

## **Independence / Democracy Group**

Opposition to the European Constitution and resisting the "centralisation and bureaucratisation of Europe" are the main aims of this relatively new group in the Parliament. Formed out of the old "Europe of Democracies and Diversities" Group (EDD) in July 2004 following some gains in the European elections, the group comprises around 3% of the Parliament with 22 MEPs from 8 countries. They describe themselves variously as "EU-critics, eurosceptics and eurorealists".



A key platform of the Group is their opposition to the draft EU Constitution. They have tried to exploit the political uncertainty over the future of the Treaty following its rejection in referenda in France and the Netherlands in mid-2005

The biggest bloc in the Group is the UK Independence Party (UKIP) with 10 members. While UKIP explicitly campaigns on a platform in favour of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, other members of the Group are reformists who accept membership of the Union for their country but would like to see "less centralisation, less erosion of national sovereignty and more power retained by national parliaments." Given these diverging views, the group respects the freedom of its national delegation to vote as they wish. They are jointly led by UKIP leader Nigel Farage MEP and Danish MEP Jens-Peter Bonde of the JuniBevægelsen - Mod Unionen Group.

### **D for Democracy - for and against the Constitution**

As anyone who listens to debates on the Constitution will know, the Group has been very adept at keeping itself in the media spotlight - for example they have frequently tried to "destabilise" some representatives of the Member States or of the European Commission when they have addressed the Parliament. At the recent European Council in Brussels they launched their "Plan D tour bus" that will follow Margot Wallström, the European Commissioner in charge of communication, around Europe as she holds her own "Plan D" seminars on the state of the European Constitution and the future of Europe.

For this relatively young political amalgam, the challenge will be to build on the success of their electoral breakthrough in 2004 and make further gains in European elections in 2009.