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*In Favour of a Social Europe,
the Developing Countries,
more Humane and
Environment-Friendly Globalisation*

ELECTRONIC VIVANT- EUROPE

N° 5 (March-April 2004)

1. Speech by Jean-Paul Brasseur (VIVANT-EUROPE)

EUPEN CONGRESS, 27 March 2004

Ladies and Gentlemen,

VIVANT-EUROPE was set up in November 2003. The first objective of the movement **is to bring together through** one site, called <http://www.vivanteurope.org>, all our fellow-citizens of Europe who wish to register their agreement with VIVANT-EUROPE's programme. (How to register on the site is indicated on your form.)

What is this programme?

Vivant is first of all a **“turnkey project”, a “way to follow”**, that stands for bringing about a social Europe, for developing countries, and for a form of globalisation that respects what is human and the environment.

Vivant is for cheaper labour, for fewer regulations and more freedom for business, for an unconditional basic income for everyone, for free trade respectful of all people, for abolishing the taxation of work, for civic education that builds social capital, for the defence of research, for

assistance to the Third World through a basic income combined with micro-credit, for favouring local trade, for higher purchasing power, for an economy that brings about harmonious globalisation because no-one is excluded from it.

The way into this socio-economic reform that Vivant is promoting is indicated in VIVANT-EUROPE's programme for the European elections of 13 June 2004.

It says there:

**“The tax system penalises the work of the citizens of Europe and encourages the flight of companies. That must stop.
The taxes imposed on work kill jobs, drain Europe of her skills and threaten the financing of her social security systems - and particularly pension rights.
The European social security systems should be financed, not by sending the cost of work through the roof, but by a tax on the sale of products in Europe, by a consumption tax.
Saving jobs and social security, both, while having regard to the natural environment, are to guarantee human development that is sustainable.”**

This is Vivant's primary pillar, and erecting it requires a choice to be made, a political decision as radical as that which created the EURO. Through such a choice Europe would become outstanding.

One can only get there by stages, as it was necessary to introduce the EURO by stages that allowed countries to prepare for that reform.

Through political will and the strength of her institutions, Europe should enable all member countries to subscribe to such fiscal harmonisation.

VIVANT-EUROPE, through your humble servant at a meeting of the European Economic and Social Committee, asked Mr DEHAENE his views on the urgency of European fiscal harmonisation: he replied that that was **the second reform needed after that of the European currency**. Mr DEHAENE clarified that it did not imply a standardisation of the rates of tax (at least at first), but the introduction of a common fiscal approach.

Jacques DELORS **was of the same mind** when he said that the European currency should be accompanied by European socio-economic governance.

And why not start introducing right now European fiscality and European economic government in tandem?

With Vivant, there is more purchasing power and therefore more money; more freedom in economic activity and therefore more jobs; more well-being because the right to determine one's way of living is restored to each citizen; and, finally, there is more confidence in the future ...

In order that each fellow-citizen may enjoy life within a multicultural society, VIVANT-EUROPE, in its slow but determined way of acting, **seeks to open doors and windows onto more imagination and less sclerosis**, onto institutional simplification with less red tape, onto a social structure favouring peace and solidarity.

The Standing Forum of European Civil Society is moving in this direction, and VIVANT-EUROPE participates in its work. This Forum proposes a Third Convention, no less, and to start on its

preparation at a conference of European civil society to be held in October this year (2004) somewhere in Europe yet to be determined. Its objective is to propose **A EUROPEAN CONTRACT FOR A SOCIETY OF WELL-BEING. Bold!**

The Third Convention's preparatory questionnaire states:

“The time has come to draw up a real European Contract, a lever for ‘more progress’ within Europe, on the social and economic levels within the framework of a just globalisation. The time has come to provide the means of carrying it out with a participatory budget and a European common taxation system. So will the European Union become a super power at peace within itself, an ‘anchor’ for world peace and the engine for a new phase of economic growth which will ensure an equitable distribution of wealth, jobs for all, and support for better systems of education and care for the sick, the aged and the handicapped. The 2004/2009 European Parliament should be the occasion for further progress toward a society of well-being both on European and world levels...”
End of quotation.

The basic income holds a central place among the priorities advanced by the Forum for a Europe of well-being.

The basic income idea is making progress in Europe and some French advocates of the idea have registered with VIVANT-EUROPE.

The basic income principle has been formally adopted in Brazil; and people are latching on to the idea in Finland, Ireland and Canada.

In Alaska a universal income has been paid for several years.

To conclude, the VIVANT-EUROPE movement seeks to bring about a service economy of sharing which will allow each citizen, each institution, each project, to be given recognition within a multicultural Europe where it is good to live, a Europe where employment progresses within a society of services, guaranteeing each citizen democratic consideration and purchasing power. For Vivant, respect for human beings means to tax not their work but rather those things that machines produce. **Machines should liberate men, not deprive them of their jobs.**

Charles Trenet used to sing “Douce France” (*Sweet France*).

We now have the duty to create the social and economic conditions which will enable our grandchildren to sing “Sweet Europe”, home of peace and harmony.

Jean-Paul BRASSEUR

2. Speech by Roland Duchâtelet, Chairman of VIVANT

EUPEN CONGRESS

27 MARCH 2004

For Vivant, what counts is the joy of living - *joie de vivre!*

To be happy, one shouldn't put too much trust in politics; one must rely on oneself. But politics can create the right setting.

Twentieth-century society was very different from that of the nineteenth. Likewise, twenty-first century society will not work properly according to the outdated precepts of fifty years ago. In 1950 there were no computers and no robots.

Today, robots make portable telephones. If robots are now doing the work which used to provide humans with their livelihoods, should not the latter continue nonetheless to receive an income? Actually, that's what does happen: they get unemployment benefit or an early pension. Thank goodness! for they can then continue spending money and keep the economic machine turning.

But can such social security survive if it continues to be financed by the taxation of work?

Life expectancy of the population is going up, which creates extra expense for the social security system by way of pensions and health care.

That leads to increases in social charges. And those extra charges make labour more expensive, leading to migration of large companies and an extra general disincentive to hiring workers - and increases the number of jobless. If there are more jobless people, the cost of social security goes up; wherefore, social charges must be increased again and labour becomes even more expensive.

It is clear that the method of financing social security destroys social security. That is why the government, over the last few years, has begun to finance social security increasingly out of VAT.

In spite of this, the solution some parties are proposing in order to fund our pensions, of raising pensionable age, having more children and admitting more immigrants, is quite ridiculous. So long as the country has so many unemployed, such measures will only increase the number of young unemployed.

First, the problem of unemployment must be solved; and that is a problem of the labour market.

To retain our *joie de vivre*, our well-being, we must have social security.

But it makes just as much sense on the economic level as well. Let me explain.

Let us suppose that the State gives a small extra sum of money to a young artist without employment or income. He then uses this sum to buy a drink in a café - for an artist, above all others, has the right to live! The café owner thus gets an extra income, after deducting what the beer costs him. With this additional income he can go one extra time to the barber's, who in his turn obtains an extra income. The barber can then go to the restaurant an extra time - and so forth.

An injection of money is good for the economy so long as there's a sufficient supply of services. If, on the other hand, allowances and benefits are reduced, many people's incomes are reduced. That means recession.

It is much more important to provide everyone with income than with jobs. And that is quite possible, for it is precisely what we've been doing for 25 years, ever since structural unemployment hit us.

Why not, then, give up once and for all the utopian ideal of jobs for everyone and embrace the reality of a guaranteed income for everyone?

But in that case it is imperative to replace the tax on workers with a tax on products – to recognise that robots have replaced workers.

Work opportunities remain in the non-commercial sector and in the sector of services to individuals. But remuneration for such work will not support taxation. At present, the State penalises with high taxes a nurse looking after the aged. This is an aberration caused by trying to apply to the service economy of today the social security funding system devised for an industrial economy dating from the middle of the last century.

Such unjust taxation excludes from rest homes people with average pensions, who would be able to go there if the caring staff, such as nurses, were not so taxed.

Partly thanks to Vivant, all the political parties and even the trade unions are now convinced that the tax on work is too high.

And it is urgent now to propose a tax that can replace the tax on work.

There are not many options. A wealth tax would hit those with average wealth, while the very wealthy would easily be able to avoid it by using the many tax havens that exist around the world. To increase corporation taxes would merely encourage further flight of enterprises from our shores.

The tax on products is the only tax that can replace the tax on workers.

It would eliminate the fiscal advantage that companies have today if they move to countries where tax on work is lower than here.

The big problem is that replacing tax on work with tax on products has to be carried out at the European level.

But there are already so many problems at this level: monetary policy, defence, environment, infrastructure, immigration, international transport, big crime.

As soon as the VLD returned to power they drew up measures to reduce tax on workers. Following this logic, the VLD is now pushing the idea at the European level with Vivant's propositions.

Thanks to this alliance Vivant has succeeded in putting its propositions at the centre of the national political debate.

This also serves to increase Vivant's credibility in the South of the country, where Vivant will be fielding candidates under the sole Vivant banner.

We should be proud of having succeeded in so short a time - barely six years - in making of our proposals a prominent political talking point.

We must finish the job. In the immediate, we must convince ever more people of the soundness of our proposals by fighting an inspiring electoral campaign in the “living Vivant” manner.

Roland Duchâtelet
27 March 2004