



Allister says curb immigration

With Bulgaria and Romania likely to join the EU on 1 January next year, DUP MEP Jim Allister has called on the Government to restrict access for workers from both countries.

When the EU enlarged last time in 2004, the UK together with Sweden and Ireland granted immediate and free access to workers from the new member states, while the rest of Europe kept barriers in place.

The UK Government hugely miscalculated the number of workers that took the opportunity to come and work in Britain. It had expected up to 13,000 workers a year to move to the UK, but 600,000 have come since 2004.

Now British media have revealed that the government privately estimates between 60,000 and 140,000 Romanians and Bulgarians will arrive in the UK in the first year after the next EU enlargement.

The figures have prompted Jim Allister to demand that the UK's borders should be closed to the new arrivals. He said current immigration has serious effects on housing, healthcare and the very nature of our community.

Commenting, the Ulster MEP said:-

“The Government got it badly wrong in 2004, the pace of immigration has been more than any country can sustainably bear. If the same “open door” policy is applied to Bulgaria and Romania, then we can expect a fresh flood of immigration, extending to people originating from beyond the two candidate countries. I say that, because official Bulgarian figures confirm that almost 25,000 people have been granted Bulgarian citizenship in the last five years, coming largely from Moldova and Macedonia, and at least 55,000 more are on the waiting list. Most are motivated by the prospect of tapping into the EU job market.

The screening procedures for granting citizenship in Romania and Bulgaria are far from satisfactory and once free access throughout the EU is granted, then we all are subject to those failings, which could also have a security dimension.”



NI victory hailed in European Parliament



During a late night debate in the European Parliament in Strasbourg on fisheries, DUP MEP Jim Allister, managed to weave in congratulations to Northern Ireland on its momentous defeat of Spain. Having congratulated the Spanish rapporteur for her report, he then commiserated with her on the defeat of "the mighty Spain" by "my small country of Northern Ireland" at Windsor Park in Belfast.

The Euro MP went on to congratulate Northern Ireland Supporters for winning the prestigious, EU and UEFA endorsed, Brussels International Supporters Award 2006, describing this as a good day for NI and its wonderful football fraternity.

Allister rejects Sinn Fein call for all-Ireland negotiations with EU

The call call by Sinn Fein for All-Ireland negotiations with the EU is a phoney political stunt. Constitutionally, the EU operates on the basis of 25 nation states, with the regions of each properly represented through their national governments, in accordance with their chosen constitutional allegiance. Thus, Northern Ireland legally and in accordance with the principle of consent - which, clearly Sinn Fein has not accepted, despite its supposed acceptance in the Belfast Agreement - is represented in the EU by the UK Government. To have it otherwise would fundamentally undermine Northern Ireland's position as an integral part of the UK. Hence, of course, Sinn Fein's proposal, which is but another aspect of its All-Ireland agenda.

Jim Allister said,

“As a Unionist and the first choice of the people of Northern Ireland in the European Parliament, I make it very plain that there is no room for impinging on our constitutional status by contemplating All-Ireland negotiations with Europe, be it on agriculture, fisheries or anything else. Tempted as Sinn Hain might be to peddle his own All-Ireland agenda by embracing this latest Sinn Fein demand, I caution him to be constrained by the constitutional imperatives which such an approach would defy.

The fact that Sinn Fein demands that Northern Ireland's interests in Europe be allied to those of a state different from that to which the local population wish to belong, is indicative not just of their non-acceptance of the principle of consent, but, also, of the invidious situation which would arise if they held governmental office in a part of the UK while dedicated to dismantling the UK. Little wonder the DUP has insisted that in any devolution arrangement the Assembly must be given paramount control and unaccountable freedom of executive action removed from individual ministers.”

DARD more severe in implementing EU legislation

Jim Allister has claimed that farmers within Northern Ireland are more likely to be penalised for breaching EU legislation compared to farmers in other Member States. The MEP made the comments following the announcement from DARD that £2.8 million had been withheld from Single Farm Payments within Northern Ireland. The corresponding figure in the Republic of Ireland for sanctions applied during cross-compliance inspections in 2005 was £229,000.

Jim Allister commented, **“The total Single Farm Payment paid to farmers within Northern Ireland is only 1/3 of the total Single Farm Payment issued to farmers in the Republic of Ireland. Despite this, the total financial penalty withheld for non-compliances within Northern Ireland is more than 10 times the amount withheld from the farming industry in the Republic of Ireland. I have no doubt that farmers within Northern Ireland are as good if not better at adhering to rules compared to their counterparts in the Republic of Ireland. This leads me to draw the conclusion that EU rules are more stringently enforced within Northern Ireland compared to other regions of Europe. This is unacceptable.**

Allister attacks Hezbollah

Speaking in the keynote debate in Strasbourg on the Middle East, DUP MEP Jim Allister strongly attacked Hezbollah and called for no "dodging or diluting" of the UN mandate requiring it to be disarmed. Pointing out the folly of Hezbollah having been admitted to the Government of Lebanon while a fully fledged terrorist organisation, Mr Allister drew some parallels with Northern Ireland.

In the course of his remarks the Ulster Euro MP said:-

"I do not endorse every act of Israel, but I am in no doubt that in the recent conflict it was not the aggressor and was entitled, as a sovereign state, to defend itself against sustained and murderous rocket attacks by Hezbollah. The fact that Hezbollah, supplied by Iran and Syria, was able to act as it did while part of the Government of Lebanon, illustrates the folly of admitting to government any terrorist-orientated organisation, be it in Lebanon, Palestine or Northern Ireland.

In Israel the level of sustained assault was such that a powerful response was necessary. Now the challenge of the future is to disarm Hezbollah. I trust that critical part of the mandate will not be dodged or diluted. Otherwise, as was foolishly done in Northern Ireland through allowing Sinn Fein into government without decommissioning, we merely store up more trouble for the future."



Allister says Nicholson and UUP asleep on the job

Following the failure of the UUP to respond to a vital SEUPB consultation on how future EU PEACE Funding should be spent, DUP MEP Jim Allister, has deplored the neglect of Cunningham House and their MEP.

Jim Allister explained:

“One of the key issues in Northern Ireland requiring to be addressed on the EU front is the historic imbalance in funding under the PEACE Programme vis-à-vis the Unionist community. With new funding priorities now being set for 2007-13, this is a critical time to seek to influence the future distribution of funding. In this regard The Special EU Programmes Body, as Managing Authority for the current PEACE Programme and for INTERREG, was asked by the Member States to conduct a public consultation process on issues emerging from the current INTERREG Programme that could impact on the preparation of a future *European Territorial Cooperation Programme* and on the future of the *PEACE Programme*.



Naturally, having campaigned persistently for equity of treatment for the majority community, I and the DUP made detailed submissions on all the key issues. I am appalled to discover that whereas Sinn Fein predictably peddled demands for more focus on ex-prisoners and the Irish language, neither UUP MEP Jim Nicholson, nor his Party, troubled themselves to respond at all to this vital consultation. They have let Northern Ireland down.

So much more could be attained if we had two effective MEPs pulling their weight in Brussels on behalf of the unionist community in particular and Northern Ireland in general. There can be no excuse for the Ulster Unionists falling asleep on the job. The electorate are entitled to know why Jim Nicholson let them down.

Allister opposed to releases of subsidy information

Jim Allister MEP has expressed opposition to the release of agricultural subsidy information to the general public. Jim Allister believes that the publishing of individual farm names with the payment they receive is not to do with transparency in relation to public money but is designed to undermine the farming community.

Jim Allister commented, “I am opposed to DARD issuing payment information on individual farmers and I believe that it more connected to DARD’s policy of undermining the Northern Ireland farming community. I objected to the release of farm payment information last year. I believe that the Ulster Farmers’ Union offered a compromise that would have allowed greater transparency in relation to public monies. It is regrettable that to date DARD has not accepted this compromise.

Information is not issued by other Government Departments regarding income support or health care. Why then should information be released on money going to the agricultural industry for supporting the Government’s cheap food policy?

“I recently highlighted how farmers in Northern Ireland are more likely to be penalised by DARD compared to farmers working in other regions of Europe. I believe that DARD could do more to resolve queries facing the agricultural industry. I raised possible solutions to the duplicate field problems last March but to date DARD has still not responded to my queries. Is this a Department that is trying to resolve problems in the interests of the farmer?”

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Cairns meets Allister in Brussels



At a recent meeting in Brussels with Agriculture and Fisheries Minister, David Cairns MP, Jim Allister MEP raised a variety of issues, including:-

- the need to get a substantial increase in the prawn quota for 2007 and a replacement for the failed Cod Recovery Scheme closures;
- the necessity of obtaining regional variation in setting voluntary modulation under the Rural Development programme;
- no further concessions should be made in the final negotiations with Brussels over the action programme for the implementation of the Nitrates Directive;

- the end date for completion of works under the FNMS must be extended to December 2008 and the Minister must commit to the money needed for the scheme;
- the Department must join in lobbying the Commission to reinstate export refunds on milk powder to a level capable of providing a viable return for milk producers;
- the over-zealous inspection process and imposition of penalties in respect of Single Farm Payments, when compared with other countries.

Commenting afterwards Mr Allister said, "This was another opportunity to press upon the Minister the imperative of DARD vigorously addressing a range of key issues. On each issue we will watch to see what progress is made, determined that the best deal possible is got for Northern Ireland on all these matters."

Tories bottle out

To capture the Eurosceptic vote in the Conservative Party leadership election, David Cameron pledged to pull Tory MEPs out of the Euro-fanatic EPP Group. His promise was to do so "in months, not years". Now, in a major volte face he has abandoned this promise and will leave the Tories in the EPP till, at least, the next election in 2009.

His promise to then form a new group has to be measured against this recent climb-down and a similar broken promise in the last parliament. In 2001 Iain Duncan Smith also pledged to leave the EPP in 2004, but when the time came it did not happen.

UUP MEP, Jim Nicholson, sits with the Tories and so he too is embedded in the federalist EPP. No doubt, given his own Party's facility to renege on promises - remember his own 1999 election slogan, "No Guns, No Government" - he has no difficulty with such political somersaulting. Strangely, or maybe not so strangely, he has been very silent about the marriage to the EPP. What bizarre political bedfellows the UUP chooses – the EPP in Brussels and the PUP/UVF in Belfast!

The Conservative Party, and Mr Nicholson, claim to be against an EU Constitution. Yet, here they are as an integral part of the Party driving forward the demand for implementation of the rejected Constitution. With EPP Leader, Hans-Gert Poettering due to take over as President of the European Parliament in January 2007 and his German Government at the same time taking over the Presidency of Europe, we can expect a renewed push on the Constitution.

If Cameron and the Tories bottled out on this simple pledge, what confidence could anyone have that in government they would not do the same on their supposedly Eurosceptic policies?



An opportunity for rural funding

One of the greatest challenges in getting an equitable distribution of EU Peace money has been in securing an adequacy of supply to the rural Unionist community. A contributory cause has been that in many instances the condition of rural halls made them unsuitable for community events, not least given health and safety requirements. Thus a programme facilitating capital works to provide, for example, toilet and disability facilities, has long been required.

The fact that in many areas Church and Orange Halls are the focal community facility seemed to add to the resistance of some in officialdom to finding a solution. At last, however, a fledgling scheme has been put in place which has the potential to bring real benefit and unlock a flow of much needed funding into rural community work. I refer to the recently announced programme, "Maximising Community Space", which is a Rural Halls Scheme sponsored by the Rural Development Council, with whom I have held useful meetings.

Under this scheme £1M is available for a pilot scheme to fund events in 30 rural halls and, where necessary, underwrite capital works necessary to bring halls up to modern standards. The funding is divided between supporting a programme of development assistance for groups and the second aspect, which will provide grants of up to £40,000 for improvement of hall facilities.

I urge those with responsibility for eligible rural halls to pursue this opportunity by making application to RDC for funding before the deadline of 27 September 2006. If my office can assist, then we are happy to do so (Tel: 90655011).



If this pilot project is a success, then a sound basis will exist to lobby Government for further funding, so that the scheme can be extended to assist more groups and halls. It is important that the unionist community, both urban and rural, intensifies its community activity and discovers, like others, that community strength can result. There are now many groups making positive strides, not least Orange Community Network, which are instilling fresh confidence, initiative and hope into a community which has lagged behind too long. This Rural Halls Scheme can help and should be fully utilised.

BIG Lottery announces Improving Community Buildings Programme

BIG lottery has announced the launch of the Improving Community Buildings programme. Grants between £25,000 and £50,000 (including VAT and contingency) will be available under this programme for the modernisation and refurbishment of community venues across Northern Ireland. Total project costs must not exceed £75,000 (including VAT and contingency).

Information on this programme, plus other BIG Lottery Fund programmes due to launch later this year, will be provided at the following events:

- Malone House, Barnett Demesne, Malone Road, Belfast 26 September 2006 2-4pm and 7-9pm
- Lough Neagh Discovery Centre Oxford Island, Annaloiste Rd, Craigavon 28 September 2006 2-4pm and 7-9pm
- Tara Centre, 11 Holmview Terrace, Campsie Road, Omagh 03 October 2006 2-4pm and 7-9pm
- Upperlands Community Development Centre, 72 Upperlands, Upperlands 05 October 2006 2-4pm and 7-9pm

Allister leads Dairy Delegation to Europe

Jim Allister MEP recently led a delegation from the dairy sector in Northern Ireland in meetings with Trade Commissioner Mandelson and Agriculture Commissioner Fishler-Boel. The delegation consisted of Sir David Dobbin and Mr Harold Hamilton from United Dairies Ltd, Mr John Thompson and Mr Jackson Wright from the UFU and Mr Paul Archer from Dairy UK.



Speaking after the meetings Jim Allister said:-

"These were positive meetings. First, I want to congratulate the representatives of the industry for the cogent and persuasive way in which they made their case. I've no doubt that both Mandelson and Fisher-Boel now clearly understand the life-threatening impact precipitative cuts in export refunds on whole milk powder have had on our dairy industry.

With the WTO talks stalled there is now an opportunity to restore stability and confidence to the market. This can be done by restoring some of the lost ground in export refunds, which will improve the farmgate price. With such refunds due to be wholly removed by 2013, this would give time for the industry to redirect its output into markets other than milk powder. Here the Government must meet its responsibilities with capital aid to restructure the industry. The Republic of Ireland is already doing so. We can't let them steal our natural market in Great Britain.

This is an unfinished task. We will now be furnishing the Commissioners with documentation to substantiate the case and need for action. In particular we will be looking for an increase in the export refunds to stabilise the market.

We also took the opportunity to lobby Commissioner Fishler-Boel on modulation, the need for regional variation and the necessity of an extension till the end of 2008 for implementation of the Farm Nutrient Management Scheme."



Allister welcomes expansion at Enniskillen Airport

"Having visited and been involved in discussions with those seeking to promote St Angelo Airport, I greatly welcome the jobs being created by Sloane Helicopter Engineering. Both the fact and the quality of these jobs, and the environment for further development which they create, is good news for Fermanagh. Now, we must seek to build on this breakthrough. Both the Council and the directors of Enniskillen Airport are to be commended for their tenacity and vision in turning the airport around into a focus for development and growth in the county.



Jim being welcomed to St Angelo Airport, Enniskillen by Arlene Foster MLA and Stephen Finlay.

If an extension to the runway could be achieved, then, ventures similar to the helicopter development, but involving commercial aircraft repairs, would be possible. Likewise the planned marina development offers further expansion and potential to have a co-ordinated and positive tourism impact. With strategic inter-regional significance, Enniskillen Airport should be able to benefit from transnational EU funding. In this regard I have already lobbied both DETI and the SEUPB and trust they will rise to the challenge."



Allister turns the tables on Fianna Fail

During Question Time in the European Parliament DUP MEP Jim Allister turned the tables on Fianna Fail when their leader in Strasbourg, Brian Crawley MEP, raised the subject of international terrorism.

Mr Crawley tabled a question asking the Council of Ministers to report on actions taken over the last year to fight international terrorism. Mr Allister used the platform provided to turn the focus back on Dublin, with this barbed supplementary:-

"On the subject of combating international terrorism, can the Council tell us what steps it took to encourage the return of three IRA members convicted of international terrorism in Colombia, who later took refuge in a Member State of the EU - namely Ireland - and continue to enjoy sanctuary there? Is it not clear that the EU undermines its credibility as regards taking a stand on international terrorism if it acquiesces in Member States harbouring wanted and convicted international terrorists?"

There was no meaningful response from the Finnish Minister, but commenting afterwards Jim Allister said, "Among all the platitudes which pour out of Europe about fighting international terrorism, it was opportune to remind the Council of Ministers of their shameful inactivity over the Columbia Three and the fact that an EU Member State continues to give these convicted international terrorists full sanctuary. Dublin hopes the issue will fade away, but on the international stage of the European Parliament I do not intend to make it that easy for them."

MEP visits Lough Neagh Eel Fishery



MEP Jim Allister visiting the Lough Neagh Eel Fishery. Mr Allister, through the Fisheries Committee of the European Parliament, has been fighting to exempt the Northern Ireland industry from the impact of intended stringent restraints by Brussels on fishing effort.

The book cover features a portrait of Jim Allister in a suit and tie. The text on the cover includes: "JIM ALLISTER MEP", "LEADING FOR ULSTER", "SPEAKING FOR YOU IN EUROPE", "A RECORD OF JIM ALLISTER'S SPEECHES IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT JULY 2004 - NOVEMBER 2005", and the DUP logo. The background shows the European Parliament building and the EU flag.

If you would like a free copy of Jim's book, 'Leading for Ulster: Speaking for you in Europe', then please phone (028) 90 655 011

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Delivering business from red tape

During both Question Time in September in the European Parliament and in a debate on eco-labelling of fishery products, MEP Jim Allister spoke out against increasing entanglement of small business in EU red tape.

In the course of the fisheries debate the Ulster MEP urged that the most the EU should do is set minimum, manageable standards required in eco-labelling of product, but that the operation of the scheme should be voluntary and private, rather than EU controlled and regulated.

In the course of the debate Mr Allister said:-

"The principle of eco-labelling is sound. The danger is that when EU bureaucracy and red tape gets to work, the system which emerges will be unwieldy and excessively burdensome, not to say expensive. The fishery sector suffers enough already from EU stipulations and restrictions. So, the most that the EU should do is set minimum requirements to be met by voluntary eco-labelling schemes. Thus, I part company from those who support a single Community scheme with what is termed "ambitious criteria", but which to the industry might seem more like more excessive regulation.

Fundamentally, we are looking for good traceability and proof of sustainable practices; such can be assured by setting sensible and manageable minimum standards. We do not need another array of regulations or army of inspectors. We need sometimes to temper utopian environmental and other demands with business reality."

Earlier at Oral Question Time, the DUP MEP had clashed with Commissioner Verheugen on his claim that the EU was in fact cutting red tape for small business. Responding, Mr Allister said:-

"Commissioner, without seeking to be unkind, is it not fair to say that the Commission's record on cutting red tape has been very high on promise, but very low on delivery? Indeed it is not without significance that though you promise us a recital in written form of some examples, you have not been able today in your substantive answer to give a single example of realistic cutting of red tape. The experience in my constituency is that businesses see no sign of it. They find themselves more and more burdened in circumstances where it is seriously impeding their competitiveness."

Commenting, Mr Allister said:-

"This Commission has been promising since it came into office 2 years ago that it wished to help business and cut back on bureaucratic demands. Frankly, it has not happened. Every month we are asked to vote for more not less regulation. We need a thorough audit of the existing EU regulation and its ruthless reduction, instead, despite the promises, we are getting more, not less red tape."

MEP's Daughter weds



25 August was a very happy occasion for the Allister family, when Jim and Ruth's only daughter, Karen, married David Cameron. "It's better than being called Tony Blair", quipped the MEP.

LEADING FOR ULSTER : SPEAKING FOR YOU



"The opinions stated herein are those of the author. These opinions do not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Parliament—in fact they almost certainly do not!"