

## **EUROPE- Our Home**

editorial by Rick Morren

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The European Union is ready for a serious overhaul and those that can make it happen are its citizens. This peoples power emerged unexpectedly in Belgium as a result of some tragic events and a corrupt judicial system. On Sunday October 20, some two hundred fifty thousand people demonstrated in Brussels, the political heart of Europe, for change of Belgian laws to end political appointments in judicial circles. Belgian citizens divided by language, but united in purpose, had reacted with vigor, following a series of unsolved crimes, disappearances and murders of children.

Belgian Prime-Minister Jean Luc de Haene has understood this message, and promised survivors of missing children that he would put legislation into effect to change the constitution. A victory for Belgium and an example for Europe.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE MAASTRICHT TREATY**

It will take more than good intentions by political forces in Europe, to counter balance the effective U.S. global economic, and political power game. Unfortunately the European Union today is struggling with the limitations imposed by the Maastricht treaty, where compromise between member States is still the key word.

The European Union is here to stay, but if it wants to be able to defend its hard won economic independence, it must become truly independent. This goal can only be achieved by some radical changes in its basic structure. When the Council of Ministers meets again to review the Maastricht treaty, it would be considered a major breakthrough if they could agree that the Council had the right to overrule a veto on any proposal, if at least two thirds of the other members were in favor.

### **DIRECT ELECTION OF E.U. PRESIDENT**

This bold step could set the European Union free from the grid-locked decision making process it knows today. It would result in immediate action on such important issues as an independent European Foreign Policy, a European Defense Force, the direct election of a E.U. president by all the citizens of the European Union, more political power for the European parliament, and employment creative incentives, to mention only a few of the many issues at hand.

At present the European Union is highly considered, but not taken serious in establishing its own political turf. Independent actions by France's President Jacques Chirac, including his recent venture into the Middle East, might look encouraging, but apart from gaining some respect for France in the Arab world, has no significant effect on establishing the E.U. as a major player in the world's political arena.

### **EUROPEAN DEFENCE FORCE**

Some European policy makers today believe that the E.U. must develop its own carrot and stick policy. "Carrots alone carry no weight", said President Teddy Roosevelt of the

United States, when he proclaimed the Monroe doctrine. Indeed the European Union needs to have an independent and modern military force to be taken seriously. The U.S. military budget is twice as large as all the military budgets of the combined Members States of the European Union. About 15 % of the U.S .military budget is earmarked for communication and information technology. In Europe that figure is only about 5 %. Obviously the benefits of an increased military budget, and more research and technology spending out of that budget , would result in new applications for the consumer market.

### **EUROPE MUST SET ITS OWN COURSE**

Also on the economic front, the European Union must be able to set its own course. It should not get sucked into the fables of a U.S. led World Economic Order. Two thirds of the U.S. population is now worse off than they were before the so-called Reagan Economic Revolution. It is a historically proven fact that all economic success is always based on market segmentation and organization. A complete free-market approach has never worked. Hendrik van Dieren, member of the Club of Rome and director of the Institute for Environment and Systems Analysis in Amsterdam, noted recently: "since the 1950 liberalization of the market in the European Union , no new job opportunities were created, all plans in this respect have failed." Studies have shown that by manufacturing products for industrialized nations in low labor cost countries and then transporting the product back to the consumer market, not only results in a loss of jobs in the industrialized nations, but is also a tremendous waste of energy, and creates increased pollution.

The highly raved about benefits to the consumer, which were to result from moving the production process to a low labor cost economy, have also never materialized. The United States has embraced the free market economy since the end of the second world. However, economic figures from the U.S. show, that despite having one of the lowest unemployment levels in the world, the bulk of these jobs can be found in the minimum wage service sector, better known as the "hamburger jobs". It is also estimated that financing the U.S. national debt, will soon require the bulk of that Nation's tax base. At this point in time, the European Union will not benefit from copying the U.S. example.

### **MARKETING EUROPEAN QUALITY PRODUCTS**

History has also proven that the European Union is at its best when it competes on the basis of quality and high productivity levels. The German economy is one of the prime examples of this approach. If the European Union wants to remain economically viable, more attention must be given to broadening the infrastructure, with the emphasis on superior technology and increased productivity. This is bound to create new job opportunities within the borders of the European Union.

On the international business market, the Member States of the European Union will have to combine their forces in marketing European products. When it comes to marketing European products and imposing political policy, the leaders of the European Union have to seize the opportunity and consolidate their efforts. For instance, European products could be promoted and marketed far more effectively and economically, if

European Union Trade Offices were established abroad , while individual Country Trade Offices are phased out. The same procedure could be followed for the embassies and consulates, presently maintained at a high cost by each individual Member State of the European Union.

### **EUROPEAN MONETARY UNION**

Another opportunity for the European Union is to get the European Monetary Union into effect . Most captains of industry in Europe expect this will bring order on the European monetary scene and reduce the cost of doing business within the Union. Strict entrance requirements established by the European Union to enter the monetary Union, will also force new candidates members to the E.U. in developing sound economic policies. Skeptics in the United Kingdom, the U.S. and Denmark are not sure, and say it will result in a collapse of the European Union. "To the contrary", says Dutch minister of Finance, Zalm, "the EMU will work as a magnet on investors." A well know financial analyst added , "if the U.S.A. feels that monetary union is such a bad idea for Europe, why doesn't the State of California have a different currency from that of the State of New York".

### **MAKING IT HAPPEN FOR EUROPE**

It is often said that nothing is more permanent than change, but change must come if the European Union is to remain a viable counter balance to the United States and Asia in the 21st Century. The European Commission and the Brussel's E.U. administrative apparatus have to become more user friendly for the European Citizens. Political parties throughout Europe will have to set their European objectives, not in empty phrases, but in well thought out strategic plans for the future. The qualities and advantages of being a European Union Citizen must be promoted in new and exciting ways. European issues of a political, economic, cultural or social nature and sporting events are to be used to instill pride and produce support from the European Citizens for the common good of the European Union.

There is a good base to continue the efforts in developing the European Union into a viable entity. Accomplishments as a result of the establishment of the European Union have been numerous. The European Union has one of the strongest economies in the world. Last year the E.U. trade surplus with the rest of the world was 24.2 billion ECU (about U.S. dollars 25 billion). Europe's space program places satellites into orbit on a monthly basis for commercial customers. In the aircraft business Airbus Industries is giving Boeing a run for its money. The unique European high speed trains are finding markets all over the world. The tunnel connecting England with the continent of Europe under the North Sea is considered one of the most advanced construction achievements of this century. The largest passenger cruise ship in the world was recently launched in Italy and delivered to a U.S. customer. The European Union Social Charter, a unique doctrine, guaranteeing sound labour practices and quality of life for all the citizen's of the Union. Common educational standards. Stringent environmental laws to combat pollution. The list could go on and on. All is in place for the European Union to move confidently into the next century. We the people must make it happen, for our children and future generations.