



PARLIAMENTARY SCRUTINY OF NEW EU LAWS NEEDS URGENT REFORM, SAYS CBI CHIEF

Sir Digby Jones sets out proposals for earlier and 'proactive' UK scrutiny of legislation from Brussels in new FPC pamphlet

Monday 4 April 2005

The current parliamentary system for examining legislation from Brussels is flawed, according to a new Foreign Policy Centre pamphlet by CBI chief **Sir Digby Jones**, with a preface by **Dr Denis MacShane**, Minister for Europe.

Sir Digby states: 'Measures that will affect millions of people and cost millions of pounds pass through UK formalities, en route to being implemented into UK law, while barely causing a ripple.'

The CBI chief emphasises that members of scrutiny committees in the Lords and Commons do the best job possible under the circumstances. But with 50 per cent of all laws imposing burdens on UK businesses coming from Brussels, UK citizens and their elected representatives remain worryingly indifferent.

Sir Digby Jones is calling for reforms which include:

- All politicians taking a greater interest in legislation from Brussels at a much earlier stage. MPs should be searching out information on proposed EU legislation and responding before a first draft has been written, rather than simply reacting to policy announcements once minds have already been made up
- A stronger connection between Brussels bureaucrats and domestic electorates
- Greater transparency with more hearings of witnesses by scrutiny committees to allow outside interest groups to voice their views. Parliamentary hearings should always be held in public.
- MPs who specialise in specific policy areas should scrutinise all legislation, regardless of whether it originates in Brussels or Westminster

In a Europe of 25, 'winks and nudges' between old allies will not be enough and 'sturdy parliamentary systems' are required. Most important is a systematically more 'proactive' approach from MPs and scrutiny committees, who should be in regular and in-depth communication with MEPs and take steps to raise the profile of European issues.

**For briefings, interviews or a copy of the pamphlet,
call Lucy Ahad on 07950 550 426**



The European Think Tank with a Global Outlook

In the preface, **Dr Denis MacShane** agrees that a 'step change' is required in the way British politicians represent their business and other constituents in the EU policy-making process, and calls on them to acquire 'ears and voices' across all the major European capitals.

'Westminster should not be afraid to take to the road,' he states. 'Each government department could have an EU-designated minister who works the Brussels-Strasbourg circuits...

'I would go further and suggest that each department should have a European Parliamentary Private Secretary working exclusively on European issues, linking up with business, unions and other interest groups and informing ministers directly on how the EU is affecting government policy and legislation.'

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. ***UK Parliamentary Scrutiny of EU Legislation*** by Sir Digby Jones, with a preface by Dr Denis MacShane, is published today (Monday 4 April 2005) by the Foreign Policy Centre.
2. Sir Digby Jones was appointed Director-General of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) in 2000, for an initial term of five years, since extended to seven at the request of CBI members. As the "Voice of Business", Sir Digby regularly visits businesses around the world as well as the CBI offices in Brussels and Washington DC, taking views back to those who make the rules affecting how UK businesses operate around the globe. Sir Digby started his career with the Birmingham corporate law firm Edge & Ellison in 1978. He was made Deputy Senior Partner in 1990 and Senior Partner in 1995. In 1998 he joined KPMG as Vice Chairman of Corporate Finance, where he acted as adviser to many public companies across the United Kingdom. He is now a non-executive director of several companies and is on the boards of many agencies and charities.
3. Dr Denis MacShane is MP for Rotherham and was appointed Minister of State for Europe at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 2002, where he previously served as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. Dr MacShane is responsible for .. and regularly represents the UK at EU summits. Before his election to Parliament Dr MacShane worked as a BBC producer and was President of the National Union of Journalists from 1978 to 1979. In the 1980s he worked abroad as an international trade union official, supporting pro-democracy union movements in Poland, South Africa, Brazil and South Korea. He was Director of the European Policy Institute from 1992 to 1994. Dr MacShane writes regularly for national and international publications, and is the author of several books on international politics.
4. The Foreign Policy Centre is an independent think tank launched under the patronage of the British Prime Minister Tony Blair in 1998 to develop a vision of a fair and rule-based world order.
5. The views expressed in the pamphlet are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily represent the views of the Centre.

**For briefings, interviews or a copy of the pamphlet,
call Lucy Ahad on 07950 550 426**