



Germinal

THE BRUSSELS LABOUR INTERNATIONAL BRANCH NEWSLETTER

Looking forward, looking back

Belinda Pyke Chair, Brussels Labour

We are now well into 2006 and our AGM meeting has just taken place, following a rich twelve months of Branch activities, chronicled on an ongoing basis in *Germinal*.

Looking back

Twelve months ago, we looked forward to a third general election victory and indeed it was delivered. Undoubtedly a historic moment - yet, far from euphoria, the mood has been overshadowed by speculation about how long Tony Blair will remain in office. The difficulties the Party finds itself in now - whether on policy or on issues of ethics and integrity - put at risk the common purpose we need to show to stay in power.

Twelve months ago, we looked forward to a UK presidency. In July, the UK took over a more challenging agenda than most presidencies have had to face. We may have had some concerns during the presidency about the way it was being handled but the considered assessment at our last meeting was overall fairly positive.

And twelve months ago, we looked forward to a UK debate on the constitution, recognising that getting a yes vote in a referendum wouldn't be easy but that it provided the Party with a great opportunity to correct misperceptions about the European Union. We felt that the Branch could play a unique role by working through Party activists. We listened carefully to the lessons of sister parties who had held referenda - some successfully, some not so. But it was not to be. The constitution is - in effect - put to one side during a period of reflecting about how



Brussels Labour's assessment of the UK presidency was fairly positive

the EU institutions can connect better with the people of the EU.

The shelving of the referendum doesn't mean we should let up on our mission to explain the EU to activists back home. Our participation at the Spring Conference was such an occasion, both through the meeting we hosted and our interventions in other meetings as well as in contacts with other delegates. The potential value of Brussels Labour to the Party is increasingly being acknowledged - this was evident both from our meeting with the General Secretary before Christmas and from the public tribute which the Europe Minister paid to us at the Spring Conference.

Looking ahead

The communal elections in October are the opportunity for all of us to show that we are part of Belgian political life. At a time when many of us are losing the right to vote back home, we should value all the more that we do have the right to vote in our local elections. You have up to the end of July to register to vote and the elections are on Sunday 8 October. We will have a meeting about the elections nearer the time.

And returning to UK politics, we will build on the success of the meeting at the Spring Conference to host a meeting

at the main conference in late September in Manchester.

We will continue to work with the Party at the central level, building on the valuable meeting we had with the General Secretary a few months back. And we look forward to developing further our excellent links with the EPLP following the appointment of our member, Giampiero Alhadef, as their general secretary. And we will continue to offer our help to UK based branches of the party in developing their understanding of the European Union.

In all these contacts, rest assured: we will not fail to press the case for our/your voting rights.

As ever, the executive welcomes your suggestions for our meetings and other events: both on content and on format. The Question Time formula of our *Retrospective of the UK Presidency* attracted a lot of positive comments.

Above all it is you - the Branch - who are responsible for our achievements. Because of you, we attract great speakers, make powerful policy submissions, and can punch above our weight.



Communal elections take place in Belgium on 8 October 2006

Editorial

Welcome to this new edition of Germinal. 2006 is already proving to be a year full of activity, with plenty of branch meetings attracting high profile speakers, the annual John Fitzmaurice Memorial Lecture where Poul Nyrup Rasmussen MEP, President of the Party of European Socialists, spoke on *Building a Political Europe: the role of the PES*, another highly successful fringe event at this year's Party spring conference - this time on *After Britain's EU Presidency - what next for International Development?*, and a submission to a government consultation on eliminating world poverty.

The AGM has just taken place and the new executive is busy preparing an exciting calendar for the rest of the year. Articles on all these events - and more - can be found inside.

Last but not least, the next communal elections in Brussels will be taking place on Sunday 8 October - and did you realise you can vote? Details of how to go about registering as a voter can also be found inside.

Many thanks to all the contributors to this edition of Germinal and a particular thanks to David O'Leary for the design and formatting. Articles and suggestions for the next issue can be sent to the Editor at rachel.buchanan@skynet.be by the end of June.

Rachel Buchanan
Newsletter Editor

BRUSSELS LABOUR

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2006

The Brussels Labour AGM took place at "Arthur's" on 22 March and attracted a high level of participation from our members. Officers reported that the past year has been another year of quality meetings and events. To mention a particular highlight - in January 2006 Brussels Labour held the second annual John Fitzmaurice memorial lecture where President of the PES, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen MEP, gave the lecture on *"Building a political Europe: the role of the PES"* which went extremely well. An account of this lecture is included elsewhere in this issue.

Relations with the party are going from strength to strength. Members of the executive committee had the opportunity to meet Peter Watt, Secretary General of the Labour Party, in November 2005. The discussion was productive and the chair, Belinda Pyke, has since written to Peter inviting him to speak at one of our branch meetings.

Encouraged by last year's fringe event in Newcastle/Gateshead, Brussels Labour held another fringe meeting at the Spring Conference in Blackpool in February. The event on *After Britain's EU Presidency - What next for Europe and International Development?* was a great success and saw Brussels Labour working well with the Party (who assisted us with aspects of its practical organisation and publicity) and attracted an attendance of over 90 people. A full report on this meeting is also included in this issue.

Election of the new executive committee

The officers elected are Chair Belinda Pyke, Vice-Chair David Earnshaw, Secretary Sarah Millar and Treasurer David O'Leary. The Committee members are Rachel Buchanan, Frazer Clarke, Emma Eatwell, Keir Fitch, Stephen Kinsella and Emma Reynolds.

Auditors Mike Ridgeway and Jeremy Jennings were re-elected.

Joanna Maycock, who stood down from the executive, was thanked for all her hard work with the sister parties. Emma Reynolds hung up her calculator as Treasurer but is remaining on the executive.

Looking ahead

Members were encouraged to use the opportunity of the communal elections in October to show that Brussels Labour is part of Belgian political life. You have up to the end of July to register to vote and the elections are on Sunday 8 October.

The executive would welcome ideas for speakers for the third John Fitzmaurice memorial lecture which will be held in October 2006 and indeed suggestions for meetings and other events. Brussels Labour also hopes to host a meeting at the main conference in late September in Manchester.

EVENTS 2005-2006

20 April Catherine Stihler MEP
Prospects for a third term Labour Government

25 May Edith Mastenbroek MEP
The referenda on the European Constitution

15 June Philip Cordery,
Secretary General of the PES
The European Elections

13 July *Summer Social*
hosted by Maggie Coulthard and Peter Wragg (with Douglas Alexander MP, Minister for Europe)

21 September *Joint meeting with St Gilles PS*

19 October Jan Andersson MEP and Stephen Hughes MEP

Britain in Europe - sharing sovereignty to strengthen sovereignty

23 November *The John Fitzmaurice lecture was postponed*

7 December *Winter Social*
hosted by Stephen Kinsella and Alice Jolly

25 January *John Fitzmaurice Memorial Lecture: Poul Nyrup Rasmussen MEP, President of the PES*

Building a Political Europe: the role of the PES

11 February *Spring Conference (Blackpool) After Britain's EU presidency - What next for Europe and International Development?*

With Douglas Alexander MP, Minister for Europe; Richard Howitt MEP; Anne-Sophie Allarp, International Secretary of the Danish Social Democrats; Batisani Maswibillili, Chair of the Botswana Congress Party

22 February Jacki Davies (EPC), Giampi Alhadeff (Solidar), Tom Jenkins (ETUC) and Jan Marinus Wiersma MEP

Retrospective of the UK Presidency

Europe and development

Blackpool in February may sound more like a sentence for misbehaviour than somewhere to visit from choice, but Friday 11 February saw six members of Brussels Labour heading north for the illuminations - and for the Party's spring conference.

Unlike previous years, there was no separate European strand to the meeting - but instead EU themes were to be integrated into the local government and women's programmes - with sessions looking at the impact of the EU on local government and on particular women's policies (or so I understand - men were not allowed in to these sessions). In general, this approach worked well, and probably allowed some of the message of what we are up to in Brussels to filter further than usual.



(left to right) Richard Howitt MEP; Douglas Alexander MP, the Europe Minister; Belinda Pyke, Chair of Brussels Labour; Anne-Sophie Allarp, International Secretary of the Danish Social Democratic Party; Batisani Maswibilili, Chair of the Botswana Congress Party

Building on the success of the Newcastle/Gateshead spring conference where Brussels Labour hosted a fringe event for the first time, we had decided on a more ambitious approach this time - in the main conference hotel and at breakfast on Saturday. We were very pleased to have a distinguished panel to speak on *Europe and Development*, including **Douglas Alexander MP**, the Europe Minister, **Richard Howitt MEP**, **Anne-Sophie Allarp**, International Secretary of the Danish Social Democratic Party and **Batisani**

Maswibilili, Chair of the Botswana Congress Party.

Douglas opened by thanking Brussels Labour for organising the event - describing us as the Leviathan of International Labour! He then went on to explain the very real progress he thought had been achieved in 2005, by *Make Poverty History* and through the UK's EU and G8 Presidencies. But it was clear many challenges remained to ensure we could deliver on the Millennium Development Goals. He cited the reform of the EU sugar regime as an example of the cases where even generally welcome policy changes create new problems - here we need to ensure there are appropriate transition measures in place to protect the most vulnerable sugar producing nations.

Anne-Sophie noted the magnitude of the differences between rich Europe and the poorer parts of Africa - a girl born in Denmark today, for example, probably has a life expectancy approaching 100, will get 17 years of schooling and will have full control over her fertility. Her Botswanan sister by comparison is likely to die before 40, will only attend school for 7 years and will have no access to family planning. But important work could be done not only with large scale aid programmes, but also by working with individuals on the ground - for example, working with AIDS victims to help them regain some hope for their family's future.

She noted that gains in aid could unfortunately be reversed - the current government had cut aid expenditure from 1.0 to 0.8% of GNI. Others noted however that Denmark remained one of the highest per capita donors in the world.

Batisani explained that to see the true extent of poverty and need in Africa, it was vital to look beyond the headline economic statistics. Botswana's raw economic statistics may appear good, but the reality is that there is 35%



Rain from rain: Brussels Labour members acclimatising to Blackpool

unemployment and most raw materials are exported outside the country for processing. He asked for inter-party support within the socialist movement, especially on education for democracy.

Richard stressed the importance of the EU for development aid: he thought the EU's value had been amply demonstrated by its role in the Tsunami relief aid and its provision of assistance following the Kashmir earthquake. Without the EU, he doubted whether effective relief would have been sent. Furthermore, development aid is becoming internationalised, rather than simply relying on old colonial powers. But the new financial perspectives would result in a 20% cut, and there were difficulties where attempt were made to mix development aid with aid for other purposes or to impose in appropriate conditionality. A developing problem for the future is that several emerging economies are now seeking the same status as the least developed countries - which will obviously cause difficulties in providing the most appropriate support to the later.

A very active question and answer session followed the speakers' presentations.

Brussels Labour has now been invited to host an event at the main Party Conference at Manchester in September.

Keir Fitch

Responding to the 'no'



Michiel van Hulten, Chair of the Dutch Labour Party (PVDA), joined the Branch on 22 March to talk about how things have gone in The Netherlands since their referendum on the constitution. In particular he focused on what went wrong with the constitutional campaign, the perceptions of the Dutch on Europe and how the PVDA believe the EU can move on.

The 'No' vote was in large measure due to emotive fears of loss of national sovereignty and identity (symbolised by tangibles such as the constitution, the flag, the single currency and the anthem). There is a distrust of the EU institutions and an aversion to the 'travelling circus' of Strasbourg, MEP expenses etc. The introduction of the euro was a particular issue for the Dutch - and one which he felt was largely mismanaged by the government. Part of the problem also stemmed from anger that Germany and France weren't held to the Stability Pact when they transgressed its rules. While enlargement itself didn't play a huge role in the factors behind peoples voting, the 'big bang' of EU expansion to include 10 new members has had a

psychological impact.

The 'Yes' campaign was extremely fragmented and had a limited budget at its disposal, whereas the 'No' campaign was not only well financed but united and very convincing in its arguments. The campaign started late and the full text of the constitution was distributed - a bad move as it was not a good product to try to sell. The biggest problem was caused by the doctrine of supremacy of European law over national law. This has been the case for decades - developed through a series of ECJ rulings - but it was a major point taken up and played on by the 'No' camp.



A national debate on why people voted how they did has been launched and the PVDA commissioned a report on this. The main conclusion was that there is too much integration too fast, too many details are regulated from Brussels, and there is too much emphasis on the free market and not enough on Europe's social dimension. Moreover, further expansion of the EU is asking too much of people's ability to deal with change in terms of the inclusion of new countries. While this report hasn't been adopted, it marks a major change in how the EU is

viewed by the Dutch.

The PVDA want The Netherlands to pursue a pro-European pose as a country and they won't support a second vote on the constitution (nor propose it if in government next year) as they believe it would cause a major political crisis. They hold the view that existing European policies need to be reformed, in particular the CAP and the structural funds. Red tape in Brussels needs to be reviewed, and there is a need to decentralise and reduce regulation, as well as reform existing rules of procedure in the Council and the Parliament. For instance MEP workloads - where they are expected to vote on 200 amendments a day - need to be made more manageable. There is also a need for a greater exchange with national administrations and the private sector as there is a danger that people become out of touch with the national dimension.

At that point it would be the time to return to the constitutional debate, to tidy up the present treaty and to create new powers while modernising and demonstrating the EU's relevance. The strength of the EU should be where it needs to be - in fighting Europe's corner on the world stage, in military intervention, and in standing up for workers' and migrants' rights.

A lively discussion followed.

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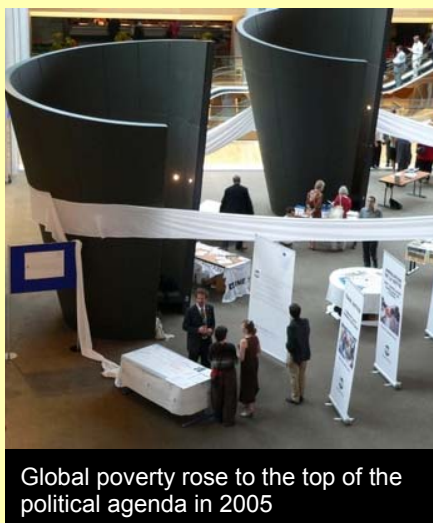
Earlier this month Brussels Labour submitted a contribution to the Department for International Development's consultative document on Eliminating World Poverty, following discussions within an informal working group of several of our members.

We focused our comments on the role of the European Union in eliminating poverty, and more specifically the role of the UK within the EU.

If you would like a copy of our contribution, please contact the Secretary at secretary@brusselslabour.org

Brussels Labour includes members working both for the European institutions and for development organisations and as such we have a close interest in development issues. At our fringe meeting at the Spring Conference on the theme of *After the UK Presidency of the EU: what next for Europe and International Development* there was a broad consensus that a response to the challenge of world poverty relief needs to maximise the important role of the European Union.

This consultation document, while brief, raised a number of important issues and we focused our comments on the role of the European Union in eliminating poverty and, more specifically, the role of the UK within the EU.



Global poverty rose to the top of the political agenda in 2005

The EU provides 55% of global ODA, and 20% of this - or €6.9 billion - is managed by the EC. The EU's role in promoting key pillars of the Paris declaration on Aid Effectiveness is obvious especially in terms of promoting harmonisation and co-ordination of aid programming and management. In addition, the EC's key role in delivering other policy areas which impact on development are clear: trade and agriculture in particular, but increasingly also issues such as migration, peace, security etc.

Many in the UK tend to disparage the EU's role and capacity. While there has undoubtedly been good reason to be critical in the past, it is clear that the EU is a major player in this scene and, moreover, that considerable progress has been made in improving delivery. The EC itself can and does act as a progressive force in development, leading the way for many other Member States which still have progress to make in improving aid quality. The UK clearly has a strong role to play in driving the EU in the right direction, not allowing it to be diverted from pursuing a broadly progressive path, especially as the EU's enlargement brings in States with little or no experience or political will to act on international poverty.

In addition, when it comes to the role of multilateral institutions, the EU clearly must be set apart from others such as G8, IMF, World Bank. While in the field of international development improvements could be made to the EU's transparency, and accountability, it is still in a different league of legitimacy when compared to other multi-laterals. In addition, the UK's influence on the EU's role in world seems to be more effective here than in other fora where the US is involved.

It is hoped that the White Paper will give a much greater prominence to the EU role.

Joanna Maycock and Belinda Pyke

BELGIAN

LOCAL ELECTIONS

SUNDAY 8 OCTOBER

Belgian local elections – don't miss your chance to vote!

The next communal elections in Brussels will take place on Sunday 8 October. We are all concerned with what's happening in Europe but we mustn't forget that local politics - and those who exercise it - directly affects our daily lives and the quality of life and local services in our neighbourhoods.

Did you realise you can vote? Electoral law in Belgium recognises the right of all European citizens to vote in - and stand for - local election and casting your vote could make all the difference in your commune. But you have to register. If you haven't done so yet, then don't delay! (If you registered for the 2000 elections, then you don't need to do so again.)

Brussels Labour strongly urges you to take up this opportunity to support the socialist candidates in the Brussels communes, who will also include candidates from other Member States including - in Woluwe St Pierre - the Brussels Labour Chair. The PS campaign is based on the theme '*Ma Commune au Quotidien*' and you can follow it on:

www.ps.be/index.cfm?R_ID=5873888&Content_ID=-8671291

The registration form must be submitted by 31 July 2006 and copies are available at the electoral registration service (service électoral) in your commune, with specific details provided on their websites. The Brussels Labour Secretary can also provide you with a copy of the registration form.

UK PRESIDENCY OF THE EU 2005

Britain at the helm: success or failure?

The intention of this meeting was to have a frank exchange of views on the views of informed stakeholders on the UK presidency. We were privileged to have 4 distinguished speakers: Giampi Alhadeff (Secretary General of SOLIDAR, and soon to be Secretary General of the EPLP), Jacki Davis (Head of Communications at the European Policy Centre), Tom Jenkins from the ETUC and Jan Marinus Wiersma MEP from the EP socialist group, who spoke to a packed audience in Arthur's.

Parliament at the beginning of the Presidency, general distrust of the UK in the EC and the fact that the British media see their role as always to play opposition to the government. Finally, while the fudge on the constitution suited everyone, many still found it convenient to criticise the UK for the lack of progress.

The reality was very different - the UK had managed to get agreement to launching accession talks with Turkey (though the long term political cost may be high) and had got a deal on the EC Budget, including a commitment to negotiate on CAP reform. Even the Hampton Court summit achieved more than expected. The UK probably damaged itself by exaggerating its achievements, so that cynicism hid the real successes.

Tom Jenkins was less optimistic - he felt that the spoof on the UK Presidency logo (featuring swans dying of bird flu) was more apposite! Certainly, many of the "successes" of the Presidency, such as REACH and the budget deal, left a bitter taste. The background was of course the "no votes" in France and the Netherlands - though even these were the fault of the UK through effectively forcing the French to have a referendum.

Jacki noted that the UK press had written off the Presidency as a failure very rapidly - and others had quickly picked up the same message. This was because expectations had been raised too high by Blair's speech in the



Member States eventually reached an accord on the EU's financial perspectives

Such progress as was achieved in the Presidency was largely the result of the arrival of Angela Merkel - especially on the budget. Hampton Court also resulted in progress in some areas - for example, in energy policy (though here Benelux, France and Germany were now forging their own caucus), the creation of a "Euro MIT", and possibly the globalisation fund, though this was contested even within the Commission.

Tom also noted Gordon Brown's deep lack of commitment to the Presidency - when the Commission visited London, he chose to attend the UNISON conference rather than meet them, and his Mansion House speech showed no



Energy policy moved up the EU agenda under the UK presidency

THE PANEL



Jacki Davis
Head of Communications,
European Policy Centre



Tom Jenkins
External Relations
Coordinator, ETUC



Giampi Alhadeff
Secretary General,
Solidar



Jan Marinus Wiersma
Dutch Member of the
European Parliament

conception of Europe beyond 25 competing states. Thus overall the Presidency had been good for Blair, but bad for the UK.

Giampi noted that the UK had been dealt a very bad hand for the Presidency – it had to deal with the consequence of the two “no votes”, and to try to negotiate its own rebate. More generally, he thought the results showed the severe limitations of the rotating presidency model.

But on substance some good was done. On the development agenda, many NGOs would complain that nothing was ever good enough, and certainly the Social Platform NGOs had established seven tests and decided all had been failed. But Ministers had worked hard in the run up to the G8 and EU presidencies, and Gareth Evans and Hillary Benn had been very open with development NGOs about the real possibilities. The real test would be that there would be much less action by NGOs in 2006 since so much was



The first reading of REACH was concluded after an intense lobbying campaign



The British presidency pushed hard in October for an opening of accession talks with Turkey

achieved in 2005 - for example, the commitment to raise aid to 0.7% of GDP, and debt relief. Even the criticism of the Doha Round and Hong Kong was overdone - the negotiation was extremely difficult, and it was unrealistic to expect that something all countries would regard as a good deal would be identified at this stage. So on balance, Giampi concluded that the UK Presidency, while not brilliant, had certainly been okay.

Jan Marinus noted cynically that the UK Presidency paid a heavy price through having to deal with the Dutch and French rejection of the Constitution – but extracted its revenge by reducing The Netherlands budget rebate by €1 bn! He felt that expectations of the presidency had been too big – while Blair made a very good opening speech, and it was important to argue hard that spending 50% of the EU budget on agriculture was not credible, he doubted that the Presidency realised how difficult change really was to achieve. It was important that a deal on

the financial perspectives had been reached, but in reality more money was needed.

Other high points of the Presidency had been the deal on data retention, brokered by Charles Clarke through transferring the matter to first pillar – a vital precedent for the EP. It had also been vital for the UK to press for the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey - the subsequent tensions between Europe and the Muslim world would have been far worse otherwise.

So in conclusion, he considered the presidency had done a good job, especially on the financial perspectives: for the future it was important to open up a debate on fundamental questions of the Union's future.

A lively debate followed - but the consensus of members present was that the UK presidency had, on balance, been a success.

Keir Fitch

THE SECOND JOHN FITZMAURICE MEMORIAL LECTURE

POUL NYRUP RASMUSSEN

PRESIDENT, PARTY OF EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS



Building a political Europe: the role of the PES

Brussels Labour members and friends gathered on a cold January evening at “The Centre” (kindly hosted by Paul Adamson) to attend the second John Fitzmaurice Memorial Lecture.

Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, President of the Party of European Socialists, paid tribute to the life and work of John Fitzmaurice. Although Poul did not have the opportunity to meet John, he felt a close connection to him due to their mutual interest in Danish and European politics. Poul also paid tributes to two colleagues who we have recently lost and who are deeply missed: Robin Cook (his predecessor as PES President) and Phillip Whitehead.

By means of introduction, Poul talked the audience through recent developments of the Party of European Socialists, from the last Congress at which he was elected in the first contested Presidency election of the party’s history, through to the new European political party statute granting European parties legal and financial independence and his ambitions for making the PES a major player at EU level.

Drawing on his experience as Prime Minister of Denmark (1993 – 2001), Poul underlined the difficulty and the importance of explaining to people how the EU is relevant to their everyday concerns. With good humour, he summed up his European referenda experience – won two, lost two!

Against the backdrop of last year’s

“no” votes in France and the Netherlands against the EU Constitutional Treaty, Poul explained his vision of greater coherence at local, regional, national and European level. Decisions at European level must be seen as additional tools to fight for the same objectives. The EU would then be seen as an arena which provides solutions to problems. Therefore, politicising Europe is paramount, providing voters with different competing visions of the EU, that is to say offering them “a political choice”. This must involve different visions from European political parties from across the political spectrum.

“ Politicising Europe is paramount – different visions of Europe must be offered, across the political spectrum ”

Referring to some of the key ambitions and projects of the PES, Poul mentioned the launch of “PES Activists” on Europe day (9 May) this year: which is an exciting, pioneering project in which individual members of any one of the 33 PES member parties (including the Labour Party) can become involved in PES activities.

The major political project in preparation for the PES Congress in November 2006 is the New Social Europe initiative which, Poul explained, will provide a roadmap to

provide coherent answers to the opportunities and challenges of globalisation in the 21st century, underpinned by common guiding principles.

In this wide-ranging lecture, Poul also presented the PES Growth and Investment Strategy (agreed by PES prime ministers at their meeting on the eve of the Hampton Court Summit, hosted by Tony Blair at Downing Street) which calls for a co-ordinated investment across the EU in key areas, such as active labour market policies, childcare and research and development.

The ensuing discussion included a series of questions and answers about the services directive, which most memorably elicited a heated exchange with a former member of the Bolkestein cabinet.

A thought-provoking evening of political discourse and debate warmed our hearts and minds on that cold winter’s night. The next John Fitzmaurice Memorial Lecture has a hard act to follow after Neil Kinnock’s passionate inaugural lecture (to the backdrop of thunder and lightning) and Poul Nyrup Rasmussen’s compelling vision of a newly politicised Europe.

Emma Reynolds

As with the previous lecture, a copy of the text was sent to John’s mother, Ilse, who lives in Dorset and she has written to express her thanks to Brussels Labour for organising these lectures.

OBITUARY

Phillip Whitehead

1937-2005



Phillip Whitehead, who died suddenly on 31 December 2005, was in many ways an ideal politician: humane, energetic, principled, knowledgeable and unpretentious. That he never rose to higher office than shadow spokesman for the arts and higher education is perhaps testament to these qualities - coupled with the coincidence of what should have been the best years of his Westminster career with Labour's dark era of the early 1980s.

Born in Matlock Bath in 1937 to a teenage mother, he was adopted in nearby Rowsley, where he lived until his death. Yet from this difficult start in life, he excelled at school and won a scholarship to Oxford, where he became president of the Union.

It was to the arts that he first turned: at the BBC, where he met his wife, Christine, with whom he would have three children; then at ITV, where he won a Guild of Television Producers Award for Factual Programmes for This Week in 1969, and an Emmy for *The World at War* in 1974. Later series on the Kennedys, the Windsors, Stalin and, in 2005, Catherine the Great, all won critical acclaim. As a parliamentarian, he was also a leading light on the Annan committee that led to the setting-up of Channel 4, and brought

technical expertise and support to the campaign for televising parliamentary proceedings.

In parallel, his political career brought him, via a general election defeat in West Derbyshire in 1966, to become Labour MP for Derby North, a position he held from 1970 until the party's electoral collapse in 1983. He played a leading progressive role in Parliament, piloting successfully his own bill on vasectomy and co-sponsoring the Children's Bill, which gave adopted children the right to seek their biological parents; he also helped instigate laws on police complaints and family planning. His work at Westminster typified the approach that he would later bring to the European Parliament: focusing on tolerance and protection of the vulnerable, and of working across party-political lines. His concern for the vulnerable in the wider world was deep; he was awarded the Polish Solidarity medal by Lech Walesa in November 2005 in recognition of his long-standing support for the movement.

It was in the heady, anti-Common Market atmosphere of the Labour Party in the 1970s that Phillip became a passionate pro-European, and followed Edward Heath's Conservatives into the 'aye' lobby when voting on accession to the EEC. His support for the Common Market brought troubles in Westminster and his constituency, but he held firm to his principles; not only as a supporter of the European project, but also as a member of the Labour Party when many of his political friends left for the SDP. That Phillip did not join them was a major disappointment to the new party.

Having already served as a member of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly in the 1970s, he was filming in the United States in 1992 when he was approached about returning full-time to politics as a Member of the European Parliament. He was returned in 1994 as MEP for Derbyshire and East Staffordshire. His work centred on



Phillip received the Polish Solidarity medal from Lech Walesa in November 2005

another field: consumer protection and food safety (he had been Chairman of the Consumers' Association - now Which? - since 1990). Phillip was responsible for a number of parliamentary reports on the EU's multiannual programmes on consumer policy, co-drafted a report that would lead to a ban on a range of unfair commercial practices, and was Parliament's rapporteur on the creation of the European Food Safety Authority. His views on media concentration and audiovisual policy were respected and welcomed by his colleagues; he worked hard to protect the vulnerable, notably children, from potential dangers, including those from the internet.

Phillip achieved the distinction of being popular

OBITUARY Phillip Whitehead 1937-2005

9 > within his own group (he was chair of the European Parliamentary Labour Party from 1999 to 2004) and across the political divide - a credit to his wit and enthusiasm, and to the encouragement he gave to many younger MEPs - notably those from the countries that joined the European Union in 2004. This became most evident during his chairmanship of the European

Parliament Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection. His deft touch, warm humour and political guidance helped to calm frayed tempers during discussions on the Services Directive, and quickly earned him the respect and trust of the committee members and staff.

Yet, for all his achievements in politics and the arts, Phillip's best qualities were

more down-to-earth: his love for his family; the way he cared for his staff; his sense of duty towards his constituents; his joy and pride in his village and home county; his warmth and humour. It is for these reasons that he is sorely missed by his family, friends and colleagues.

David O'Leary

TRIBUTES Phillip Whitehead 1937-2005**Arlene McCarthy MEP**

Chair, European Parliament Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection

I was shocked and saddened at the untimely death of Phillip - a dear colleague and friend - on 31 December 2005. I am myself an MEP because of Phillip's support of me as a young woman 12 years ago, supporting and advising me on running for selection and election to the European Parliament.

He was supportive of me, as a woman in politics, long before it was fashionable to support women and even before the internal rules changed in our Party. Phillip had immense influence on my parliamentary career. I became an MEP because of him and now I take up the Chair of the Internal Market and

Consumer Protection Committee (IMCO), due to his premature death.

Phillip had a very special blend of wit, wisdom and experience which made him an effective and respected Chair. This earned him the trust and confidence of his colleagues.

He had great achievements in his career, both as a politician and as a broadcaster and producer.

He was a modest man and I think he would have been genuinely surprised and embarrassed to have seen all the tributes towards him in the British and European newspapers.

Working alongside him for the last 18 months, I continually learnt from him through observing him in his role as Chair.

I keep a photograph of him in my office to remind me of how he handled his role as Chair and his reputation, which I am challenged to live up to.

In IMCO, we all owe it to Phillip's memory to maintain the committees' strong profile through raising the key issues which matter to consumer and citizens, and to work towards positive progress in the internal market.

**Gary Tittley MEP**

Leader, European Parliamentary Labour Party

The death of Phillip Whitehead on New Year's Eve came as a great shock to us all. He was a man of many talents. He rose from humble beginnings to become an award-winning television producer, a highly regarded MP and frontbench spokesperson on education at Westminster and a formidable chair of the internal market and consumer protection committee in the European Parliament.

Yes indeed, the sheer range of Phillip's abilities and the enormity of his achievements was quite simply breathtaking. In this tribute, though, I intend to focus on the contribution he made to politics.

Throughout his political career, he was committed to improving the lives of his constituents. Despite all his many

achievements, he never ever lost his zeal for fighting on behalf of those less able to fight for themselves.

He was a committed European, even in the days when such a view was neither fashionable nor popular in the Labour Party. I was always struck by the energy and determination he put into arguing the pro-European case at every opportunity. Many was the time that after dining together, I had gone off to bed while he had returned to his office to write his latest pro-European article.

Phillip was a highly effective parliamentarian, able to grasp the complex detail of legislation and identify the key issues. I shall forever associate him in my mind with the battle over food supplements. No matter how much the lobbyists bombarded us, there was always a detailed but clear briefing from Phillip readily to hand.

His wisdom, open-mindedness and sense of fair play won him the respect of all sides in the European Parliament and contributed to his effectiveness as a parliamentarian. For so long too, he was the backbone of the Labour group, offering wise counsel whenever needed, supporting our activities and contributing massively to our debates.

More than anything else, though, I shall remember him as a dear friend, ever willing to listen, support and guide. As Leader, I relied very heavily on Phillip's knowledge, wisdom and judgement.

I will treasure the last Christmas card from him. In typically concise fashion, he had written in it a wonderful message of encouragement and friendship. My life is richer for having known him. It is emptier now.

EPLP

**NEW DEPUTY LEADER:
CONGRATULATIONS TO RICHARD CORBETT**



Richard Corbett, Labour MEP for Yorkshire and the Humber, was elected on 7 March as deputy leader of the 19 Labour MEPs, following Catherine Stihler's resignation before taking maternity leave.

Commenting on his election, Richard said "I'm delighted to have been elected deputy leader of the Labour MEPs. It is a privilege to gain the support of my parliamentary colleagues". In his new role, he will advise the EPLP Leader,

manage staff and will be responsible for his Labour MEP colleagues complying with European Parliamentary procedure.

Richard is spokesperson for the Labour MEPs and the Socialist Group on constitutional affairs and is a member of the European Parliament's Constitutional Affairs Committee. He is also on the Civil Liberties, Justice, and Home Affairs Committee, and chairs the Labour Movement for Europe MEPs' Group.

Brussels Labour wish him all the best in his new role.

NOTICEBOARD

**UPCOMING EVENTS
IN BRUSSELS**



Wanna be a PES activist? At lunchtime on 8 May the PES will hold a launch event at their headquarters (98 rue de Trone,

Brussels). Watch this Space!
www.pes.org

The French and German Young Socialists invite all European Young Socialists to a get-together in Brussels on 20 April at 7.30 p.m. in the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, (Rue du Taciturne 38 (close to Rue Stevin)).



BRUSSELS LABOUR ON THE INTERNET

WEBSITE WIZARDS WELCOME!

A new website is in the early stages of development. If there are any web wizards in the Branch who would like to help us create our new site, keep it up to date and make it more interactive, please get in touch - your assistance would be valued!

If you are interested in helping us out - whether with design or with the routine tasks of uploading documents and photographs - please contact the secretary at secretary@brusselslabour.org.



"Brussels meets Europe" with Martin Schulz MEP, President of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament and Pascal Smet, Belgian Minister for Mobility and Public Works (SPD Brussels and Sp.a Etterbeek joint meeting), 25 April 7.30 p.m., Etterbeek Town Hall, 113-115 Avenue d'Auderghem.

Debate on « *citoyen bruxellois, citoyen européen!* » on 27 April at 8 p.m. with speakers including Belgian members of parliament at the École Européenne de Bruxelles III, Boulevard du Triomphe 135 - 1050 Brussels. Drinks provided afterwards.

To register contact Bureau de Liaison Bruxelles-Europe, tél : 02/234.57.50 - fax : 02/280.03.86, email: ygall@blbe.irisnet.be

DIARY DATES 2006

**WED
26
APR**

**Brussels Labour
Pub Quiz**
The Staff, rue de Trèves
7.30 p.m.

**WED
20
SEP**

**Branch meeting:
Belgian local
elections**

**WED
31
MAY**

**Branch meeting
(speaker to be
confirmed)**

**SUN
8
OCT**

**Belgian local
elections**

**WED
21
JUN**

**Branch meeting
(speaker to be
confirmed)**

**WED
18
OCT**

**John Fitzmaurice
Memorial Lecture**

**WED
12
JUL**

Summer Social
*Hosted by Maggie
Coulthard and Peter
Wragg*

The wider world

All Labour International (LI) members should have received the Annual Report at the beginning of the year. The annual report is part of the efforts being made by LICC (Labour International Co-ordinating Committee) to provide a better and more proactive service to both LI members and the Party. The annual report is sent to all current LI members with information about what is happening in and around LI and LICC.

One of Labour International's main concerns has been declining membership of LI. Whilst LI hasn't experienced the steep downward trend in membership experienced by the national party, it has decided to take a number of measures to try to increase membership and improve membership involvement.



Labour International is using the international press in order to reach a wider audience

At the beginning of the year we placed a series of three advertisements in The Guardian

Weekly. The Guardian Weekly has an international readership of over 2.5 million people, aimed at an expatriot audience in all parts of the world. We haven't yet measured the success of this initiative, but if found to be successful, we will continue to advertise in this way.

LICC members have also committed themselves to encouraging members in different countries to establish branches or local groups. I recently made contact with a member who was formerly involved in an active group in the Paris area, with the use of the Maliniak Fund* we were able to support him in placing an ad in a local well-read ex-pat magazine. The group has since had a meeting and has attracted interest from new members.

Rob Navin, who is a member of LICC based in New York, is managing a Country Correspondents Network. This is for LI members who are able to provide the Party, the Parliamentary Labour Party, the media and others with reports and analysis from around the world written from a Party perspective and with expert knowledge. It will also assist the International Department of the Labour Party, as required, and it gives members an opportunity to make a contribution to the international understanding of the Party.

Links with Labour Party headquarters have increased dramatically over the last two years. The International Office have welcomed the Country Correspondent Network, have

* The Maliniak bequest provides for financial support to be given to support the development of local LI groups.



Labour International will hold its spring meeting in Rome at the beginning of May

helped us a great deal with our membership lists, and have provided us with a link 'LI' Member of Parliament.

Tim Clapham, Chair of LI, has successfully forged links with enthusiastic members in Italy, and we will be holding our Spring meeting in Rome at the beginning of May. If you have any issues that you would like us to raise at this meeting, please let me know and I will be happy to pass them on. If you would like to find out more about Labour International and our work on Overseas Voting Rights please visit the website at www.labourint.org.uk.

**PLAY A ROLE IN
LABOUR
INTERNATIONAL**

Catherine Feore has informed us that, for work reasons, she will be standing down as a member of Labour International's Co-ordinating Committee with effect from 30 June 2006. The Committee has invited Brussels Labour to propose a replacement, preferably a woman to maintain the gender balance on the Committee. If you are an LI member and would be interested, please contact secretary@brusselslabour.org by 10 May.