

## **Strasbourg Round-Up**

### **Fond Farewell**

It was time for Gary to bid a fond farewell to the European Parliament, as he attended his final full Strasbourg session before standing down at the European Elections on 4<sup>th</sup> June. He has served as an MEP firstly for Greater Manchester West and subsequently the whole of the North West Region since 1989, including 6 years as Labour's Leader in Europe. Gary will be best remembered for his role in spearheading the enlargement of the EU. Not for nothing is he fondly known as "the Godfather" in Finland and was granted their equivalent of a knighthood, as well as similar awards from Austria and Lithuania.

Speaking at the end of a highly emotional week, Gary said: "I certainly won't miss the trip to Strasbourg each month - it's been the bane of my life for the last 20 years. But I will miss the buzz of the place, and most importantly the close friendships that I have built up with my Labour colleagues as we battled away trying to make life better for our constituents.

### **Economic Recovery Plan**

With the world still struggling through recession, the European Union is doing its bit to help claw its way towards recovery. This month in Strasbourg, MEPs agreed to a €5 billion plan designed to create jobs as well as building crucial infrastructure which will have long term benefits for the European economy.

The projects to be funded include improving energy interconnections, boosting investment in carbon capture and storage plants and providing broadband access to more areas. Working closely with the UK government, Gary helped to secure a crucial €500 million for the UK. After the vote, he said: "This money is just what the doctor ordered. It will help to create the jobs, growth and security of energy supply that we so desperately need."

### **Capital Requirements Directive**

Whilst the European Economic Recovery Plan is designed to deal with the impact of the current recession, the Parliament has also been working on ways to avoid a similar crisis in the future. This month in Strasbourg MEPs voted on a series of measures designed to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of bank supervision and to improve risk management. Since so many banks are interdependent, these new rules will improve cooperation between national authorities so that any problems can be spotted earlier, hopefully preventing them spreading to other countries.

### **Seals**

In what was described as a "victory for people power", MEPs finally managed to secure a ban on the trade in seal products this month in Strasbourg. The campaign to outlaw the trade began years ago and initially led to a ban on killing very young seal pups. A European Parliament Written Declaration in 2006 and further vigorous campaigning by animal welfare groups across the EU led to the proposal for a complete ban on the trade. The battle continued right up to the final whistle, as agreement with member states was only reached just in time for the vote to take place before the European Parliament broke up for the European Elections.

### **Telecoms**

With the internet now part and parcel of most people's every day lives, maintaining access to it is crucial. This month in Strasbourg MEPs voted on the Telecoms Package, which is designed to

update existing rules, in view of the lightning fast pace of innovation and the sector's huge growth. Unfortunately, these new rules created major confusion, resulting in hundreds of constituents approaching Gary, concerned that their access to the internet might be limited or cut off altogether. The Parliament voted to safeguard users' rights by ensuring that a court ruling had to be in place first.

This amendment, though, was not part of the deal struck with member states' governments, so the proposals will have to be debated again after the elections. Consequently, for now, everything has been left on ice. Speaking after the vote, Gary said: "MEPs have listened to people's concerns. Now the negotiations will be taken forward to find the best solution. The right balance needs to be struck – both citizens' rights and the law must be upheld."

## **Animal Experiments**

Carrying out scientific testing on animals is always a highly emotive issue. This month in Strasbourg Labour MEPs trod a carefully chosen path between setting the highest standards for animal welfare, whilst allowing scientists to continue with crucial research, which could relieve suffering from debilitating diseases and save lives. In the final vote, the European Parliament adopted provisions to ban the use of great apes, which are threatened with extinction and also to carry out studies into the impact of banning the use of wild animals, as opposed to those bred in laboratories.

However, it was agreed that tests could still be carried on other non-human primates to help find treatments for a wide range of diseases including cancer, Alzheimer's and Multiple Sclerosis. Welcoming the vote, Gary said: "In the long run, we should be looking for research methods which do not involve animal testing at all. In the meantime, we should have the highest standards of animal welfare whilst enabling scientists to find cures for debilitating diseases."

## **And Finally...**

*"For those whose cares have been our concern, the work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives and the dream shall never die."* Those words spoken by Edward Kennedy in 1980 when he withdrew from the U.S. Presidential race have been the inspiration for Gary Titley as he prepares to stand down from the European Parliament.

Gary is committed now to work on the campaign leading up to June 4<sup>th</sup> and to continue to be an active party member beyond. Gary said: "These European Elections are vital. We must get Theresa Griffin elected. She is an outstanding candidate. It will be close though and every vote will count. Furthermore, the prospect of the BNP winning a seat is too horrific to contemplate. Winning will give them a platform and the finance to spread their destructive creed."

***"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing".***

**Gary Titley MEP**

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