



Transcript of the CRT launch on 12th September

At the launch of the Coalition for the Reform Treaty (CRT) this morning, Roland Rudd (Chairman, Business for New Europe) said:

"We believe very strongly that the implementation of this Treaty would be in Britain's interests. As the number of members of the EU has grown to 27, we needed to have a more efficient process. Any large business or organization, when it grows, needs to have new rules and regulations.

The issue of moving to QMV, for many in business, is an important point. To get things done in the EU, particularly in areas such as energy liberalisation, there is no way in terms of unanimous voting. Just as Mrs Thatcher did with the SEA, there has to be a compromise in pooling sovereignty to get what you want.

In many ways this is a tailor-made Treaty for Britain. The CRT's principles are very clear and relate to policy. But the process is important too. We feel unambiguously that this should be ratified through Parliament."

Guest speaker Dr Denis MacShane MP (Minister for Europe from 2002-2005) said:

"I welcome this new Coalition. It's about time. It's bottom up. The pro-European case has not been made in a coherent and coordinated way for some time.....We want to make our membership of the EU a success. We do not do so starry-eyed but as British realists.

Europe is good for us. We've lost sight of what an extraordinary achievement it is to have 27 countries living together in peace with open borders. If we are to meet the challenges of the environment, Europe is absolutely essential. If we want to tackle immigration, you can't do it alone as a nation.

The Treaty it is a made in Britain Treaty. Do not forget the extent to which the former Constitutional Treaty was attacked as giving far too much to a British vision of Europe: a barrier free Europe, a Europe where economic forces and skills can develop and take off. The new Treaty maintains that spirit. It's been further tailor made with extra language on the Charter and the specific opt-in provisions for aspects of criminal and justice affairs.





This is another Treaty which changes the rulebook. And changes it, I would argue, in an intergovernmental direction. Take the proposal to establish a standing President of the European Council. You now have three Presidents in Europe: the President of the Commission, of the Parliament and now the Council. At the time it was proposed it was a British proposal against what I would loosely call the 'federalist' idea.

The British Parliament is the institution that ratifies international Treaties. It is right that this Treaty should be ratified by Parliament. This Reform Treaty is like the Amsterdam Treaty, the Nice Treaty, the Maastricht Treaty and the SEA. We've never had referendums on those Treaties. Many people have called for them. But we've said no – we uphold parliamentary democracy. I think some of those calling for a referendum wish to weaken our position and Europe, and to move to some new relationship between Britain and the EU, which I think would be very dangerous, sad and bad for our country.

If you look at the Treaty, you will see things that are of benefit to Britain, to Parliament and to Europe. I would like to see this ratified as quickly as possible. Then we can move on to the real story of Europe – we have been over-focused on the issue of new Treaties and constitutional settlements - a Europe of jobs, of growth, of social justice, of combating environmental pollution , a Europe that can begin to express some of its strength on the world stage as a partner of the US and the other democracies of the world. A Europe that can create new sources of economic excitement and energy in companies.”

Sir Stephen Wall (Vice Chair, Business for New Europe) said:

“If Tony Blair had come back and said ‘all that’s left of the Constitutional Treaty is a blank sheet of paper’ – somebody would have said ‘it could be written on in a way that’s damaging to Britain over time so we must have a referendum.’ We are a large group of very competitive and occasionally quarrelsome countries and we need mechanisms that the EU provides – on the one hand to manage those potential disagreements and we see it every day in terms of possible industrial and commercial competition and on the other hand, to maximise what we can do through our shared values to create peace and stability to what is frankly a pretty dangerous world.

One of the biggest successes of the EU is when the countries of eastern and central Europe emerged from



dictatorship, we provided a home for them in which they can realise to the full their democratic and economic ambitions. It must be in our interests to spread that zone of peace and stability as far as we possibly can. It is soft power in the sense it's not aggressive. It's hard power because we have economic clout and political leverage. Also, a number of other regional groups look to the EU as a model of how they might organise themselves.

We have a parliamentary democracy and if we don't like a parliamentary democracy we should have a referendum on the British Constitution rather than a European Treaty. We trust our Parliament to take decisions on whether we should go to War, on euthanasia, on abortion, on capital punishment."

ENDS

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

For further information, visit the CRT's website www.coalitionforreformtreaty.org.uk (live from 10 a.m. on 12 September) or contact the BNE Secretariat:

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