



## [Comment] Let's vote for the Commission president?

28.04.2004 - 10:05 CET | By Richard Laming

EUOBSERVER / COMMENT - The British government has just declared that it thinks that the Chinese government should allow the people of Hong Kong to elect their political leader. Will the British government allow the people of Europe the same right?

Let us vote for the president of the European Commission. It does not require a change in the treaties: all we need is for the political parties contesting the European elections to nominate their candidates for president. That will put the choice in the hands of the voters.

The MEPs elected in June will have to approve the nomination for president made by the European Council. They have the right to reject that nomination, too, if they don't accept the person put forward. The European Parliament has the right - in fact, the duty - to ensure that the next president of the Commission will do a good job.

So who do the candidate MEPs want? That seems so far to be a secret. But each candidate should be asked who he or she hopes to see as president of the Commission. What kind of a candidate would be acceptable? What type of nomination would be rejected?

As the European parliamentary elections come closer, ask all the candidates who they support for the post of president. Don't let them dodge or run away from the question. It matters.

And anyone actually elected in June will actually have to vote on this in July. It's not a distant issue, it's a real one and an urgent one. Make sure that you get a good answer.

Who do the political parties want to put forward? They are drawing up common manifestos; they are quite capable of choosing common candidates.

Of course, as in so many other areas, the introduction of the European constitution would make it all so much clearer.

The draft text in front of the IGC spells out that the decision should be made "taking into account the elections to the European Parliament". Including such words in the constitution would make it clearer for citizens how the people who run the European Union will be chosen.

Joschka Fischer said that democracy depends on the citizens being able to understand the political system: he was talking about double majority voting but the same is true of how the Commission president is chosen.

The European Union institutions are complicated enough. Here's a means of making things simpler and clearer. And it would make them more democratic, too, giving voters the choice of who should be in power. Everybody's happy. Aren't they?

*Richard Laming - is Director of Federal Union, the British federalist campaigning organisation, and works in public affairs for commercial interests in London and Brussels. He writes here in a personal capacity.*

© EUobserver.com 2005

Printed from EUobserver.com 26.02.2005

*The information may be used for personal and non-commercial use only.*

*This article and related links can be found at: <http://euobserver.com/?aid=15375&sid=9>*