

6 February 2003

## HUDGHTON ISSUES STARK C.A.P. WARNING

Ian Hudghton, Member of the European Parliament and former Leader of Angus Council, is Guest Speaker at the Annual General Meeting of Sidlaw Branch of the Scottish National Party tonight.

In his speech, Mr Hudghton will report to members on his work in the European Parliament and will issue a stark warning to farmers to prepare themselves for the imminent overhaul of the Common Agricultural Policy. Citing the recent sell-out of Scottish fishermen by the UK Fisheries delegation in Brussels in December, Mr Hudghton will say it's time for Scotland to take her place in the Council of Ministers where crucial decisions which impact on our country are taken. In his speech the MEP will say:

"We need to start lobbying hard for Scotland's interests in the CAP talks and we need to start now. At stake is the future viability of Scotland's rural economy and you don't have to be Mystic Meg to predict that the negotiations will be just as fraught as those in the Fisheries Council at the turn of last year.

"It's no good complaining after the event. Anyone who still says we're better off as part of the UK, having seen how those dodgy, secret deals were done in the Fisheries Council in December must be deluded. Our fishermen lost out and so will our farmers and rural communities unless we sharpen up and see how such decisions are reached in the EU.

"Rest assured, I will fight hard for Scotland's interests within the European Parliament as I always do. But, don't forget that the ultimate decisions affecting Scotland's agricultural sector will not be taken by MEPs like me - they'll be taken by the Agriculture Minister from London, Margaret Beckett. The Scottish minister may be there, maybe not - it's in the gift of the London Minister whether they'll be allowed in the door.

"This is what we're up against. An SNP majority in the Scottish Parliament after the first of May would be a major step towards empowering Scotland to take the decisions needed to protect our rural communities through these difficult negotiations."

ENDS