

CONV 808/03

CONTRIB 365

COVER NOTE

from	Secretariat
to	The Convention
Subject :	Contribution submitted by The Earl of Stockton, alternate member of the Convention: - “Reaffirming the aims of the Laeken Declaration”

The Secretary-General of the Convention has received the contribution annexed hereto from The Earl of Stockton, alternate member of the Convention.

Submission to the Convention by:

The Earl of Stockton MEP (Alternate) on behalf of:

Roger Helmer MEP, Niranjan Deva MEP, Robert Goodwill MEP, Martin Callanan MEP, Geoffrey van Orden MEP, Jacqueline Foster MEP, Robert Sturdy MEP, Giles Chichester MEP, Mogens Camre MEP, Daniel Hannan MEP, Georges Berthu MEP, Jens-Peter Bonde MEP, Jose Ribeiro E Castro MEP, Neil Parish MEP, Struan Stevenson MEP, James Nicholson MEP, Theresa Villiers MEP and Dana Rosemary Scallon MEP.

Reaffirming the aims of the Laeken Declaration

The Laeken Declaration states that one of its principle aims is to bring the European Union (EU) closer to its citizens. It identifies a primary vehicle for augmenting the role of the nation state, in that "*The Union should involve itself more with their particular concerns, instead of intervening, in every detail, in matters by their very nature that are better left to Member States' and regions' elected representatives*". The Convention on the Future of Europe has repeatedly failed to address this objective.

We believe that democracy can only be realised at the national level. Attempts to counter the EU's notorious *democratic deficit* by conferring more powers to the European Parliament will not provide the EU with the legitimacy that it seeks. The voter apathy evident at successive European elections highlights the absence of a European public sphere and as a corollary, the European Parliament remains a remote institution. Efforts to engender a post-national citizenship by way of pan-European political parties or institutional restructuring will therefore only serve to further alienate European citizens, undermine the sovereignty of member states and add credence to the view that the EU is not serious about subsidiarity.

Even within the Single Institutional Framework, the European Parliament fails to remedy the democratic deficit. It favours the lowest common denominator of consensus rather than high-level lengthy debate.

We repudiate the transfer of sovereignty away from Member States to the EU and call for the Convention on the Future of Europe to recognise that the national model is preferable to the establishment of a European super-state. An association of sovereign states working together will provide the requisite flexibility and co-operation. We reject the integrationist model as a future paradigm for European co-operation, just as the Laeken Declaration accepts that citizens expect "*better responses to practical issues and not a European Super-state*".

To date the Convention has only discussed ways to the increase powers and competences for the EU institutions. As Article 8 of the draft constitutional treaty illustrates, Giscard d'Estaing has deemed the subsidiarity principle as an instrument for extending the competences of the EU, "*where the objectives of [an] intended action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States*".

The Convention has not however, addressed what we are already managing, and whether we are managing it properly. If the people of Europe are already dissatisfied with the EU of today, how are we, as elected representatives, to convince them that we are not involved in destroying the tradition of subsidiarity 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.

We therefore declare that Member States should be freed from the trappings of excessive supranational intervention, which only threatens national sovereignty. If the EU does not seek to remedy the fundamental democratic flaws within the European Union, rather than proffer cosmetic reform, then Europe's people will be inclined to let their apathy lead to outright rejection.
