

# PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release – 20 March, 2002

Attn: NEWS DESKS & POLITICAL CORRESPONDENTS

## **LABOUR ATTACK ON SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT**

### **SNP EXPRESSES DISAPPOINTMENT AT SCOTS MEP'S VOTE**

SNP Euro MP Ian Hudghton MEP today expressed his disappointment after Scottish Labour MEP Catherine Stihler voted against a key amendment in an important European fisheries meeting. The amendment - which was tabled by the SNP's group in the European parliament - would have had the effect of requiring the parliament's President to inform the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Executive directly of important decisions taken. The Scottish Labour vote means that the President need now only inform Westminster. Mr Hudghton commented:

"I'm disappointed, but not altogether surprised, that Scottish Labour decided to vote against the interests of the Scottish Parliament. The SNP group's amendment would have brought the Scottish Parliament and, indeed, the Executive, that bit closer to the European decision making process; however, Scottish Labour are not interested in increasing Scotland's voice in Europe.

"Fisheries is a vital area of interest for Scotland's coastal communities. Around 60% of the UK's catches are landed in Scotland, so it's only right that the Scottish Parliament should take the lead in fisheries matters. Unfortunately, Ms Stihler is happy for London to call the shots. Jack McConnell has said that 'Ministers must do everything possible to raise Scotland's profile in the EU'. It's a pity that he can't depend on his own MEPs to give him a hand."

Speaking in Edinburgh, Shadow Spokesman on Europe Richard Lochhead MSP said:

"People in Scotland will be astonished to hear that Labour MEPs are working against the Scottish Parliament at European level. Labour in Scotland talk about how good the devolution settlement is, but their own colleagues are acting as wreckers elsewhere.

"There is no excuse for this shameful behaviour. Labour don't want Scotland to have a direct voice in Europe, and now they don't even want Scotland to hear directly from Europe."

#### Notes for editors

- The vote - which took place at today's Fisheries Committee meeting in Brussels - was on a draft report on multi-annual guidance programmes for fishing fleets.
- The amendment sought to change the original text of the report from:

"The European parliament instructs its President to forward its resolution to...the governments and parliaments of the Member States  
to

"The European parliament instructs its President to forward its resolution to...the governments and parliaments in the Member States

This would have had the effect of requiring the President to forward the resolution to the Scottish Parliament and Executive, as well as other "sub-state" parliaments.

- The SNP will continue to fight to bring the Scottish Parliament into the European Parliament's communication loop. Similar amendments will be tabled to forthcoming reports on the crucial CFP reform.