Assessment of the Reflection Group's work; EP political priorities for the Intergovernmental Conference

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Although he pointed out that the report, which reflected completely the dominant trends in the EP, did not in any way meet his expectations, the co-rapporteur, Mr BOURLANGES (EPP, F), explained that his first concern was to be ‘the honest broker of the trends of this House’. Having said that, faced with the EU’s three major problems (variable geometry, democratisation and the political dimension), Parliament had chosen to bury its head in the sand. With regard to the first problem, formulas that ‘please us’ were bandied about but these were not equal to the situation. With regard to the second, since Parliament did not have a government that was responsible before the legislature and it could not be dissolved, many more powers had been demanded without the necessary proposals being put forward (Mr Bourlanges’ proposals had been poorly received). As far as the third issue was concerned, the co-rapporteur felt that the removal of the pillars should be accompanied by a new political balance between Parliament and the Council. Mr MARTIN (PSE, UK), co-rapporteur, highlighted the three objectives that should be on the agenda of the IGC. The first was to improve the Union’s ability to define clear political objectives (for example regarding the former Yugoslavia, the unemployment problem, etc.). The second was to simplify the EU’s complex operating procedures, both within its institutions and in its decision-making. Finally, the Union should prepare for further enlargements. As regards the means of achieving these objectives, Mr Martin believed that the key was to do away with the EU’s three pillars and replace them with a single structure. A better balance between the interests of the Community and those of the Member States required qualified majority voting on legislative matters and unanimity, as before, on constitutional issues, such as reform of the Treaties, enlargement, own resources, and so on. Moreover, the reduction in the number of decisions to three could be implemented as follows: codecision for all ordinary legislation, assent for agreements with third countries, enlargement and constitutional issues, and, finally, consultation solely for decisions on the CFSP. Mr Martin again called for a better balance between the rights of the institutions and those of the citizens. Moreover, EMU should be accompanied by firmer commitments to combat unemployment. He agreed nonetheless that this report presented a minimalist position of the Community for the next decade. 17/05/95… (continued) Mrs GREEN (PSE, UK) indicated that her group supported the proposals in the MARTIN/BOURLANGES report, which, by advocating a more open and democratic Europe, combined the principles with a pragmatic approach. Mr MARTENS (EPP, B) stated that a large percentage of his group would vote in favour as the Union needed to be reformed in order to meet the social, environmental and institutional challenges it faced. Mr DE VRIES (ELDR, NL) regretted the Union’s current shortcomings in the area of foreign and security policy and called for an end to the requirement for unanimity in the Council. Mr PUERTA (GUE, E) criticised the report and stated that many members of his group would vote against it. Mr DANESIN (FE, I) noted that his group would abstain because the report was not innovative enough and Parliament needed to be more courageous. Mr PASTY (RDE, F) criticised the report because it gave priority to the institutional approach and because the instruments could not replace political will; he therefore anticipated that his group would vote against the report. Mr LANGER (Greens, I) was worried about the risk of a new monster treaty (Maastricht Mark II) being produced and, highlighting the shortcomings of the report, stated that most of his group would abstain unless the Greens’ amendments were adopted by the House. Mrs LALUMIERE (ARE, F) stated that her group would vote in favour if the report was not distorted by the amendments. Mr BONDE (EDN, DK) opposed the plan to create a European superstate, which he believed was contained in the report, and called for the veto to be maintained in the Council. Mr LE PEN (NI, F) gave a fairly negative assessment of the report, which would justify all sorts of aberrations and myths. Mrs MUSCARDINI (NI, I) stated that the Italian Members of her group would vote against the report because the programme had to be

decided on before committing to reforms of the institutional system. Commissioner OREJA noted the similarities between Parliament's report and that of the Commission, particularly with regard to involving the public in the revision process, improving the effectiveness of the CFSP, simplifying the decision-making procedures, and looking in greater detail at the different rates of integration that were compatible with respect for the EU's unique institutional nature and shared common objectives. The Commissioner warned against the dangers of achieving a fragile and inadequate result.