside SNP CA, Blairgowrie

28 OCTOBER

European Liaison Meeting, House of Commons, London

29 OCTOBER

Briefing meetings, Brussels

Dundee West SNP CA, Dundee

30 OCTOBER

Euro Election Planning mtg. SNP HQ, Edinburgh

1 NOVEMBER

War Games Society, Kirriemuir

3 NOVEMBER

Liaison meeting with Angus SNP Councillors

Budgets Committee, Brussels

4 NOVEMBER

Agriculture Committee, Brussels

5-6 NOVEMBER

Plenary Session, Brussels

8 NOVEMBER

SNP National Executive Committee, Edinburgh

10-14 NOVEMBER

Group Meetings and European Free Alliance General Assembly, Brussels

14 NOVEMBER

European Question Time, Paisley

15 NOVEMBER

SNP Campaigning and North East Regional Mtg., Montrose

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