



Geoffrey Van Orden's **eDispatch**

From Brussels
Christmas 2014



 **Conservatives**



Commemorating Armistice Day
in Antwerp

"I didn't become an MEP in order to promote the EU - I want us to govern our own country. I go to Brussels to speak up for British interests and for the people of the East of England. My priorities are the prosperity and security of the United Kingdom." **Geoffrey Van Orden MBE MEP**

Happy Christmas! Fanny and I, and Anna, Phoebe and James in the Brussels office, would like to send you our very best wishes for a Happy Christmas and a healthy and successful New Year!

What a year

What a turbulent year it has been. Our country has seen two crucially important votes – nationwide and in Scotland. On 22 May the European Elections produced a swing to UKIP, who returned 24 MEPs compared to 20 for Labour and 20 for Conservatives + Unionists. Since then, as I woefully predicted, UKIP has been on a media roll. The consequences of this will be disastrous and produce precisely the opposite outcome to what its adherents say they want. UKIP may go on to win 3 or 4 seats in the General Election, no more. But they could stop the Conservatives winning 40 or 50 seats. That means Ed Miliband in Downing Street. Then our people will get all the things they detest, in spades – a broken economy, uncontrolled immigration, and a headlong rush into a federal Europe. Don't be taken in by the idea that UKIP also takes votes from Labour – in the Heywood and Middleton by-election, where UKIP came a close second to Labour, Labour actually increased their proportion of the vote. Have no doubt, it is Conservative votes that are threatened by UKIP.

Mercifully, the Scottish referendum on 18 September saw a significant majority in favour of maintaining the United Kingdom. However, the fall-out does not bode well for the future. And while 41 of Scotland's 59 MPs are currently Labour and 6 SNP, the current prediction is that this figure will be reversed. Either way, the SNP has made it clear it will not support a Tory government – so their MPs would still be there to prop up Labour.

Remember Labour's Record

Many people seem to think that elections are about somebody else – that it's just about some group of people in Westminster, or Brussels – that it no longer makes any difference as they're all the same and the best thing is to give them a shake-up by sending a few trouble-makers into their midst.

A few seconds thought should show that is not the case. After all it was on Labour's watch that the economy went into a spiral from which we are now recovering. The fact is, 2 million new jobs have been created in the private sector (i.e. not funded by your taxes) under the Conservatives and, contrary to Labour's slander about the Tories, the highest earners (top 25%) pay 75 % of total income tax.

Mr Miliband insults the British people when he now talks about Labour being tough on immigration. Labour created the problem – deliberately! Labour allowed over 3 million people, mainly from south Asia, to settle in our country. The scale of this was unprecedented. It exceeded migration from Europe by a factor of 3:1. Conservative ministers are now getting a grip of this – it

has taken longer than we would have liked. But let's be clear. Labour would loosen the grip once more.

And then there's Europe. Let's not forget that it was Labour that gave away more of our money and signed the Lisbon Treaty that massively increased the powers of the European Parliament, removed the national veto in many areas and greatly expanded the reach of the European Court of Justice. Only the Conservatives have the aim of reforming our relationship with Europe, and only the Conservatives will give the British people a say on Europe in a referendum.

So let us get serious. The General Election on 7 May 2015 is just 20 weeks away.

The new European Commission

We now have a new European Commission, the executive branch of the EU and the motor of European integration, and new Commission President, the controversial Jean-Claude Juncker. On 15 July 2014 his nomination was confirmed by the European Parliament. The Commission as a whole was voted on by the European Parliament on 22 October 2014. Along with most of my ECR colleagues I abstained – I did not wish to vote against the UK Conservative nominee, Lord Hill who has the important portfolio of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union. It remains to be seen whether this Commission has taken on board the need for a change of direction and radical reform. I doubt it. It will be up to the Governments to come to an agreement and instruct the Commission accordingly.

Russia

Russia's dangerous and illegal actions in Ukraine caused the EU countries, as well as other nations including America, to impose sanctions on 31 July 2014. Russia's continued failure to give a positive response has resulted in an escalation of counter measures, which are now beginning to have consequences. The sanctions combined with the falling price of oil have caused a severe depreciation in the value of the rouble with a massive effect on the Russian economy. At the same time, NATO has reviewed dispositions and put in place a number of measures including increased air monitoring and training in the Baltics, deployment of ships to the Baltic and Mediterranean, and an intensive exercise programme in Poland and other parts of Eastern Europe. This is NATO business – we don't need the EU getting involved in defence. It should stick to civil activities.

Iran

The emergence of the ISIS terrorist army in Syria and Iraq has given a new slant to relations with Iran, whose warplanes have engaged the ISIS forces. Negotiations to secure an agreement that will prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon are continuing. We should rightfully be sceptical about this. The deadline for a final settlement has now been put back until 30 June next year, allowing Iran a measure of sanctions relief in return for some restrictions on its nuclear programme. While Britain, France, Germany, the USA, Russia and China are taking part in the negotiations, the work of the European delegations is being "co-ordinated" by Catherine Ashton, who worryingly remains the EU's chief negotiator in the Iran talks after stepping down as EU High Representative. This "P5+1" have already agreed that Iran may continue a limited enrichment programme - contrary to UN sanctions designed to prevent any enrichment - and the Obama administration now seems content for Iran to disconnect its centrifuges, instead of dismantling them. I'm not sure about the idea that 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend'. We need to be vigilant to stop Iran obtaining sanctions relief without satisfactory safeguards to prevent it from building a bomb. I would prefer it if national foreign ministers took the lead.

Please do not hesitate to ask for more information on any of the many topics on which I am engaged.

I welcome invitations to speak throughout the East of England

88 Rectory Lane, Chelmsford, CM1 1RF – Tel: 0032 228 47332 - Email: geoffrey.vanorden@europarl.europa.eu

Websites: www.geoffreyvanorden.com - www.newdirectionfoundation.org