

# Resistance

## 'THE PEOPLE SAY



### - but what next?'

On 29.5.05, the French referendum rejected the European Constitution by 55%-45%. As in the Netherlands, both turnout and margin were higher than expected. The heavy rejection of European integration sent shock waves across Europe.

Some pointed out the personal unpopularity of President Chirac and a reaction against high unemployment, but France has been both following and *driving* EU policy. Others noted a reaction against the idea of Turkey joining the EU. There is no *specific* move to this in the Constitution, but membership has always been open to 'European nations' and the EU has encouraged Turkey's.

Some claimed it was public opposition to the 'neo-liberal economics' in the Constitution. However, the BBC's Paul Reynolds gave a well-reasoned report<sup>1</sup> on how **"The problem... is that in many key areas the constitutional treaty essentially repeats existing policy"**. (You could argue that the French were effectively rejecting the EU).



Germany's *Suddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper<sup>2</sup> spoke of the feeling of the EU as "obscure omnipotent power that is advancing uncontrollably". Switzerland's *Le Temps*<sup>2</sup> put it down to "a crisis between 'the elites' and 'the people'". Britain's *Daily Telegraph*<sup>3</sup> noted that the massive 'No' vote could not just be written off as a protest vote by radical groups, and that the under-26 group 'unthinkably' voted against it.

On 1.6.05, the Dutch referendum rejected the Constitution by 62%-38%. Reasons included dissatisfaction with the Euro after steep price rises, being the largest contributor per head to the EU, fears on losing identity and control on immigration; also the prospect of Turkey joining the EU.

Like France, there was a reaction against unemployment (at 7%) but in contrast a feeling of being bullied by bigger EU states<sup>4</sup>. The Netherlands had previously been regarded as a 'stronghold of European integration'.

### NO CHANGE OF DIRECTION

After the French vote, Spain's *El Pais* newspaper<sup>2</sup> regretted "as from today, Europe has no direction".

They could not be more wrong. 'Europe' will continue under the existing Treaties which commit to 'ever-closer union'.

A Treaty is normally dead if one of the countries fails to ratify it. But not in the EU - Denmark (1993) and Republic of Ireland (2002) were made to go back and vote again after their people rejected EU treaties in a referendum.

There were a whole range of unique national perceptions. Earlier, a Dutch newspaper had paralleled Eurovision Song Contest voting with a loss of Dutch influence in a 25+ member EU that was increasingly E. European<sup>5</sup>.

Voters ignored Foreign Minister Bernard Bot's cries that rejecting the Constitution meant 'economic disaster'

The 'Yes' campaign were so desperate that they claimed it was needed to prevent war and terror. Complaints from viewers forced them to withdraw a TV commercial featuring rooms full of coffins from Yugoslavian massacres and films of Jews being deported in trains in WW2<sup>6</sup>.

Using 'Nazi/Holocaust/anti-semitic' imagery was highly inappropriate as the Dutch suffered under Nazi occupation. It was also seen as hypocritical of EU supporters after the outrage at reports of funding terrorism via EU grants to the Palestinian Authority in 2003.

On BBC TV<sup>7</sup>, Peter Osborne of the Spectator blasted Lord (and former European Commissioner) Neil Kinnock's view that people had voted 'in ignorance': "They knew exactly what they were voting against".

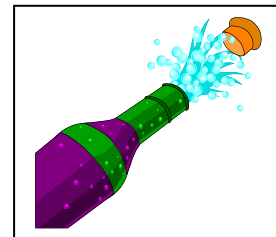
## FEDERALISTS REACT...

Luxembourg currently holds the EU Presidency. Its leader, Jean-Claude Juncker, said that if the French and the Dutch voted 'No', they should have to hold their referendum again<sup>8</sup>.

Juncker also flannelled the French result: "Many of those who voted 'no' were voting for more Europe. If some of their votes are added to the 'yes' vote, we have won."<sup>9</sup>

The Dutch vote is not legally binding but Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende said that the government would 'respect' the result.<sup>10</sup>

Dutch Foreign Minister Bernard Bot<sup>11</sup> was less respectful. He claimed it was a mistake to let his people decide. "We were opposed to it... We always said that this subject matter was far too complex to be made the subject of a referendum." Presumably he didn't complain about general election that his party won on the grounds that the public had to consider all sorts of other 'complex' issues as well.



Wilfried Martens is President of the hard-line federalist EU-wide 'party', the 'EPP' (both Dutch and French governing parties are members).

While claiming he respected the 'clear decision' of the French people, he added: "We should not forget that the Constitution was based on a very large consensus among all Member States. We will not get a better Constitution if we start the process again. Therefore, the Constitution, or at least the most important parts of it, have to come into force..."<sup>12</sup>

Its European Parliamentary leader, Hans-Gert Poettering, felt: "The 'No' of two EU countries... could not be allowed to speak for all the other 23 members of the Union... ratification must go on."

He claimed that nine countries, with a total of 220m citizens, had already ratified the Treaty, and warned that a final failure of the Treaty would mean "less democracy".<sup>13</sup>



**FEDERALISTS REACT**  
/ continued

In eight of those, it was ratified only by politicians, and in the ninth (Spain), only on a low referendum turnout.

Martin Schulz, European Parliament's Socialist Group (PES) leader, crowed very presumptively: "Nine countries, representing 49 per cent of the population of the EU, have already endorsed the Constitution. Many more will follow. We cannot allow the wish of the majority of our people to be thrown casually to one side. We cannot allow one or two countries to stifle the ambitions that the majority hold for Europe".<sup>14</sup>

His ally German Chancellor Schröder had previously insisted<sup>15</sup> that a mechanism must be found for putting the treaty into operation even if Britain or other states blocked it with a "no".

'British' Commissioner Peter Mandelson hoped that other member states would carry on and vote 'Yes', then France would supply the necessary 'statesmanship and unity' that the future EU required.<sup>16</sup> "One country, even France, does not have a veto, but this vote cannot be ignored".

Mandy is wrong - sovereign nations should and **do** have a veto on Treaties that could unacceptably bind them. Fat-cat politicians claim to want 'a more democratic' EU. In practice, they like democracy only when it gives them what they want - an even greater transfer of power away from elected governments to their Euro-state.

**RIGHT MAN FOR THE JOB?**

Denis 'MacInsane' is out as Europe Minister. Douglas Alexander MP is in. He made a 'Brownite' case for Britain's EU future - "a practical Europe which delivers real, practical benefits".<sup>17</sup>

Like the Chancellor, he spoke of a confident Britishness that "has not been undermined by EU membership" (Yawn). Why was he appointed?

It's said that he'll be more measured in his EU passion than MacShane (not difficult!). Alexander's claim to fame so far is that he was the Cabinet Office minister responsible for pushing through the Civil Contingencies Act.

This provided drastic powers for the government to set aside the British Constitution and institutions and deal with any civil unrest. Just a very idle thought - but this experience *might* just prove relevant in bringing in the European Constitution? :)

President Chirac will no doubt be delighted to be reminded of his helpful suggestion that *Britain* could be forced to leave the EU if its voters rejected the Constitution in a referendum!<sup>15</sup>

**BETTER OFF OUT - BY BILLIONS**



In 2004, Ian Milne's Civitas pamphlet "The Costs and Benefits of the European Union" indicated that there would be no net loss of jobs or trade if the UK withdrew, but there could be net benefits of up to £20Bn.



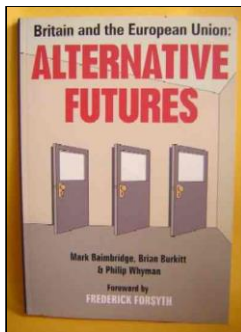
Price £15.95, from Institute of Economic Affairs, 2 Lord North St, London SW1. www.iea.org.uk

**Should Britain leave the EU?**

A team at Cardiff Business School has compared scenarios from adopting the EU Constitution to withdrawal, and can identify *theoretical* benefits of **up to £200Bn** through leaving.

Some of the assumptions, such as on the UK having to bail out continental pension schemes are very much a 'worst case', although if the UK continues to let the European Court dictate policy, even such drastic measures might be conceivable.

However *conservative* estimates could still produce substantial gains.



Price £7.50 from CIB, Ashmole St, London SW8. ISBN 0-9519642-5-9

'Bradford economists' Burkitt (LESC) Baimbridge and Whyman gave us a 1996 classic 'There Is An Alternative'.

Their long-awaited follow-up '**Alternative Futures**' updates the picture in a readable way. NAFTA membership is touched on; a useful addition would have been a comment on whether member governments have had to compensate corporates for 'damage to profits' through their laws 'if required' in practice.<sup>18</sup>

Also stocked by the June Press (08456-120175 / www.junepress.com).

**EU TREATY: WHERE NEXT?**



EU leaders meet on **16/17 June** to discuss. They still have plans for an EU diplomatic corps, defence agency and police college. They will no doubt pursue integration by stealth. The planned EU-wide 'citizen tracking system' based on the Galileo satellite is a good example.

**ID CARDS UPDATE**

The **Identity Cards Bill** resurfaced. The Second Reading is tipped for around **13 June**, but it may be delayed after growing back-bench opposition - MPs are uneasy after recent reports:

- ❖ the costs, first thought to be about £3Bn are looking nearer to £18Bn<sup>19</sup> - watch out for a new LSE report soon.
- ❖ claims of benefits, against the latest justification of combating 'identity theft' were reckoned to be worth only £35m out of the very loose Government estimate of £1.3Bn.<sup>20</sup>
- ❖ The Passport Service's technology trials gave high failure rates.<sup>21</sup>



**QUOTE FROM 1994** Sweden's 'Fortress Europe' noted:<sup>22</sup>

"EU-member states are preparing the piecemeal introduction of ID cards in the form of "smart cards"... enabling authorities to keep track of citizens in a borderless Europe."

**QUOTE FROM 2005**

"Public opinion likes the idea of ID cards because it seems like the ultimate solution to all known problems. But actually, the way this bill is designed enables a police state.

You're not going to be allowed to opt out of having an ID card, the linked databases make detailed tracking feasible, and a system with this combination of complexity and scale is way beyond the state of the art.

It won't be reliable or safe. Anybody with access to the database will be able to target anybody. It's horrendous what you'll be able to do."<sup>23</sup>

- Brian Gladman, retired MOD director

- Please do anything you can to use the media to keep up public opposition
- Lobby your MP (if Labour: to at least abstain; others: to vote against) You could stop what's at best a White Elephant, at worst a Police State.