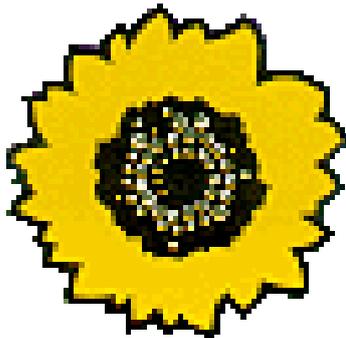


<http://lipietz.net/Very-encouraging-to-see-the-Greens-launch-the-first-European-political-party>

Rome

"Very encouraging to see the Greens launch the first European political party"

- Vie publique - Alain Lipietz et les Verts -



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John Monks is General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (Confédération européenne des syndicats).

At a time when democratic governments are bending to nationalistic forces on the migration question in particular, we need to consider areas of mutual support. The whole concept of Europe this year of reunification is at risk from mounting xenophobia caused by high unemployment, sluggish growth and racism. It is therefore very encouraging to see the Greens launch the first European political party. This is a splendid, positive signal to the rest ! And a defiant gesture of contempt to the eurosceptics in all the countries of Europe.

In the 7 months in this job after having replaced Emilio Gabaglio who is here today, the Constitutional debate has become deadlocked, the Stability and Growth Pact is in trouble and I have lost my Social Affairs Commissioner to Greek politics. It is not, I think, all the ETUC's fault.

I should pay tribute at the outset to the work of Theo Bouwman with whom I have kept in close contact for the past six months. He has been a pillar of strength and support as we and others have struggled to keep the social pillar alive in the face of the current emphasis in Europe on competitiveness, an emphasis confirmed at this week's trilateral meeting between the leaders of France, Germany and the UK.

And that's my starting point. In the pursuit of competitiveness, which is of course important, there is a present and future danger that social policy and sustainable development will be relegated even more than has been the case since the Lisbon decisions were taken.

If the three countries get their way with a new post of a pro-business, anti-red tape Vice-President in the new Commission, superintending no doubt the social affairs and environmental portfolios, that would be a bleak prospect for those of us who believe that economic growth must be accompanied by social progress and that it must be on a sustainable basis.

This is not raising the alarm unnecessarily. The Irish Prime Minister, who holds the Presidency, attended an ETUC and NGO forum on the environment in Dublin on February 2. We were pleased to see him and also by many of his remarks but we were alarmed at some other remarks to the Press to the effect that there has been too much emphasis on sustainable development since Lisbon to the detriment of Europe's economic growth. Did I miss something ?

It is wholly wrong to present both social policy and sustainable development as job destructive. It is true that there has to be hard decisions about whether to close down unscrupulous employers who treat workers below accepted standards or who damage environmental standards.

But it is equally true that jobs in the future, sustainable jobs, are much more likely to be created in industries which improve the environment. We will not face competition in this area from that new workshop of the world, China, for the foreseeable future, as we face it now on many staple products.

So, I am calling for an alliance on this, between the ETUC, the European Greens, civil society and other allies to prevent Europe from being swamped by an over-emphasis on business and carelessness with social dialogue and environmental standards.

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That, after all, is the American model, now being admired by many in prominent business and political circles. Add to that the USA Government's hostility to the Kyoto process and you can see that it poses a grave threat to European social values and environmental standards.

I also call today for a broadly based alliance to reflect our concerns adequately in the new European Constitution and I am grateful for the work of Johannes Voggenhuber alongside Emilio Gabaglio.

I was generally pleased by the progress made in the Convention on both social and environmental matters. We could have done with more qualified majority voting. We need a Part III of the Treaty which fully reflects Part I and the aspirations referred to there.

But this is the best we are going to get. The nation states won't improve it. They will weaken it. That's why we must fight for a Constitution based on the Convention, as Joschka Fischer argued yesterday. We have a Day of Action on April 2 -3 to ram this point home - a Europe of high social and environmental standards.

And of course, we do need a new constitution. The existing treaties are not an adequate basis for operating a Europe of 25 nations. Without a new Constitution, there is a danger of inaction and decay.

And let's be clear. Who would benefit from delay ? Companies would not be affected. The big deals and restructurings would go on, as would reliance on some products and practices which damage the environment.

What would stop without an adequate constitution is the impetus for new social and environment standards.

Historically, there has been no shortage of tension between the Green Movement and the Trade Union Movement. And despite the common challenge we face, there are undoubted conflicts of interest in areas like energy, civil air transport and currently in chemicals.

But because there can be arguments, that should not detract from our scope for common action and common causes. We should reinforce each other in the quest for a clean, sustainable, full employment Europe - and let's do that as we face the future together.

PS:

[See the context.](#)