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Press Release

SNP/Plaid Euro-MPs: 'Mandelson has a lot of convincing to do'

"Euro-MPs sceptical ahead of Monday's crucial hearing"

Speaking ahead of Monday's crucial European Parliament grilling of UK Euro Commission nominee Peter Mandelson, Euro-MPs from the SNP and Plaid Cymru have expressed scepticism that the controversial politician will be able to convince MEPs he's up to the job.

Each nominee for a job in the new 25 member Commission has to undergo a three hour hearing before a special European Parliament committee, before the full parliament takes a vote to accept or reject the whole Commission later this month. Nevertheless, a negative view on a particular candidate could force a premature reshuffle or in exceptional circumstances a request for a new candidate to be put forward.

Each candidate has been required to complete comprehensive questionnaires set out by MEPs ahead of the hearings. But the SNP and Plaid Cymru MEPs have expressed disappointment at apparent contradictions in Mr Mandelson's answers and a lack of commitment to remaining independent in his role as a Commissioner.

Ian Hudgton MEP (SNP) commented:

"We expect European Commissioners to preserve their independence and remain impartial when they have important decisions to make. My initial reaction to Mr Mandelson's attempts to persuade us of his impartiality is one of some scepticism. In one part of his written evidence he tells us that he understands the need to remain independent whilst in another part conspicuously adding the caveat that 'national experiences will shape' commissioners' views.

He also tells us good communication is not about 'spin' before going on to talk about his experience in creating not Labour but 'New Labour' - the very epitome of spin! Many MEPs are aware of Mr Mandelson's controversial reputation and that he's twice had to resign from the UK Government - this

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combined with his unconvincing written evidence means that he needs to put in an exceptional performance on Monday."

Jill Evans MEP (Plaid Cymru) added:

"I was surprised to see Mr Mandelson referring so blatantly to his experience creating 'New Labour' in his written evidence, as if this would be in his favour. He was also less than straightforward in trying to assure us he could be impartial when it came to a referendum on the constitutional treaty. In one part of his evidence he says making the case for the constitution is a job for national governments before rushing to pledge his 'strong support' for the treaty.

His line that 'effective communication is not about spin' would be laughable if he wasn't trying to be so serious - his written evidence is riddled with 'spin' and this is something that certainly won't impress MEPs."

Alyn Smith MEP (SNP) said:

"He was Tony's crony in London and it looks as if nothing much will change in Brussels. He tells us that he's going to be impartial and then tells us he won't be resigning as Chairman of the board of Policy Network - a think tank close to New Labour in conjunction with whom he was chairing a fringe meeting at the Labour conference just this week. This is hardly the behaviour of someone who wants to assert his political independence.

Talking about his experience in Government he says 'my experience as a minister was shorter than I would have wished' - he will need to perform very convincingly on Monday or I fear that his experience as a Commissioner may be even shorter."

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