PRECIOUS LIFE – Northern Ireland

The front-line in the war against abortion is in Northern Ireland. The 1967 Abortion Act does not apply to the Province but that has not stopped a minority of people abetted by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety from acting as if it did. Brook went to Belfast in 1992 with a remit and promise to reduce teenage pregnancies. They said they would not be involved in abortion. They convinced and fooled many into believing their lies with the result that a lot of young girls were referred from Brook for abortions and Belfast has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in the Province. They were invited to a reception at Stormont to celebrate the Brook Centre’s tenth anniversary.

There to greet them as they arrived was a protest organised by Precious Life - formed in August 1997 as ‘a voice for the unborn child...because every life is precious’. Through those ten years they have been directed by Bernadette Smyth. Bernie has won many battles but the war goes on. Precious Life has maintained a presence outside the Brook Centre on Saturdays (Parents Against Brook) and is outside the Family Planning Association in Belfast and Derry on random days throughout the week. They have Saturday Street Sessions with a permanent team in Belfast and a mobile team across the rest of the Province. They have conducted a Basic Rights Campaign as part of their proposals for the new Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. Two major conferences, with world class speakers, were held in Belfast and Derry. Behind the banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe, they hold the annual Candle-light Procession in Derry in December, the annual Life Chain in Belfast on the anniversary of the Abortion Act, and Walks for Life in both cities. These activities unite Catholics and Protestants.

In addition to this they provide counselling and have followed the referrals to Liverpool to hold a vigil outside the British Pregnancy Advisory Service abortuary. All of this is a magnificent effort, but it is a David and Goliath struggle against the Establishment. However, we know the outcome of that contest.

Bernie’s main antagonist is Audrey Simpson, the Director of the Family Planning Association in Northern Ireland, who threw a bucket of water over her during a prayer vigil outside the FPA Referral Agency in Belfast. She was later cautioned for assault by the police with a file sent to the Public Prosecution Service who decided that she would not be charged because of lack of evidence. Audrey Simpson was later awarded an OBE.

Some members of the Police Service of Northern Ireland seem to have a bias with the usual tactics of seizing display boards showing images of abortion (despite being told by the PPS that the display of images of abortion are not illegal) and take no action when Precious Life volunteers are threatened. Such as the time that volunteers were threatened by a man with a knife outside the Brook Centre. The time that Mary Crawford, the manager of the Belfast Brook Centre, went berserk and tore down posters throwing them to the floor. Or when Bernie herself was assaulted by a man outside the FPA Referral Agency and arrested by the police instead of the assailant. These reactions are borne stoically and demonstrate how effective Precious Life is.

In 2003 a new campaign (Project Reality) was launched with a demonstration outside a Conference of campaigners seeking the legalisation of abortion in NI. The keynote speaker was Dr Wendy Savage from London, who has in the past stated that she would be willing to bring doctors from Britain to NI to carry out abortions in defiance of the law. Other speakers were Audrey Simpson of the Family Planning Association,
Mary Crawford of the Brook Advisory Centre, Goretti Horgan of Save the Children, and Elizabeth Byrne-McCullough of the Women’s Coalition; also in attendance were the NI Equality Commission, Women’s Aid, Marie Stopes International and Democratic Dialogue. In other words, the usual suspects.

In 2004 a campaign was mounted against the Nucleus Centre in Derry which was surgically implanting the Norplant contraceptive into young girls. A growing number of legal actions are being taken against the manufacturers by women, who have suffered side-effects. As a result of the campaign, the Western Health Board approached the Foyle Trust to confirm that child protection procedures would be enforced by the Centre. The Centre closed. After four years of campaigning the FPA in Derry has stopped abortion referrals and the Brooke Centre has been kept out of the City.

In 2005 Precious Life challenged the appointment of Monica McWilliams as the new head of the NI Human Rights Commission because she is pro-abortion. She was asked to state that she would work vigorously to protect and promote the human rights of unborn children in law, policy and practice. If she could not make the statement, she was unfit for office and should resign. She had previously been leader of the NI Women’s Coalition, a political party which supports the introduction of abortion on demand to NI. On appointment she said that she was looking forward to taking the Bill of Rights forward. However the proposals for the Bill have denied all human rights to unborn children despite the fact that the remit of the Commission was to ensure that the Bill should ‘reflect the particular circumstances and ethos of Northern Ireland’. The pro-life ethos of NI and its people’s opposition to abortion are not reflected in the proposed Bill. For example, a 2004 survey in teenage magazine Bliss revealed that 91% of young people in NI are pro-life.

In 2006 a demonstration was held outside the Annual Representatives Meeting of the British Medical Association held in Belfast. The BMA are pro-abortion, describing the Abortion Act as a humane piece of legislation and have repeatedly called for the Act to be extended to NI. Dr Wendy Savage was in attendance and collared by Bernie and others to little effect. Pro-life doctors leaving the meeting were disgusted that the time allocated to hear motions on abortion had been taken up entirely by a condemnation of the State of South Dakota which had made moves for a complete ban on abortion. This meant that motions for a reduction in the upper limit of abortion from 24 weeks to 20 weeks; the current practices surrounding the resuscitation and treatment of babies born before 24 weeks; and for the BMA to conduct a full review of the legislation surrounding abortion were never even heard. In other words, the usual procedural manipulation to stifle debate in the BMA.

Precious Life was also represented at a public meeting held in Belfast by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority in May 2006 to discuss their work. During a brief Q&A session Clare Paradi asked Richard Harris [Bishop of Oxford up to 2006] whether his position on HFEA as Chair of the Ethics and Law Advisory Group was in conflict with his vocation as a man of God. His reply was illuminating when he said, “If I am going to discuss the work I do here, I cannot bring God into it.”, “The embryo is not human until the 14th day after fertilisation.” and “God wants us to enjoy the benefits of science, so if we can prevent a child from being born then we should”. The public consultation by the HFEA was a cheap PR stunt as they have no regard for popular opinion. The dignity, rights and humanity of the unborn child was never mentioned let alone the morality of the work they do.

The FPA sought a judicial review in 2001 claiming that they were seeking clarification of the abortion law in the Province which they claimed was unclear. The FPA was seeking an order forcing the Department of Health to draw up guidelines on whether abortion can be carried out under NI law. This was contested by Precious Life who challenged them in a two day courtroom battle at the High Court in Belfast in March 2002. Judge Kerr made his ruling in the case in July 2003 when a victory to keep abortion out of Ireland was achieved. He rejected every one of the FPA’s arguments for issuing guidelines on abortion and he dismissed their case. He was not satisfied that there was any uncertainty among the medical community as to the principles that govern abortion.

It was an important victory against an attempt to introduce abortion into the Province by a judicial sleight of hand. If successful, and abortion had been introduced into Northern Ireland, it would have made a nonsense
of the Republic of Ireland Constitution and its protection for the unborn. It would have enabled abortion clinics to be set up just north of the border. It was an important decision for the whole of Ireland.

The Royal College of Midwives in Belfast had filed submissions to the Court supporting the FPA’s case and still claim that there are circumstances when abortion is legal in cases of ‘foetal abnormality’. Precious Life had been aware of rumours that abortions were being carried out at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast. The RCM confirmed, “terminations are carried out on mothers from throughout NI in our unit –Royal Maternity – terminations are carried out in some other Units throughout NI…..It is recommended by our College that with terminations of pregnancy beyond 21 weeks the foetus should undergo antenatal lethal injection prior to termination, so that the foetus does not show any signs of life at delivery….Last year [2001]there were 24 cases [termination of pregnancy between 21-24 weeks] in Royal Maternity”.

Precious Life will not tolerate the killing and vigils are now held at the Royal. The law protects unborn children so these abortions are illegal. One abortion is one too many.

In May 2004 Precious Life went back to High Court in Belfast to challenge the FPA who were appealing the rejection of their case to legalise abortion. It was revealed in Court that the Department of Health had already drafted guidelines on abortion in NI. During this appeal, the FPA had to admit that the law on abortion in NI is clear and prohibits abortion-on-demand as practised in Britain. They also acknowledged that the law states that abortion is only permitted in serious medical cases where the mother’s life is at risk [there are no medical circumstances in which the life of the mother may only be saved by directly killing her unborn child]. The FPA acknowledged the right to life of the unborn child and said that the state had a duty not only to protect the health of women, but unborn children who also have human rights. They also conceded the critical issue that aborting babies because of their disabilities is unlawful in NI. This was their response when challenged by pro-life arguments. Precious Life concluded the three day hearing with a Jericho Walk around the Court building.

The Appeal Court ruling in October, by Lord Justice Nicholson, said the courts could not change the abortion law in NI and aborting children with a disability was illegal. Women seeking abortion should be encouraged to make a different choice and the number of women travelling to England for abortion must be reduced. “This judgement is written in the hope that the Department will seek to reduce the number of women and girls going away to seek an abortion and to encourage those seeking an abortion in NI to make a different choice”.

The ruling also stated that there should be ‘consultation with concerned organisations’ in drawing up the guidelines. Despite this, in May 2005 the Department of Health held a series of meetings on drawing up guidelines on abortion. Pro-life doctors were refused attendance at the meetings and the fear was that the guidelines would be issued without any pro-life input. This was confirmed in January 2007 when the Department of Health issued draft guidelines which included references on how to perform an abortion. Each Health Trust must ensure that its patients have access to ‘termination of pregnancy services’, interpreted as all hospitals must carry out abortions. Secret abortions will be performed on under-age girls without their parent’s knowledge. Doctors and nurses will be forced to assist in abortions against their conscience or else forced to leave their profession.

Precious Life responded with a campaign, Not in My Name, when 50,000 people contacted the Department and the guidelines were stalled. The lobbying of Members of Parliament and NI Assembly Members commenced. This July, Jeffrey Donaldson and Iris Robinson of the Democratic Unionist Party agreed to put a motion opposing the guidelines before the Assembly. A briefing paper was prepared that showed that the guidelines contain many serious legal errors. While the guidelines cannot change the law, they will change how the law is interpreted and so effectively legalise abortion in NI through the back door. The briefing paper has been sent to 108 Assembly Members. Phase two of the campaign involves a second postcard distribution whereby people are asked to write to their Assembly Member requesting their support for the motion:

“That this Assembly opposes the introduction of the proposed guidelines on the termination of pregnancy in Northern Ireland; believes that the guidelines are flawed; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to abandon any attempt to make abortion more widely available in Northern Ireland”.
No date has been set for the motion to be debated but it appears that cross-party support will ensure that it is passed. Only the Progressive Unionist Party seems opposed to it.

Precious Life needs financial support to make sure this happens and another battle is won. Financial support can be sent to **Precious Life; PO Box 425; Belfast; BT1 4YF.**

**Resurgence** - As in any war, it is the last battle that counts. Even when successful at Stormont, there is the threat of a pincer attack from Dr Evan Harris GP, the Liberal Democrat MP for Oxford West and Abingdon and member of the BMA, who says that it is disgraceful that unborn children are still protected in NI and has demanded that the situation change with a vote in Parliament by way of an amendment to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill as it proceeds through this current session.

So in addition to giving financial and moral support to Precious Life we must also resist Evan Harris and his friends in Westminster.

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**DAVID CAMMERON and the family**

David Cameron’s speech to the Conservative Party conference was much better than the media coverage that it received. Reading the full written text showed that it had depth. He wants to make families stronger and society more responsible. The trouble is trying to reconcile it with his speech at last year’s conference.

This year he stated his commitment to the family and marriage. Last year he redefined the meaning of family to include unconventional relationships including homosexual. Any hope that under the influence of Iain Duncan Smith he has come back to a traditional view were dashed when in a separate interview he clarified his position. Extra cash would be available to married or unmarried couples with children and same-sex couples with adopted children or children from a previous relationship. Now we know!

On balance I would say that they had a good conference in no little part due to the contributions of William Hague and Iain Duncan Smith who showed that when he is natural and true to himself (a decent and honest man) he comes across with more credibility than when he was Leader and let himself be modelled by the spin doctors.

David Cameron expressed the need for change - real change - and a move away from old politics. Although he did not use the phrase ‘new kind of politics’ this phrase was used by George Osborne in an interview afterwards, who also talked of the need for change to face the modern world. David Cameron also said that he wanted the Conservative Party to inspire voters.

So we have had Gordon Brown talking about renewal and a new kind of politics together with strength and change. David Cameron is talking about real change and inspiring people with a move away from old politics. At least they are in agreement about what needs to be done.

**Resurgence** has continued the central themes enunciated by the Midland ProLife Party in 2004 - that is to **inspire and renew.** The two Party Conferences show that three years later both main parties have moved on to our territory, but will they be able to match their rhetoric with meaningful policies? I think that when our policy formulation comes to fruition it will be seen that we have the solutions and that we have the high moral ground.

They have both still got a long way to go to catch up. We’ll be putting people first and making people matter. Government and the political parties have yet to realise that they are there to serve the common good and not boost the profits of UK plc.

From our inception we have adopted a tridentate strategy for the Common Good that is; our vision of inspiration - **hope for the future,**
our springboard of basic policies for renewal - **foundations for the future**, and the return to enduring and traditional truths and values - **back to the future**.

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**40th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ABORTION ACT**

**MY LITTLE ONE**

Today I think of you while I am weeping  
And slowly count the lost and empty years.  
If you had lived, it would have been your birthday  
Though every day, in truth, is filled with tears.  

I try, of course, to think of other matters,  
To dust and clean and wash away the pain  
And yet the more I try to push you from me,  
The deeper in my heart do you remain.  

What colour were your eyes, your hair I wonder,  
Your little ears - what shape would they have been?  
I want you, seek you, yearn so much to hold you  
But in my searching mind you stay unseen.  

If I had known upon that day the future,  
If I had felt the torment I would bear,  
If I had not then let them take you from me,  
I would not now be slave to this despair.  

Within that room of death and cold and darkness  
The devil surely did exultant dwell,  
For was it not, indeed, the very annex  
Adjacent to the icy halls of hell.  

And is it my imagining, I wonder,  
When first you felt that sharp, satanic knife,  
You cried to me in fear, “What’s happening, Mother?  
I beg you, help me … help me … save my life!”  

It is a world become malign and shadowed,  
A realm in which the strong, the mighty reign,  
Where they - the lost, the old, the weak, the suffering -  
Are cast into the winds as husks of grain.  

They talk of “rights” and “choice” and “women’s freedom”  
And raise their odious banners to the sky;  
They claim they have alone the right of living  
And leave to the unborn the right to die.  

All joy, all hope, all human warmth must perish  
When pity, love and trust are thus betrayed,  
When frozen hearts and callous hands accomplish  
A work that dares destroy what God has made.  

And it is He, the Lord of Life, who formed you  
And cherishes you now, my little one,
Who will, upon that day when all shall tremble,
Ask why it was this piteous deed was done.

Michael Healy

NORTHERN ROCK – the plot sickens

The Chairman of Northern Rock has resigned after giving evidence to the Commons Treasury Select Committee. He denied that the banks high-risk borrowing and loans strategy was the cause of their collapse and instead blamed wholly unexpected events resulting from the closure of the world’s wholesale credit markets. This explanation was not accepted and he had to go in order to restore a vestige of confidence in the bank. The shareholders are not happy as the value of their holdings has reduced by 80% and their dividend payments have been stopped. The Financial Services Authority claims that they could not have anticipated events at Northern Rock, but that lessons have to be learned.

They may have adequate assets but these are tied up in long-term loans and with a low-level of liquidity they cannot meet the demands of their depositors. The Government’s guarantee to Northern Rock depositors has taken the form of Bank of England emergency loans to the tune of £16million. This is at a price but has strained the Bank of England’s resources and the money will be lost if Northern Rock sinks. This is the reason that the guarantee has been extended to new retail deposits in an effort to increase liquidity and give time for a rescue strategy.

These measures could not be offered to every bank in danger of collapse as resources are limited. The aim has been to stop a domino effect of runs on the other ex-building societies turned mortgage banks and maintain the international reputation of the City. Again, it is a matter of confidence. Even as the Northern Rock was feeling the heat, the Abbey and the Birmingham Midshires were offering 100% percent plus £25,000 negative equity loans, and the Darlington BS was offering an Income Stretch deal. Chancellor Darling accused the banks and building societies of fuelling an unsustainable boom in house prices and said they must be more responsible with their lending. The Council for Mortgage Lenders immediately hit back, saying that Darling’s remarks were mis-judged and behind the times. They denied responsibility.

With the flak flying all over the place no one seems to have any thought for the poor borrowers who face repossession. Early this month the BBC published the results of its own investigation into the sub-prime mortgage market in the UK. This throws more light on the situation in this country and shows the similarities with what happened in the USA. In the USA low-income black people were targeted as clients for high interest loans. In the UK the people targeted in the high risk category; were people on benefits who were council tenants and encouraged to exercise their right-to-buy; and people who were already house owners but had court judgements and poor credit records who were encouraged to solve their financial problems by consolidating debts into one loan with a smaller monthly instalment but over a longer period of years. These were high risk loans with high interest rates.

Everybody including the financial regulators knew what was happening. The tabloid press carry page after page of adverts aimed at these people and the commercial television channels carry adverts in the morning and afternoon targeting these categories of people. The loan companies are not the familiar high street banks or building societies but specialist companies that have attracted investors looking to place their cash in a high return investment.

The BBC investigation revealed that although these types of high risk loan comprise 8% of the market – disproportionably, 70% of repossessions processed through the courts in the preceding three months were of this high risk type.

The common factor in the UK and USA is that low income people are being made homeless. Another common factor is that the mortgage applications were less than accurate with exaggerated levels of income.
There is no evidence yet that in the UK these high risk loans were packaged with other loans to create a financial product for onward sale.

Where was the protection for these borrowers with high levels of missed payments? In the USA, Alan Greenspan, the former head of the US Federal Reserve, has admitted that they knew what was happening and saw the credit risk, but did nothing. They did not feel any compulsion to protect the rich investors in Hedge Funds so why should they feel the need to protect the borrowers. He also predicted that the era of low inflation was coming to an end.

Darling has reined back on his proposal to safeguard £100,000 of investment and now says that deposit protection will for a full £35,000 instead of the present £3,000 plus 90% of £32,000. Without dismissing his aim of safeguarding £100,000 he says it might be necessary to impose a levy on the banks. It is all very vague and has not been thought through properly. Critics draw parallels with the Government’s reluctance to guarantee occupational pensions and share-holdings.

How this is going to maintain investor confidence is hard to see. When Darling tried to stop the run on Northern Rock by assuring depositors that the Bank was solvent and had enough assets to meet the deposits, many people queuing outside the bank’s branches stated that they did not believe the Government because they had lied about Weapons of Mass Destruction and the reasons for going to war with Iraq. They might also have pointed out that the Government had reneged on the promise of a referendum on the European Constitutional Treaty. In other words, they had no confidence in the Government. It was only when Darling gave an assurance that 100% of deposits would be guaranteed by the Government that the run was halted. Given that they we now know that in the event of a general banks sector collapse only £35k will be guaranteed, will anyone believe him or his successor when the next bank-run occurs. And if more than one bank is affected how can he possibly meet even this limited promise.

It is also important to differentiate between the banks and the mutual building societies. The banks have a high level of commercial wholesale borrowing up to 80% while the building societies get most of their money from their members and top up with commercial borrowing up to 20%. If the banks have to make a levy towards a reserve fund to protect depositors – and the commitment should be made by them in full – then the building societies should not be included, but should have a separates scheme in place. Building societies have a good collective record for dealing with societies that fail.

If a protection scheme is required - and there is an argument for saying that as all investments entail some element of risk, the investor must shoulder it – then each sector of the industry should have a scheme tailored for their particular circumstances and it is essential that they are not funded by the taxpayer.

There are other dubious banking practices that need to be addressed. Such as super hero - Homebuyer Man – the public advertising face of National Home Saver. There are other companies offering a similar service. If you are in debt and facing eviction but own your house, they will come to the rescue by buying your house off you and letting you stay in it. The snag is that they will pay less than the market value, say 60% or 75% and even then your security of tenure is tenuous.

Young people are priced out of the housing market with 70% needing to rent because they cannot afford to buy. These are people in the age group 20-35 with incomes of £15k to £25k. Renting is now 60% of the cost of buying and a better proposition, but difficult with London rents in the £1000-£1400 per month range and elsewhere £450-£750pm. Even then young people share the cost of renting, with the next step up the ladder being to rent by themselves.

The next step after that is to buy. In the UK 70% of people are buying or own their home and according to the Land Registry £210,000 is the average price of a house. First time buyers have a higher loan to earnings ratio, with 50% of them getting help from parents. Interestingly, psychologists claim that males feel the need to move around and would prefer to rent, while females have a nesting instinct and prefer to own.
Young first time buyers taking the plunge borrow up to the hilt on the basis that property prices always go up. They will pay silly purchase prices in a desperate bid to climb the housing ladder in a market where demand outstrips supply. Some are taking out loans of 10-12 to 1 = loan to earnings ratio. One in ten is taking out an interest only mortgage. With low interest rates they might just survive but then the trouble starts. Such as, five mortgage interest rate rises this year, and an anticipated 3% fall in house prices in 2008 and a further 3% fall in 2009. General falls of 10% have already been reported with some estate agents holding across the board sales with huge SALE NOW ON signs in the window. Remember that the normal loan to earnings ratio use to be 3.5 : 1. There is clear evidence that high ratio mortgages have fuelled the housing boom, and will be instrumental in killing off the market.

The alternative is rental but it is in short supply and there is a disparity between what is available and what people can afford to pay. Security for private tenants killed off the post war rental market, so modern tenants do not get any security of tenure. One contentious issue is the need for rent deposits to be paid into separate tenant accounts earning interest for the tenant. Of the people who rent privately 22% are on benefit which sets the bottom floor of rents which landlords can charge. Investor’s in new build apartments in city centres have a lot left empty because they cannot achieve a sufficient rental income.

New landlords find it hard to get into the rental market and there is a need to grow the supply of affordable rental property. Government support for the rental market is not covered in the Housing Green Paper. This is not just a metropolitan problem. Rents in Cornwall have rocketed because of buy to let purchasers coming in. Some buy-to-let repossession have also resulted in tenants, who are up to date with rent, being evicted.

A country like the UK, which is heavily dependent on financial services, is going to be more affected by the world financial crisis than other diverse economies. Lurking in the background is the next financial crisis. The Euro is overvalued, being strong against both the US Dollar and the UK Pound Sterling, while the Pound is very strong against the Dollar but weak against the Euro. Despite the financial crisis this does not make sense.

The European Central Bank has identified the problem as France, for being Europe’s number one spender. In comparison with its Gross Domestic Product, France is spending much more than other European countries. France is under pressure to cut its budget deficit but has retaliated by attacking the ECB policies for causing poor growth and for the Euro trading at a record high against the Dollar. France wants special exemptions from the Rules which are applied rigorously to all the other Euro partners. If the French do not toe the line, they risk undermining the Euro on international money markets.

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**Resurgence** letter to the Universe 14th September 2007 - **European Reform Treaty**

Dear Editor

Gordon Brown promised “a new kind of politics” which consisted of listening and devolving power to the people. This did not last long and we can now see the New Labour spin machine at full throttle as they renege on their election commitment of a referendum for the people to vote on the European Union Constitution.

We have seen David Milliband, the Foreign Secretary, repeating ad nauseam the mantra that this treaty is merely tidying up the institutional arrangements for an enlarged European Union. Jim Murphy, the European Minister, appears on television telling us that the Reform Treaty is totally different from the abandoned Constitution, so that a referendum is not necessary. A previous Minister, Denis MacShane, goes on the television using cheap theatrical tricks to prove that the Treaty is not the Constitution. He had printed-off a copy of the Constitution and a copy of the draft Treaty, which he produced to show that the Treaty was half the size of the Constitution and therefore not the same.

This is grossly misleading as well as being dishonest. They appear to be under the impression that they can fool all the people all the time.
This is not just a treaty; it is an M&S treaty – that is Mammoth and Seismic.

All the European State leaders know that there is no popular enthusiasm in Europe for the Project of further expansion and integration. Tony Blair advised them that there was no chance of winning a referendum on the Constitution in the United Kingdom. So to by-pass the Dutch and French No votes, they have resorted to this devious strategy of also by-passing all the citizens of Europe. We thank God that the Danes and Irish will hold referenda.

My travels through Europe indicate to me that we are not isolated in the UK, there is widespread scepticism and the Euro currency is still not accepted. So what is the truth?

The European Union Council communiqué issued after the summit in June contained within its thirty-two pages a detailed mandate for the Inter Governmental Conference to draw up a Reform Treaty. This Reform Treaty is currently being considered by the IGC after being drawn up by the Commission, but after weeks of deliberation there are no reports forthcoming. The IGC seems to be operating in strict secrecy.

The draft Treaty has been published but it is not easy to understand as it consists of amendments to two existing European treaties. The Commission has not released copies of the two treaties as amended, so that a comparison with the abandoned Constitution is difficult, if not impossible. Some people say that this is a deliberate ploy, as people cannot object to what they do not understand.

However, the Open Europe website www.openeurope.org.uk has done us the service of undertaking the job to decipher the Reform Treaty and amend the existing two treaties, so giving us the end result. They have also published this alongside the abandoned Constitution to make comparisons easy.

This shows us that although the Reform Treaty is shorter than the Constitution, the two amended treaties are the same length as the Constitution and are in all material respects identical. In fact the amended treaties incorporate some amendments that were not in the Constitution.

Resurgence after consideration of the communiqué in July has adopted a position of demanding a referendum on the Reform Treaty and of having a referendum on every subsequent treaty. The people of the UK have been denied a referendum on all the previous European treaties. We now have a once only opportunity to catch up, as a referendum on the European Reform Treaty will be a referendum on the past treaties.

Opinion polls indicate that 80% of UK citizens want a referendum. If Gordon Brown is listening, he is obviously not hearing. This will be a test of his new kind of politics and the ultimate devolution of power to the people.

To quote from Julius Caesar in the scene where he confides in Mark Antony, “come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf, And tell me truly what thou think’st of him”. Gordon Brown runs the risk of people moving to his right in order to be heard.

That would be unfortunate. New Labour is deliberately trying to make this a party political issue and David Cameron is responding in kind. This will blur this vital issue with people voting on partisan lines for the wrong reasons. This will be a gross disservice to the country and democracy.

Yours faithfully, Leader

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EUROPE finally abandoning democracy
I am not one for reinventing the wheel, so I reproduce in full the Editor’s Comment (October 2007) from Alive! – the Catholic Monthly Newspaper which is Ireland’s biggest free paper.

“Over the past 2000 years Europe has had many forms of government – Roman empire, tribal kingdoms, feudalism, absolute monarchy, and so on.

For the past 150 years or so the preferred form was democracy. Today we have moved well away from that and into what EU chief, Jose Manuel Barroso, calls ‘a voluntary empire’.

What he means is that the EU is now an empire, but instead of nations being conquered by marching armies they willingly surrendered to bureaucrats their right to govern themselves.

Certainly he is right about the EU being an empire. Up to 80% of Irish laws now come from Brussels. No matter who is in government, they must rubber stamp these laws. The same is true in other countries.

But is the empire ‘voluntary’? To a large extent Irish people were bribed and swindled out of their right to govern themselves, much as happened with the 1800 Act of Union.

In most other countries the people’s wishes were simply ignored as MPs voted away independence, step by step. When voters were consulted, as in France and Holland, their wishes were ignored and the EU pushed on regardless.

Now the EU is governed by a tiny oligarchy, the unelected Commission that answers to no one. Meanwhile, lest the people panic and revolt, the nations retain the forms of democracy, but without real power.

One of the best books on EU history, by Booker and North, is rightly titled, The Great Deception.

The upcoming treaty, another massive deception, will mean further transfer of power to the EU. Moreover, UK Conservatives have pointed out that one clause in it will allow EU leaders to take over more powers without the need for further treaties.

In other words, this treaty may be regarded as the official burial of European democracy. And our national media? They backed the sell-out all along the way.”

Alive! is an excellent paper that covers current affairs and issues in Ireland, the EU and the UK from a Catholic perspective. I wish that it was available in all our Catholic churches. It can be accessed in full online at www.alive.ie

Resurgence - In my July briefing on the European Reform Treaty I set out the reasons for demanding a referendum in the UK. The institutions of the EU are anti-family and anti-life, and in addition they are anti-church and anti-religious. The European Parliament is a sham, giving a veneer of democracy. We need to know the nature of the beast occupying Brussels. I repeat – Satan has a suite of offices in the Berlaymont.

Campaigners in Ireland were instrumental in getting the Irish Supreme Court to rule that each European Treaty raised sovereignty issues under the Irish Constitution so that a referendum must be held each time. The Irish must have a referendum and in theory so must the Danes. The Danish government is taking the same position as the UK government and arguing that the Reform Treaty is not a constitutional issue. It remains to be seen whether the Danish parliament will let them get away with it.

In Holland, the Christian Democrat led coalition government has decided to override the previous No vote on the European Constitution and buy-off the opposition parties with political concessions on their pet issues. They seem to have forgotten what the ‘Democrat’ in their title means. The Dutch Foreign Minister has said that aid must be denied to those countries that have protection for the unborn child. It seems that they have also forgotten what the ‘Christian’ in their title means.
I have pointed out that the front-line in the war against abortion is in Northern Ireland. The Christian Solidarity Party who organised the successful No To Nice campaign in Ireland needs our help and support. The front-line in the war to defend democracy is in the Republic of Ireland. During the Dark Age it was the monks from Ireland who kept the light alive and brought the Truth and the Word back to the continent of Europe. Once again we look to the Irish to keep the light burning just as Saint Brigid did.

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