

PRESS RELEASE

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COMMISSION IS “CYNICAL IN THE EXTREME” - MEP

SNP Euro MP Ian Hudghton today derided the European Commission saying its decision to withdraw penalties against France for its year-long illegal ban on British beef is “cynical in the extreme!” Mr Hudghton, along with Westminster colleague, Annabelle Ewing MP, raised questions over the illegal action earlier this year when Commissioner Byrne assured Mr Hudghton that the Court of Justice could award financial penalties against France.

Speaking from his Brussels office, the SNP member says the Commission’s decision to withdraw its threat of sanctions has made a mockery of European Court of Justice and created an outrageous precedent.

“The Commission has created a rogues market in which member states can simply choose which rules they want and which they don’t in the sure knowledge that they’ll escape any penalties. Just so long as they fall into line at the eleventh hour before the Court of Justice is asked to decide what reparation is due. What a lot of nonsense!

“France was found “guilty” as long ago as 13 December 2001. The case was cut and dried. Yet they have escaped the £100,000 per day fine because they lifted the ban just in time. If the level of fines weren’t set at the time the verdict was reached, why not? And what level of threat was issued if non-compliance followed? If this is justice, European Union style, then you can keep it!

“Either that, or, when rules don’t suit Scotland, then perhaps we should take a leaf out of France’s book and break the law for as long as we can get away with it!

“The UK Government’s response is what we’ve come to expect – rather pathetic hand-wringing, expressing regret etc, etc, etc, while our beef farmers continue to pick up the tab. Who’ll have to pick up the tab next time round? With the Commission’s cynical action, who knows who’ll be next in line unless swift action is taken to repair this crooked system of so-called justice. I have written to the Presidents of the Commission and the Court of Justice expressing my anger and asking them to comment.”

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