

FORWARDING NOTE

from	Secretariat
to	The Convention
Subject :	Open letter to the President of the Convention "Doing Less and Doing it Better : A Debate on Substance and Direction

The Secretary-General of the Convention has received from Mr.David Heathcoat-Amory , member of the Convention and the Earl of Stockton, alternate, the attached open letter to the President of the Convention, signed also by Mr. Richard Spring

Submission to the Convention by:

The Earl of Stockton MEP (Alternate), David Heathcoat-Amory MP (National Parliament Representative) and Richard Spring MP (Opposition Spokesman for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs, with responsibility for Europe and the Middle East).

Open letter to the President of the Convention

“Doing Less and Doing it Better”: A Debate on Substance and Direction

Mr President,

The Convention was established with a powerful and wide mandate, that of examining why Europe’s citizens feel alienated from the European Union.

To date, our meetings have rather focused on the practicalities of integration. We need to take a step back.

When the working group on Complementary Competences was established, some contributors indicated that they wanted a general discussion on the attribution of competences as a whole. Some called for more integration; others, a restoration of national powers. Understandably, the Chair determined that such discussions lay rather in the remit of the plenary as a whole: such is their importance. But those discussions have yet to take place.

Correspondingly, we call for a debate and a working group to review these fundamental principles;

- *Where do policy areas belong, and should some be returned to member states?* It is remarkable that there has been no debate over whether reform of failed policies could best be achieved by

restoring national parliamentary control over them, perhaps within European frameworks. Is the ecological and social wreck of the Common Fisheries Policy best salvaged by returning competences to national or regional governments? Can the Common Agricultural Policy be fixed by giving national governments control over their budgets? Is there really justification for the EU to deal with matters internal to member states, like local environmental issues such as groundwater and habitats, or health protection?

- *What areas of the *acquis communautaire* should be restored to national parliaments?* 85,000 pages of *acquis* is a fearsome burden on applicant states, and will certainly damage the international competitiveness of these fragile economies. Discussion over sunset clauses, cost-benefit analyses, and the relevance of some of these uniform laws covering an area from Lapland to Sicily, is an essential. The economies of Europe are struggling, characterised by low growth, poor productivity and high unemployment. Yet the Convention has given little thought to the economic future of Europe or the burden of regulation that the EU continues to impose.
- *What mechanisms should operate for the future return of these powers and legislation?* If the European Union is to be flexible, there has to be a structure permitting individual powers or laws to be transferred in the future. Some very positive suggestions have been made in respect of Article 308 as a mechanism for this, but can this be expanded upon, to respond to a sudden call from citizens to retake control over their immediate destinies? But for now, like articles 94 and 95, it remains a one way “open sesame” clause.

Mr President, The Convention to date has discussed ways to increase powers for the EU institutions, to increase the number of competences it holds, to increase the amount of QMV in the system. But it has not addressed what we are already managing, and whether we are managing it properly. If our national citizens are already dissatisfied with the EU of today, how are we to convince them that we are not involved in a naked power grab in the name of ‘simplification’? Whatever our different views may be on the practicalities, we deserve at least a debate on what Europe should do less of, in order to do it better.